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A Rapid and Highly Diastereoselective Synthesis of Enantiomerically Pure (4*R*,5*R*)- and (4*S*,5*S*)- isocytoxazone

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Abstract: A three step protocol for the highly diastereoselective (>98%) synthesis of both (4*R*,5*R*)- and (4*S*,5*S*)- *iso*-cytoxazone from (D)- or (L)- tyrosine is reported. The diastereoselection was confirmed by X-ray crystallography. This synthesis is currently the highest yielding approach towards these enantiomerically pure biologically active oxazolidinones

Key words: Diastereoselective, Cytoxazone, Tyrosine, Oxazolidinone, Oxidation.

During the course of screening for chemical immunomodulators from microbial metabolites, Osada found that an actinomycete strain (RK95-31) produced cytoxazone **1**, an oxazolidinone that interferes with cytokine IL-4, IL-10 and IgG production.¹ Several groups have synthesized (–)-cytoxazone **1** and (+)-*epi*-cytoxazone **2**,² and Šunjić has described the racemic syntheses of all of the stereoisomers and congeners of *iso*-cytoxazone **3**; enantiomerically pure samples were isolated by preparative HPLC.³ A theoretical study on the absolute configurations of **1** and **3** has been carried out by Berova, as have extensive X-ray crystallographic studies.⁴

Rozwadowska and Tomczak have recently reported the synthesis of (4*S*,5*S*)-(–)-*iso*-cytoxazone **3**,⁵ but the synthesis required seven synthetic steps, the last of which afforded a mixture of regioisomers in an overall yield of 8.1%. Prompted by these studies after reporting several routes to 1,3 amino diols⁶ we herein report our efforts in this area, utilizing a rapid highly diastereoselective three-step process from Boc-protected D- or L- tyrosine.

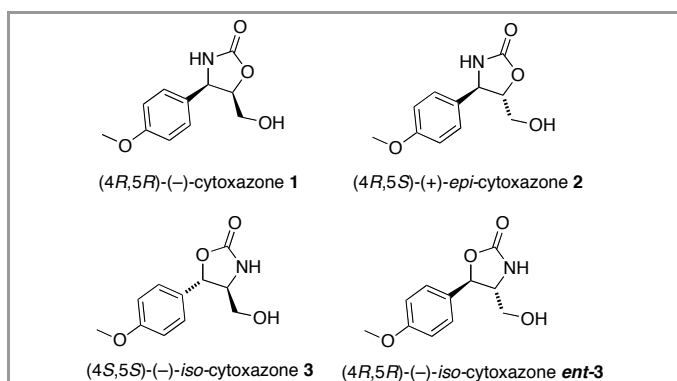
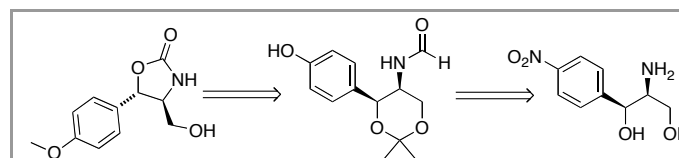


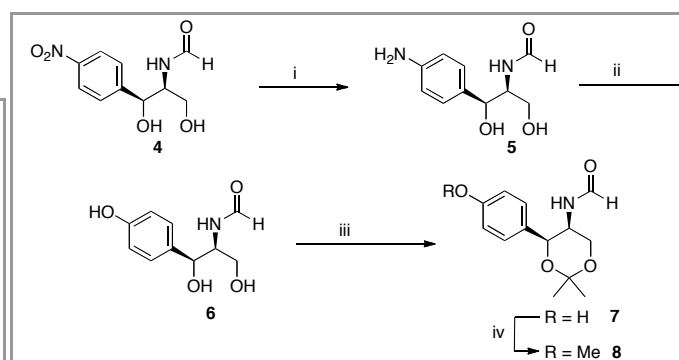
Figure 1 The cytoxazones

Our original strategy towards (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-cytoxazone was similar to that of Rozwadowska, using diazotization as a key reaction step (Scheme 1).



