



# Novel Potent Substance P and Neurokinin A Receptor Antagonists. Conception, Synthesis and Biological Evaluation of Indolizine Derivatives

Régis Millet,<sup>a</sup> Juozas Domarkas,<sup>a</sup> Benoît Rigo,<sup>b</sup> Laurence Goossens,<sup>a</sup>  
Jean-François Goossens,<sup>a</sup> Raymond Houssin<sup>a</sup> and Jean-Pierre Hénichart<sup>a,\*</sup>

<sup>a</sup>Institut de Chimie Pharmaceutique Albert Lespagnol, Université de Lille 2, EA 2692,  
3 rue du Professeur Laguesse, B.P. 83, F-59006 Lille, France

<sup>b</sup>Laboratoire d'Ingénierie Moléculaire, Ecole des Hautes Etudes Industrielles,  
13 rue de Toul, F-59046 Lille, France

Received 11 January 2002; accepted 3 May 2002

**Abstract**—Exploration of SAR around dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> antagonist Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> and its derivatives disclosed the essential requirements for more potent dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> binding. We report here the synthesis and the biological properties of a novel series of indolizine including pharmacophoric elements. © 2002 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

## Introduction

Substance P (SP), Neurokinin A (NKA) and Neurokinin B (NKB) are members of the tachykinin family (Table 1) and share a common C-terminal amino acid sequence Phe-X-Gly-Leu-Met-NH<sub>2</sub> (Table 1) often referred to as the message moiety of the peptide.<sup>1,2</sup>

The biological actions of tachykinins are mediated through specific G-protein coupled receptor. There are three subtypes of receptor designated NK<sub>1</sub>, NK<sub>2</sub> and NK<sub>3</sub>. SP mediates its physiological effects<sup>3</sup> mainly by binding to a specific NK<sub>1</sub> receptor whereas NKA and NKB exert their activities via the NK<sub>2</sub> and NK<sub>3</sub> receptors, respectively.

Neurokinin antagonists have been the subject of considerable investigation since the association of their central and peripheral actions with the treatment of chronic diseases like asthma,<sup>4,5</sup> pain,<sup>6</sup> emesis<sup>7,8</sup> and psychiatric disorders.<sup>9,10</sup>

In the pathogenesis of asthma, SP and NKA have been widely studied in animal and human airways. These neuropeptides are localised in sensory airway nerves

from which they can be released by a variety of stimuli, including allergen, ozone or inflammatory mediators. Involvement of NK<sub>1</sub> receptors seems to be more important in inflammatory conditions including vaso-dilatation, mucus secretion, plasma extravasation and leukocyte adhesion-activation, while NK<sub>2</sub> mediates the bronchomotor tone. Taking into account these features, it was hypothesized that dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> antagonism may be useful in the treatment of asthma.<sup>11,12</sup>

We have already reported that the tripeptide Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> exhibited dual NK<sub>1</sub> and NK<sub>2</sub> affinities.<sup>13–15</sup> Studies of structure–activity relationships revealed that the C-terminal sequence [Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>] was shown to be favourable for NK<sub>1</sub> recognition and indolylmethyl and Cbz carbamate groups for NK<sub>2</sub> recognition. These results encouraged us to find new potent dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> receptor antagonists by structural modifications of the tripeptide Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> (Table 2). Thus, we decided firstly to investigate chemical modifications of C-terminal sequence since a new class of dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> antagonists (Scheme 1) has recently been reported as neurokinin receptor antagonists including the *N*-methylbenzamide group in their structure.<sup>17</sup> For a better understanding of NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> profile binding and to improve metabolic stability, we went on to replace the ester linkage of Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> by several amide groups (**1a–c**).

\*Corresponding author. Tel.: +33-3-2096-4374; fax: +33-3-2096-4906; e-mail: henicha@phare.univ-lille2.fr

**Table 1.** Chemical structure of three mammalian tachykinins

Tachykinin	Sequence
SP	Arg-Pro-Lys-Pro-Gln-Gln-Phe-Phe-Gly-Leu-Met-NH <sub>2</sub>
NKA	His-Lys-Thr-Asp-Ser-Phe-Val-Gly-Leu-Met-NH <sub>2</sub>
NKB	Asp-Met-His-Asp-Phe-Phe-Val-Gly-Leu-Met-NH <sub>2</sub>

Amino acids common to carboxyl-terminal are italicized.

**Table 2.** Binding affinity and calcium responses in hNK<sub>1</sub>- or hNK<sub>2</sub>-receptors expressing CHO cells

Compound	hNK <sub>1</sub> K <sub>i</sub> <sup>a</sup> (nM)	pA <sub>2</sub> <sup>b</sup>	hNK <sub>2</sub> K <sub>i</sub> <sup>a</sup> (nM)	pA <sub>2</sub> <sup>b</sup>
<b>1a</b>	200 ± 18	6.8 ± 0.4	> 3000	n.d.
<b>1b</b>	1580 ± 82	n.d. <sup>c</sup>	> 3000	n.d.
<b>1c</b>	100 ± 7	6.7 ± 0.3	79 ± 5	7.1 ± 0.5
<b>2a</b>	79 ± 8	7.0 ± 0.2	> 3000	n.d.
<b>2b</b>	158 ± 16	6.9 ± 0.3	398 ± 35	6.2 ± 0.2
<b>2c</b>	100 ± 9	6.7 ± 0.4	100 ± 12	6.7 ± 0.4
Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub>	40 ± 3	n.d.	250 ± 24	n.d.

<sup>a</sup>Inhibition of [<sup>3</sup>H]SP or [<sup>3</sup>H]NKA binding to membranes of hNK<sub>1</sub>- or hNK<sub>2</sub>-receptors expressing CHO cells. Each value represents the mean ± SD of three independent experiments (triplicate per experiment) performed from a 10<sup>-11</sup>–10<sup>-6</sup> M range.

