Pergamon

Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters, Vol. 7, No. 21, pp. 2735-2740, 1997

0960-894X/97 $17.00 + 0.00

PII: S0960-894X(97)10067-1

DESIGN AND SYNTHESIS OF NOVEL 2,7-DIALKYL SUBSTITUTED 5(*S*)-AMINO-4(*S*)-HYDROXY-8-PHENYL-OCTANECARBOXAMIDES AS *IN VITRO* POTENT PEPTIDOMIMETIC INHIBITORS OF HUMAN RENIN

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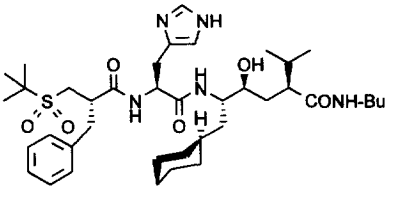
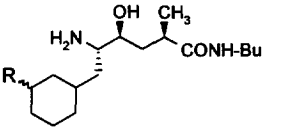
Abstract: Novel low-molecular weight transition-state peptidomimetic renin inhibitors characterized by an all-carbon 8-phenyl substituted octanecarboxamide skeleton have been discovered based on a topographical design approach. The *in vitro* most potent inhibitors **21**, **25** and **26** incorporating a strong H-bond acceptor group linked to the benzyl spacer of the (P_3-P_1)-unit had IC_{50}s in the low nanomolar range against human renin.

Renin inhibitors which specifically block the first, rate limiting step of the blood-pressure regulating renin-angiotensin system (RAS) are an attractive target in drug discovery as novel agents for the treatment of hypertension and other cardiovascular diseases.[1a,b] However, development of substrate-based transition-state renin inhibitors usually spanning the P_4-P_1' minimal sequence has been hampered in most cases by limited oral bioavailability, rapid metabolism or extensive first-pass biliary excretion.[2]

Problems associated with unfavourable pharmacokinetic properties could be potentially overcome by generating structurally distinct renin inhibitors. Recently, a novel approach based on the extension of the P_1 cyclohexyl group of peptide-based inhibitors directly towards P_3 and partial truncation of the N-terminal backbone has been reported[3,4] as a strategy in order to reduce molecular size. The crystal structure of a (P_4-P_1)-spanning inhibitor complexed to rh-renin confirmed that its (P_3-P_1)-modified side chain could indeed be accomodated by the S_3-S_1 site.[4] Furthermore, elimination of the P_4-P_3 portion led only to a small drop in binding affinity,[4] with IC_{50}s of these inhibitors in the micromolar range. On the other hand, the significance of the H-bond accepting and -donating P_4-P_3 amide group for strong binding interactions has been emphazised.[3b]



CGP 38560 (**1**)



2: R = H
(*rac-trans*)-**3**: R = ^{t}Bu-$(CH_2)_3$-

This has prompted us to disclose, in a preliminary communication,[5] part of our efforts towards a similar topographical[6] design concept based on the enzyme-bound conformation of the peptide-based renin inhibitor CGP 38560 (**1**),[7] as predicted by modeling[8] and confirmed by X-ray crystallography.[9] Initially, our strategy was guided by the paradigm that the key binding forces between the enzyme and a ligand result from interactions involving the amino acid side chains rather than the amide backbone of the peptide-like inhibitors.[10,11] Several approaches were extensively investigated to design various hydrophobic conformationally rigid (P_3-P_1)-moieties appending a transition state mimetic, that would optimally fill the large, contiguous S_3/S_1 binding

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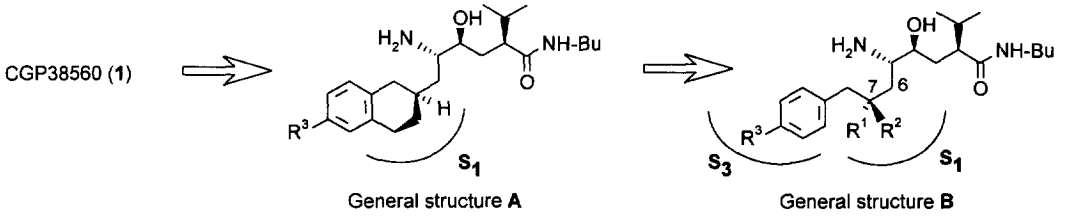
pocket of the enzyme, and which would allow to sacrifice the P_4-P_2 spanning backbone and side chains of a topological inhibitor such as **1**.[5] As a first result, the hydroxyethylene mimetic **3** bearing a free NH_2 group was found to inhibit human renin in the sub-micromolar range, thus being 100 times more potent than compound **2**.[12] We report herein the synthesis and *in vitro* potency of a novel class of peptidomimetics incorporating a benzyl spacer that directly links the P_3 residue to an alkyl P_1 group of the dipeptide isostere. Attachment of H-bond acceptor groups to the phenyl template led to inhibitors with low nanomolar binding affinities.

