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ARTICLE TYPE

Fluorescence Modulation of a Pyrazolones Dye in the Solid State Based on Energy Transfer

Hu Liu, Ji-Xi Guo, Dian-Zeng Jia*, Ming-Xi Guo, Lang Liu, Dong-Ling Wu

Received (in XXX, XXX) Xth XXXXXXX 20XX, Accepted Xth XXXXXXXX 20XX ⁵ DOI: 10.1039/b000000x

New pyrazolones dye is synthesized and its fluorescence modulation is achieved based on energy transfer. The prepared pyrazolones dye is combined with photochromic pyrazolones to obtain fluorescence photoswiching material (FPM), which exhibits stable and reversible fluorescence photoswiching property in the solid state. Upon characterization of the samples by ¹H NMR spectra, XRD, FT-IR, UV spectrum and fluorescence spectrum, it was found that photochromic pyrazolones and pyrazolones dye integrally retained the inherent ¹⁰ properties in the FPM, respectively. An investigation of FPM revealed that the photoswiching mechanism of FPM was studied in detail by FT-IR, UV spectrum and fluorescence dye and the synthetic route of FPM. The photoswitching mechanism of FPM was studied in detail by FT-IR, UV spectrum and fluorescence spectrum techniques. The results show that the photochromic pyrazolones. The emission wavelength of the pyrazolones dye hardly induces the photochemical reaction of photochromic pyrazolones in FPM, which has potential to be used as non-destructive fluorescence readout of optical information. This study represents a simple and efficient alternative to the covalent system to obtain FPM, and it may be applied in photoelectronic devices.

1. Introduction

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Due to the non-invasive character, high selectivity and high ²⁰ sensitivity of fluorescence detection, coupling fluorescence molecule to photochromic units¹⁻⁴ and doping fluorescence dye into photochromic system⁵⁻⁸ are two attractive ways to develop multifunctional FPM for optical memories,⁹⁻¹¹ super resolution imaging,^{12,13} and protein trafficking in living cells.¹⁴⁻¹⁶ To realize ²⁵ fluorescence photoswitching, i.e., to modulate fluorescence emission upon external light stimulus, photochemical reaction is commonly the fundamental regulatory step. Photochromism, a photoinduced reversible reaction between two isomers, is one of

³⁰ fluorescence photoswitching process in FPM.^{17,18} Various reports have been published regarding reversibly photoswitchable fluorescent molecules in recent years. Photochromic molecules, such as diarylethene, spiropyran or azobenzene, are employed as key units to toggle the fluorescence "on" and "off" repeatedly.^{19,21}

the essentially photochemical reactions to facilitate the reversible

35 For instance, Liao et al. constructed a photoswitchable

nanoparticles by grafting the fluorescent carbon nanoparticles with the copolymers of styrene and spiropyran, the fluorescent of fluorescent carbon nanoparticles was modulated by the copolymers of styrene and spiropyran.²² Diaz et al. devised 40 skillfully a photoswitchable semiconductor nanocrystals based on energy transfer between the semiconductor core functions and multiple photochromic diheteroarylethene groups.²³ However, among the photomodulatable compounds mentioned above, they only show photoreaction property in solution, which limit their 45 applications in photoelectronic devices. In the large family of photochromic material, the photochromic pyrazolones material can exhibit excellent fatigue resistance, good thermal stability in pure solid state. Therefore further works, which utilize photochromic pyrazolones to modulate the fluorescent of 50 fluorescence dye, can exploit the excellent properties of photochromic pyrazolones.^{24,18} We have successfully developed the reversible fluorescence photoswitching system based on doping inorganic fluorescence dye (Sr₂P₂O₇-EC) into photochromic pyrazolones.²⁵ But there is differences in physical

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and chemical properties between inorganic fluorescence dye and photochromic pyrazolones in this material, which may limit this material to be applied in photoelectronic devices. Thus, utilizing the similar structure of pyrazolones dye and photochromic ⁵ pyrazolones, we conceive another FPM by doping pyrazolones dye into photochromic pyrazolones system.

