

Synthesis of 4′/5′-Spirocyclopropanated Uridine and D-Xylouridine Derivatives and Their Activity against the Human Respiratory Syncytial Virus

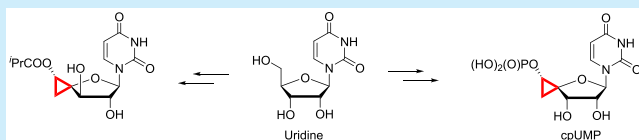
Christoph Köllmann,[†] Svenja M. Wiechert,[§] Peter G. Jones,[‡] Thomas Pietschmann,[§] and Daniel B. Werz^{*,†,§}

[†]Technische Universität Braunschweig, Institute for Organic Chemistry and [‡]Technische Universität Braunschweig, Institute for Inorganic and Analytical Chemistry, Hagenring 30, 38106 Braunschweig, Germany

[§]Institute for Experimental Virology, TWINCORE, Centre for Experimental and Clinical Infection Research; a Joint Venture Between the Medical School Hannover (MHH) and the Helmholtz Centre for Infection Research (HZI), Hannover, Feodor-Lynen-Str. 7, 30625 Hannover, Germany

Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The Simmons–Smith–Furukawa reaction was used to generate 4′/5′-spirocyclopropanated uridine analogs from electron-rich exocyclic enol esters. During synthesis, the native hydroxylation pattern of the nucleoside is preserved and offers the possibility for a late stage 5′-phosphorylation at the spirocyclopropanol moiety. All synthesized spirocyclopropanated uridine derivatives, including the corresponding 5′-monophosphate (cpUMP), were evaluated with respect to their antiviral activity in an HRSV assay showing moderate, but promising activity.



The synthesis of nucleoside derivatives for medical therapy has been of major interest for several decades;^{1,2} nucleosides have become a striking and powerful group of therapeutic agents, especially in the case of viral diseases and anticancer therapy. While antiviral agents against certain viruses such as HIV-1, Hepatitis C virus, CMV, or Influenza virus are available, treatment options for human respiratory syncytial virus (HRSV) are still limited.³

HRSV is a globally distributed negative strand RNA virus of the family *Pneumoviridae* that causes a severe disease burden among infants, the elderly, and in immunocompromised patients.^{4–6} Apart from a prophylactic monoclonal antibody that is given to children at high risk of severe infection, only Ribavirin, a guanosine analog with broad antiviral activity, is approved for treatment of RSV-infected patients.⁷ Nevertheless, side effects of established therapeutics and the evolution of viral drug resistance have revealed a lack of appropriate new drug classes. During the past few decades the cyclopropyl motif has shown astonishing biological effects in drug development and was finally introduced as a spirocyclopropanation motif of the D-ribose scaffold by Mulard et al.^{8–11} Since then, spirocyclopropanations have been realized at carbons 2′, 3′, and 4′ by the addition of difluoromethylene (I) or methylene units, generated from metal reagents or diazomethane (Figure 1).^{8,12–14} Although 4′/5′-methylene spirocyclopropanated uridine derivatives have been synthesized by the groups of Boyer and Robins, one aspect of the native substitution pattern of the nucleoside, namely the 5′-hydroxyl group at the spirocyclopropane, has been neglected.^{8,15} In fact, conservation of the 5′-hydroxy motif for

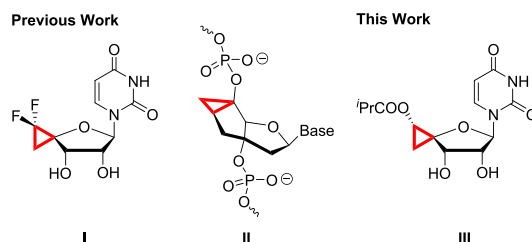


Figure 1. Conformational restricted cyclopropanated nucleoside derivatives.

polycyclic (II) or spirocyclopropanated systems (III) proves challenging, as literature-known spirocyclopropanation protocols for nucleosides require electronically neutral, exocyclic, primary alkenes. Starting materials containing electron-rich alkenes are associated with low yields under reported reaction conditions.¹⁶ Recently, our lab successfully introduced the Simmons–Smith–Furukawa method for the spirocyclopropanation of electron-rich enol ester systems of various monosaccharides for the purpose of reducing conformational freedom along the C5/C6-bond or achieving 5-C-methylation.^{17–19} Further, we have shown that the stability of a free spirocyclopropanol motif depends on the carbohydrate scaffold. As isobutyric esters are widely used in prodrug strategies, releasing the final drug *in vivo* after enzyme-catalyzed ester cleavage, this protecting group is suitable for