Design Concept

Intrigued by the close spatial proximity of both the P_1 cyclohexyl and P_3 phenyl sidechains of **1** in its predicted binding mode within the S_3/S_1 site,[5] we envisaged the possibility to extend P_1 by annulating a phenyl ring, for tethering P_3, to the C3'-C4' bond of the cyclohexyl, which was predicted to be distal to the surface of the S_1 site, as illustrated in Figure 1 (Structure **A**). Modeling of such a tetrahydronaphthalene substituted dipeptide isostere, as well as its 'ring-opened' congener (Figure 1, structure **B** with R^1=H, R^2=Et) suggested that in both cases the rigid phenyl spacer would direct a hydrophobic substituent R^3, such as aryl or bulky alkyl, towards the S_3 pocket, and that the P_1 alkyl group would be well accomodated by the S_1 site. Furthermore, these initial design considerations predicted the β-configuration at P_1 (**B**, R^1=H, R^2=alkyl) to be preferred over the α-configuration (**B**, R^1=alkyl, R^2=H) with respect to a better fit in the S_3/S_1 pocket.[13]

Figure 1. Design Approach towards Novel Peptidomimetic Hydroxyethylene Mimetics extended at P_1

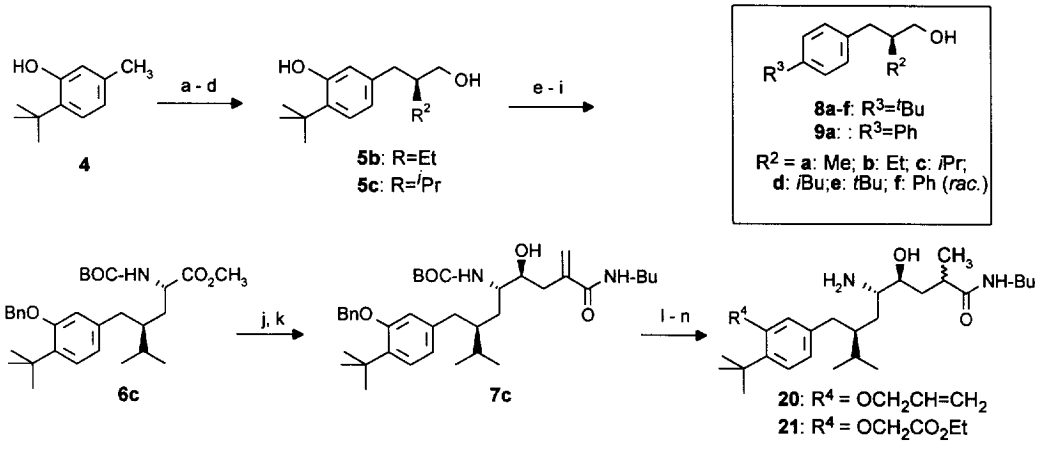


Synthesis

The novel (P_3-P_1)-extended transition-state mimetic renin inhibitors **10-26** with varying P_1 side chains and tethered P_3 residues (Table) were prepared by the linear route as exemplified for compounds **20** and **21** in the Scheme.[14,15] Commercially available **4** (Aldrich Ltd.) was protected as its acetate and subsequently treated with NBS to give the corresponding benzylbromide which was used for the diastereoselective alkylation (de ≥ 95%) of the N-acyl-oxazolidinone chiral auxiliaries (*R*)-**27b** and (*R*)-**27c** according to the method of Evans *et al.*[16] Reductive cleavage of the chiral auxiliary with $LiAlH_4$ afforded alcohol (*S*)-**5b** in good (70%), but (*R*)-**5c** in only poor (12%) yields, the major side products resulting from reductive endocyclic cleavage of the oxazolidinone. Similarly, the regioselectivity of the $LiAlH_4$ reduction dropped dramatically with increasing steric hindrance[16b] in the case of the *para* mono-substituted analogues **8a-d**[17] and **9a** (for example, 94% yield for **8a** *vs.* 43% for **8c** *vs.* 0% for **8e**; *cf.* Scheme). On the other hand, removal of the auxiliary through reaction with lithium benzyl mercaptide and $LiAlH_4$ reduction of the intermediate thioester in one pot by the method of Damon and Coppola[18] gave enantiomerically pure **5c** in excellent 86% yield and even moderate to good yields

for **8e** (37%). In the case of the phenyl-substituted alcohol **8f**, the presence of the nucleophilic and poorly basic benzyl mercaptide caused complete racemisation at the benzylic stereocenter.[19]