Fortunately, the as-synthesized pyrazolones dye shows strong fluorescence emission and optical waveguide performance in the solid state. So the developed FPM can be exploited for ¹⁰ photoswitches and optical waveguide devices.^{26,27} In this work, we report a simple FPM in which pyrazolones dye is blended with photochromic pyrazolones: 1,3-diphenyl-4-(3-chlorobenzal) -5-hydroxypyrazole-4-phenylsemicarbazone (2a)as the photochromic compound and 1,3-diphenyl-4-(3-chloro-2-¹⁵ fluoro-5-trifluoromethyl)-5-pyrazolone (1) as the fluorescence dye. The constructed FPM shows high efficiency and remarkable fatigue-resistance in the solid state. Schematic illustration of this photoswitchable system is shown in Scheme 1.



20 Scheme 1 Schematic illustration of energy transfer of FPM. After 365 nm light irradiation, the fluorescence of 1 is quenched due to intermolecular energy transfer from 1 to 2b.

The photochromic pyrazolone molecule is a modulator as an energy acceptor of **1** to toggle fluorescence "on" and "off" ²⁵ following with 365 nm light irradiation or heating. We choose **1** as a desirable compound to realize fluorescent toggling by photochromic pyrazolones as photomodulator because of the fluorescent emission band of **1** overlaps well with the absorption spectrum of the keto-form isomer of photochromic pyrazolone ³⁰ unit. This is an essential criterion for effective energy transfer

- between the keto-form isomer of photochromic pyrazolone and **1**. In this case, the photoinduced switching of photochromic pyrazolone unit converts from enol-form isomer to keto-form isomer, which efficiently modulate the ON/OFF switching of ³⁵ fluorescence emission of **1**. Such an observation may provide an
- alternate approach for designing and developing novel optoelectronic materials.

2. Experimental

2.1 Materials

⁴⁰ 1,3-Diphenyl-5-pyrazolone (DPP) was synthesized according to the literatures.²⁸ 4-phenylsemicarbazide (PSC), 3-chlorobenzoyl chloride and 3-chloro-2-fluoro-5-trifluoromethyl)-benzoyl chloride were purchased from Aldrich Company USA. The other materials were AR grade obtained from commercial sources and ⁴⁵ used without further purification.

2.2 Instrument

¹H NMR spectra were performed on an INOVA-400 NMR spectrometer with DMSO-d₆ as solvent. Melting point was measured with a TECHXT-5 melting point apparatus. The ⁵⁰ elemental analysis were made on FLASH EA 1112 Series NCHS–O analyser. Absorption spectra were measured on Hitachi UV-3010 spectrometer equipped with an integrating sphere accessory. Fluorescence spectra were studied using a Hitachi F-4500 fluorescence spectrophotometer (an optical filter was ⁵⁵ used at the excitation window). FT-IR spectra were recorded by using infrared diffuse reflectance spectroscopy in the range 400–4000 cm⁻¹ on a BRUKER EQUINOX-55 spectrometer. A ZF-1 ultraviolet analysis instrument equipped with an ultraviolet lamp (15 W cm⁻²) as the light source was used to induce ⁶⁰ photochromic reactions, the distance between the sample and the light source was 15 cm.

2.3 Synthesis

2.3.1 Synthesis of pyrazolones dye



Scheme 2 Synthesis route of 1.

The intermediate 1,3-diphenyl-4-(3-chlorobenzal)-5-pyrazolone (DP3ClBP) and 1,3-diphenyl-4-(3-chloro-2-fluoro-5-trifluoro-methyl)-5-pyrazolone (1) were synthesized according to literature (Scheme 2).²⁴ For 1. Yield: 78%. Mp. 193.5-194.7 °C. MS: 70 *m/z*M+: 460.1. Elemental analysis: (C₂₃H₁₃ClF₄N₂O₂): Calcd. (%) C, 59.95; H, 2.84; N, 6.08. Found: (%) C, 59.65; H, 2.91; N, 6.12. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆): 8.80-8.75 (m, 1H), 8.57 (Substituted phenyl-ring, 2H), 8.47-6.92 (phenyl-ring, 10H).

