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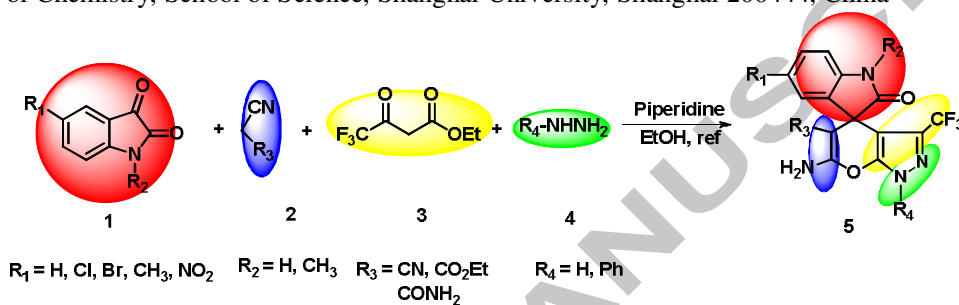
Graphical Abstract

A Facile and convenient way to functionalized trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyrano[2,3-*c*]pyrazole derivatives

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Xiaoqing Liu^a, Xiaoling Xu^a, Xu Wang^a, Wenxin Yang^a, Qun Qian^a, Min Zhang^a, Liping Song^{a, b, *}, Hongmei Deng^c, Min Shao^c

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A facile and convenient way to functionalized trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyrano[2,3-*c*]pyrazole] derivatives

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ABSTRACT

An efficient and consecutive one-pot, two-step, four-component reaction for synthesis of trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyrano[2,3-*c*]pyrazole] derivatives by reaction of isatin, malononitrile, ethyl cyanoacetate or cyanoacetamide, ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetoacetate and hydrazine in the presence of a catalytic amount of piperidine in good yields was described. The structures of new compounds were determined by spectroscopic methods, microanalysis and X-ray diffraction analysis. In addition, a possible mechanism of the reaction was proposed herein.

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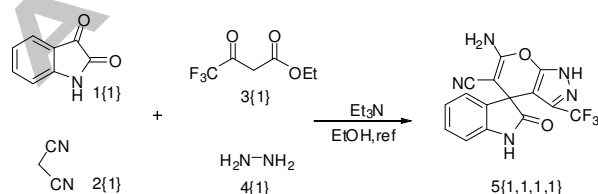
Indole and indoline fragments are a class of important structural motif central to a large number of natural biologically active compounds.¹ Compounds bearing the 2-oxindole nucleus moiety exhibit different pharmacological activities² and C-3 spiroindoline derivatives dramatically enhance biological activity.³ Therefore, searching for efficient methods for the preparation of those compounds has aroused great interest in organic synthesis, and developments in the synthesis of diversely structured spirocyclic derivatives have made a tremendous progress, such as Heck reactions,⁴ cyclopropane expansions,⁵ Diels-Alder reactions⁶ and [3+2] cycloadditions.⁷

Multicomponent reactions (MCRs) have attracted much attention for the construction of bioactive heterocyclic compounds by virtue of their convergence, productivity, facile execution, and generally high yields of products.⁸ In recent years, literatures showed a series of simple and convenient methods for synthesis of spirocyclic compound via multicomponent condensation reactions in good to excellent yields catalyzed by InCl_3 ,⁹ K_2CO_3 ,¹⁰ quaternary cationics,¹¹ $\beta\text{-CD}$,¹² sodium stearate,¹³ L-proline¹⁴ etc. Other effective synthetic methods were microwave irradiation¹⁵ and the use of electrogenerated base.¹⁶ It is widely recognized that the introduction of fluorine to organic molecules can often significantly improve their physical, chemical and biological properties.¹⁷ However, to the best of our knowledge, tremendous progress has been achieved in the synthesis of spirocyclic compounds, while the preparation of trifluoromethylated spirooxindole derivatives has been considerably less studied.