Scheme



Reagents: (a) Ac_2O (93%); (b) NBS, CCl_4 (95%); (c) 3-butyroyl-4(*R*)-benzyl-oxazolidin-2-one (**27b**) or 3-isovaleroyl-4(*R*)-benzyl-oxazolidin-2-one (**27c**), LiHMDS, THF, -78 °C to 0 °C (46-52%); (d) BnSH, *n*-BuLi, $LiAlH_4$, THF (**5c**:86%); (e) **5c**, BnBr, Cs_2CO_3, DMF (78%); (f) NBS, PPh_3, CH_2Cl_2 (98%); (g) (2*R*)-2,5-dihydro-3,6-dimethoxy-2-isopropylpyrazine, *n*-BuLi, THF, -75 to -20 °C (91%); (h) 1N HCl, MeCN (96%); (i) $(BOC)_2O$, $NEt(iPr)_2$, CH_2Cl_2 (96%); (j) DIBAH, toluene (quant.); (k) i. N-butylmethacryl-amide, *n*-BuLi, $TiCl(OiPr)_3$, THF, -78 °C; ii. RCHO, THF, -78 °C; iii. silica gel chromatography (19%); (l) H_2, Pd/C, MeOH (88%); (m) allylbromide, Cs_2CO_3, acetone (90%) or $BrCH_2CO_2Me$, Cs_2CO_3, acetone, NaI (80%); (n) 4N HCl-dioxane (**20**:32%; **21**:74%).

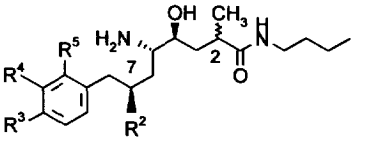
The N-*BOC*-protected α-amino ester 2(*S*),4(*S*)-**6c** was expediciously prepared from **5c** (after reprotection of the phenolic OH group) in 62% overall yield following the procedure of Schöllkopf *et al.*[20] Subsequent DIBAH reduction afforded the N-*BOC* amino aldehyde, which was reacted with the dianion generated from *n*-butyl acrylamide in the presence of $Ti(OiPr)_3Cl$ similar to the method by Kempf,[21,22] to give separable mixtures of both 4(*S*)/4(*R*)-configured diastereoisomers **7c** in good yields (ratio 4(*S*),5(*S*),7(*R*)-**7c**:4(*R*),5(*S*),7(*R*)-**7c** ca. 1:2).[23] Hydrogenation (10% Pd/C) of the alkene with concomitant removal of the benzyl protecting group yielded a pair of 2(*R*)/2(*S*)-diastereomers which were difficult to separate by silica gel chromatography and thus further transformed as epimeric mixtures.[24] O-Alkylation of the phenol intermediates with the corresponding alkylhalogenides (iodoacetamide for **25**) was followed by N-deprotection to afford inhibitors **20**, **21** and **25**,[25] whereas the carboxylic acid **24** (Table) was obtained by hydrogenolysis of the benzyl ester precursor. The methylsulfone **26** was prepared by oxidation (oxone, MeOH-H_2O, 16h, r.t, 54%) of the corresponding thioether obtained by alkylation of the phenol precursor with methylthiomethyl chloride (66%).

Results and Discussion

The hydroxyethylene mimetic **10** bearing a hydrophobic biphenyl residue at P_1 assumed to be directed towards the S_3 enzyme sub-pocket according to modeling showed weak binding affinity for purified human renin at the micromolar level (Table). Thus, **10** had a 10 fold increased activity in this assay (determined at pH=7.2)[7] as compared to the non-extended dipeptide isostere **2**.[12] Replacement of the terminal phenyl with the bulky *tert*-butyl group gave inhibitor **11** with similar *in vitro* potency. This is in agreement with previous results for **3** and some analogues, that an appended *tert*-butyl is equally well tolerated at P_3 as phenyl which is the commonly more preferred P_3 residue in peptide-based inhibitors.[12] Further optimisation of these initial

target inhibitors was performed within the P_3 *tert*-butyl substituted series, partially in view of more readily available precursors bearing additional substituents on the phenyl ring.