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FT-IR (v, cm⁻¹): 3082 v(O-H), 1673 v(C=O), 1595, 1534 v(phenyl), 1494, 1443 v(pyrazole-ring) , 1250, 1050 v(C-O).

2.3.2 Synthesis of photochromic pyrazolones compound

1,3-Diphenyl-4-(3-chlorobenzal)-5-hydroxypyrazole-4-phenyl-⁵ semicarbazone (**2a**) was synthesized according to the literature.²⁵

2.3.3 Synthesis of FPM

Several methods have been used to fabricate FPM: 1) When photochromic pyrazolones is dissolved by the polar solvents, the photochromic property of photochromic pyrazolones is easily 10 affected by solvation during the drying process. The constructed FPM can't exhibit reversible or even no photochromic property (Fig. S2(C, D)), which is crucial for fluorescence modulation. Unfortunately, there is not a suitable solvent which can allow photochromic pyrazolones occur reversible photoisomerization 15 reaction in the solution. 2) After optimizing the experiment conditions, the co-crystallization of 1 and 2a is a more suitable method. Therefore, we designed and constructed successfully FPM during the synthesis process of 2a by adding the compound 1 according to the literature of our previous work.²⁵ After the 20 reaction and then cooling down to room temperature, white powders were obtained from the solution and repeatedly purified by ethanol at room temperature. The purified powders were directly used for spectroscopic analyses. Different proportion of FPM was successfully prepared by this way. Especially proposed, 25 1 can not react with 4-phenylsemicarbazide for its steric hindrance effect, so FPM is only composed of 1 and 2a, which was confirmed by XRD data (Fig. S1A). The concentration of 1 in FPM was calculated by ¹H NMR data (Fig. S1(B-F)).

3. Results and Discussion

³⁰ 3.1 Basic properties of the photochromic pyrazolones and pyrazolones dye





- ³⁵ Fig. 1 (a) Absorption spectra changes of 2a under 365 nm light irradiation (black line) and heating (red dash line), absorption spectra of 1 (blue line) in the solid state. (b) Fluorescence emission spectra of 1, before (red dash line) and after (black line) 365 nm light irradiation for 60 minutes in the solid state ($\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm). (c) Fluorescence image of 1.
- ⁴⁰ The absorption spectra of **2** and **1** were measured in the solid state, respectively (Fig. 1a). The **2a** transfers into **2b** (photoisomerization product of **2a**) with 365 nm light irradiation, and the absorption band intensity (350-470 nm) of **2b** is increasing by photoisomerization of **2a**. The original absorption
- ⁴⁵ spectrum of **2a** is recovered completely by heating at 120 °C in a constant temperature oven. There was almost no absorption for **1** after 400 nm, which excludes the possibility of self absorption. In addition, the fluorescence spectral of **1** is not affected by 365 nm light irradiation, which indicates that **1** is photostable under 365
- ⁵⁰ nm light irradiation (Fig. 1b). The fluorescence emission spectrum of **1** centered at 417 nm ($\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm) and the fluorescence image of **1** (Fig. 1c) show that **1** has intense fluorescence. As shown in Fig. 1c, the microtopography of **1** is the rod-like structure, there are two luminescent spots in the ⁵⁵ two endpoints of each rod, which indicates that **1** is an optical waveguide material in pyrazolone derivatives. So developing FPM may be helpful to exploit the application value of pyrazolones dye and photochromic pyrazolones in photoelectronic devices.

3.2 IR spectrum of FPM

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Fig. 2 (a) IR spectra of pure **2a**, FPM (the concentration of **1**: 37 wt%, 10 wt% ⁵ and 4 wt%), and pure **1** range from 3150 cm⁻¹ to 3500 cm⁻¹, and (b) range from 1625 cm⁻¹ to 1725 cm⁻¹ in the solid state, respectively.

