

Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters 9 (1999) 1185-1188

BIOORGANIC & MEDICINAL CHEMISTRY LETTERS

THIAZOLO[4,5-d]PYRIMIDINE THIONES AND -ONES AS CORTICOTROPIN-RELEASING HORMONE (CRH-R1) RECEPTOR ANTAGONISTS

James P. Beck,* Matt A. Curry, Robert J. Chorvat, Larry W. Fitzgerald,^a Paul J. Gilligan, Robert Zaczek,^a and George L. Trainor

DuPont Pharmaceuticals Company Chemical and Physical Sciences and ^aCNS Diseases Research Experimental Station, P. O. Box 80500 Wilmington, DE 19880-0500, U.S.A.

Received 4 January 1999; accepted 17 March 1999

Abstract: A series of thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidine thiones and -ones was prepared and discovered to have good binding affinity to the CRH-R1 receptor, thus showing promise as a new class of potential anxiolytics and/or antidepressants. © 1999 DuPont Pharmaceuticals Company. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

The development of new pharmacotherapies for the treatment of anxiety and depression remains an area of active research.^{1,2} In particular, the design of small molecule, nonpeptide antagonists for the corticotropinreleasing hormone (CRH) R1 receptor may afford new treatment options.³ CRH, a 41-amino acid neurotransmitter, plays an integral role in regulating mammalian stress response via action upon the hypothalamicpituitary adrenal (HPA) axis,⁴ and the finding that CRH may be hypersecreted in depressed patients lends support to the design of antagonists of CRH receptors.³, ⁵

Several accounts of small molecule antagonists have appeared in the literature, including CP154526-1,⁶ triazolopyrimidine 2,⁷ and many others^{8–11} (Figure 1). In addition, preclinical pharmacology has been reported for one of these agents, CP154526-1.¹² Recent efforts in our laboratory have focused on the evaluation of diverse heterocycles that may potentially serve as CRH-R1 antagonists.¹³ In this communication we detail the synthesis and preliminary structure–activity studies for a novel series of thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidine thiones and - ones (6 and 7) which show good affinity for the CRH-R1 receptor *in vitro*.¹⁴

Thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidines are known from the literature to possess antimicrobial activity¹⁵ and CNS depressant activity.¹⁶ General synthetic methods employed in the synthesis of thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidines are





0960-894X/99/\$ - see front matter © 1999 Du Pont Pharmaceuticals Company. Published by Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved. *PII:* S0960-894X(99)00159-6 described in Scheme 1. Commercially available aniline 3 (or 2,4,6-trimethylaniline) was converted to the isothiocyanate and treated with cyanoacetamide and elemental sulfur as described by Gewald¹⁷ to afford thiazolothione 4. Pyrimidine formation with acetic anhydride followed by chlorination provided the desired core 5 in excellent yield.¹⁸ Addition of amines cleanly generated the CRH-R1 targets 6 which could further be treated with dimethyl sulfate and hydrolyzed to yield the thiazolones 7.¹⁹ Yields for thiazolone formation were variable, and were consistently low when R₁ was substituted with alkoxy groups, likely due to overalkylation from dimethylsulfate.



Scheme 1: (a) thiophosgene, Na₂CO₃, DMF, 0 °C, 20 min; (b) cyanoacetamide, sulfur, Et₃N, DMF, rt, 2 h, 63% (from aniline); (c) acetic anhydride, reflux, 2.5 h, 97%; (d) POCl₃, reflux, 3 h, 85-95%; (e) amine (R₁), acetone, reflux, 2–5h, 85–98%; (f) SO₂(OMe)₂, 130 °C, 1 h; (g) H₂O, reflux, 2 h, 10–75% (from 6).