<sup>b</sup>Inhibition of SP- or NKA-induced intracellular [Ca<sup>2+</sup>]<sub>i</sub> increase in hNK<sub>1</sub> or hNK<sub>2</sub> receptors expressing CHO cells loaded with Fura-2. Each value is the mean ± SD derived from Schild plot using three independent experiments (triplicate per experiment) in a 10<sup>-10</sup>–10<sup>-6</sup> M range for both agonist and antagonist compounds.

<sup>c</sup>n.d., not determined.

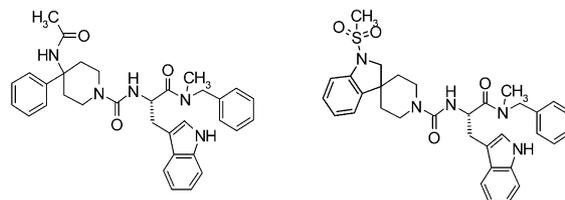
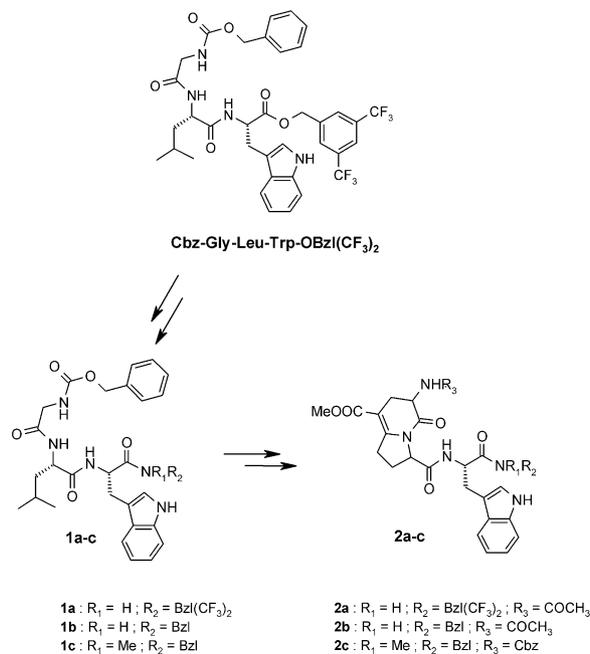
In addition, we focused our interest on a rational design of peptidomimetics.<sup>18,19</sup> In previous reports, we described that introducing building units such as spiro lactam or lactam led to restricted Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub> conformations showing high binding affinity and selectivity for NK<sub>1</sub> receptors. To continue our investigation in the design of neurokinin antagonists, we report here (Scheme 2) the synthesis and binding profile of new compounds which include an indolizine moiety in their N-terminal structure (**2a–c**) mimicking the Gly-Leu sequence of the tripeptide Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>. Investigation of such a system should allow an increasing neurokinin binding potency through a decrease in the entropy system.

Furthermore, these chemical modifications led us to explore the importance of the amide function and Cbz carbamate on NK<sub>2</sub> recognition and to improve our knowledge of the bioactive conformation of neurokinin antagonists with a view to creating and optimising dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> antagonists.

