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High Affinity Phenylglycinol-Based NK_1 Receptor Antagonists

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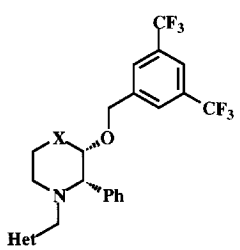
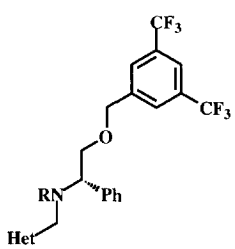
Abstract: Heterocyclic replacements for the carboxamido group of the previously disclosed phenylglycinol-based human NK_1 (hNK_1) receptor antagonists have been investigated, ultimately leading to acyclic compounds with sub-nanomolar affinity for the hNK_1 receptor.

It has recently been shown that certain heterocyclic moieties can be introduced into piperidine- or morpholine-derived human NK_1 (hNK_1) receptor antagonists[1,2] resulting in compounds of type **1** which possess increased potency, both *in vitro* and *in vivo*, over previous lead structures. In this publication we investigate the effect of the introduction of certain of these heterocycles into the phenylglycinol-derived acyclic series of NK_1 receptor antagonist of type **3**[3] as replacements for the potentially metabolically labile carboxamido moiety to obtain compounds of type **2**. The heterocycles chosen for this initial investigation were triazole, triazolinone and tetrazole. In addition, the effects of introducing alternative N-alkyl substituents and of alternative benzyl ether substitution patterns were investigated.



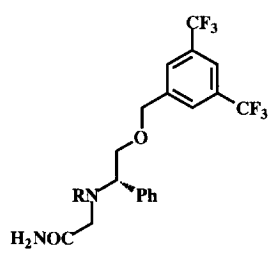
X = O, CH_2

1



2

R = H or Me



3

The triazole moiety was introduced by synthesis of the (chloromethyl)amidrazone **6** (Scheme 1) which was coupled with enantiomerically pure **11a**[3] at 40°C with K_2CO_3 in DMF, followed by cyclization at 140°C to give **12a** (Scheme 2). The tertiary amine derivative **12b** was prepared by BOC protection of **11a** followed by methylation with NaH/MeI, and subsequent deprotection with TFA to give **11b** which was alkylated with **6** followed by cyclization, as previously described (Scheme 2). The triazolinone moiety was introduced in a similar fashion to the triazole by synthesis of **7** (Scheme 1) which was coupled with **11a** or **11b**, followed by cyclization to give the secondary amine derivative **13a** and the tertiary amine derivative **13b** (Scheme 2).