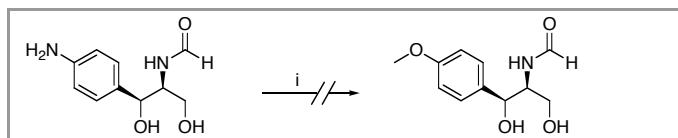
Scheme 1 Retrosynthetic route towards (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-isocytoxazone

Hydrogenation of the nitro group in the formate-protected amino diol **4** to give the corresponding amino compound **5** proved highly successful (99% yield). The subsequent diazotization reaction, however, was extremely poor, giving at best 15% yield in our hands (the reaction has previously been reported to give yields of up to 35%).⁷ Further manipulation of product **6** afforded the 4-hydroxyphenyl-1,3-dioxane **7**. Methylation, after some experimentation, was achieved with caesium carbonate and dimethyl sulfate, producing the 4-methoxyformate **8**, but separation from by-products brought through from the initial diazotization reaction proved difficult (Scheme 2). Before this approach was abandoned, an interesting reaction reported by Quin and Macdiarmid was attempted, whereby direct conversion from an amine group to a methoxy group is possible using *iso*-amyl nitrite in methanol (Scheme 3).⁸ Unfortunately, when using our substrate, this led to a complex mixture of products, including loss of the formate protecting group.



Reagents and Conditions: i: H₂/Pd, ethanol, r.t. 24 h, 99 %; ii: a) NaNO₂, H₂SO₄, b) pH 6, Δ, 15 %; iii, 2,2-DMP, acetone, CSA, r.t., 4 h, 72 %; iv: Cs₂CO₃, Me₂SO₄, CH₂Cl₂, 48 h, 72 %.

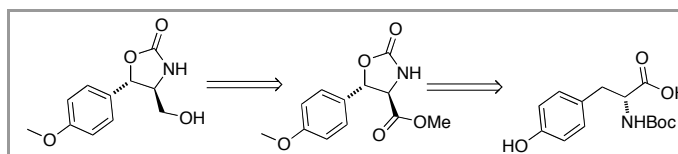
Scheme 2 Initial synthesis of the *p*-methoxy formate **8**.



Reagents and Conditions: i: a) H₂SO₄, MeOH, (CH₃)₂CHCH₂CH₂ONO, 0 °C, 3 h; b) Δ, 1 h.

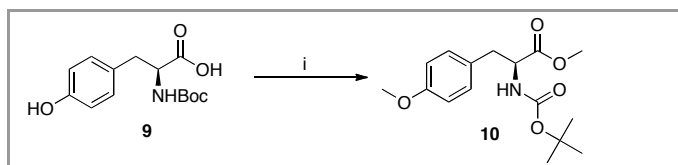
Scheme 3 Attempted direct incorporation of the methoxy group using Quin and Macdiarmid's method.

We next reasoned that (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **3** could be prepared from commercially available Boc-(*D*)-tyrosine (Scheme 4).



Scheme 4 A revised retrosynthetic route towards (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-cytoxazone from Boc-*D*-tyrosine

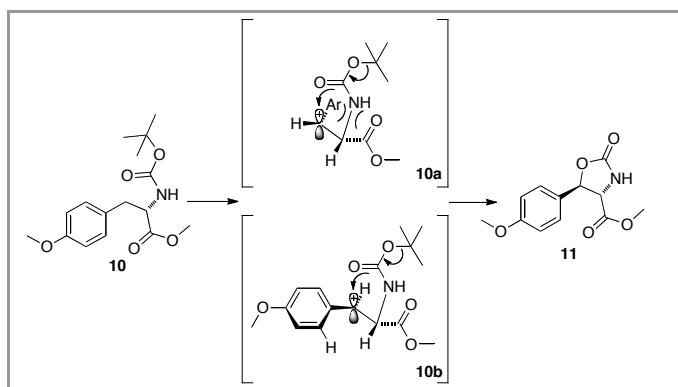
We initially aimed to prepare the enantiomer of **3** (4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **ent-3** from the cheaper Boc-(*L*)-tyrosine (Schemes 5, 6 and 7). Methylation of the acid and phenol components within Boc-(*L*)-tyrosine with potassium hydroxide and iodomethane afforded **10**,⁹ the required precursor to **11**.