As part of our ongoing research programs directed at the development of efficient methodologies for the preparation of the fluorine-containing heterocyclic compounds and our continued work on the synthesis of fluorine-containing heterocyclic compounds via MCRs based on the trifluoromethyl-1,3-dicarbonyl compounds, a versatile fluorine-containing building-block,¹⁸ herein, we investigated a facile and convenient way to functionalized trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyranol[2,3-*c*]pyrazole] derivatives.

Initially, we carried out the one-pot, two-step, four-component reaction of isatin **1**{1}, malononitrile **2**{1}, ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetate **3**{1} and hydrazine **4**{1} as a model reaction. A stirring solution of **3**{1} (1.5 mmol) and **4**{1} (1.5 mmol) in ethanol (10 mL) was refluxed at 78 °C for 30 mins. Then **1**{1} (1.5 mmol), **2**{1} (1.5 mmol) and a catalytic amount of Et_3N (25 mol%, 0.375 mmol) were added. The resulting mixture was continued to stir at 78 °C for 6h. TLC analysis showed that the reaction was completed. General workup afforded the major pure product **5**{1,1,1,1} in 70% yield as a white solid (Scheme 1).

Scheme 1. Model Reaction



Based on the above results, a series of commercially available bases and solvents were investigated in order to find the optimal condition for the envisaged one-pot, two-step, four-component reaction for synthesis of trifluoromethylated spirooxindole derivatives (Table 1). It was found that pyridine catalyzed this reaction with moderate yield (Table 1, entry 2) and other common bases, such as Et_3N , DABCO, DMAP, Morpholine and DBU, gave a little bit higher yields (Table 1, entries 1, 3-6). Among those bases examined, piperidine was identified as the

optimal catalyst, which afforded the product **5**{1,1,1,1} in 93% yield (Table 1, entry 7). Next, we screened the effect of catalyst loading, the solvent factors and the reaction time. We observed that the reaction in protic solvents could generally give a higher yield than that in aprotic solvents (Table 1, entries 7-11). Also higher amounts of catalyst and prolonged reaction time did not further improve the yield obviously (Table 1, entries 12-14). Consequently, the best result was obtained by using 25 mol % of piperidine as the catalyst and ethanol as the solvent (Table 1, entry 7).

Table 1. Optimization of the reaction conditions^a

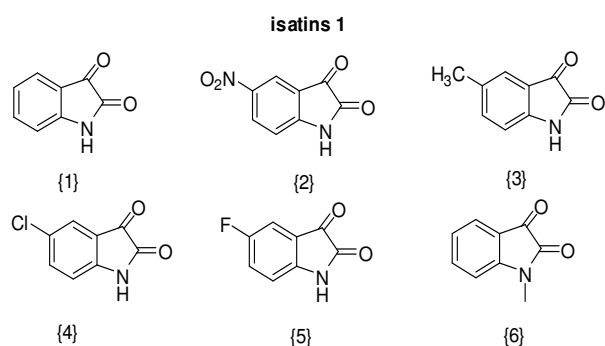
Entry	Base/equiv.	Solvent	Time/h	Yield of 5 {1,1,1,1} ^b (%)
1	Et_3N /0.25	EtOH	6	70
2	Pyridine/0.25	EtOH	6	50
3	DABCO/0.25	EtOH	6	71
4	Morpholine /0.25	EtOH	6	70
5	DBU/0.25	EtOH	6	87
6	DMAP/0.25	EtOH	6	65
7	Piperidine/0.25	EtOH	6	93
8	Piperidine/0.25	MeOH	6	83
9	Piperidine/0.25	DME	6	50
10	Piperidine/0.25	CH_2Cl_2	24	35
11	Piperidine/0.25	CH_3CN	24	40
12	Piperidine/0.5	EtOH	6	91
13	Piperidine/1	EtOH	6	91
14	Piperidine/0.25	EtOH	12	90

^a Reaction conditions: **1**{1} (1.5 mmol), **2**{1} (1.5 mmol), **3**{1} (1.5 mmol), **4**{1} (1.5 mmol), solvent: 10.0 mL EtOH, refluxing.

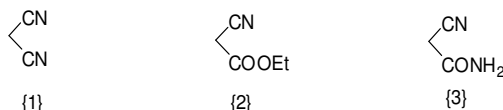
^b Isolated yield.