## Results and Discussion

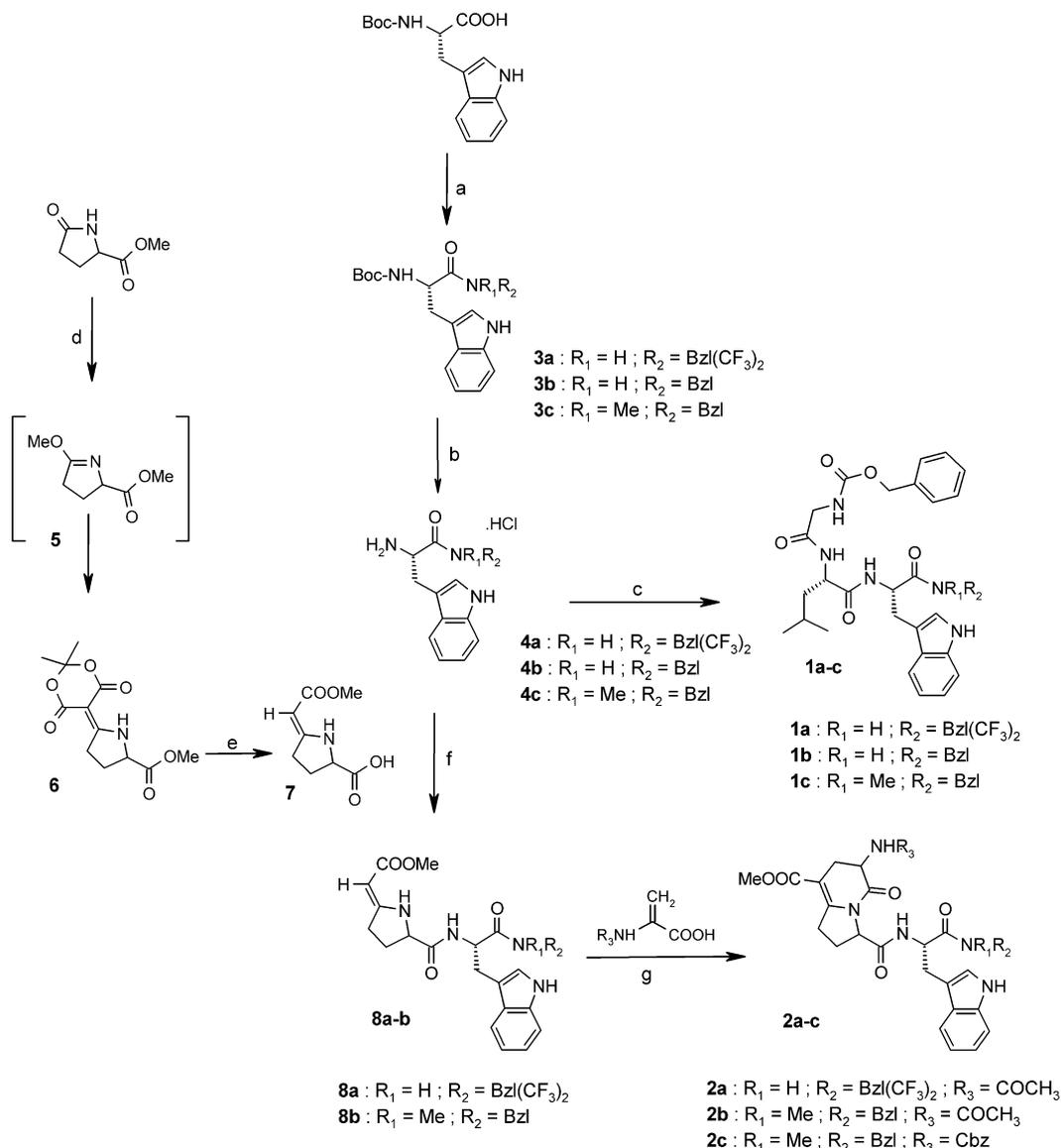
### Chemistry

Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-N(R<sub>1</sub>)R<sub>2</sub> peptides (**1a–c**) were obtained (Scheme 3) according to classical peptidic methods<sup>20</sup> in solution using Boc as protective group for Trp, and EDCI/HOBt or PyBOP as coupling agents. Boc-Trp-OH was coupled with 3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)

**Scheme 1.** Structure of dual NK<sub>1</sub>/NK<sub>2</sub> antagonists.**Scheme 2.** Drug design of tripeptides **1a–c** and indolizines **2a–c**.

benzylamine, benzylamine, or *N*-methylbenzylamine under EDCI/HOBt conditions (59–83% yield) to afford the amides **3a–c**. Removal of the Boc protective group with methanolic HCl solution gave amines **4a–c** which were coupled with commercially available Cbz-Gly-Leu-OH by using PyBOP to produce tripeptides **1a–c** at 58–64% yields after purification.

The synthesis of 5,6-fused bicyclic skeleton (**2a–c**) is outlined in Scheme 3 and represents an extension of the chemistry that we previously described.<sup>21,22</sup> The strategy adopted uses enaminoesters **8a–b** and different *N*-substituted aminoacrylic acids<sup>23</sup> in a Michael condensation<sup>24</sup> followed by cyclisation promoted by phosphorous trichloride (30–50% yield). Enaminoesters **8a–b** were obtained according to a previously described procedure<sup>25</sup> which used methyl pyroglutamate as its starting point. Conversion of pyroglutamate into iminoether **5** was carried out with dimethyl sulfate and triethylamine and a follow-on condensation with Meldrum's acid afforded enaminoester **6** at 83% yield. Opening of Meldrum's ring and saponification of ester function were carried out with sodium methoxide in methanol followed by acidification with hydrochloric acid to give a *Z/E* mixture of carboxylic acid **7** at 70% yield. Coupling reactions with tryptophan amides **4a** or **4c** (PyBOP) were finally completed to generate the



**Scheme 3.** Reagents and conditions: (a) EDCI, HOBT, amine, DIPEA,  $CH_2Cl_2$ , 48 h, rt; (b) MeOH, HCl, 16 h, rt; (c) Cbz-Gly-Leu-OH, PyBOP, DIPEA,  $CH_2Cl_2$ , 48 h, rt; (d) (1)  $(CH_3)_2SO_4$ ,  $60^\circ C$ , 12 h; (2)  $NEt_3$ ,  $0^\circ C$ ; (3) Meldrum's acid, 24 h, rt; (e) (1) MeONa, MeOH, reflux, 24 h; (2)  $H_2O$ , 2 h, rt; (3) HCl, MeOH; (f) PyBOP, DIPEA,  $CH_2Cl_2$ , 48 h, rt; (g)  $PCl_3$ , dioxane, toluene, reflux, 4 h.

desired enamoesters **8a–b** (70–71% yield) which were directly used in the building of the indolizine ring (**2a–c**).

### Biological evaluation and structure–activity relationships

The  $NK_1/NK_2$  receptor binding affinity and antagonist activity data are summarized in Table 2. Our peptidic approaches in the design of a dual  $NK_1/NK_2$  antagonist consisted firstly in modifying the ester function of the tripeptide Cbz-Gly-Leu-Trp-OBzl( $CF_3$ )<sub>2</sub> by different amide groups to optimize  $NK_1$  and  $NK_2$  affinities and to enhance metabolic stability. Three tripeptides (**1a–c**) were prepared and their affinities toward neurokinin receptors were measured. Analysis of the neurokinin binding profile revealed that it was possible to obtain dual  $NK_1/NK_2$  antagonists by substitution of the 3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)benzyl ester function with *N*-methyl(benzyl)-amide moiety. This observation confirms what we

supposed and shows that -Trp-N(Me)Bzl is an interesting pattern providing a good  $NK_1/NK_2$  in binding affinity ratio. Introduction of a primary amide as in compounds **1a–b** leads to a significant decrease in binding affinity to  $NK_2$  receptors. Noting these results, we decided to introduce a heterocyclic connector between the previously identified -Trp-N(Me)-Bzl moiety and the Cbz ring of **1c** in an attempt to induce a structural constraint. The indolizine ring was chosen as a scaffold to mimic the Gly-Leu residue of **1c**. Three indolizine compounds (**2a–c**) were prepared and their pharmacological results led to two significant observations that enabled us to propose pharmacophoric elements (Scheme 4) of potential dual  $NK_1/NK_2$  receptor antagonists.

Firstly, as it was observed for **1c**-Trp-N(Me)Bzl residues in **2b,c** were well tolerated both by  $NK_1$  and  $NK_2$



***N*- $\alpha$ -*tert*-Butoxycarbonyl-*N*-benzyltryptophan amide (3b).** The product **3b** was flash chromatographed on a 5×40 cm column using cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (5:5) as the eluting solvent. The product thus obtained crystallized from CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/hexane (8:2) as a white solid (7.10 g) in 88% yield: mp 136–139 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (5:5)] = 0.3; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1651 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1680 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3260 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 1.32 (s, 9H), 2.89–3.13 (m, 2H), 4.20–4.30 (m, 3H), 6.86 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.1 Hz), 7.00 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.2 Hz), 7.09 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.2 Hz), 7.13 (s, 1H), 7.16–7.29 (m, 5H), 7.34 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.63 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.1 Hz), 8.43 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 10.83 (s, 1H); MS (EI) *m/z* 393 (M<sup>+</sup>).