Reagents and Conditions: i: MeI (2.2 eq.), KOH (2.2 eq.), DMF, 0 °C-r.t. 3.5 h, 74 %.

Scheme 5 Formation of Boc-protected, dimethylated (*L*)-tyrosine **10**.

Following the work of Ohfuné,¹⁰ the benzylic position of **10** was oxidized with potassium persulfate (K₂S₂O₈) and catalytic copper sulfate to form the oxazolidinone **11**¹¹ in a highly diastereoselective manner (diastereomeric ratio ≥ 98 % *R* at C3) (Scheme 6).



Reagents and Conditions: K₂S₂O₈, CuSO₄, H₂O/MeCN (1:1), 70 °C, 3h, 52%.

Scheme 6 Ohfuné's cyclic carbamate formation.

The authors suggest that this high selectivity in cyclic carbamate formation arises because the reaction proceeds *via* the more stable conformer of benzyl cation intermediate **10b**. The conformer **10a** is more strained than **10b** due to steric interaction between the ester group and the *ortho* hydrogen atom. Intramolecular trapping of this cation by a carboxyl oxygen and subsequent release of the *tert*-butyl cation, which is believed to be more stable than the benzylic cation of **10**, is thought to be a driving force for the reaction. This was supported by Ohfuné's observation that only poor yields were obtained from compounds containing other amino protecting groups, such as the Cbz group. Confirmation of the stereoselectivity was achieved from the X-ray crystal structure of compound **11**, as shown in Figure 2.

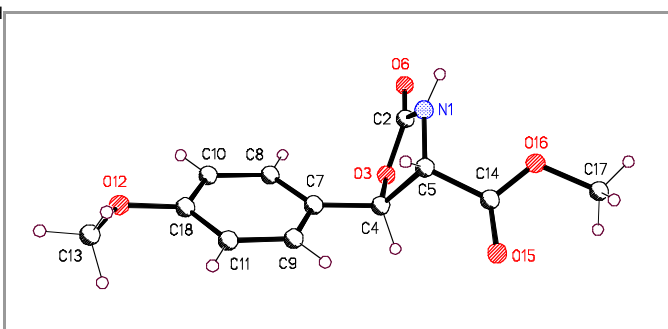
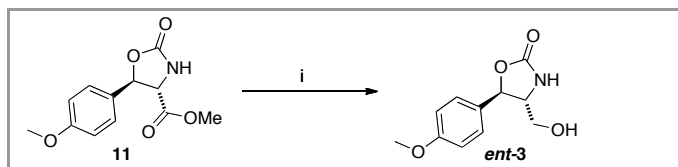


Figure 2 X-ray crystal structure of **11**¹²

Although this reaction is highly stereoselective, some problems were encountered during the synthesis. Yields tended to vary on scale-up of the reaction. Initially, the reaction on 4 mmol of substrate afforded 50% of the desired product (a good yield given the reported yield of 55%), but on increasing the scale to 26 mmol a drop in yield to 40% was observed. Optimum conditions were found when carrying the reaction out on a 16 mmol scale - a 52 % yield of product was obtained. Attempts to drive the reaction to completion proved fruitless. Generally, increased reaction times and temperatures decreased the overall yield due to generation of higher levels of the side product 4-methoxy benzaldehyde (a product of over-oxidation).¹⁰ Milder reaction conditions resulted in no product formation.