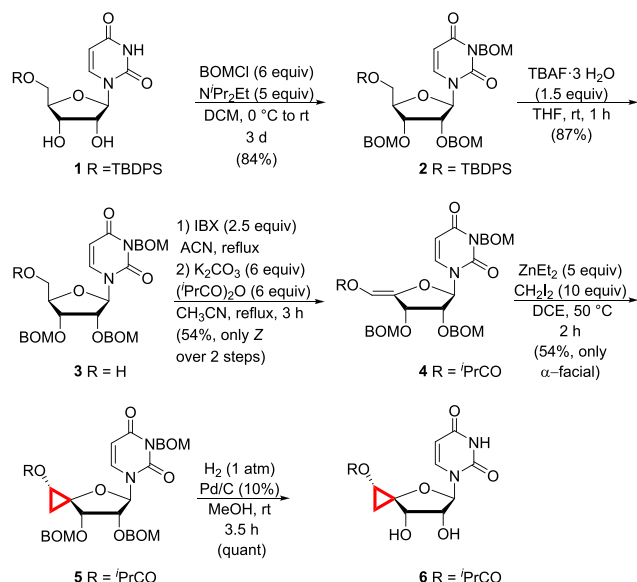
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preserving the spirocyclopropanol motif.²⁰ Nevertheless, the activation of nucleosides in biological systems is realized by enzyme-promoted phosphorylation giving 5'-phosphorylated nucleotides. Therefore, we envisioned a late-stage phosphorylation protocol to generate 4'/5'-spirocyclopropanated uridine monophosphate (cpUMP) from a cyclopropanated precursor.

In this work, we present a synthetic approach to 4'/5'-spirocyclopropanated uridine derivatives bearing a 5'-oxy substitution pattern. The secondary alcohol at the spirocyclopropane motif was masked by a carboxylic ester or a monophosphate. Finally, we investigated the potential application of compounds **6**, **16**, **19**, **20**, and **21** as antiviral agents against infection with HRSV.

As starting material we used the OS-silylated nucleoside **1**, which was prepared from uridine according to the reported procedure by van Otterlo et al.²¹ Treatment with benzyloxymethyl chloride (BOMCl) afforded the fully protected nucleoside **2** (Scheme 1). BOM was chosen to enable

Scheme 1. Synthesis of Spirocyclopropanated Uridine Derivative **6**



simultaneous deprotection of the nucleobase and the 2,3-*syn*-diol motif by hydrogenolysis with palladium on charcoal in a single step. Use of this hydrogenolytically cleavable ether proved to be superior to other common protecting strategies lacking orthogonality toward carboxylic esters or the spirocyclopropane. Removal of the OS-silyl group by TBAF afforded compound **3** in 87% yield. After oxidation of the primary alcohol by IBX, the sensitive aldehyde was directly subjected to further reaction without purification. Enolization by potassium carbonate and subsequent esterification led to compound **4** (54%). Although high diastereoselectivity was reported for the corresponding literature-known enol acetates, only the (*Z*)-configured diastereomer was isolated with the isobutyrate.^{22,23} Cyclopropanation of the exocyclic enol ester was carried out by application of the Simmons–Smith–Furukawa protocol, providing compound **5** exclusively as the α -facial cyclopropanated diastereomer in 54% yield.^{24,25} The striking diastereoselectivity is assumed to be controlled by the ether-protected O2 and O3, directing the zinc carbenoid

during cyclopropanation. Following global deprotection by hydrogenolysis, the use of palladium on charcoal secured the spirocyclopropanated uridine derivative **6** (Figure 2). The

