

Novel N(23)–C(10)-linked linear tetrapyrroles

Nicholas T. Salzameda,^a Michael T. Huggins^b and David A. Lightner^{a,*}

^aDepartment of Chemistry, University of Nevada, Reno, NV 89557-0020, USA

^bDepartment of Chemistry, University of West Florida, Pensacola, FL 32514, USA

Received 28 June 2006; revised 2 August 2006; accepted 4 August 2006

Available online 28 August 2006

Abstract—Although Lewis acid-catalyzed condensation of 9-H dipyrinones with acetone dimethylketal is known to afford 10,10-dimethyl-bilirubin analogs, stannic chloride-catalyzed condensation with acetone followed a different course to give a novel linear tetrapyrrole containing a C(9)–C(10)–N(23) linkage that forms a pyrrolizine unit with one of the internal pyrroles. The structures (**1** and **2**) of this unexpected new type of tetrapyrrole, which might be viewed as an N-inverted and N-bridged extended bilirubin, were characterized by a combination of mass spectrometry, NMR spectroscopy, and X-ray crystallography.

© 2006 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Some 15 years ago, Xie and Smith¹ reported the preparation of a *gem*-dimethyldipyrromethane (**Fig. 1A**) in 65–75% yield by condensing benzyl 3,4-dimethylpyrrole-2-carboxylate with acetone in the presence of $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$ catalyst. The reaction apparently also led to a small amount of a side product containing two pyrrole rings connected via two acetone units (**5**, **Fig. 1B**). Attempts to carry out a similar reaction with two dipyrinones so as to prepare a 10,10-dimethyl bilirubin analog, e.g., to convert a methyl neoxanthobilirubinate analog (**Fig. 1C**) to a 10,10-dimethyl bilirubin ester analog (**Fig. 1E**) by coupling with acetone, failed to give the expected tetrapyrrole dimethyl ester and yielded, however, the α -isopropenyl dipyrinone (**Fig. 1D**). After numerous attempts (including changes in Lewis acid catalysts) to effect the conversion, a successful synthesis of the 10-*gem*-dimethyl bilirubin analog (**Fig. 1E**) was accomplished by replacing acetone with 2,2-dimethoxypropane, using TFA as a catalyst in the place of $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{OEt}_2$, and using the dipyrinone acid rather than its ester.² This successful conversion was later generalized in the synthesis of 10,10-dimethyl bilirubin analogs with varying alkanoic acid chain lengths.³ And it was also used to generate 10,10-spiro analogs from ketals such as those of cyclohexanone and fluorenone.⁴ Recently, we reinvestigated our failed coupling of dipyrinones with acetone and wish to report in the following on the novel tetrapyrroles produced from the SnCl_4 -catalyzed self-coupling of 2,3,7,8-tetramethyl-10(*H*)-dipyrin-1-one (**3**) and its tetraethyl analog (**4**) (**Fig. 1F**) in CH_2Cl_2 -acetone.

Keywords: Pyrrole; Pyrrolizine; Bilirubin; X-ray.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1 775 784 4980; fax: +1 775 784 6804; e-mail: lightner@scs.unr.edu

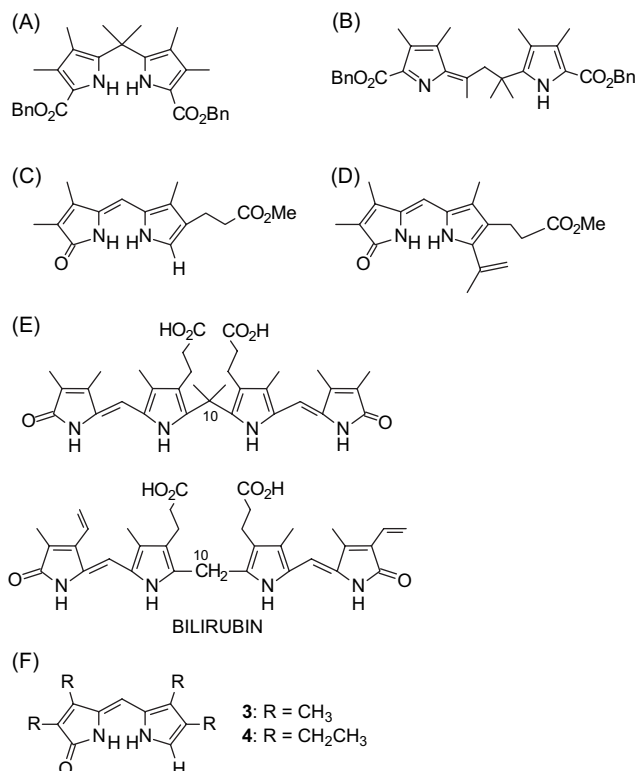


Figure 1. (A) The *gem*-dimethyldipyrromethane was prepared by Xie and Smith by the reaction of the corresponding α -H monopyrrole with acetone+ $\text{BF}_3 \cdot \text{Et}_2\text{O}$; (B) The proposed minor side product was obtained in the synthesis of (A); (C) 2-Ethylneoxanthobilirubin acid methyl ester was converted to its 9-*iso*-propenyl derivative (D) by the reaction that yields (A); (E) The *gem*-dimethyl bilirubin was produced from the free acid of (C) by reaction with 2,2-dimethoxypropane in the presence of trifluoroacetic acid; (F) The dipyrinones that were used in the current study.