***N*- $\alpha$ -*tert*-Butoxycarbonyl-*N*-benzyl-*N*-methyltryptophan amide (3c).** The product **3c** was flash chromatographed on a 5×40 cm column using cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (7:3) as the eluting solvent. The product thus obtained crystallized from diisopropyl ether as a white solid (6.27 g) in 75% yield: mp 144–145 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (5:5)] = 0.5; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1645 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1686 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3226 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 1.30 (s, 3H), 1.33 (s, 6H), 2.72 (s, 1H), 2.78 (s, 2H), 2.89–3.13 (m, 2H), 4.30–4.75 (m, 3H), 7.16–7.29 (m, 8H), 7.34 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 7.56 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.8 Hz), 10.82 (s, 0.33H), 10.88 (s, 0.66H); MS (EI) *m/z* 407 (M<sup>+</sup>).

**General procedure for preparation of amides 4a–c.** *N*-Protected amide (**3a–c**) (10.4 mmol) was dissolved in a mixture of dry tetrahydrofuran (20 mL) and of methanol saturated with hydrochloric acid (30 mL), and the solution was left to stand for 16 h. The solvent was removed in vacuum and the residue was recrystallized.

***N*-3,5-Bis(trifluoromethyl)benzyltryptophanamide hydrochloride (4a).** The product **4a** crystallized from MeOH/CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (1:1) as a white solid (4.61 g) in 95% yield: mp 245–247 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/MeOH saturated in NH<sub>3</sub> (9:1)] = 0.6; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1661 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3200–3350 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH), 3423 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 3.14–3.33 (m, 2H), 4.08 (bs, 1H), 4.41 (dd, 1H, *J* = 6.5 Hz, *J'* = 13.0 Hz), 4.56 (dd, 1H, *J* = 6.4 Hz, *J'* = 13.1 Hz), 6.97 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 7.08 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.0 Hz), 7.21 (s, 1H), 7.35 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.68 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 7.97 (s, 2H), 8.00 (s, 1H), 8.38 (s, 3H), 9.40 (s, 3H), 11.07 (s, 1H); MS (EI) *m/z* 429 (M<sup>+</sup>).

***N*-Benzyltryptophan amide hydrochloride (4b).** The product **4b** recrystallized from MeOH/acetone (2:8) as a white solid (3.26 g) in 95% yield: mp 228–230 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/MeOH saturated with NH<sub>3</sub> (9:1)] = 0.6; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1663 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3261 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH), 3315 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 3.14–3.33 (m, 2H), 4.02–4.12 (m, 1H), 4.20–4.34 (m, 2H), 6.99 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 7.14–7.30 (m, 7H), 7.38 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.3 Hz), 7.70 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.7 Hz), 8.45 (s, 3H), 9.17 (t, 1H, *J* = 5.8 Hz), 11.16 (s, 1H); MS (EI) *m/z* 293 (M<sup>+</sup>).

***N*-Benzyl-*N*-methyltryptophan amide hydrochloride (4c).** The product **4c** crystallized from MeOH/ethyl acetate (1:5) as a white solid (3.50 g) at 98% yield: mp 76–77 °C;

TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/MeOH saturated with NH<sub>3</sub> (9:1)] = 0.6; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1643 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3415 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 2.57 (s, 2H), 2.65 (s, 1H), 3.14–3.33 (m, 2H), 4.30–4.70 (m, 3H), 6.97–7.45 (m, 9H), 7.61 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.7 Hz), 8.51 (s, 3H), 11.18 (s, 1H); MS (EI) *m/z* 307 (M<sup>+</sup>).

**General procedure for preparation of tripeptides 1a–c.** Amide (**4a–c**) (1.00 g, 2.15 mmol), PyBOP (1.23 g, 2.36 mmol) and DIPEA (1.1 mL, 6.44 mmol) were added to a solution of Cbz-Gly-Leu-OH (693 mg, 2.15 mmol) in 40 mL of CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The reaction mixture was cooled in an ice bath and stirred for 48 h; then the solvent was removed in vacuum.

***N*- $\alpha$ -Benzyloxycarbonyl-Gly-Leu-*N*-3,5-bis-(trifluoromethyl)benzyltryptophan amide (1a).** The product **1a** was recrystallized from ethyl acetate as a white solid (960 mg) at 61% yield: mp 213–215 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [hexane/ethyl acetate (3:7)] = 0.3; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1640 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1718 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1723 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3250–3400 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 0.79–0.83 (m, 6H), 1.30–1.40 (m, 2H), 1.47–1.55 (m, 1H), 3.01–3.17 (m, 2H), 3.65 (d, 2H, *J* = 5.8 Hz), 4.30–4.53 (m, 4H), 5.03 (s, 2H), 6.97 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.1 Hz), 7.06 (t, 1H, *J* = 6.6 Hz), 7.13 (s, 1H), 7.31–7.39 (s, 5H), 7.45–7.49 (m, 1H), 7.55 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 7.91 (s, 2H), 7.99 (s, 1H), 8.17 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.8 Hz), 8.59 (t, 1H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 10.82 (s, 1H); MS (CI) *m/z* 734 (MH<sup>+</sup>), 227 CH<sub>2</sub>Ph(CF<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>, 130 (Ind-CH<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup>), 91 Ph-CH<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup>. Anal. calcd for C<sub>36</sub>H<sub>37</sub>F<sub>6</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>5</sub>: C, 58.94; H, 5.08; N, 9.55. Found: C, 59.01; H, 5.37; N, 9.42.

