

Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Amide Derivatives of Imidazopyridine as Anticancer Agents

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Abstract—A series of new amide derivatives of imidazopyridine is synthesized and structures of the products are confirmed by ¹H and ¹³C NMR, and mass spectral data. The synthesized derivatives are screened for their anticancer activity against four human cancer cell lines: lung cancer (A549), breast cancer (MCF-7), melanoma cancer (A375), and colon cancer (HT-29). Six synthesized compounds exhibit more potent activity than the control drug.

Keywords: Nocodazole, Celebrex, pyrazole and anticancer activity

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INTRODUCTION

Benzimidazoles exhibit a range of biological activities including antitumor [1], antiviral [2], antimicrobial [3], antifungal [4], and more [5–7]. Nocodazole (Fig. 1a) is a benzimidazole nucleus containing anticancer agent that inhibits tubulin polymerization [8]. Similarly, imidazopyridines are fused heterocyclic compounds that demonstrate important biological activities including antitumor [9], antiviral [10], antibacterial [11], and anti-inflammatory [12].

Pyrazoles constitute another important class of heterocyclic compounds characterized by well known significant biological properties. For example, one of pyrazole core containing drugs is Celebrex (Fig. 1b) [13].

In view of the above information and in continuation of our earlier studies, we have designed and synthesized a series of amide derivatives of imidazopyridine. Structures

of the products were confirmed by ¹H and ¹³C NMR and mass spectral data. The compounds were screened for their anticancer activity against human cancer cell lines.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Synthesis of the novel compounds **10a–10j** is outlined in Scheme 1. Compound **3** was cyclized with methyl-4-formylbenzoate **4** in presence of *p*-benzoquinone in ethanol medium upon refluxing to afford the compound **5**. Its following reaction with hydrazine hydrate in ethanol gave benzalhydrazide **6** in high yield. Reaction of the intermediate **6** with acetyl acetone in presence of acetic acid led to the product of cyclization **8**, which upon coupling with substituted acid chlorides **9a–9j** in presence of TEA gave the corresponding target compounds **10a–10j**.

Biological evaluation. *In vitro cytotoxicity.* The newly synthesized compounds **10a–10j** were tested for their an-

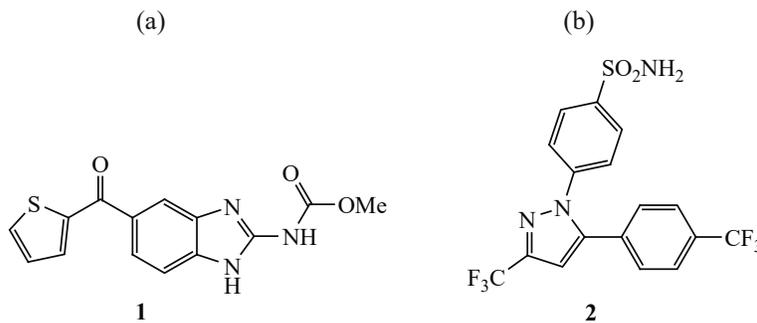
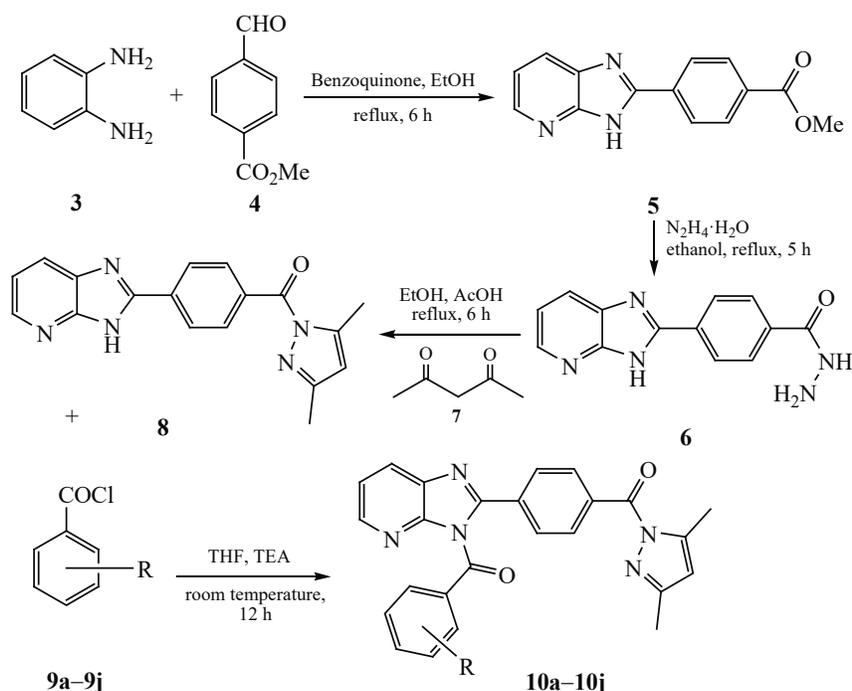