The useful IR spectra are employed to confirm that FPM is composed of **1** and **2a** (Fig. 2). As shown in Fig. 2a, broad absorption bands of **2a** in the range of 3000-3500 cm⁻¹ are ¹⁰ observed, which suggests that there exist characteristic of schiff bases with a medium strength intramolecular hydrogen bond in the solid state.²⁹ Obviously, broad absorption bands of **2a** are also observed in FPM, the result confirms that **2a** is one of components of FPM. The absorption band of 1673 cm⁻¹ can be ¹⁵ ascribed to C=O vibration of **1** in Fig. 2b, with increasing concentration of **1**. The intensity of absorption band at 1673 cm⁻¹ increases markedly, which distinctly demonstrates that **1** is one of components of FPM. So FPM is composed of **1** and **2a**. Other peaks of IR spectra were identified in the experiment section.

20 3.3 Photoswitching mechanism of FPM

The helpful FT-IR spectroscopy is used to explain the photoswitching mechanism of FPM. As shown in Fig. S3A, a new sharp peak appears at 3400 cm^{-1} after **2a** is irradiated by 365 nm light (curve for b), attributed to the N-H stretching vibration

- ²⁵ in the pyrazole-ring.¹⁸ In addition, a same phenomenon appears in the FPM, the result indicates that the photoisomerization from **2a** (enol-form) to **2b** (keto-form) occurs during 365 nm light continuous irradiation in the FPM (Fig. S3(B-D)).
- The colour of **2a** reversibly changed from white to yellow. For ³⁰ FPM, same method was used to evaluate photochromic property

of FPM. When irradiated by 365 nm light, the colour of FPM changed from white to yellow, the opposite process occurred when FPM was heated at 120 °C for ten minutes. This result assuredly demonstrated that FPM indeed showed photochromic ³⁵ property (Fig. S4).



Fig. 3 (a) and (b) Absorption spectra and fluorescence emission ($\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm) 40 changes of FPM (the concentration of 1: 10 wt%) under 365 nm light irradiation at room temperature in the solid state, respectively.(c) Normalized emission spectra of 1 (red line), absorption spectra of 2a before 365 nm light irradiation (blue line) and after 365 nm light irradiation (black line) in the solid state, respectively.

⁴⁵ To clearly explain photoswitching mechanism of FPM, the absorption and fluorescence spectrum of FPM (the concentration of 1: 10 wt%) have been examined in the solid state. The absorption and emission spectra of FPM were recorded upon 365 nm light irradiation at room temperature. Fig. 3a, b show that
⁵⁰ FPM exhibits weak absorption band around 350-470 nm and strong fluorescence emission at 417 nm before 365 nm light irradiation, which correspond to the absorption spectrum of 2a and fluorescence emission peak of 1, respectively. Once 365 nm

light irradiation, FPM can be observed that an absorbing band of ⁵⁵ **2b** is increasing around 350-470 nm, which is assigned to the

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formation of keto-form isomer of **2a** in Fig. 3a. When prolonging irradiation time, the emission peak of 417 nm is gradually diminishing in Fig. 3b. Once the absorption spectra of FPM increases to the maximum value, which suggests that the energy 5 transfer rate is basically maximized between 1 and 2b in FPM. The phenomenon convincingly testifies that the quenching of fluorescence will occur via energy transfer between pyrazolones dye and the keto-form isomer of photochromic pyrazolones as expected. When the fluorescent emission band of pyrazolones dye 10 overlaps well with the absorption spectrum of the keto-form isomer of photochromic pyrazolones unit (Fig. 3c). Therefore, the fluorescence emission of 1 is modulated efficiently by the photoisomerization of **2a** with 365 nm light irradiation.³⁰ When the FPM was heated, the reverse reaction happened from 15 keto-form isomer to enol-form isomer and the absorption band around 350-470 nm was gradually diminishing, and the absorption band recovered completely to the original absorption band intensity, which owes to the excellent fatigue resistance, thermally reversible properties, and rapid response time of 2a in 20 pure solid state. In agreement with the experiments of naked eye observation, these results evidently demonstrate that photochromic pyrazolones works as a modulator for fluorescence modulation of the pyrazolones dye.