Table. IC_{50}s of 5(*S*)-Amino-4(*S*)-hydroxy-8-phenyl-octanecarboxamides **10-26** against Purified Human Renin



No.[a]	R^2	R^3	R^4	R^5	Binding Affinity IC_{50}, μM (pH 7.2)
3					30
10	CH_3	phenyl	H	H	3
11	CH_3	*tert*-butyl	H	H	2
12	C_2H_5	*tert*-butyl	H	H	0.8
13	C_2H_5[b]	*tert*-butyl	H	H	3
14	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	H	H	0.1
15	$CH_2CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	H	H	4
16	$C(CH_3)_3$	*tert*-butyl	H	H	1.5
17	phenyl[d]	*tert*-butyl	H	H	39
18[c]	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	OH	H	0.13
19	C_2H_5	*tert*-butyl	OC_4H_9	H	0.24
20[c]	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	$OCH_2CH{=}CH_2$	H	0.11
21	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	$OCH_2CO_2CH_3$	H	0.006
22	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	H	$OCH_2CO_2C_2H_5$	0.29
23[c]	$CH(CH_3)_2$	H	$OCH_2CO_2CH_3$	H	0.037
24	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	OCH_2COOH	H	0.120
25	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	OCH_2CONH_2	H	0.020
26	$CH(CH_3)_2$	*tert*-butyl	$OCH_2SO_2CH_3$	H	0.013

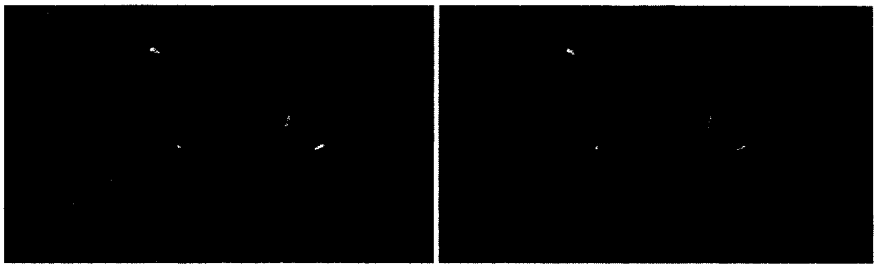
[a] Tested (single determination) as ca. 1:1-mixtures of C2(*R*,*S*)-diastereomers; [b] (*R*)-configured at C7; [c] Pure diastereomer of 2(*R*),4(*S*),5(*S*),7(*S*) absolute configuration; [d] (*R*,*S*)-configured at C7.

In the next step, the structure-activity relationship (SAR) of the putative P_1 residue as well as the required stereochemistry at this position was investigated. Increasing the steric bulkiness by replacing Me with Et and *i*Pr improved binding affinity 20 fold (**11** *vs.* **12** *vs.* **14**), which was attributed to an increase in the van der Waals contacts to the hydrophobic S_1 subsite. In order to prove that the C7(*S*) absolute stereochemistry at P_1 is required for strong binding of **12**, the corresponding (7*R*)-epimer **13** was prepared by the same route shown in the Scheme. Inhibitor **13** was found to be 3-4 times less active than **12**, as was also suggested by comparative docking analyses for both epimers.[13] Extension of the P_1 side chain by incorporation of isobutyl (compound **15**) led to a 15 fold drop of the IC_{50} value compared to **14**. Also, the additional CH_3 of the *tert*-butyl group in **16** appeared to interfere unfavourably with the S_1 binding site. A phenyl group at P_1 was not well tolerated as demonstrated by the markedly decreased IC_{50} value for **17**.

To improve the moderate binding affinity of **14**, we envisaged[3] introducing appropriate substituents having the potential of forming additional hydrogen bonds to the enzyme cleft at different positions of the benzyl spacer. In the case of peptide-like enzyme inhibitors, the contribution of H-bonding interactions of the backbone amide groups to the overall binding energy may be outweighed by unfavourable desolvation enthalpies,[26] however such interactions may play an important role in providing a proper inhibitor alignment within the enzyme active site.[11,3b] Previous reports on the SAR of peptide-based inhibitors of renin[2] and crystal structures of enzyme-inhibitor complexes,[27,28] indicated the importance of the conserved hydrogen bonding between a P_2/P_3 carbonyl group of various inhibitors to the backbone amide NH of the amino acid