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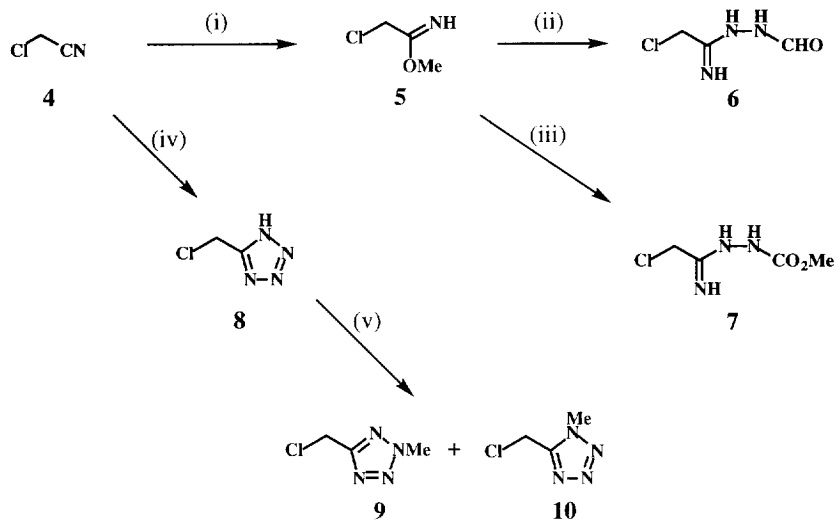
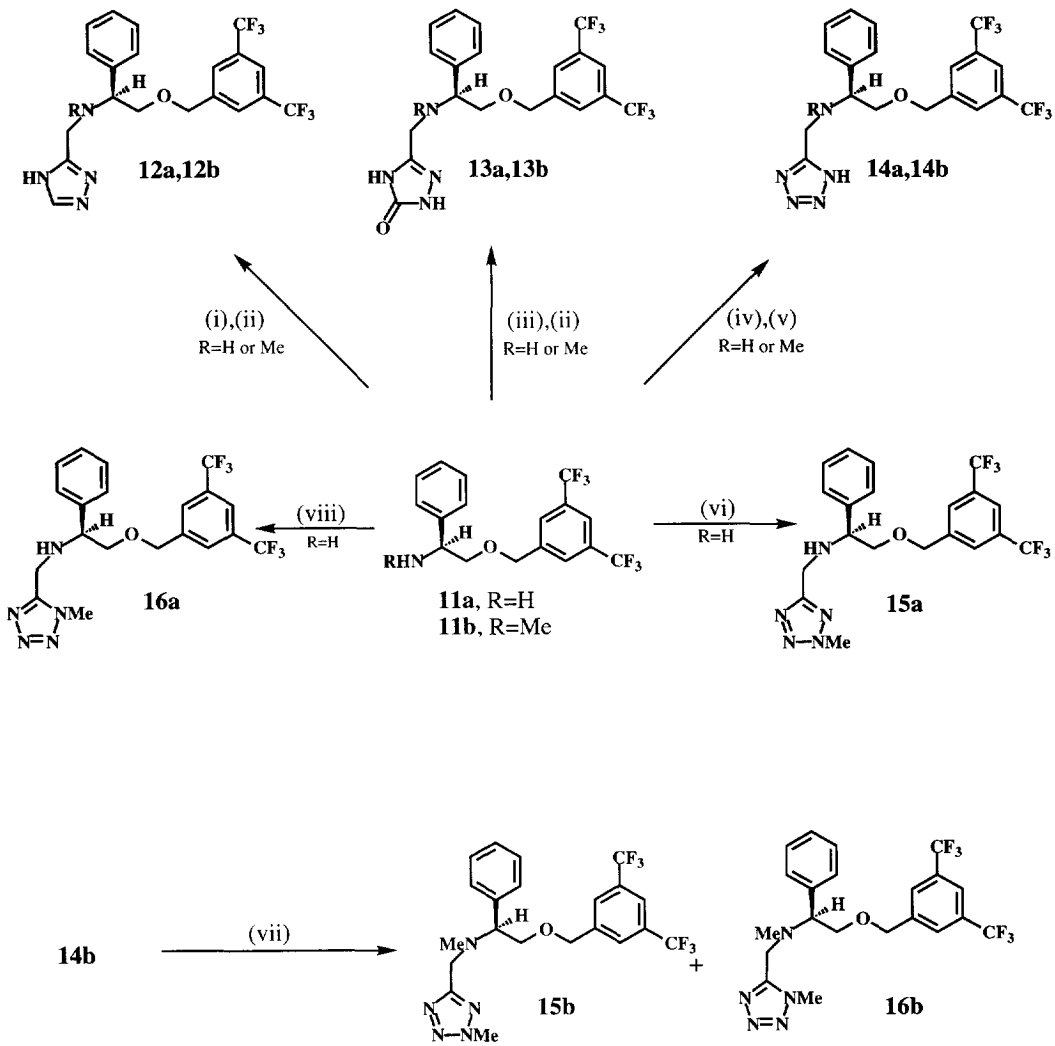
The tetrazole containing compounds (**14-16a,b**) were formed by various methods. The unsubstituted tetrazoles **14a** and **14b** were formed by alkylation of **11a** and **11b** respectively with bromoacetonitrile in DMF in the presence of K_2CO_3, followed by cycloaddition with sodium azide in 1-methyl-2-pyrrolidinone (Scheme 2). Compound **14b** was subsequently alkylated with diazomethane in ether to give the two isomers **15b** and **16b** which were separated by flash silica gel chromatography (Scheme 2). The secondary amines **15a** and **16a** were formed by alkylation of **11a** with the N-methylated (chloromethyl)tetrazole isomers **9** and **10** (Scheme 2) which were made by diazomethane methylation of **8** derived from reacting chloroacetonitrile with $Al(N_3)_3$ in THF at reflux (Scheme 1).[4]



Reagents: (i) NaOMe, MeOH; (ii) CH_3CO_2H, NH_2NHCHO; (iii) CH_3CO_2H, NH_2NHCO_2Me; (iv) $AlCl_3$, NaN_3, THF, reflux; (v) CH_2N_2, Et_2O, 0°C.

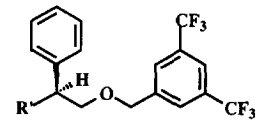
Scheme 1

Table 1 summarises the effects of heterocyclic replacements of the carboxamido group of **3** on the hNK_1 binding affinity. The N-Me group, resulting in series **b**, was included as it had previously been shown to have a beneficial effect in the phenylglycinol-based series on hNK_1 binding affinity.[3] It can be seen that introduction of either the triazole or the triazolinone heterocycles into the secondary amine series **12a** and **13a** is tolerated and gives a slight improvement in affinity for the hNK_1 receptor over the unsubstituted compound **11a**, whereas introduction of the tetrazole moiety to give **14a**, shows no improvement in binding affinity. Removing the acidity of the tetrazole, by the introduction of a methyl group on the ring, compounds **15a** and**16a**, again gives no improvement in binding affinity. N-Methylation to give the tertiary amines (series **b**) has a slight detrimental effect on the affinity of the tetrazole **14b**, but little effect on **15b** and **16b**, however N-methylation results in a 4-6 fold improvement in affinity in the triazole and triazolinone cases **12b** and **13b**. Compound **13b** has a 30 fold improved receptor affinity compared to the original unsubstituted compound **11a**.