Fig. 1. Structure of (a) Nocodazole and (b) Celebrex.

Scheme 1.



R = H (**9a**, **10a**), 3,4,5-trimethoxy (**9b**, **10b**), 4-methoxy (**9c**, **10c**), 4-chloro (**9d**, **10d**), 4-bromo (**9e**, **10e**), 4-fluoro (**9f**, **10f**), 4-nitro (**9g**, **10g**), 4-cyano (**9h**, **10h**), 4-methyl (**9i**, **10i**), 4-trifluoromethyl (**9j**, **10j**).

ticancer activity against four human cancer cell lines: lung cancer (A549), breast cancer (MCF-7), melanoma cancer (A375), and colon cancer (HT-29) by the MTT assay. Here CA4 was used as a positive control (see the table). All the compounds demonstrated high to moderate anticancer activity. The compounds **10b**, **10c**, **10d**, **10g**, **10h**, and **10j** exhibited more potent activity than the control drug. According to structure-activity relationship (SAR) study the compound **10b** with 3,4,5-trimethoxy substituents on the phenyl ring exhibited excellent anticancer activity. Compound **10c** containing 4-methoxy group, demonstrated lower activity than **10b**. The 4-chloro substituted product **10d** was characterized by the moderate activity. The compounds **10e** and **10f** with 4-bromo and 4-fluoro groups on the phenyl ring exhibited even lower activity. Interestingly, replacement of 4-fluoro substituent by the nitro group resulted in higher activity of compound **10g** than **10f**.

EXPERIMENTAL

All chemicals and reagents were obtained from Aldrich (Sigma-Aldrich, St. Louis, MO, USA), Lancaster (Alfa Aesar, Johnson Matthey Company, Ward Hill, MA, USA) and used without further purification. Reactions were monitored by TLC, performed on silica gel glass

plates containing 60 F-254, and visualized by UV light or iodine indicator. ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra were measured on a Gemini Varian-VXR-unity (300 MHz) instrument using TMS as an internal standard and $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ as a solvent. ESI spectra were measured on a Micro mass, Quattro LC using ESI+ software with capillary voltage 3.98 kV and ESI mode positive ion trap detector. Melting points were determined on an electrothermal melting point apparatus, and are uncorrected.

Methyl 4-(3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)benzoate (5). The mixture of pyridine-2,3-diamine (**3**) (17 g, 155.7 mmol) with methyl 4-formylbenzoate **4** (25.5 g, 155.7 mmol) and *p*-benzoquinone (33.6 g, 311.4 mmol) in 100 mL of absolute ethanol was refluxed for 4 h. Upon completion the reaction, the mixture was cooled down to room temperature and diethyl ether was added. The crude product was filtered off, suspended in the mixture ethanol–diethyl ether several times until the powder was an analytically pure compound **5**, yield 70%. ^1H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 3.87 s (3H), 7.52 t (1H), 7.72–7.75 m (3H), 8.30 d (2H, $J = 8.17$ Hz), 8.65 d (1H, $J = 8.10$ Hz), 10.67 br.s (1H). MS (ESI): 254 [$M + \text{H}$] $^+$.