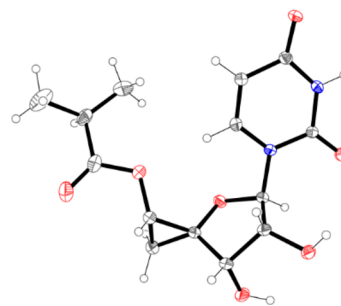
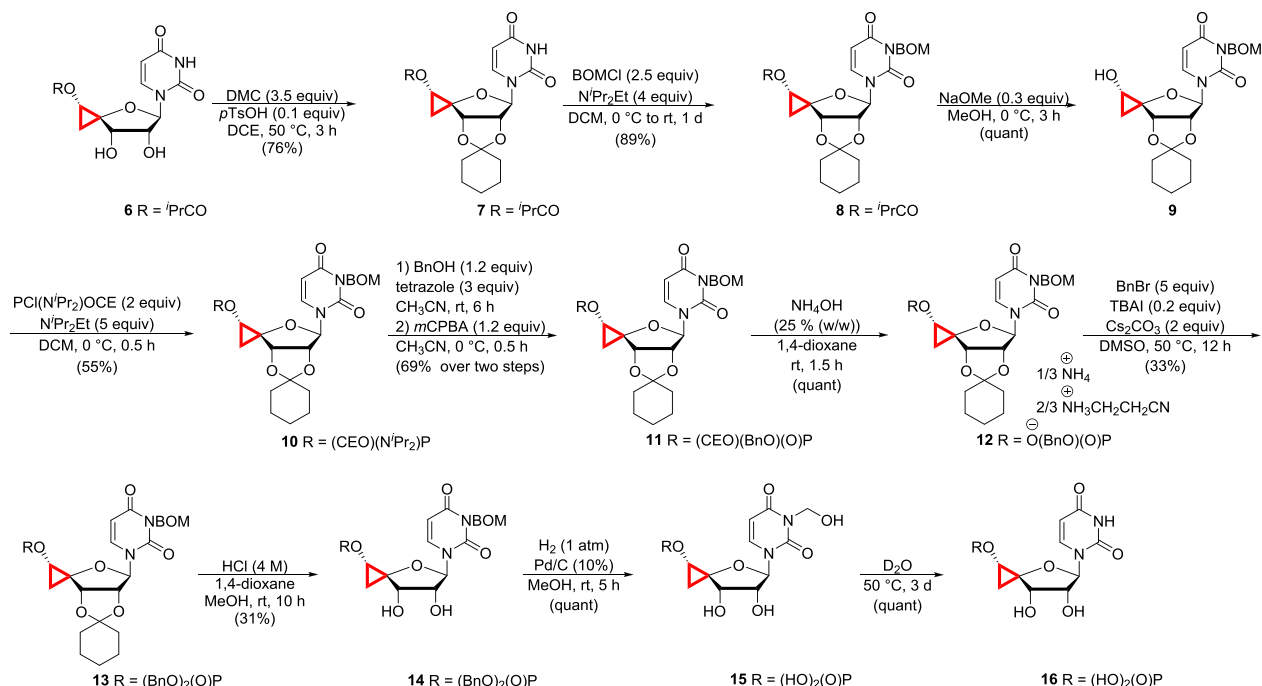


Figure 2. X-ray crystal structure of compound **6** (50% ellipsoid probability).

configuration of the isobutyric ester at the spirocyclopropane motif and the previous α -facial diastereoselective cyclopropanation were confirmed by NOE and single-crystal X-ray analysis (Figure 2 and Supporting Information). Determined by X-ray analysis, the D-ribose scaffold showed a ₃E pucker, with carbon 3' lying 0.57 Å out of the ring plane (S'-O-1'-2'). The χ -value ($-140.40(17)^\circ$) of the nucleoside derivative corresponds to the common *anti*-conformation. In comparison to free uridine (1.507(3) Å), no significant effect of the spirocyclopropane on the 4'–5' bond length was observed (1.502(3) Å).

The isobutyric ester could not be replaced by a phosphoric ester without reprotection of both N5 of the nucleobase and the *syn*-diol motif at the furanose. Therefore, we used an acid-catalyzed spiroketal formation with 1,1-dimethoxycyclohexane (DMC) leading to compound **7** in 76% yield. The following reprotection of N5 with BOMCl proceeded easily, giving compound **8** (89%). The isobutyric ester was finally cleaved by alkaline reaction conditions using sodium methoxide in methanol at 0 °C; ester cleavage at room temperature promoted decomposition of the secondary alcohol at the spirocyclopropane and hampered formation of product **9**. Addition of phosphorus(V) species such as phosphoryl chlorides afforded only traces of the desired phosphorylated uridine derivative. However, phosphorus(III) species neatly converted the secondary alcohol to the phosphoramidite **10**, after which the diisopropylamino group was substituted by benzylic alcohol in a tetrazole-mediated reaction. The emerging phosphite was subsequently oxidized to the diastereomeric mixture of the corresponding phosphate **11** by the addition of *m*CPBA at 0 °C (69%). An aqueous solution of ammonium hydroxide was used for selective cleavage of the cyanoethyl protecting group in quantitative yield.²⁵ The resulting phosphate ester was obtained as a mixed salt with ammonium and ammonium propionitrile cations. Column purification using triethylamine as an additive in the eluant led to the corresponding triethylammonium salt but still remained difficult (**12a**; see the Supporting Information). The following steps were performed without further purification, as this proved to be unnecessary. Benzylation of compound **12** was applied for reasons of purification, as partially unprotected phosphates prevented proper aqueous workup after ketal cleavage. Treatment with hydrogen chloride in dioxane delivered the deprotected 1,2-*syn* diol motif of the spirocyclopropanated uridine monophosphate. In contrast to