Reagents: (i) **6**, K_2CO_3, DMF, 40°C; (ii) 140°C; (iii) **7**, K_2CO_3, DMF, 40°C; (iv) $BrCH_2CN$, K_2CO_3, DMF, 60°C; (v) NaN_3, 1-methyl-2-pyrrolidinone, $Et_3N.HCl$; (vi) **9**, K_2CO_3, DMF; (vii) CH_2N_2, Et_2O, 0°C; (viii) **10**, K_2CO_3, DMF

Scheme 2



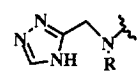
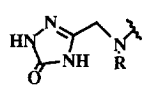
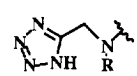
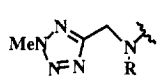
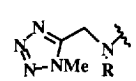
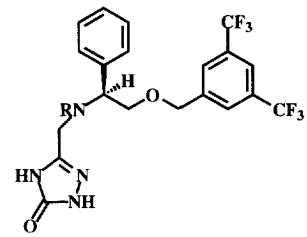
Cpd	R'	$hNK_1IC_{50}(nM)^5$ R=H a	R=Me b
11	H_2N-	13 ± 4	-
3	H_2NCOCH_2RN-	8 ± 1	5.8 ± 2.2
12		5.0 ± 2.0	1.4 ± 0.3
13		2.4 ± 0.4	0.43 ± 0.12
14		23 ± 6	70 ± 13
15		15 ± 3	16 ± 1
16		10 ± 5	13 ± 0

Table 1

Compound **13b** was shown to display excellent selectivity over other neurokinin receptors (NK_2, NK_3 >1mM) whilst maintaining low affinity binding to the calcium channel (IC_{50}>1mM).[6] Compound **13b** has also a modest oral bioavailability of 16% in rat (C_{max} = 97ng/ml, T_{max} = 30min, plasma elimination half-life = 0.8h, steady state volume of distribution = 3.5 l/kg after *iv* dosing; *iv* and *po* dosing at 3mg/kg). Further studies on this compound in rat liver microsomes showed N-demethylation to be the major metabolic pathway *in vitro*. Replacement of the N-methyl group with less metabolically labile groups could be a method for improving bioavailability.

The observation that the inclusion of the N-methyl group in compound **13b** resulted in an improved affinity for the hNK_1 receptor was further investigated by the introduction of larger N-alkyl groups. Ethyl and n-propyl groups were introduced following sodium hydride deprotonation of BOC-protected **11a** in DMF, reaction with the appropriate alkyl halide followed by BOC deprotection using TFA. The triazolinone was then introduced as previously described to give compounds **17** and **18** (Table 2).

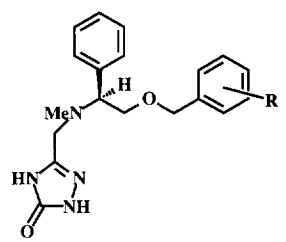


Cpd	R	$hNK_1IC_{50}(nM)^5$
13a	H	2.4 ± 0.4
13b	Me	0.43 ± 0.12
17	Et	0.8 ± 0.5
18	^{n}Pr	2.0 ±0.5

Table 2

It can be seen that although N-ethylation and N-propylation are tolerated, affinity for the hNK_1 receptor is gradually reduced as the size of the alkyl group is increased.

Replacements for the 3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)phenyl group of compound **13b** were then investigated using a previously described route.[3] The 3,5 disubstitution pattern was retained as this had been shown previously to be optimal.[7] Results of this investigation are shown in Table 3. The 3,5-dichloro substituted compound **19** and the 3-methyl, 5-chloro substituted compound **20** show reduced affinities compared to **13b**, whereas the 3-^{t}butyl, 5-methyl substitution pattern resulted in compound **21** which has an equivalent potency to **13b**.



Cpd	R	$hNK_1IC_{50}(nM)^5$
13b	3,5 bis CF_3	0.43 ± 0.12
19	3,5 Di Cl	1.5 ± 0.5
20	3Me, 5Cl	2.2 ± 0.7
21	3^{t}Bu, 5Me	0.42 ± 0.11

Table 3

In summary the triazole and triazolinone heterocycles have been shown to be acceptable replacements for the carboxamido moiety of compound **3**. When this modification is combined with N-methylation and appropriate benzyl substitution, the resulting compounds have sub-nanomolar affinity for the hNK_1 receptor.

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