4-(3H-Imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)benzohydrazide (6). A mixture of methyl-4-(3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-

2-yl)benzoate **5** (26 g, 102.7 mmol) with hydrazine hydrate (149 mL, 308.3 mmol) in ethanol was refluxed for 5 h. The crude product was isolated after distilling off the excess ethanol, filtering off and washing with a small volume of cold water. The product **6** was introduced in the next step without further purification. Yield 83%. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 7.37 br.s (2H), 7.50 t (1H), 7.76 d (1H, $J = 8.10$ Hz), 8.20 d (2H, $J = 8.18$ Hz), 8.48 d (2H, $J = 8.18$ Hz), 8.62 d (1H, $J = 8.10$ Hz), 8.74 t (1H), 10.66 br.s (1H). MS (ESI): 254 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)[4-(3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)phenyl]methanone (8). A mixture of 4-(3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)benzohydrazide **6** (10 g, 39.5 mmol) with acetylacetone (11.3 mL, 39.5 mmol) and few drops of glacial acetic acid in absolute ethanol (40 mL) was refluxed for 6 h. Upon completion of the process the solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure and the residual solid was crystallized from CHCl₃/pet ether to afford the pure compound **8**, yield 85%. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.39 s (3H), 3.41 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.49 t (1H), 7.75 d (1H, $J = 8.11$ Hz), 8.56–8.60 m (3H), 8.69 d (2H, $J = 8.19$ Hz), 10.67 br.s (1H). MS (ESI): 318 [$M + H$]⁺.

[4-(3-Benzoyl-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)phenyl-(3,5-dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)methanone (10a). To a solution of (3,5-dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)[4-(3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl)phenyl]methanone **8** (500 mg, 1.57 mmol) in 30 mL of dry THF, benzoyl chloride **9a** (1.8 mL, 1.57 mmol) and Et₃N (6 mL, 4.71 mmol) were added. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 12 h upon TLC monitoring, washed with water, extracted with dichloromethane, dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄. The crude product was purified by column chromatography using ethyl acetate–hexane (6 : 4) as an eluent to obtain pure compound **10a**. Yield 81%, mp 298–300°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.22 s (1H), 7.49–7.55 m (3H), 7.67 t (1H), 7.74 d (1H, $J = 8.10$ Hz), 7.95 d (2H, $J = 7.37$ Hz), 8.78 d (1H, $J = 8.20$ Hz), 8.83 d (2H, $J = 8.14$ Hz), 8.98 d (2H, $J = 8.14$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.5, 121.4, 129.5, 129.8, 130.4, 131.4, 131.9, 132.5, 133.4, 134.5, 134.9, 135.2, 136.7, 145.4, 152.3, 153.8, 154.7, 161.3, 164.9. MS (ESI): 422 [$M + H$]⁺.

The compounds **10b–10j** were synthesized according to the above method from the intermediate **8** and the corresponding substituted benzoyl chlorides **9b–9j**, and the products were purified by column chromatography using ethyl acetate/hexane in the ratio 6 : 4 or 7 : 3 as an eluent.

In vitro cytotoxicity data for compounds **10a–10j**^a

Comp. no.	IC ₅₀ , μ M			
	A549 ^b	MCF-7 ^c	A375 ^d	HT-29 ^e
10a	2.33±1.950	4.78±2.340	2.10±1.450	2.30±1.460
10b	0.90±0.028	0.10±0.028	1.23±0.260	0.19±0.030
10c	0.28±0.030	0.89±0.035	0.33±0.031	Not active
10d	1.90±0.210	0.67±0.034	1.09±0.170	1.45±0.180
10e	3.89±2.140	4.74±2.320	Not active	Not active
10f	5.67±2.490	3.10±2.090	2.88±1.970	7.20±3.650
10g	0.13±0.030	0.15±0.031	0.76±0.033	2.50±1.480
10h	1.33±0.440	0.66±0.028	Not active	Not active
10i	2.19±1.550	8.56±4.560	9.40±4.620	10.34±4.78
10j	0.45±0.024	1.11±0.220	1.67±0.190	2.78±1.770
CA4 ^f	0.11±0.020	0.18±0.021	0.21±0.029	0.93±0.034