Scheme 2. Synthesis of Spirocyclopropanated Uridine Monophosphate (cpUMP) 16

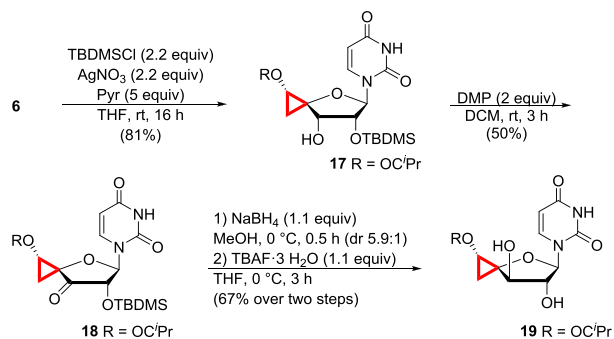


compound 6, only the partially deprotected nucleotide 15 was obtained after palladium-mediated hydrogenolysis of 14, leaving a hemiaminal at N5. Dissolving the nucleotide in D₂O at 50 °C furnished complete hydrolysis of the hemiaminal under formation of the desired cpUMP nucleotide 16 (Scheme 2).²⁷ The process of temperature-promoted hydrolysis, giving rise to an increasing signal set of cpUMP, was monitored by ¹H NMR spectroscopy (see Supporting Information).

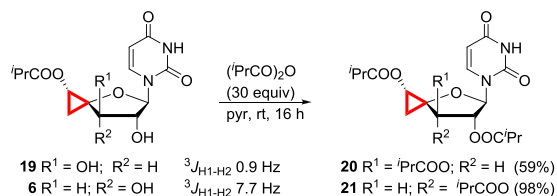
D-Xylose scaffolds are valuable synthetic precursors for the preparation of further 3'-substituted derivatives.²⁸ Structural elucidation experiments by NMR revealed D-xylose nucleosides to adopt strictly a 3'-endo conformation.²⁹ In order to investigate the conformational impact of 4'/5'-spirocyclopropanations on the ring flexibility of uridine, we submitted 6, showing a ₃E-conformation, to a four-step 3'-epimerization. Thereby, 17 was prepared by a modified procedure of an analogous synthesis by Kreutz.³⁰ Epimerization of carbon 3' was performed by prior oxidation of the hydroxy group using Dess–Martin periodinane (50%).³¹ The 3-oxonucleoside 18 was diastereoselectively reduced by NaBH₄ delivering the desired D-xylose nucleoside as the major diastereomer.^{32,33} Successive desilylation by application of TBAF at lower temperature afforded 19 in 67% yield over two steps (Scheme 3).

Interestingly, NMR investigations showed that 4'/5'-spirocyclopropanation effectively guided the uridine structure from the native 3'-endo conformation to a ₃E pucker, as observed in X-ray analysis of compound 6.³⁴ Nevertheless, this effect does not survive the 3'-epimerization. Changing the molecular configuration at 3' causes a retransformation to a 3'-endo pucker, as indicated by the strongly reduced coupling constant between H1 and H2 (Scheme 4).³⁵ Converting 6 to the respective 5'-phosphate 16 led only to a minor effect on the ring conformation (³J_{H1–H2} = 6.9 Hz). For a more detailed and comparative view on the torsion angles of compound 6 and other conformationally restricted ribose and 2'-deoxyribose nucleosides in DNA, see the Supporting Informa-

Scheme 3. Synthesis of Spirocyclopropanated D-Xylouridine Scaffold 19



Scheme 4. Preparation of Esterified D-Xylo Nucleoside 20 and D-Ribo Nucleoside 21



tion.^{36,37} Compared to the 2'-deoxyribose backbone of DNA, the δ -value of compound 6 (137.6°) fits the region of the DNA B-form given by the scatterplot of Dickerson et al.³⁸

According to the established prodrug strategy we sought to increase the membrane solubility and permeability of our nucleoside derivatives by decreasing the hydrophilicity. For this purpose, both spirocyclopropanated compounds 19 and 6 were esterified twice by application of isobutyric anhydride in pyridine. Compounds 20 and 21 were obtained in 59% and 98% yield, respectively.

