

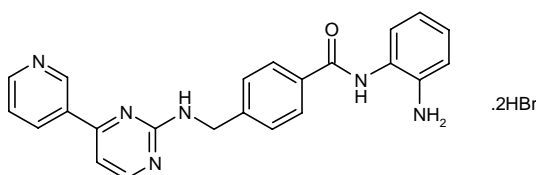
# MGCD-0103

*Histone Deacetylase Inhibitor  
Apoptosis Inducer  
Oncolytic*

## MG-0103

N-(2-Aminophenyl)-4-[4-(3-pyridyl)pyrimidin-2-ylaminomethyl]benzamide dihydrobromide

InChI=1/C23H20N6O/c24-19-5-1-2-6-21(19)28-22(30)17-9-7-16(8-10-17)14-27-23-26-13-11-20(29-23)18-4-3-12-25-15-18/h1-13,15H,14,24H2,(H,28,30)(H,26,27,29)



C<sub>23</sub>H<sub>22</sub>Br<sub>2</sub>N<sub>6</sub>O

Mol wt: 558.2686

CAS: 944537-89-7

CAS: 726169-73-9 (free base)

EN: 342540

### Abstract

MGCD-0103 is an orally active isoform-selective histone deacetylase (HDAC) inhibitor under development by MethylGene in cooperation with Pharmion. Histone acetylation represents an attractive target in cancer therapy since abnormal acetylation is a frequent feature of human cancer and can result in dysregulation of cell cycle control and aberrant gene expression. In preclinical studies, MGCD-0103 demonstrated inhibitory activity against a variety of human cancer cell lines and in murine models of cancer. Early *in vivo* studies have shown inhibition of HDAC at clinically achievable doses (45 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) with tolerable toxicity. Phase I-II trials in lymphoma, leukemia, myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) and solid tumors are under way.

### Synthesis\*

MGCD-0103 can be prepared as follows. Reaction of 4-(aminomethyl)benzoic acid methyl ester hydrochloride (I) with pyrazole-1-carboxamide hydrochloride (II) affords guanidine (III). 3-Acetylpyridine (IV) is then heated with dimethylformamide dimethyl acetal to furnish the enaminone (V), which is cyclized with guanidine (III), giving

the pyridyl pyrimidine (VI). After saponification of the methyl ester (VI) by means of LiOH, the resulting carboxylic acid (VII) is coupled with *o*-phenylenediamine (VIII) to provide the title compound (1). Scheme 1.