***N*- $\alpha$ -Benzyloxycarbonyl-Gly-Leu-*N*-benzyltryptophan amide (1b).** The product **1b** crystallized from CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> as a white solid (822 mg) at 64% yield: mp 211–212 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [hexane/ethyl acetate (3:7)] = 0.3; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1631 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1763 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1718 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3282 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH), 3351 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 0.78–0.85 (m, 6H), 1.30–1.40 (m, 2H), 1.47–1.55 (m, 1H), 3.01–3.17 (m, 2H), 3.66 (d, 2H, *J* = 5.4 Hz), 4.30–4.53 (m, 4H), 5.03 (s, 2H), 6.97 (t, 1H, *J* = 7.0 Hz), 7.06 (t, 1H, *J* = 6.8 Hz), 7.13 (s, 1H), 7.20–7.40 (m, 10H), 7.45–7.49 (m, 1H), 7.55 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.5 Hz), 8.12 (d, 1H, *J* = 7.8 Hz), 8.41 (t, 1H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 10.76 (s, 1H); MS (CI) *m/z* 598 (MH<sup>+</sup>), 130 (Ind-CH<sub>2</sub><sup>+</sup>). Anal. calcd for C<sub>34</sub>H<sub>39</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>5</sub>: C, 70.09; H, 6.56; N, 12.57. Found: C, 70.00; H, 6.71; N, 12.44.

***N*- $\alpha$ -Benzyloxycarbonyl-Gly-Leu-*N*-Benzyl-*N*-methyltryptophan amide (1c).** The product was flash chromatographed on a 5×40 cm column using cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (3:7) as the eluting solvent and recrystallized from hexane/CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (3:7) to give **1c** as a white solid (763 mg) at 58% yield: mp 92–94 °C; TLC *R<sub>f</sub>* [cyclohexane/ethyl acetate (3:7)] = 0.3; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1632 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 1711 cm<sup>-1</sup> (CO), 3293 cm<sup>-1</sup> (NH); <sup>1</sup>H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>)  $\delta$ : 0.79–0.83 (m, 6H), 1.30–1.40 (m, 2H), 1.47–1.55 (m, 1H), 2.66 (s, 1H), 2.68 (s, 2H), 2.92–3.05 (m, 1H), 3.62–3.68 (m, 2H), 4.30–4.53 (m, 4H), 5.05 (s, 2H), 6.90–7.09 (m, 1H), 7.15 (s, 1H), 7.19–7.39 (m, 10H), 7.45–7.49 (m, 1H), 7.57 (d, 1H, *J* = 8.0 Hz), 7.92 (m, 1H), 8.46 (d, 0.33H, *J* = 8.0 Hz),

8.53 (d, 0.66H,  $J=8.0$  Hz), 10.81 (s, 0.33H), 10.87 (s, 0.66H); MS (CI)  $m/z$  612 ( $MH^+$ ), 130 ( $Ind-CH_2^+$ ), 91 ( $Ph-CH_2^+$ ). Anal. calcd for  $C_{35}H_{41}N_5O_5$ : C, 68.72; H, 6.75; N, 11.45. Found: C, 68.73; H, 7.01; N, 11.70.

**Isopropylidene(methoxycarbonylpyrrolidinylidene)malonate (6).** A mixture of dimethyl sulfate (100 mL, 1.06 mol) and methyl pyroglutamate (120 g, 0.85 mol) was stirred at 60 °C for 12 h. The iminoether salt was slowly dropped into an ice well stirred cooled solution of  $NEt_3$  (150 mL, 1.05 mol). Meldrum's acid (123 g, 0.85 mol) was added and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 24 h. The  $\beta$ -enaminoester **6** was filtered and recrystallized from water as a white solid (189 g) at 83% yield: mp 140–141 °C; TLC  $R_f$  [hexane/ethyl acetate (1:1)]=0.35; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1720  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1745  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3300  $cm^{-1}$  (NH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz,  $CDCl_3$ )  $\delta$ : 1.70 (s, 6H), 2.20–2.70 (m, 2H), 3.20–3.70 (m, 2H), 3.70 (s, 3H), 4.40–4.90 (m, 1H), 10.10 (s, 1H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  269 ( $M^+$ ). Anal. calcd for  $C_{12}H_{15}NO_6$ : C, 53.53; H, 5.61; N, 5.20. Found: C, 53.46; H, 5.59; N, 5.39.

**(E) and (Z)-(RS) 5-Methoxycarbonylmethineproline (7).** A solution of sodium methoxide (276 mmol) in 140 mL of MeOH was added to a solution of compound **6** (24 g, 88.9 mmol) in MeOH (60 mL). The mixture was refluxed for 24 h then water (1.6 mL, 88.9 mmol) was added. After 2 h, the solution was neutralized with concentrated HCl (23.1 mL, 276 mmol). The inorganic salts were filtered and MeOH was removed under vacuum. The residue obtained was flash chromatographed on a 6×60 cm column using  $CH_2Cl_2/MeOH$  (1:1) as the eluting solvent to give **7** as a white solid (11.5 g) at 70% yield: mp 93–95 °C; TLC  $R_f$  [ $CH_2Cl_2/MeOH$  (1:1)]=0.5; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1669  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1716  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3255  $cm^{-1}$  (NH), 3443  $cm^{-1}$  (OH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz,  $DMSO-d_6$ ) isomers *E* and *Z* were observed in 1/9 proportion  $\delta$ : 1.85–1.90 (m, 1H), 2.09–2.16 (m, 1H), 2.49–2.51 (m, 2H), 3.42 (s, 0.3H), 3.48 (s, 2.7H), 3.98 (t, 0.1H,  $J=6.9$  Hz), 4.14 (t, 0.9H,  $J=6.8$  Hz), 4.34 (s, 0.9H), 4.66 (s, 0.1H), 7.85 (s, 0.1H), 8.05 (s, 0.9H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  185 ( $M^+$ ).  $[\alpha]_{25}^D=0^\circ$  (MeOH,  $c=1$ ). Anal. calcd for  $C_8H_{11}NO_4$ : C, 51.89; H, 5.99; N, 7.56. Found: C, 51.74; H, 6.09; N, 7.69.