corresponding to Ser219 of human renin for strong inhibitor binding. The overlap of the enzyme-docked inhibitors **14** and CGP38560 (**1**) within the human renin model revealed the phenyl of **14** to be in a remote position several bond lengths distant from the Ser219 main-chain amide bond of the enzyme. Accordingly, and due to its large distance to other H-bonding groups of the enzyme, the additional phenolic OH of inhibitor **18** does not lead to an increase in binding affinity as compared to **14**. However, we realized that attaching an ester group via a two-atom spacer preferentially *ortho* to the P_3 residue would position the ester carbonyl in reasonable hydrogen bonding geometry to the NH of Ser219, similar to the P_3 carbonyl of **1** (Figure 2).[29] Inhibitor **21** with a low nanomolar IC_{50} value revealed a 15 fold enhancement in binding affinity over **14** (Table), which would be in agreement with the formation of an additional hydrogen bonding interaction. On the other hand, the *meta* substituted regioisomer **22** was much weaker in binding, indicating the requirement of the proper spatial orientation of the ester group. The markedly reduced affinities of the alkoxy derivatives **19** and **20**, being only equipotent to their unsubstituted congeners **12** and **14**, appeared to further support the validity of our design model. The importance of the van der Waals forces of the P_3 *tert*-butyl group within the hydrophobic S_3 subsite for strong binding is demonstrated by the 6 fold drop of the IC_{50} of **23** (Table).

Figure 2. Stereoview of the overlay of the energy-minimized Monte Carlo conformations of CGP38560 (**1**) and inhibitor **21** within the human renin active site model.[8,11] Both centers of the enzyme S_3 and S_1 contiguous binding pockets are indicated by red colored spots. The close distances of the P_2/P_3 carbonyl of **1**, as well as of the ester carbonyl of **21**, to the Ser219 (orange colored) amide NH suggested in both cases a strong H-bond.



Replacement of the terminal carboxylic ester with a carboxamide or methylsulfonyl residue as strong H-bonding acceptors led to inhibitors **25** and **26** with comparable *in vitro* potencies, whereas the carboxylic acid **24** was only a weak inhibitor of purified human renin. Finally, N-acetylation of the amino group of several inhibitors in the Table resulted in a loss in binding affinity by 2 to 3 orders of magnitude (data not shown).

In summary, a novel class of small-sized, *in vitro* highly potent peptidomimetic transition-state renin inhibitors which incorporate a constrained benzyl-spacer-linked (P_3-P_1)-moiety has been designed using a topographical approach. Introduction of additional hydrogen bond acceptor/donor residues at the position *ortho* to the P_3 substituent and in appropriate distance to the phenyl template, as suggested by previous SAR data of peptide-based inhibitors and computational modeling, resulted in a remarkable enhancement in binding affinities as compared to the parent inhibitor **14**. The most potent compounds within this series, the carboxylic ester **21**, the carboxamide **25** and the methylsulfonyl derivative **26**, showed IC_{50} values at the low nanomolar level towards purified human renin. Further optimization of the *in vitro* potency of this compound class and evaluation of the oral activities on blood pressure in Na^+-depleted marmosets will be reported in due course.

Acknowledgements: The main author would like to thank Dr. Walter Fuhrer and Dr. Vittorio Rasetti for the critical discussions in the course of this work. We are grateful to H.-P. Baum for performing the *in vitro* assay and Dr. Vincenzo Tschinke for providing the stereoview presented in Figure 2. R. G. Is indebted to Ms. Nicole Hasler and Ms. Florence Lugrin for their excellent technical assistance.

References and Notes

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23. Stereochemical assignments within this series were tentatively based on the relative *in vitro* binding affinities of 2(R,S),4(*S*)-configured **22** (Table) and its 2(R,S),4(*R*)-epimer obtained after silica gel flash chromatography separation of the C2 methylene intermediate, with **22** being 10 fold more active towards human renin than the 4(*R*)-isomers. For **7c** and analogues, assignment was based on the generally observed relative ^{1}H-NMR up-field shifts of the *BOC*-NH signals (ca. 0.2 ppm, DMSO-d_6) for the 4(*S*)- *vs.* 4(*R*)-isomers. In all cases, the 4(*R*)-diastereomers corresponding to **7c** appeared to be more polar by t.l.c..
24. In the course of this work, it was discovered for related N-*BOC* protected hydroxyethylene dipeptide isosteres substituted with different (P_3-P_1)-moieties [Ref. 5] that catalytical hydrogenation of the methylene group at the C-2 position occurred highly diastereoselectively in the presence of optically active $[Ru_2Cl_4((S)\text{-BINAP})_2]\cdot NEt_3$ [see: Takaya, H.; Noyori, R. *et al.*, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.* **1987**, 109, 1596] to give the desired 2(*R*)-methyl isomers (H. Rüeger, personal communication).
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29. In a parallel effort within different series of peptidomimetic renin inhibitors, a similar strategy was applied successfully to design *in vitro* highly potent P_3 extended dipeptide isosteres in our laboratories [Ref. 5].

(*Received in Belgium* 2 *July* 1997; *accepted* 29 *September* 1997)