Figure 1. Diversity of Reagents

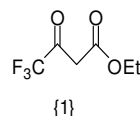
groups on isatins. The protocol was also effective with isatins bearing N-methyl group (Table 2, entries 11-12) or N-phenyl group (Table 2, entries 13-14).



malononitrile or ethyl cyanoacetate or cyanoacetamide 2



Ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetoacetate 3



hydrazines 4



To investigate the scope and limitation of this process, six isatins **1**{1-6}, three acetonitrile derivatives **2**{1-3}, ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetoacetate **3**{1} and two hydrazines **4**{1-2} were chosen for the library validation (Figure 1). The corresponding trifluoromethylated spirocyclic [indole-3,4-pyrano[2,3-*c*]pyrazole] derivatives **5**{(1-6),(1-2),1,(1-2)} were obtained in excellent yields. The reaction facilitated various isatins bearing either electron-withdrawing substituents, such as fluoro, chloro and nitro (Table 2, entries 3-4,7-10), or electron-donating substituents such as alkyl (Table 2, entries 5-6). Gratifyingly, it was found that nearly all of the corresponding products were obtained in excellent yields, regardless the effect of substituted

Table 2. Synthesis of trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyrano[2,3-*c*] pyrazole] derivatives by using malononitrile or ethyl cyanoacetate^{a, 20,21}

Entry	Product 5	Time/h	M.p. ^b	Yield/ % ^c
1	5{1,1,1,1}	6	>222 °C	93
2	5{1,2,1,1}	8	>210 °C	90
3	5{2,1,1,1}	7	>236 °C	90
4	5{2,2,1,1}	9	>190 °C	87
5	5{3,1,1,1}	4	>246 °C	96
6	5{3,2,1,1}	7	>214 °C	91
7	5{4,1,1,1}	6	>255 °C	93
8	5{4,2,1,1}	9	>220 °C	90
9	5{5,1,1,1}	6	>244 °C	94
10	5{5,2,1,1}	9	>212 °C	90
11	5{6,1,1,1}	7	>240 °C	95
12	5{6,2,1,1}	10	>210 °C	93
13	5{1,1,1,2}	7	>227 °C	94
14	5{1,2,1,2}	10	>202 °C	91

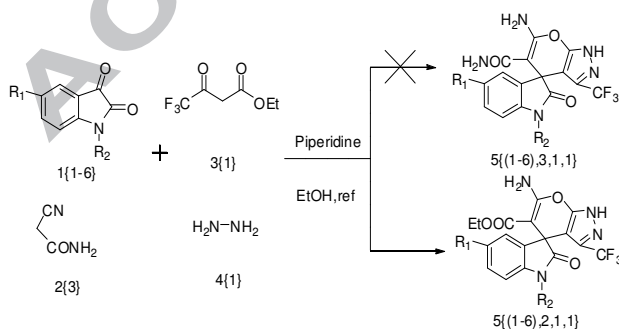
^a Reaction conditions: **1**{(1-6)} (1.5 mmol), **2**{(1-2)} (1.5 mmol), **3**{1} (1.5 mmol), **4**{(1-2)} (1.5 mmol), solvent: 10.0 mL EtOH, refluxing.

^b Decomposed.

^c Isolated yield.

It should be noted that the reaction with ethyl cyanoacetate afforded a lower yield than that with malonanitrile, which was probably due to the lower reactivity of ethyl cyanoacetate, resulting in the requirement of prolonged reaction time. To our surprise, in the case of cyanoacetamide instead of malonanitrile or ethyl cyanoacetate, we could not obtain the corresponding products bearing carbamoyl group **5**{(1-6),**3**,**1**,**1**}. As a result, products bearing ethoxycarbonyl group **5**{(1-6),**2**,**1**,**1**} were obtained in moderate yields (Table 3, Scheme 2) and a yellow precipitate was formed, which showed no fluorine signal in ¹⁹F NMR. Apparently, the envisaged products were ethanolized under the present reaction conditions.