**General procedure for preparation of  $\beta$ -enaminoesters (8a,b).** PyBOP (2.68 g, 3.22 mmol), carboxylic acid **7** (895 mg, 4.83 mmol) and DIPEA (1.7 mL, 9.66 mmol) were added to a solution of tryptophan amide hydrochloride (**4a** or **4c**) (3.22 mmol) in  $CH_2Cl_2$  (50 mL) (ice bath). The solution was stirred for 48 h, then the solvent was evaporated. The residue obtained was dissolved in ethyl acetate and washed successively with saturated  $NaHCO_3$  solution, HCl (1 N) and  $H_2O$ . The organic phases were dried over  $MgSO_4$ , filtered then evaporated.

**(E)- and (Z)-5-Methoxycarbonylmethine-(RS)-prolyl-N-3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)benzyltryptophan amide (8a).** The product **8a** was recrystallized from  $CH_2Cl_2$  as a white solid (1.36 g) at 71% yield: mp 190–194 °C; TLC  $R_f$  (ethyl acetate)=0.5; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1630  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1650  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3210  $cm^{-1}$  (NH), 3320  $cm^{-1}$  (NH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz,  $DMSO-d_6$ )  $\delta$ : 1.45–1.60 (m, 0.33H),

1.70–1.80 (m, 0.66H), 1.95–2.10 (m, 1H), 2.40–2.50 (m, 2H), 2.95–3.20 (m, 2H), 3.48 (s, 1H), 3.50 (s, 2H), 4.20–4.60 (m, 5H), 6.97 (t, 1H,  $J=7.5$  Hz), 7.05 (t, 1H,  $J=7.4$  Hz), 7.12 (bs, 1H), 7.32 (d, 1H,  $J=8.3$  Hz), 7.57 (d, 1H,  $J=7.8$  Hz), 7.92–7.97 (m, 3H), 8.10 (s, 0.33H), 8.14 (s, 0.66H), 8.23 (d, 0.66H,  $J=7.8$  Hz), 8.30 (d, 0.33H,  $J=7.8$  Hz), 8.70–8.80 (m, 1H), 10.82 (s, 1H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  596 ( $M^+$ ), 565 (M-OCH<sub>3</sub>), 130 ( $CH_2-Ind^+$ ). Anal. calcd for  $C_{28}H_{26}F_6N_4O_4$ : C, 56.38; H, 4.39; N, 9.39. Found: C, 56.38; H, 4.43; N, 9.55.

**(E)- and (Z)-5-Methoxycarbonylmethine-(RS)-prolyl-N-benzyl-N-methyltryptophan amide (8b).** The product **8b** was flash chromatographed on a 5×40 cm column using ethyl acetate as the eluting solvent. The product was isolated as an unstable oil (1.07 g) at 70% yield and was not purified but utilized directly to synthesize compounds **2a** and **2c**. TLC  $R_f$  (ethyl acetate)=0.2; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1630  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1650  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3210  $cm^{-1}$  (NH), 3320  $cm^{-1}$  (NH).

**General procedure for preparation of indolizines (2a–c).** Acrylic acid (4.21 mmol) and  $PCl_3$  (0.41 mL, 4.63 mmol) were added to a solution of  $\beta$ -enaminoester (**8a,b**) (4.21 mmol) in dry dioxane (30 mL) and dry toluene (30 mL). The solution was heated at reflux in an inert atmosphere and stirred for 4 h. The solvents were removed under reduced pressure.

**6-Acetamido-5-oxo-8-methoxycarbonyl-1,2,3,5,6,7-hexahydroindolizine-3-carbonyl-3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)benzyltryptophan amide (2a).** The product **2a** was dissolved in boiling acetone. The salts were filtered and the acetone solution was evaporated under reduced pressure to give an oil which was flash chromatographed on a 4×40 cm column using  $CH_2Cl_2/acetone$  (1:1) as the eluting solvent. The product obtained was isolated as a white solid (1.49 g) at 50% yield: mp 208–212 °C; TLC  $R_f$  [ $CH_2Cl_2/acetone$  (1:1)]=0.4; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1645  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1690  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3280  $cm^{-1}$  (NH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz,  $DMSO-d_6$ )  $\delta$ : 1.80–1.90 (m, 4H), 2.12–2.40 (m, 2H), 2.65–2.87 (m, 2H), 3.05–3.20 (m, 3H), 3.63 and 3.65 (2s, 3H), 4.25–4.75 (m, 5H), 6.98 (t, 1H,  $J=7.5$  Hz), 7.05 (t, 1H,  $J=7.4$  Hz), 7.15 and 7.18 (2s, 1H), 7.30–7.35 (m, 1H), 7.55–7.60 (m, 1H), 7.91–7.96 (m, 3H), 8.14–8.27 (m, 1H), 8.50–8.60 (m, 1H), 8.63–8.71 (m, 1H), 10.80–10.85 (m, 1H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  707 ( $M^+$ ), 648 (M-CO<sub>2</sub>CH<sub>3</sub>). Anal. calcd for  $C_{33}H_{31}F_6N_5O_6 \cdot 1/2H_2O$ : C, 55.31; H, 4.50; N, 9.77. Found: C, 55.25; H, 4.60; N, 9.90.

**6-Acetamido-5-oxo-8-methoxycarbonyl-1,2,3,5,6,7-hexahydroindolizine-3-carbonyl-N-benzyl-N-methyltryptophan amide (2b).** The product **2b** was dissolved in boiling acetone. The salts were filtered and the acetone solution was evaporated under reduced pressure to give an oil which was flash chromatographed on a 4×40 cm column using  $CH_2Cl_2/acetone$  (7:3) as the eluting solvent. The product obtained was recrystallized from acetone as a white solid (740 mg) at 30% yield: mp >240 °C; TLC  $R_f$  [ $CH_2Cl_2/acetone$  (1:1)]=0.25; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1634  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1697  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3303  $cm^{-1}$  (NH), 3373  $cm^{-1}$  (NH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz,  $DMSO-d_6$ )  $\delta$ :

1.40–1.60 (m, 1H), 1.87 (s, 3H), 2.02–2.15 (m, 1H), 2.30–2.73 (m, 2H), 2.76–2.80 (m, 4H), 3.00–3.20 (m, 3H), 3.62 (s, 1H), 3.65 (s, 2H), 4.38–5.14 (m, 5H), 6.84–7.37 (m, 9H), 7.59 (d, 1H,  $J=7.6$  Hz), 8.23 (d, 1H,  $J=7.6$  Hz), 8.72 (bs, 1H), 10.81 (s, 0.33H), 10.87 (s, 0.66H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  585 ( $M^+$ ), 130 (Ind- $CH_2^+$ ). Anal. ( $C_{32}H_{35}N_5O_6$ ) C, H, N. Anal. calcd for  $C_{32}H_{35}N_5O_6$ : C, 65.63; H, 6.02; N, 11.96. Found: C, 65.37; H, 5.83; N, 11.84.

