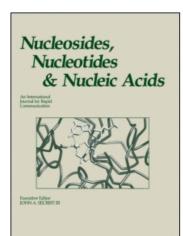
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Nucleosides, Nucleotides and Nucleic Acids

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information: http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/title~content=t713597286

α -DNA. Synthesis, Characterization and Base-Pairing Properties of Unnatural α -Oligodeoxyribonucleotides

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To cite this Article Morvan, P., Rayner, B., Imbach, J.-L., Chang, D.-K. and Lown, J. W.(1987) ' α -DNA. Synthesis, Characterization and Base-Pairing Properties of Unnatural α -Oligodeoxyribonucleotides', Nucleosides, Nucleotides and Nucleic Acids, 6: 1, 471 — 472

To link to this Article: DOI: 10.1080/07328318708056260 URL: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/07328318708056260

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 α -DNA. SYNTHESIS, CHARACTERIZATION AND BASE-PAIRING PROPERTIES OF UNNATURAL α -OLIGODEOXYRIBONUCLEOTIDES.

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The aim of this work was to synthesize unnatural oligodeoxyribonucleotides consisting exclusively of α -nucleotide units, to test their substrate activities towards nucleases and to study their structure and conformation, as well as their ability to form duplexes with complementary β - or α -strands.

Starting from N-protected α -deoxy-2'-ribonucleosides, the corresponding fully-protected α -nucleotides were prepared by selective 5'-0-tritylation and 3'-0-phosphorylation. The α -hexadeoxyribonucleotides α -d(CpCpTpTpCpC) and α -d(CpApTpGpCpG) were synthesized by the classical phosphotriester method, using MSNT as coupling agent.

Enzymatic studies indicated that both α -hexamers were completely resistant to calf spleen phosphodiesterase while they were degradated by crotalus durrissus terrificus snake venom phosphodiesterase and alkaline phosphatase, yielding the expected α -nucleoside ratio. However the rate of hydrolysis of these α -strands is considerably smaller than that of the analogous β -strands. The higher hypochromicity as determined for α -d(CpApTpGpCpG) (19.5%) compared to that of the analogous

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 β - strand (14.2%) may reflect a higher degree of base stacking in the former strand.

 1 H-NMR NOE examination of α -d(CpCpTpTpCpC) strand indicate that all the bases adopt the *anti* conformation; the furanose ring of thymidine moieties probably adopt a C_3 -endo conformation and the cytidine furanose groups are close to C_2 -endo conformations. Both hyperchromicity in thermal melting and detection of base paired imino protons in 1 H-NMR studies provided evidence for annealing of α -d(CpCpTpTpCpC) and β -d(GpGpApApGpG).

In conclusion, unnatural oligodeoxyribonucleotides consisting exclusively of α -nucleotide units have been synthesized by the phosphotriester approach. Thermal denaturation, enzymatic and $^1\text{H-NMR}$ studies provided evidence for α -oligodeoxynucleotides to exhibit a secondary structure similar to that of the natural nucleic acids, featuring base stacking, base pairing and duplex formation with β -strands.

Work is in progress in order to determine the polarity of the strands in α , β - and α , α -duplexes as well as the thermal stability of these duplexes.

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