Scheme 2. Unexpected reaction results by using cyanoacetamide as the starting materials



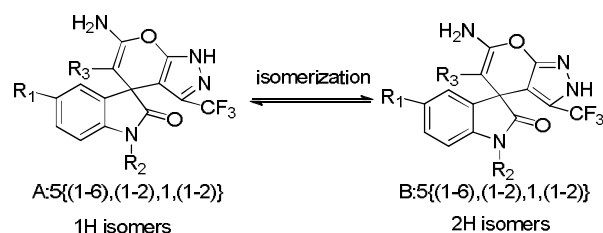
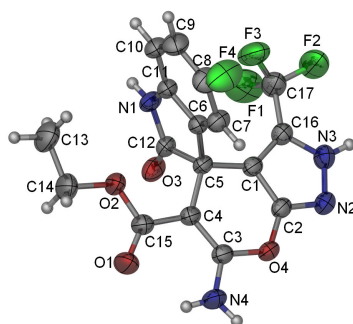
materials^a

Entry	Product	Time/h	Yield (%)
1	5{1,2,1,1}	5	50
2	5{2,2,1,1}	6	48
3	5{3,2,1,1}	5	53
4	5{4,2,1,1}	6	51
5	5{5,2,1,1}	6	52
6	5{6,2,1,1}	12	50

^a Reaction conditions: **1**{(1-6)} (1.5 mmol), **2**{3} (1.5 mmol), **3**{1} (1.5 mmol), **4**{1} (1.5 mmol), solvent: 10.0 mL EtOH, refluxing

The structure of all products **5**{(1-6),**1**,**2**,**1**,**1**} was fully characterized by IR, ¹H, ¹⁹F, ¹³C NMR spectroscopies, MS and elemental analysis or HRMS. It should be noted that, in some cases, the CF₃ signals in ¹⁹F NMR displayed a major peak and a minor peak respectively, indicating the tautomeric structures of trifluoromethylated pyrazole ring in solvent. Thus, with all the information at hand, we were hard to deduce which of the tautomeric structures (A or B) the resulting compounds correspond (Scheme 3). To unambiguously establish the regioselectivity of the products obtained by one-pot, two-step, four-component reaction, the structure of **5**{**5**,**2**,**1**,**1**} was further confirmed by X-ray diffraction analysis (Figure 2).¹⁹ The fine crystal suitable for XRD analysis was obtained from acetone. As shown in Figure 2, the tautomeric structure of **5**{**5**,**2**,**1**,**1**} was 2H isomers in solid state.

Table 3. Reaction results by using cyanoacetamide as the starting

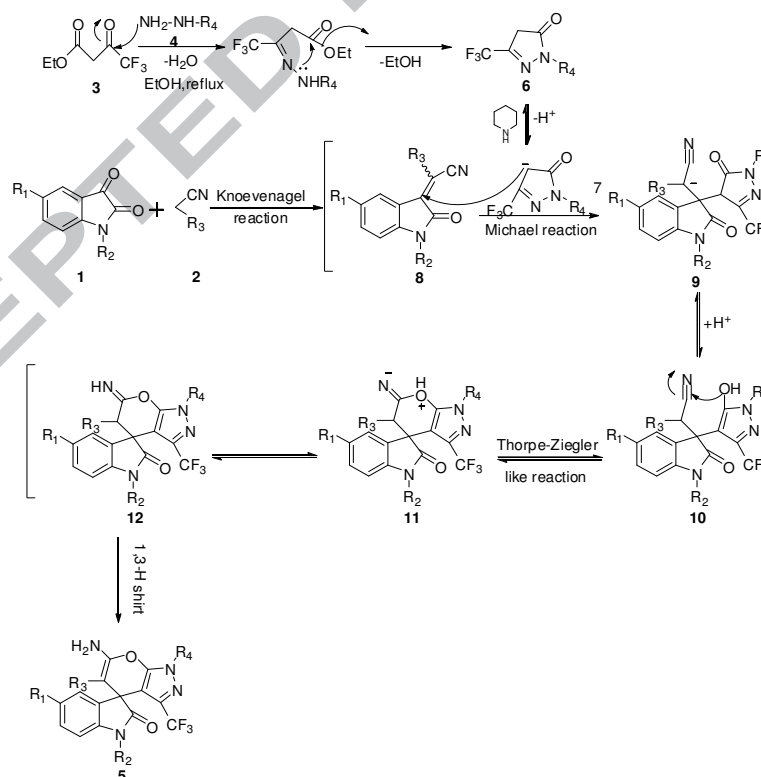
Scheme 3. Two isomers formation of products**Figure 2.** X-Ray crystal structure of **5**{5,2,1,1}