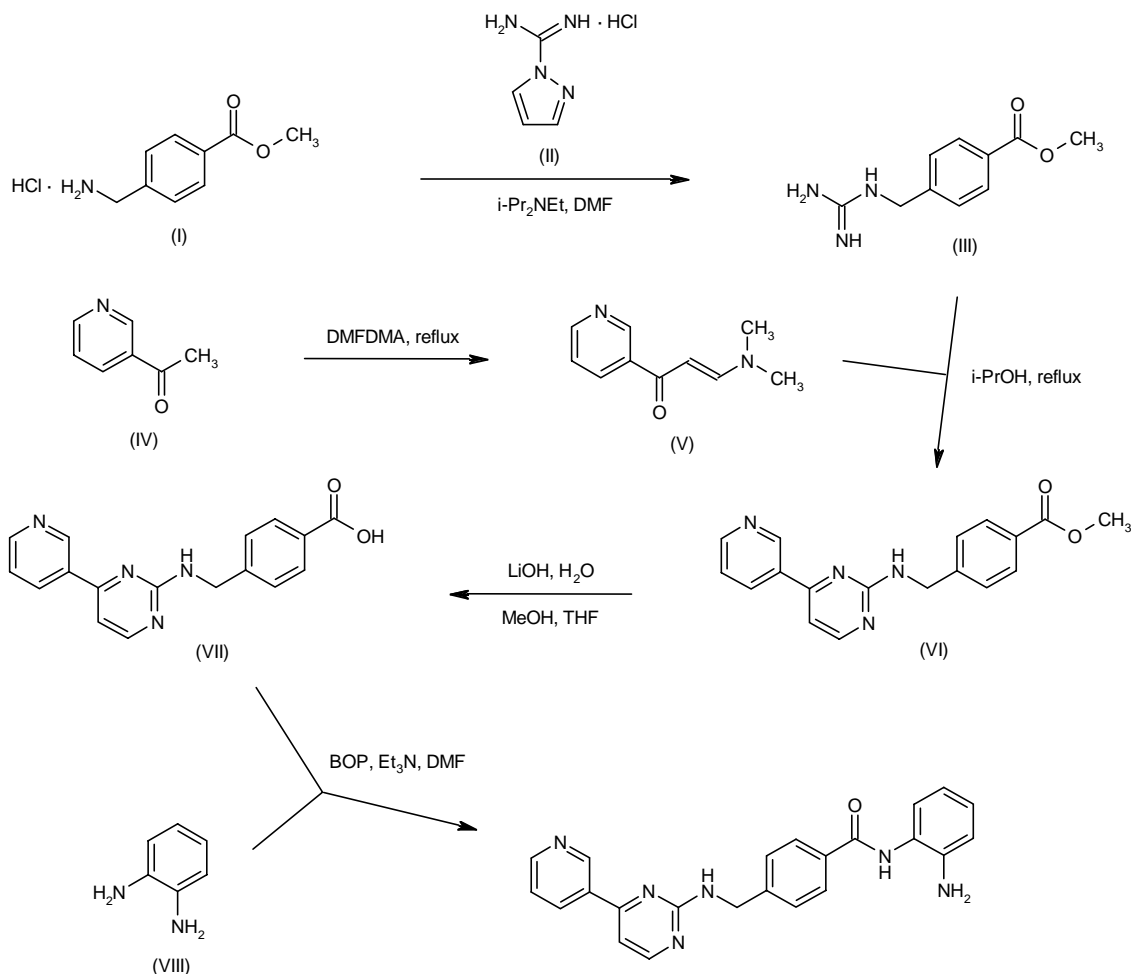
### Background

Tumorigenesis is thought to arise through a complex interaction of the dysregulation of various proteins controlling critical cell processes. These include disruption of the cell cycle, survival and apoptosis pathways, and cell differentiation. Protein function can be disturbed by chromosomal mutation or translocation, resulting in the production of structurally abnormal proteins, or by altered expression of a normal gene. Methylation of specific DNA sequences, notably repeated CpG dinucleotide islands, results in gene silencing. This silencing is mediated by recruitment of histone deacetylases (HDACs), which remove the steric hindrance of acetyl groups attached to specific lysine residues in histone complexes. The result is a tighter chromatin structure (2). Conversely, histone acetylation is associated with an open chromatin structure and gene expression. Hypermethylation and histone deacetylation are frequently seen in human cancers, resulting in gene silencing (3). Treatment with HDAC inhibitors has been shown to increase the expression of several cell cycle-active genes, including *p21<sup>WAF/CIP</sup>*, an inhibitor of cyclin-dependent kinase (CDK). Furthermore, HDAC inhibitors have been shown to induce antiproliferative effects and induce differentiation, cell cycle arrest and apoptosis.

Such diverse actions would be difficult to explain entirely by alterations in histone acetylation status. Indeed, in addition to modification of gene expression mediated through altered acetylation of DNA-associated

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Scheme 1: Synthesis of MGCD-0103



histones, several HDACs have been shown to co-precipitate with other nonhistone proteins (4, 5), in particular with the chaperone proteins heat shock protein (HSP) 70 and HSP90. HSP70 associates with hydrophobic regions of proteins, protecting them from aggregation and aiding folding (4), while HSP90 protects proteins from polyubiquitination, which would lead to increased destruction of client proteins, including BCR-ABL and cRAF, in the proteasome (5).

Four principal classes of HDAC inhibitors have been developed thus far: hydroxamic acid derivatives, short-chain fatty acids, cyclic peptides and phenylenediamines (6). The prototypic group of drugs is derived from hydroxamic acid and includes suberoylanilide hydroxamic acid (SAHA, vorinostat, Zolinza®; Merck & Co.), now licensed by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for the treatment of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma (CTLC) (7) and in phase II/III trials for mesothelioma (8), trichostatin A, a naturally occurring fungal antibiotic (9), and belinostat (PXD-101), which has demonstrated

activity in preclinical models of prostatic carcinoma (10). Valproic acid is a short-chain fatty acid that has been used in the treatment of epilepsy for many years and is now in clinical trials in myelodysplastic syndromes (MDS) and acute myeloid leukemia (AML) ([www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)). Romidepsin (Gloucester Pharmaceuticals) is a depsipeptide in phase II trials for CTCL, myeloma and solid tumors (11; [www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)). MS-275 (now SNDX-275; Syndax) is a benzamide derivative in early-phase trials in chronic myelomonocytic leukemia (CMML), MDS and AML, solid tumors and lymphoma ([www.clinicaltrials.gov](http://www.clinicaltrials.gov)).

Acetylation of HSP90 appears to be dependent on the class II HDAC HDAC6, which is inhibited by hydroxamic acid derivatives, but not by benzamide derivatives. On the other hand, HSP70 appears to be dependent on HDAC1 and HDAC2 and thus is potentially targeted by these newer agents. Whether this selectivity is of clinical benefit remains unclear and awaits the results of randomized phase III trials.