Table 1 details the preliminary structure–activity relationship studies for derivatives of **6** and **7**. New compounds were assayed against transfected human CRH-R1 receptors expressed in HEK 293E cells.¹⁹ 2-Bromo-4-isopropylphenyl was selected for aryl substitution from SAR work in previous series.^{7,13} Introduction of a morpholine group provided **6a**, which showed only modest affinity for the CRH-R1 receptor. Binding affinity improved an order of magnitude, however, when noncyclic dialkyl amines were introduced to provide **6b** and **6c** (K_i = 4.1 nM and 12.6 nM, respectively). Optimal activity was observed with ethyl and n-propyl chain lengths; longer and bulkier alkyl chains provided the less potent analogs **6d** and **6e**. Not surprising from these preliminary studies was the excellent activity observed for the structurally related purin-8-one series of CRH-R1 antagonists reported from our lab.¹³ The corresponding thiazolones **7a**, **7b**, and **7c** (Table 1) also showed good binding affinity for the CRH-R1 receptor and were generally equipotent with their thiazolothione precursors. A comparison between 2-bromo-4-isopropylphenyl analogs and a second series of target compounds prepared from 2,4,6-trimethylaniline is also shown in Table 1. The thiocarbonyl analogs **6g-i** as well as the carbonyl derivatives

Table 1 Structure-Activity Relationships for Thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidine Thiones and -Ones.



Comp	d R ₁	x	$K_i (nM)^a$	Com	od R ₁	Х	$K_i (nM)^a$
Aryl = 2-bromo-4-isopropylphenyl				Aryl = 2,4,6-trimethylphenyl			
6a	morpholino	S	122	6g 7d	N(Et) ₂ N(Et) ₂	s O	9.2 <u>+</u> 5.3 14.5 + 5.4
6b 7a	N(Et) ₂ N(Et) ₂	S O	4.1 ± 0.3 9.4 ± 2.1	6h	N(n-Pr)CH ₂ cyclo-Pr	S	13.1 ± 2.0 16.2 ± 0.3
6с 7b	N(n-Pr)CH ₂ cyclo-Pr N(n-Pr)CH ₂ cyclo-Pr	S O	12.6 <u>+</u> 6.4 4.1 <u>+</u> 3.4	6i	$N(H-H)CH_2CYCIO-H$ $N(CH_2CH_2OMe)_2$	s	8.6 ± 2.9
6d	N(Et)n-Bu	S	23.9 ± 6.2	/1	$N(CH_2CH_2OMe)_2$	0	5.0 <u>+</u> 1.8
6e	N(sec-Bu) ₂	S	45.4 <u>+</u> 31.4				
6f 7c	$N(CH_2CH_2OMe)_2$ $N(CH_2CH_2OMe)_2$	S O	6.6 <u>+</u> 2.5 14.5 <u>+</u> 8.6				

a) Binding affinity was measured at transfected human CRH R1 receptors expressed in HEK 293E cells using ¹²⁵I-tyr-oCRH as the displaced radioligand.¹⁹ Values are the average of $n \ge 2$ when Ki < 50 nM.

7d-f possessed good CRH R1 binding affinity and afforded activity similiar to the disubstituted phenyl series. The dialkoxy analog **7f** ($K_i = 5.0 \text{ nM}$) was the most potent member of this series.

Efforts to further characterize the properties of the title compounds included a determination of the extent of protein binding.²⁰ An *in vitro* competition experiment was performed with binding to the CRH-R1 receptor challenged by the presence of human serum albumin (HSA, 4.5%) and α_1 -acid glycoprotein (AAG, 0.1%). The resultant IC₅₀ was divided by the control IC₅₀ to provide a fold shift in the IC₅₀s; the larger the fold shift, the greater the relative indication of small molecule bound by plasma protein. The measured fold shifts for **6b**, **6f**, and **7a** were 9.8, 26.2, and 29.3 respectively, indicating thiazolothione **6b** was least bound to HSA and AAG.

In summary, we have synthesized a series of thiazolo[4,5-d]pyrimidine thiones and -ones that show good affinity for the CRH-R1 receptor *in vitro* and that may represent a new class of anxiolytics and/or antidepressants. In addition to work focused on defining the physiochemical properties of this new series (i.e., protein binding, lipophilicity, solubility), future studies to be reported in due course will continue to elucidate the SAR of alkyl vs alkoxy amine substitution on heterocyclic CRH-R1 receptor antagonists.

Acknowledgements: The authors gratefully thank Anne Marshall, Sue Keim, John Patterson and Carol Krause for performing the *in vitro* binding studies.

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