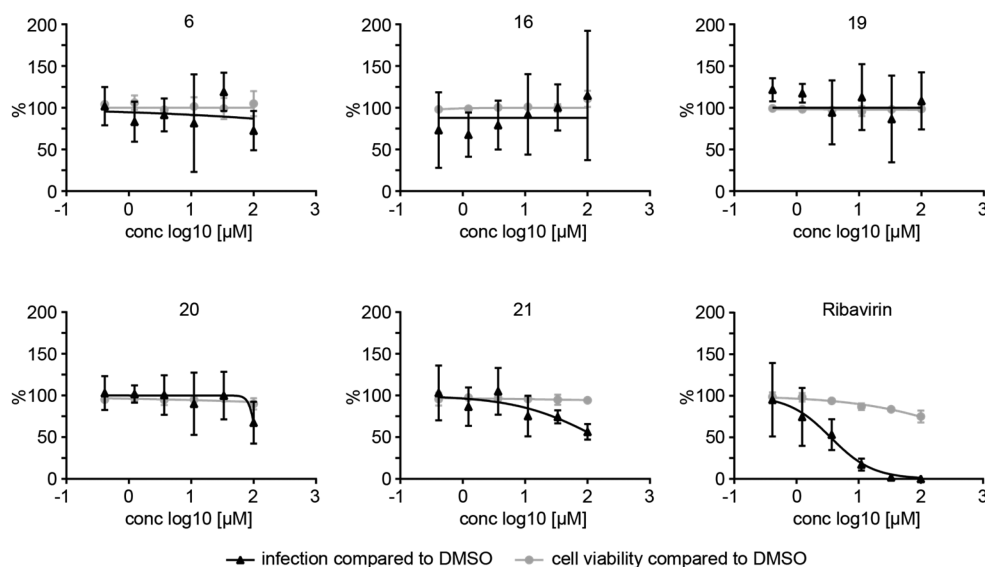


Figure 3. Antiviral activity and cell toxicity of compounds **6**, **16**, **19**, **20**, and **21** compared to the antiviral guanosine analog ribavirin. Mean and standard deviations of three to four independent experiments are shown.

To determine the antiviral activity of the spirocyclopropanated uridine nucleosides, their inhibitory effect was exemplarily tested against the negative strand RNA virus HRSV. Thereby, HEP2 cells were infected with HRSV³⁹ in the presence of various compound concentrations. Ribavirin, the only nucleoside analog licensed as an RSV targeting antiviral therapeutic, was used as assay control. In the tested dose range, compounds **6**, **16**, and **19** showed no antiviral effect (Figure 3). In contrast, compounds **20** and **21** inhibited viral infection when used at concentrations of 100 μM or 33 μM , respectively. Although the antiviral effect was moderate, it occurred independently of any overt cytotoxic effect, suggesting that the observed effect was attributable to direct inhibition of HRSV infection rather than to indirect effects caused by compromised cell viability. Moreover, nucleoside **21** was more effective than compound **20**, providing the first hints for optimizing the anti-HRSV activity of these spirocyclopropanated uridine nucleosides.

The antiviral activity of nucleoside analogs depends on several factors. The compounds have to permeate the cell membrane⁴⁰ and be phosphorylated by the host cell machinery^{41,42} in order to be incorporated into the nascent viral RNA, thus causing chain termination or mutations by base mispairing in genome replication.⁴³ In our case, extracellular phosphorylation of compound **6** did not render compound **16** antiviral. However, compounds **20** and **21**, which are more lipophilic than their derivatives, compound **19** and **6**, possess an antiviral activity at high doses. Further experiments are needed to conclude whether this is because of improved cell membrane penetration of these molecules. Moreover, it will be interesting to see whether spirocyclopropanated uridine nucleosides have broad spectrum antiviral activity or are HRSV specific inhibitors.

In conclusion, we have demonstrated an access to 4'/5'-spirocyclopropanated uridine derivatives while preserving the native hydroxylation pattern of the nucleoside. Further, we have generated the first spirocyclopropanated nucleotide of uridine applying the Simmons–Smith–Furukawa protocol as the key step. NMR analysis of a spirocyclopropanated D-xylose scaffold showed a minor impact of the spirocyclopropane on

the ring conformation in comparison to an axially oriented 3'-hydroxy group. For two uridine derivatives, we observed moderate antiviral activity in an HRSV inhibition assay. For a transfer of our developed methodology to cytosine, guanine, and adenine nucleosides, we expect a proper protecting strategy for the nucleobase to be necessary.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

📄 Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge on the ACS Publications website at DOI: 10.1021/acs.orglett.9b02555.

Detailed experimental procedures, analytical data for all new compounds, and crystal data for **6** (PDF)

■ Accession Codes

CCDC 1935067 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by emailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

■ AUTHOR INFORMATION

Corresponding Author

*E-mail: d.werz@tu-braunschweig.de.

ORCID

Daniel B. Werz: 0000-0002-3973-2212

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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