MGCD-0103 (MG-0103) is an orally active phenylene-diamine HDAC inhibitor currently being assessed in numerous phase I-II trials as single-agent therapy and in combination with azacitidine, gemcitabine or docetaxel in hematological malignancies and solid tumors. The agent has received orphan drug designation from the FDA and the EMEA for the treatment of Hodgkin's lymphoma and AML (12).

### Preclinical Pharmacology

MGCD-0103 is an isotype-selective HDAC inhibitor targeting HDAC isozymes 1, 2, 3 and 11, with  $IC_{50}$  values in the 0.1-2.0  $\mu$ M range. It has little activity against HDAC isozymes 4-10 ( $IC_{50} > 20 \mu$ M) (13). The activity of MGCD-0103 has been tested in several cell lines using an MTT assay, showing activity against A549 lung cancer cells, HCT 116 colon cancer cells, MDA-MB-231 breast cancer cells and T24 bladder cancer cells. The  $IC_{50}$  was in the 0.2-1.0  $\mu$ M range for each tumor compared to values of 0.5-5  $\mu$ M for either SNDX-275 or vorinostat (14).

In human HCT 116 colon cancer cells, MGCD-0103 at 1  $\mu$ M induced a greater degree of apoptosis than SNDX-275, a structurally related HDAC inhibitor, at similar concentrations. MGCD-0103 increased apoptosis by 120% relative to control compared to a 50% increase for SNDX-275. These changes correlated with increased histone acetylation, cell cycle arrest and induction of  $p21^{WAF/CIP}$  (14). In human leukemia RPMI 8226 cells, the expression of interleukin-6 (IL-6) was induced 8-fold compared with control after 24-h exposure to 1  $\mu$ M MGCD-0103 (15). Inhibition of histone acetylation was also seen in white blood cells (WBCs) from healthy human volunteers after *in vitro* incubation with MGCD-0103 and in WBCs of mice treated with 60 or 90 mg/kg (16). Similar oral doses in HCT 116-xenografted mice induced a 3-fold greater increase in histone acetylation and a 1.4-fold increase in  $p21$  expression (13). Tumor growth in murine xenograft models of A549 lung cancer was inhibited by 15-30 mg/kg/day MGCD-0103 i.p. Similarly, 70-80 mg/kg/day p.o. resulted in 47-81% growth inhibition of DU 145 prostate cancer xenografts. A-431 epidermoid carcinoma xenografts were similarly inhibited (14).

HDAC inhibition with MGCD-0103 appears to be synergistic with conventional chemotherapy. Using A549 lung cancer xenografts, the nucleoside analogue gemcitabine 80 mg/kg resulted in 45% growth inhibition, whereas co-administration of 30 mg/kg MGCD-0103 resulted in 76% growth inhibition. Similar results were seen in PANC-1 pancreatic carcinoma xenografts. The time lag to the development of tumors was increased from 24 days with gemcitabine to 36 days with the combination (17). To date, no significant toxicity has been reported in preclinical models.

### Pharmacokinetics and Metabolism

MGCD-0103 is orally active but shows low bioavailability, ranging from 42% in rats to under 5% in dogs, with

a half-life of 35-80 min (13). After a single oral dose of 90 mg/kg in mice, plasma concentrations were 2.3, 0.21 and 0.015  $\mu$ M after 2, 8 and 24 h, respectively (16). The half-life was 9 h, with an AUC of 1300 ng.h/ml among patients with advanced leukemia administered a dose of 60 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, with a  $C_{max}$  of 169 ng/ml at 80 mg/m<sup>2</sup> (18). In patients with solid tumors treated with 36 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, on day 1 the  $C_{max}$  was 80.6 ng/ml, the AUC was 453 ng.h/ml and the  $t_{1/2}$  was 11.3 h, with respective values on day 12 of 126 ng/ml, 611 ng.h/ml and 7.1 h (19). These data were confirmed in 19 patients with leukemia or MDS (20). The  $t_{1/2}$  ranged from 7 to 11 h, with a  $t_{max}$  of 0.5-1.0 h. The  $C_{max}$  was 124 ng/ml at 40 mg/m<sup>2</sup> and was proportional to the dose (21).

### Clinical Studies

MGCD-0103 has been studied in dose-escalating phase I trials in patients with advanced and aggressive solid malignancies, including lung, colorectal and renal tumors and NHL, administered either daily, twice or thrice weekly (19, 22-25). On the thrice-weekly schedule, histone acetylation increased in a dose-dependent manner, correlating with HDAC inhibition. Approximately 40% of patients showed at least 20% inhibition of HDAC activity, while 60% had at least a 50% increase in histone acetylation. Three patients with renal cell cancer and 1 with colorectal cancer had stable disease (22, 25).