**6-Benzoyloxycarbonylamino-5-oxo-8-methoxycarbonyl-1,2,3,5,6,7-hexahydroindolizine-3-carbonyl-N-benzyl-N-methyltryptophan amide (2c).** The product **2c** was dissolved in boiling ethyl acetate. The salts were filtered and the ethyl acetate solution was evaporated under reduced pressure to give an oil which was flash chromatographed on a 4×40 cm column using  $CH_2Cl_2$ /acetone (75:25) as the eluting solvent. The product obtained was isolated as a white solid (285 mg) at 30% yield: mp 125–135 °C; TLC  $R_f$  [ $CH_2Cl_2$ /acetone (75:25)]=0.25; IR (KBr)  $\nu$ : 1641  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 1707  $cm^{-1}$  (CO), 3320  $cm^{-1}$  (NH);  $^1H$  NMR (300 MHz, DMSO- $d_6$ )  $\delta$ : 1.20–2.45 (m, 5H), 2.50–2.82 (m, 4H), 2.85–3.20 (m, 2H), 3.60–3.79 (m, 3H), 4.20–5.20 (m, 7H), 6.80–7.37 (m, 14H), 7.50–7.58 (m, 1H), 8.14–8.17 (m, 1H), 8.79–8.86 (bs, 1H), 10.85–10.93 (4s, 1H); MS (EI)  $m/z$  677 ( $M^+$ ), 130 (Ind- $CH_2^+$ ). Anal. calcd for  $C_{38}H_{39}N_5O_7$ : C, 67.34; H, 5.80; N, 10.93. Found: C, 66.97; H, 5.92; N, 10.76.

### Binding assays

Binding experiments were performed according to standard techniques<sup>37</sup> using clones of Chinese Hamster Ovary (CHO) as the receptor source for both NK<sub>1</sub> and NK<sub>2</sub> subtypes. Crude membranes were prepared and stored in Tris 20 mM, sucrose 250 mM medium, pH 7.4, at –70 °C. Both tritiated radioligands were used with specific activities of 170 Ci/mmol (Amersham). Incubation conditions were the following: Tris 50 mM, Mg 2 mM (final concentrations), pH 7.4 and additional Bacitracine 160  $\mu$ g/mL at 25 °C for 1 h. The reaction was terminated by rapid vacuum filtration onto glass fiber filters (GF/C Wathman presoaked 2 h in PEI 0.1%): after four 2 mL washes with Tris 50 mM at 4 °C, pH 7.4, the radioactivity trapped onto the filters was counted and binding was calculated. Non-specific binding was determined with additional non-radioactive Substance P 1  $\mu$ M. Competition curves were fitted according to the Cheng and Prusoff equation (Kaleidagraph software, Microsoft for Macintosh).<sup>38</sup>

### Intracellular $[Ca^{++}]_i$ measurements

Intracellular calcium concentrations were determined using the fluorescent  $Ca^{2+}$  chelating agent Fura-2, as previously described.<sup>39</sup> Cellular suspension (10 million cell/mL) was incubated with permeant fluorescent probe Fura-2 AM (AM = acetyl methyl ester, 5  $\mu$ M) in Krebs–Ringer buffer (pH 7.4) consisting of NaCl (132 mM), KCl (4 mM),  $CaCl_2$  (1 mM),  $MgCl_2$  (0.5 mM), glucose (5 mM), HEPES (9.5 mM) at 37 °C for 30 min. Loaded cells were washed free of extracellular dye and centrifuged at 700 rpm during 10 min. After three washes,

the cells were resuspended at 1 million/mL in a thermostated quartz cuvette (3 mL). Cells were maintained in suspension by a magnetic stirrer. A spectrofluorometer equipped for dual excitation and mono emission wavelength (Fluorolog, HORIBA group) was used to record the ratio of fluorescence emission intensity at 510 nm resulting for alternative excitation of cells at 340 and 380 nm. The recorded ratios (6 per second) were then automatically converted to cytosolic  $Ca^{2+}$  concentration using the established equation described by Grynkiewicz.<sup>40</sup> Schild plots were established from six activity curves with concentrations of selected compounds **1a–c** and **2a–c** ( $10^{-10}$ – $10^{-6}$  M) in three independent experiments.