3.4 Fatigue resistance of FPM

25 The fatigue resistance of FPM was detailedly studied as follows: Firstly, the repeatability of the photoreaction of FPM was assessed. The absorption spectra of FPM (the concentration of 1: 37 wt%, 10 wt% and 4 wt%) were also measured upon 365 nm light irradiation and heating, respectively (Fig. 4a). When the 30 concentration of **1** is 4 wt% and 10 wt%, the absorption spectra of FPM is reversible and could go through more than 10 cycles. The result indicates the photochromic reaction of 2a is not obviously affected by the presence of 1in FPM. Secondly, if the fluorescence photoswiching of FPM is also reversible, when 35 veries the amount of pyrazolones dye in photochromic pyrazolones system. FPM with different doping ratios of 1 was synthesized and their fluorescence photoswiching property were measured too (Fig. S5). The fluorescence intensity of FPM returns completely to the initial value after heating at 120 ⁴⁰ °C, when the concentration of **1** is 4 wt% and 10 wt% (Fig. 4b). It can be seen noteworthy that the fluorescence photoswiching of FPM is reversible. So the fluorescence photoswiching efficiency of FPM is remarkably improved by controlling reasonable doping



Fig. 4 (a) Absorption spectra cycles of FPM (the concentration of 1: 37 wt%, 10 wt% and 4 wt%) during alternating 365 nm light irradiation and colour fading at 120 °C in the solid state. (b) Fluorescence photoswitching cycles of FPM ($\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm) (the concentration of 1: 4 wt% (solid line) and 10 wt% 50 (dash line)) during alternating irradiation of 365 nm light and colour fading at 120 °C in the solid state.

ratio, which also confirms that the **2a** regulates the fluorescence of **1** "on" and "off". The degradation of fluorescence photoswitching function of FPM was not observed obviously ⁵⁵ after several months storage. The results indicate that fluorescence emission of **1** is efficiently modulated by the photochemical reaction of **2a** with high fluorescence quenching efficiency and remarkable fatigue resistance in the solid state. The highly optical sensitivity, excellent fatigue resistance and ⁶⁰ high contrast fluorescence photoswitching properties of FPM are foundation for designing novel optoelectronic devices.³¹⁻³⁴

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, we have developed a convenient method for fluorescence switching of pyrazolones dye, whose fluorescence ⁶⁵ modulation is realized by energy transfer between fluorescence dye and keto-form isomer of photochromic pyrazolones under alternate 365 nm light irradiation and heating at 120 °C. The fluorescence photoswiching materials can work reversibly without obviously degradation. The advantages of our system are 70 based on: 1) The pyrazolones dye synthesized shows fluorescence property and optical waveguide performance, and the

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fluorescence of pyrazolones dye is successfully modulated by the photoisomerization of photochromic pyrazolones in the solid state. 2) The fluorescence photoswitching of fluorescence photoswiching materials have been demonstrated to be reversible, ⁵ and the fluorescence photoswitching cycles could be repeated many times. 3) This study indicates that fluorescence photoswiching materials retain the photochromic properties of pyrazolones and fluorescence, optical waveguide property of pyrazolones dye completely. Hence, fluorescence photoswiching ¹⁰ materials are expected to exploit the applications value of pyrazolones dye and photochromic pyrazolones system.

Acknowledgements

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This work was supported by Scientific Research Program of the Higher Education Institution of Xinjiang (XJEDU2012I04), the ¹⁵ National Natural Science Foundation of China (21262038 and U1203292), Specialized Research Fund for the Doctoral Program of Higher Education (2011650113001), the Outstanding Youth Natural Science Foundation of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China (201311006), Doctoral Fund of Xinjiang ²⁰ University (BS110110).

Notes and references

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Key laboratory of material and technology for clean energy, ministry of education; Key laboratory of advanced functional materials, autonomous region; Institute of Applied Chemistry, Xinjiang University, Urumqi 25 830046, Xinjiang, P. R. China. Tel.: +86-991-8583083; Fax: +86-991-8588883; E-mail address: jd20991@gmail.com

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