^a Each data is presented as mean \pm S.D value of three different experiments performed in triplicates. ^b (A549) human lung cancer cell line. ^c (MCF-7) human breast cancer cell line. ^d (A375) human melanoma cancer cell line. ^e (HT-29) human colon cancer cell line. ^f (CA4) Combretastatin-A4.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)4-[3-(3,4,5-trimethoxybenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenylmethanone (10b). Yield 83%, mp 354–356°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.37 s (3H), 3.39 s (3H), 3.84 s (3H), 3.91 s (6H), 6.21 s (1H), 7.54 s (2H), 7.68 t (1H), 7.76 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.69 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.86 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz), 8.95 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 57.4, 61.3, 106.5, 110.5, 121.4, 129.5, 130.4, 131.3, 133.4, 134.5, 135.6, 136.8, 144.6, 145.9, 152.4, 153.7, 154.8, 157.5, 161.8, 164.9. MS (ESI): 512 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)4-[3-(4-methoxybenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenylmethanone (10c). Yield 86%, mp 350–352°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 3.87 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.68 t (1H), 7.78–7.83 m (3H), 7.88 d (2H, $J = 8.18$ Hz), 8.68 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.85 d (2H, $J = 8.21$ Hz), 8.94 d (2H, $J = 8.21$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 57.4, 110.8, 115.6, 121.5, 128.5, 129.6, 130.5, 130.8, 131.5, 133.5, 134.6, 135.9, 136.8, 145.3, 152.3, 153.8, 154.8, 156.5, 161.8, 164.9. MS (ESI): 452 [$M + H$]⁺.

4-[3-(4-Chlorobenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenyl(3,5-dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)methanone (10d). Yield 96%, mp 325–327°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.50 d (2H, $J = 8.16$ Hz), 7.68 t (1H), 7.80–7.85 m (3H), 8.67 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.86 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz), 8.95 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.6, 121.8, 129.5, 130.4, 130.6, 130.9, 131.5, 131.9, 133.5, 134.2, 135.6, 136.8, 138.4, 145.8, 152.3, 153.8, 154.7, 161.8, 165.6. MS (ESI): 456 [$M + H$]⁺.

4-[3-(4-Bromobenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenyl(3,5-dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)methanone (10e). Yield 82%, mp 320–322°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.68 t (1H), 7.81–7.87 m (3H), 7.89 d (2H, $J = 8.19$ Hz), 8.68 d (1H, $J = 8.13$ Hz), 8.86 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz), 8.95 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.9, 121.7, 125.5, 129.7, 129.9, 130.5, 131.5, 133.6, 133.7, 134.6, 135.4, 135.8, 136.3, 145.8, 152.7, 153.8, 154.8, 162.3, 165.9. MS (ESI): 501 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)4-[3-(4-fluorobenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenylmethanone (10f). Yield 82%, mp 310–312°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.66–7.70 m (3H), 7.83 d (1H, $J = 8.14$ Hz), 7.86 d (2H, $J = 8.18$ Hz), 8.67 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.85 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz), 8.94 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.8, 117.5, 121.4, 129.5, 129.8, 130.4, 131.5, 132.4, 133.5, 134.7, 135.2, 136.7, 145.7, 152.4, 153.7, 154.9, 158.7, 161.8, 164.9. MS (ESI): 440 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)4-[3-(4-nitrobenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenylmethanone (10g). Yield 93%, mp 349–351°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.68 t (1H), 7.76 d (1H, $J = 8.14$ Hz), 8.10 d (2H, $J = 8.24$ Hz), 8.17 d (2H, $J = 8.24$ Hz), 8.67 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.87 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz), 8.96 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.9, 121.8, 125.7, 128.6, 129.7, 130.7, 131.4, 133.6, 134.7, 135.7, 136.6, 142.8, 145.9, 150.6, 152.4, 153.7, 154.8, 162.4, 165.9. MS (ESI): 467 [$M + H$]⁺.