### References and Notes

1. Snijdelaar, D. G.; Dirksen, R.; Slappendel, R. *Eur. J. Pain* **2000**, *4*, 121.
2. Gao, Z.; Peet, N. P. *Curr. Med. Chem.* **1999**, *6*, 375.
3. Maggi, C. A.; Pataccini, R.; Rovero, P.; Giachetti, A. *J. Auton. Pharmacol.* **1993**, *13*, 23.
4. Joos, G. F.; Germonpré, P. R.; Pauwels, R. A. *Allergy* **2000**, *55*, 321.
5. Naline, E.; Molimard, M.; Regoli, D.; Emonds-Alt, X.; Bellamy, J. F.; Advenier, C. *Am. J. Physiol.* **1996**, *271*, L763.
6. Hill, R. *Trends. Pharmacol. Sci.* **2000**, *21*, 244.
7. Cocquyt, V.; Van Belle, S.; Reinhardt, R. R.; Decramer, M. L.; O'Brien, M.; Schellens, J. H.; Borms, M.; Verbeke, L.; Van Aelst, F.; De Smet, M.; Carides, A. D.; Eldridge, K.; Gertz, B. J. *Eur. J. Cancer* **2001**, *37*, 835.
8. Diemunsch, P.; Grelot, L. *Drugs* **2000**, *60*, 533.
9. Stout, S. C.; Owens, M. J.; Nemerof, C. B. *Annu. Rev. Pharmacol. Toxicol.* **2001**, *41*, 877.
10. Pacher, P.; Kohegyi, E.; Kecskemeti, V.; Furst, S. *Curr. Med. Chem.* **2001**, *8*, 89.
11. Barnes, P. J. *Respir. Physiol.* **2001**, *125*, 145.
12. Joos, G. F.; Germonpre, P. R.; Pauwels, R. A. *Clin. Exp. Allergy* **2000**, *30*, 60.
13. Millet, R.; Goossens, J.-F.; Bertrand-Caumont, K.; Chavatte, P.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *Letts. Pept. Sci.* **1999**, *6*, 221.
14. Millet, R.; Goossens, J.-F.; Bertrand-Caumont, K.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *Letts. Pept. Sci.* **1999**, *6*, 255.
15. Millet, R.; Goossens, L.; Goossens, J.-F.; Chavatte, P.; Bertrand-Caumont, K.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *J. Pept. Sci.* **2001**, *6*, 323.
16. Millet, R.; Goossens, L.; Bertrand-Caumont, K.; Goossens, J.-F.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *J. Pharm. Pharmacol.* **2001**, *53*, 929.
17. Qi, H.; Shah, S. K.; Cascieri, M. A.; Sadowski, S. J.; MacCoss, M. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **1998**, *8*, 2259.
18. Hanessian, S.; McNaughton-Smith, G.; Lombart, H.-G.; Lubell, W. D. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1997**, *53*, 12789.
19. Halab, L.; Gosselin, F.; Lubell, W. D. *Biopolymers* **2000**, *55*, 101.
20. Gross, E.; Meienhofer, J. *The Peptides: Analysis, Synthesis, Biology*; Academic Press: New York, 1979–1983; Vols. 1–5.
21. Millet, R.; Rigo, B.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *J. Heterocycl. Chem.* **1999**, *36*, 1279.
22. Millet, R.; Meulon, E.; Goossens, L.; Rigo, B.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J.-P. *J. Heterocycl. Chem.* **2000**, *37*, 1491.
23. Kolar, A. J.; Olsen, R. K. *Synthesis* **1977**, 4757.
24. Capps, N. K.; Davies, G. M.; Loakes, D.; McCabe, R. W.; Young, D. W. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1991**, 3077.
25. Fasseur, D.; Rigo, B.; Leduc, C.; Cauliez, P.; Couturier, D. *J. Heterocycl. Chem.* **1992**, *29*, 1285.

26. Cascieri, M. A.; Ber, E.; Fong, T. M.; Sadowski, S.; Bansal, A.; Swain, C.; Seward, E.; Frances, B.; Burns, D.; Strader, C. D. *Mol. Pharmacol.* **1992**, *42*, 458.
27. Bradshaw, C. D.; Cezkowski, K.; Turcatti, G.; Beresford, I. J. M.; Chollet, A. *J. Med. Chem.* **1994**, *37*, 1991.
28. Harrison, T.; Korsgaard, M. P. G.; Swain, C. J.; Cascieri, M. A.; Sadowski, S.; Seabrook, G. R. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **1998**, *8*, 1343.
29. Bernstein, P. R.; Aharony, D.; Albert, J. S.; Andisik, D.; Barthlow, H. G.; Bialecki, R.; Davenport, T.; Dedinas, R. F.; Dembofsky, B. T.; Koether, G.; Kosmider, B. J.; Kirkland, K.; Ohnmacht, C. J.; Potts, W.; Rumsey, W. L.; Shen, L.; Shenvi, A.; Sherwood, S.; Stollman, D.; Russell, K. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2001**, *11*, 2769.
30. Ting, P. C.; Lee, J. F.; Anthes, J. C.; Shih, N.-Y.; Piwinski, J. J. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2001**, *11*, 2333.
31. Reichard, G. A.; Ball, Z. T.; Aslanian, R.; Anthes, J. C.; Shih, N.-Y.; Piwinski, J. J. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2000**, *10*, 2329.
32. Gerspacher, M.; Von Sprecher, A.; Mah, R.; Anderson, G. P.; Bertrand, C.; Subramanian, N.; Hauser, K.; Ball, H. A. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2000**, *10*, 1467.
33. Nishi, T.; Ishibashi, K.; Takemoto, T.; Nakajima, K.; Fukazawa, T.; Lio, Y.; Itoh, K.; Mukaiyama, O.; Yamaguchi, T. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2000**, *10*, 1665.
34. Ting, P. C.; Lee, J. F.; Anthes, J. C.; Shih, N.-Y.; Piwinski, J. J. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **2001**, *11*, 491.
35. Nishi, T.; Fukazawa, T.; Ishibashi, K.; Nakajima, K.; Sugioka, Y.; Lio, Y.; Kurata, H.; Itoh, K.; Mukaiyama, O.; Satoh, Y.; Yamaguchi, T. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **1999**, *9*, 875.
36. Burkholder, T. P.; Kudlacz, E. M.; Le, T.-B.; Knippenberg, R. W.; Shatzer, S. A.; Maynard, G. D.; Webster, M. E.; Horgan, S. W. *Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett.* **1996**, *6*, 951.
37. Vollmer, J. Y.; Alix, P.; Chollet, A.; Takeda, K.; Galzi, J. L. *J. Biol. Chem.* **1999**, *53*, 37915.
38. Cheng, Y.; Prussof, W. H. *Biochem. Pharmacol.* **1973**, *22*, 3099.
39. Le Bourdonnec, B.; Meulon, E.; Yous, S.; Goossens, J. F.; Houssin, R.; Hénichart, J. P. *J. Med. Chem.* **2000**, *43*, 2685.
40. Gryniewicz, G.; Poenie, M.; Tsien, R. Y. *J. Biol. Chem.* **1985**, *260*, 3440.