In order to afford the desired (4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **ent-3**¹³ the carbamate **11** was then reduced; this was initially achieved with lithium aluminium hydride, but sodium borohydride provided a superior yield (91 % compared to 77 %), probably due to the ease of work-up associated with the sodium borohydride reactions, (Scheme 7). (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **3** was prepared by repeating this optimized sequence using (*D*)-tyrosine as the starting material, in an overall yield of 33%.¹⁴



Reagents and Conditions: i: NaBH₄, EtOH, 0 °C to r.t. 45 min, 91%.

Scheme 1 Formation of (4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-cytoxazone *ent*-3.

In conclusion we have reported here the highly diastereoselective synthesis of (4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-cytoxazone *ent*-3 and (4*S*,5*S*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **3** in just three synthetic steps from (D)- or (L)- Boc-tyrosine, and confirmation of the stereoselection by X-ray crystallography. This is the shortest and most high yielding approach (35% overall yield compared to 8.1% overall yield reported previously) currently known for this class of biologically active oxazolidinones.

Acknowledgment

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- (9) **O-Methyl-*N*-tert-butoxycarbonyl-L-tyrosine methyl ester 10**: A solution of *N*-tert-butoxycarbonyl-L-tyrosine (8.00 g, 28.5 mmol) in dimethylformamide (80 ml) was cooled using an ice bath, treated with freshly ground potassium hydroxide (1.72 g, 31.3 mmol), and a cooled solution of iodomethane (1.95 ml, 31.3 mmol) in dimethylformamide (20 ml) added dropwise over 5 min. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min, cooled using an ice bath, and additional potassium hydroxide (1.72 g, 31.3 mmol) and a cooled solution of iodomethane (1.95 ml, 31.3 mmol) in dimethylformamide (20 ml) added. The mixture was stirred for 3 h, poured onto ice (150 ml), and extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 75 ml). The organic layers were washed with water (3 x 50 ml), brine (2 x 50 ml) and dried (MgSO₄). The solvent was removed under reduced pressure to afford a colourless oil. Crystallization was achieved from ethyl acetate/light petroleum, to give **10** as colourless crystals (6.5 g, 74%); m.p. 52–53 °C; [α]_D²⁰ +58.9 (*c* 1.2, CHCl₃, lit.¹⁵ [α]_D²² +59.2 *c* 1.8, CHCl₃); ν_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 2976, 1746, 1716, 1612, 1515, 1391, 1366, 1248, 1175, 1058, 1034; δ_H (250 MHz; CDCl₃) 1.42 (9 H, s), 3.01–3.11 (2 H, m), 3.71 (3 H, s), 3.78 (3 H, s), 4.53 (1 H, q, *J* 5.7 Hz), 5.00 (1 H, d, *J* 6.7 Hz), 6.82 (2 H, d, *J* 8.7 Hz), 7.03 (2 H, d, *J* 8.7 Hz); δ_C (100 MHz; CDCl₃) 28.3, 37.6, 52.7, 54.7, 55.3, 79.9, 114.1, 128.1, 130.3, 155.1, 158.8, 172.4; *m/z* 309.1578; C₁₆H₂₃NO₅ requires 309.1576.