In patients with high-risk MDS or AML treated with increasing oral doses of MGCD-0103 twice (40-83 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) (21) or thrice (20-80 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) (18) weekly, 3 patients (14%) achieved complete remission on the thrice-weekly schedule at 60 and 80 mg/m<sup>2</sup> (18). Histone acetylation was increased 1.5-3.5-fold in responders. A similar study continues to recruit older patients with untreated high-risk MDS or AML, or younger adults with relapsed or refractory AML (26).

Several ongoing trials are assessing MGCD-0103 alone or in combination with conventional chemotherapy (azacitidine, gemcitabine, docetaxel) in patients with leukemia, MDS, relapsed or refractory Hodgkin's lymphoma and NHL and solid tumors (27-35).

The MGCD0103-005 trial combines azacitidine with MGCD-0103 in patients with high-risk MDS and AML (32). Data presented at the 2007 meeting of the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) reported responses in 7 patients with leukemia treated in this trial. Six of these responding patients were treated with 90 or 100 mg/m<sup>2</sup> MGCD-0103 thrice weekly. Of the 7 responding patients, 3 achieved CR, 3 achieved CRp (CR with incomplete recovery of platelets) and 1 patient achieved a partial response (PR). Toxicity was mild and limited to anorexia, nausea (in 2 patients at 135 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) and vomiting (1 patient of 8 in the 90 mg/m<sup>2</sup> cohort) (36). Similar results were reported at another meeting later in the year (37).

Interim results were also reported last year from the ongoing phase II MGCD0103-010 trial in patients with relapsed/refractory Hodgkin's lymphoma (29). Patients were treated with MGCD-0103 starting at 110 mg 3 times weekly every 4 weeks, with dose reductions in case of

toxicity. An objective response rate of 40% (2 CR and 6 PR) was obtained in 20 evaluable patients. The most frequent adverse events were nausea, fatigue, vomiting, diarrhea, anorexia, pneumonia, abdominal pain and weight loss, which were mostly manageable with dose modification. Inhibition of HDAC in peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) of most patients was observed. A decrease in serum thymus- and activation-regulated chemokine (TARC) levels appeared to be predictive of response to therapy (38, 39).

An open-label, multicenter phase II trial (MGCD0103-008) is evaluating MGCD-0103 (110 mg 3 times weekly every 4 weeks, with dose escalation or reduction depending on toxicity) in patients with relapsed or refractory follicular and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (30). In an interim analysis of 25 evaluable patients, 1 with follicular lymphoma had a CR and PR was obtained in 2 patients with diffuse large B-cell lymphoma and 1 with follicular lymphoma. Hematological toxicity was minimal and other common adverse events included nausea, fatigue, diarrhea, anorexia, vomiting and weight loss. As in other studies, most patients showed inhibition of HDAC activity in PBMCs (40).

## Conclusions

MGCD-0103 is an orally active HDAC inhibitor that has been shown to increase histone acetylation at clinically achievable submicromolar concentrations, with preferential activity on HDAC1, 2, 3 and 11. The precise mechanism of inhibition remains uncertain, but there is potential for combining this modality with existing chemotherapy. The drug has shown promise in early trials in resistant and refractory cancer and appears to exert preferential effects on tumor cells compared to normal tissue. It appears to be better tolerated than vorinostat, which is less specific in its action but was recently licensed for CTCL. Vorinostat represents the first agent in this drug class to be licensed for cancer therapy.

The principal toxicities recorded to date are mainly limited to mild gastrointestinal problems, such as anorexia, nausea and vomiting. Such a favorable toxicity profile promises that MGCD-0103 will lend itself to combination therapy with existing chemotherapy schedules. Pre-clinical data support its combination with gemcitabine, with potentiation of apoptosis in PANC-1 pancreatic cell lines. Such observations raise the question of the mechanism of sensitization to chemotherapy and how to schedule these drugs to best exploit their interaction. Studies are presently recruiting to combine MGCD-0103 with gemcitabine in solid tumors (35) and with azacitidine in MDS and AML (32). The effects on MDS with monosomy 7, a subset of MDS with poor outcome, will be awaited with particular excitement, as this disease has recently been shown to be potentially more responsive to azacitidine than other subtypes of MDS (36). Other phase II trials include combination with docetaxel (60 or 75 mg/m<sup>2</sup>) in solid malignancies, including breast and non-small cell lung carcinoma (34). The results of these trials can be expected in the next 18-24 months.

Several other HDAC inhibitors, including belinostat and romidepsin, are at a similar stage of clinical development for MDS and solid malignancies. On the basis of early data, these drugs appear to have similar efficacy and spectrum of action, but there are no comparative data. Given the early promising data for MGCD-0103 and other selective HDAC inhibitors, we may find ourselves on the verge of a new dawn for epigenetic therapies in human cancer.

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