Based on the above results, a plausible mechanism for the formation of **5** was illustrated in Scheme 4. In the first step, a condensation of hydrazine **4** with ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetoacetate **3** was proposed to give the intermediate **6**. In the second step, Isatins **1** condensed with malononitrile derivatives to give unsaturated nitriles **8** via Knoevenagel condensation reaction in the presence of a catalytic amount of piperidine. Under the present reaction conditions, the resulting intermediate **6** reacted with intermediate **8** by Michael addition reaction to afford the intermediate **9**, which then underwent the intra-molecular cyclization via Thorpe-Ziegler like reaction to afford the final product **5**.

In conclusion, we have showed that the one-pot, two-step, four-component reaction provides a facile and convenient way to functionalized trifluoromethylated spirocyclic[indole-3,4-pyran o[2,3-*c*]pyrazole] derivatives from readily available starting materials in the presence of a catalytic amount of piperidine. Excellent chemical yields have been achieved and the reaction may be considered as a useful synthetic method of fluorine-containing heterocyclic compounds with potential biological activity.

Acknowledgments

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Scheme 4. Plausible Mechanism for the Formation of **5**

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- CCDC 922624 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge from the Cambridge Crystallographic Centre via www.ccdc.ac.uk/data_request/cif.
- Typical experimental procedure for synthesis of **5[1,1,1,1]**: To a mixture of ethyl 4,4,4-trifluoroacetate **3** (276.0mg, 1.5mmol) and 85% hydrazine hydrate **4** (88.4 mg, 1.5 mmol), was refluxed in 10ml EtOH for 30min. Then isatin **1** (220.5 mg, 1.5 mmol), malononitrile **2** (99 mg, 1.5 mmol) and piperidine (21.3 mg, 25 mol %, 0.25 mmol) were added. The mixture was continuously stirred at 78 °C for 6h. After the completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was chromatographed on a silica column using petroleum ether-ethyl acetate (1/1, v/v) as eluent to afford the final product **5[1,1,1,1]**, 484.1mg, 93% yield.
- Spectroscopic data for products **5[1,1,1,1]**: compound **5[1,1,1,1]**, white solid, yield: 93%. M. p.: >222 °C (decomposed). IR (KBr) ν : 3470, 3313, 3177, 3095, 2205, 1717, 1646, 1620, 1498, 1402, 1334, 1146, 1014, 928, 754, 699 cm^{-1} . ^1H NMR (500 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ 2.09 (s, 6H, CH_3 , solvent), 6.67 (s, 2H, NH_2), 6.99 (d, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.03 (dt, $J_1 = 7.5$ Hz, $J_2 = 0.5$ Hz, 1 H, Ar-H), 7.20 (d, $J = 7.0$ Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.28 (dt, $J_1 = 7.5$ Hz, $J_2 = 1.0$ Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 9.64 (s, 1H, NH), 13.12 (br, s, 1H, NH). ^{13}C NMR (100 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ 30.95 (acetone-C), 48.55, 59.72, 99.41, 111.02, 111.07, 117.98, 120.70 (q, $^1J_{\text{C-F}} = 267.0$ Hz), 123.88, 126.00, 130.84, 142.77, 142.89, 162.42, 178.30, 207.06 (acetone-C). ^{19}F NMR (470 MHz, acetone- d_6): δ -61.81 (s, 3F). ESI-MS: 348 $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{18}\text{H}_{14}\text{F}_3\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$: C, 53.34; H, 3.48; N, 17.28. Found: C, 52.95; H, 3.62; N, 17.20. (Recrystallized from acetone. The product contains a molecular of acetone).