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- (11) **Methyl (4*S*,5*R*)-5-[4-methoxyphenyl]-1,3-oxazolidin-2-one 4-carboxylate 11**: A solution of *O*-methyl-*N*-tert-butoxycarbonyl-L-tyrosine methyl ester **10** (5.00 g, 16.2 mmol) in CH₃CN (200 ml) was treated with a solution of K₂S₂O₈ (8.75 g, 32.4 mmol) in water (210 ml) and a solution of CuSO₄ (0.52 g, 3.2 mmol) in water (50 ml). The mixture was heated to 70 °C for 3 h under a blanket of N₂, allowed to cool, and extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 150 ml). The combined organic solutions were dried (MgSO₄) and concentrated under reduced pressure to give a dark yellow oil. Column chromatography, eluting with ethyl acetate/light petroleum (1:10:1), afforded a colourless solid, which was recrystallized from ethyl acetate/light petroleum to give **11** as a colourless crystalline solid (2.10 g, 52%); m.p. 94–96 °C; [α]_D²⁰ +83.5 (*c* 1.15, CHCl₃); ν_{max} (film)/cm⁻¹ 3316, 2956, 2362, 2337, 1762, 1613, 1515, 1382, 1250, 1224, 1026, 834, 763; δ_H (400 MHz; CDCl₃) 3.81 (3 H, s), 3.83 (3 H, s), 4.31 (1 H, d, *J* 5.2 Hz), 5.56 (1 H, d, *J* 5.2 Hz), 6.81 (1 H, s), 6.93 (2 H, d, *J* 4.8 Hz), 7.33 (2 H, d, 4.8 Hz), δ_C (100 MHz; CDCl₃) 53.5, 55.7, 61.8, 79.9, 114.7, 127.5, 130.3, 158.6, 160.6, 170.7; *m/z* 251.0794; C₁₂H₁₃NO₅ (M⁺) requires 251.0794.
- (12) *Crystal data for 11*: C₁₂H₁₃NO₅, *M* = 251.23, monoclinic, *a* = 7.0103(8), *b* = 5.5734(6), *c* = 15.6004(18) Å, *U* = 602.01(12) Å³, space group *P*2₁, *Z* = 2, *μ* = 0.109 mm⁻¹, ρ_{calc} = 1.386 Mg.cm⁻³. 5035 data (1542 unique, *R*_{int} = 0.0157) collected on an Apex II diffractometer at 150K. Solved by direct methods¹⁶ and refined by full-matrix least-squares on *F*². *R*₁(*I* > 2σ(*I*)) = 0.0298 and *wR*₂(all data) = 0.0745. Goodness of fit on *F*² = 1.079. CCDC No. 804096.
- (13) **(4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-Cytoxazone ent-3**: Methyl (4*S*,5*R*)-5-[4-methoxyphenyl]-1,3-oxazolidin-2-one 4-carboxylate **11** (2.20 g, 8.8 mmol) was dissolved in ethanol (25 ml) and the solution cooled using an ice bath. A solution of NaBH₄ (0.70 g, 19.3 mmol) in ethanol (8 ml) was added dropwise with stirring. After the addition was complete the ice bath was removed and the mixture stirred for 45 min. The mixture was cooled to 0 °C and conc. HCl (1.5 ml) added, followed by water (15 ml). The ethanol was removed under reduced pressure and the remaining aqueous solution extracted with ethyl acetate (3 x 50 ml). The combined organic solutions were dried (MgSO₄), and the solvents removed to afford an off-

white solid, which was recrystallized from ethyl acetate/light petroleum to give (4*R*,5*R*)-*iso*-cytoxazone **ent-3** as a colourless crystalline solid (1.75 g, 90%); m.p. 140-142 °C; $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} +74.8$ (*c* 1.08, CH₃COCH₃, lit.³); $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{25} +70$ (*c* 0.4, MeOH); ν_{max} (nujol) /cm⁻¹ 3239, 1725, 1614, 1514, 1459, 1376, 1251, 1174, 1062, 1016, 828; δ_{H} (250 MHz; acetone-*d*₆) 3.71-3.87 (3 H, m), 3.86 (3 H, s), 5.35 (1 H, d, *J* 5.3 Hz), 7.01 (2 H, d, *J* 8.6 Hz), 7.41 (2 H, d, *J* 8.6 Hz); δ_{C} (100 MHz; CDCl₃) 56.0, 63.1, 64.2, 80.4, 115.4, 128.7, 133.2, 159.6, 161.3; *m/z* 223.0842; C₁₁H₁₃NO₄ (M⁺) requires 223.0845.

- (14) See the supplementary material for the experimental data.
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