4-[(2-4-[(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)carbonyl]phenyl-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-3-yl)carbonyl]benzotrile (10h). Yield 94%, mp 356–358°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.69 t (1H), 7.76 d (1H, $J = 8.15$ Hz), 7.94 d (2H, $J = 8.24$ Hz), 8.09 d (2H, $J = 8.24$ Hz), 8.67 d (1H,

$J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.87 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz), 8.96 d (2H, $J = 8.23$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.8, 115.6, 119.7, 121.7, 128.6, 129.7, 130.7, 131.4, 133.3, 134.5, 135.2, 135.8, 136.7, 136.9, 145.9, 152.4, 153.8, 154.9, 162.6, 165.9. MS (ESI): 447 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)4-[3-(4-methylbenzoyl)-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenylmethanone (10i). Yield 78%, mp 309–311°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.30 s (3H), 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.49 d (2H, $J = 8.18$ Hz), 7.68 t (1H), 7.76–7.85 m (3H), 8.67 d (1H, $J = 8.12$ Hz), 8.85 d (2H, $J = 8.20$ Hz), 8.94 d (2H, $J = 8.20$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 24.7, 110.7, 121.6, 127.5, 129.7, 130.5, 130.9, 131.5, 132.7, 133.4, 134.7, 135.7, 136.7, 141.8, 145.7, 152.4, 153.7, 154.7, 161.8, 164.7. MS (ESI): 436 [$M + H$]⁺.

(3,5-Dimethyl-1H-1-pyrazolyl)(4-3-[4-(trifluoromethyl)benzoyl]-3H-imidazo[4,5-b]pyridin-2-yl]phenyl)methanone (10j). Yield 79%, mp 314–316°C. ¹H NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 2.38 s (3H), 3.40 s (3H), 6.23 s (1H), 7.69 t (1H), 7.78 d (1H, $J = 8.16$ Hz), 7.86 d (2H, $J = 8.21$ Hz), 8.30 d (2H, $J = 8.21$ Hz), 8.68 d (1H, $J = 8.13$ Hz), 8.85 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz), 8.94 d (2H, $J = 8.22$ Hz). ¹³C NMR spectrum, δ , ppm: 13.7, 16.7, 110.6, 114.8, 121.6, 127.6, 128.9, 129.6, 130.7, 131.7, 133.7, 134.8, 135.7, 135.9, 136.5, 136.8, 145.8, 152.7, 153.7, 154.8, 161.8, 164.9. MS (ESI): 490 [$M + H$]⁺.

MTT assay. Cytotoxic activity of the compounds was determined using MTT assay. 1×10^4 Cells/well were seeded in 200 mL of DMEM, supplemented with 10% FBS in each well of 96-well microculture plates and incubated for 24 h at 37°C in a CO₂ incubator. Compounds, diluted to the desired concentrations in the culture medium, were added to the wells with the respective vehicle control. After 48 h of incubation, 10 mL MTT [3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyl tetrazolium bromide] (5 mg/mL) was added to each well and the plates were further incubated for 4 h. The supernatant from each well was carefully removed, formazan crystals were dissolved in 100 mL of DMSO and absorbance at 540 nm wavelength was recorded.

CONCLUSIONS

A novel series of amide derivatives of imidazopyridine **10a–10j** is synthesized and their structures are confirmed by ¹H and ¹³C NMR, and mass spectral data. The products are tested for their anticancer activity against four human cancer cell lines: lung cancer (A549), breast cancer (MCF-7), melanoma cancer (A375), and colon cancer

(HT-29). Among these, the compounds **10b**, **10c**, **10d**, **10g**, **10h**, and **10j** exhibit more potent activity than the control drug.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

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