2. Results and discussion

2.1. Synthesis and molecular structure

When (4Z)-2,3,7,8-tetramethyl-10(*H*)-dipyrryn-1-one (**3**) was dissolved in a mixture of CH_2Cl_2 and acetone and treated with SnCl_4 a new yellow, crystalline product (**1**) was isolated in approximately 35% yield. The FABMS showed a molecular weight of 512 and a molecular formula of $\text{C}_{32}\text{H}_{40}\text{N}_4\text{O}_2$ for the product, indicative of a composition from 2 equiv of **3** and 2 equiv of acetone, less 2 equiv of water. Analogously, the tetraethyl analog (**4**) of **3** reacted quite similarly to give an ethylated product of molecular weight 568—again indicating condensation of 2 mol equiv of dipyrrynone **4** with 2 equiv of acetone to produce what we believed must be a novel type of tetrapyrrole. From the FABMS of **1**, showing a molecular ion peak at m/z 512 and a fragment at m/z 257, it appeared that **1** could fragment by splitting the molecule in half, so as to retain one dipyrrynone connected to three carbons (of acetone)—a molecular fragment equivalent to the structure of Figure 1D, *mutatis mutandis*. These data suggest that two such fragments being conjoined (Fig. 2A), less 2H—to make our tetrapyrrole equivalent to the Xie and Smith reported minor product (Fig. 1B).¹ However, we also recognized that the tetrapyrrole structure of Figure 2A could not easily fit the ^{13}C NMR data, which did not support an exocyclic carbon–carbon double bond.

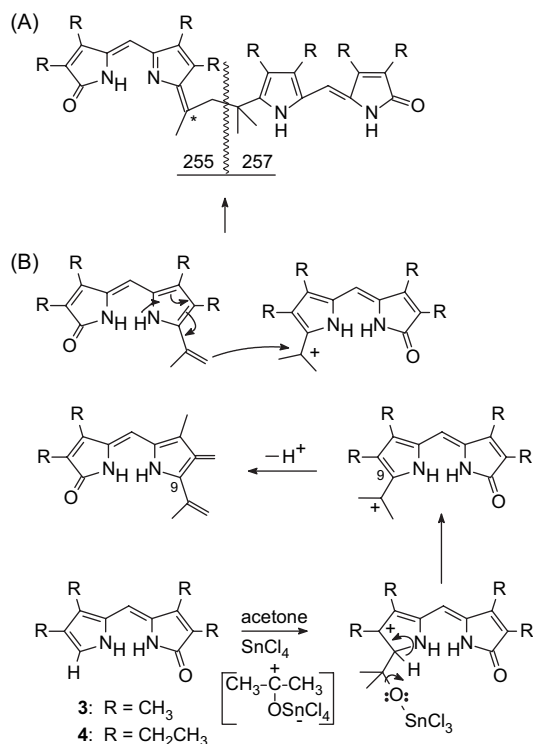


Figure 2. (A) A diacetone tetrapyrrole analog of the Xie–Smith diacetone dipyrrole of Figure 1B; (B) A possible route to its formation from **3** or **4** by reaction with acetone/ SnCl_4 to give two reactive dipyrrynone intermediates: one with an isopropenyl group at C(9), the other with an isopropyl carbocation at C(9). An alternative mechanism would have two acetones undergoing an SnCl_4 -catalyzed aldol condensation to give a C_6 carbocation reactive intermediate.

^{13}C NMR of **1** showed 18 sp^2 -carbon resonances and 14 sp^3 (Table 1) to account for all 32 carbons of the molecular formula. Likewise the ^{13}C NMR spectrum of **2** showed all 18 sp^2 -carbon resonances and the expected 18 sp^3 -carbon resonances. The C(9) doublet of **3** or **4** in the ^{13}C NMR spectrum was replaced by a singlet in **1** or **2**, and remaining ^{13}C NMR signals correlated with the expected ring carbons of two dipyrrynones, but the two dipyrrynones are not related by symmetry. Thus, as expected the dipyrrynones were joined at C(9) but they were not identical in the tetrapyrrole product. Aside from the ^{13}C NMR resonance of the pyrrole β -substituents that tagged along with the dipyrrynones, we found six new high field ^{13}C NMR signals due to three CH_3 groups, one CH_2 group and two quaternary carbons. There were no new or unexpected sp^2 -carbon resonances such as what might have been seen if the ‘diacetone’ connection between the two dipyrrynones (Fig. 2) resembled that (Fig. 1B) proposed by Xie and Smith.¹ However, because we saw no extra sp^2 carbons in the ^{13}C NMR of **1** and **2**, other than those belonging to the dipyrrynone skeletons, we knew that our tetrapyrroles could not have quite the same ‘diacetone’ connection unit as in Figure 2A or as that in the dipyrrole of Figure 1B.

In order to reconcile the absence of an extra sp^2 -C signal in the ^{13}C NMR spectra of **1** and **2**, we looked at a conformationally different representation of the Xie–Smith dipyrrole (Fig. 3A), wherein a pyrrole NH is brought into close proximity to the azafulvene exocyclic double bond. In this conformation, one might imagine an intramolecular nucleophile attack by the pyrrole nitrogen on the terminal carbon of the azafulvene, activated by a Lewis acid (H^+ or SnCl_4), leading (after work-up) to a cyclopentanopyrrole (pyrrolizine) structure. By analogy, from the protonated and conformationally oriented form (Fig. 3B) of the tetrapyrrole of Figure 2A, the same cyclization mechanism would lead to one of the central pyrrole rings fused to a cyclopentane ring into a 1*H*,2*H*,3*H*-pyrrolizine in a novel type of extended linear tetrapyrrole (Fig. 3C).

Such a structure would be expected to exhibit the same number and types of carbons as shown in Table 1, with no extra sp^2 carbon in the ^{13}C NMR and only three NH resonances in the ^1H NMR spectrum, and its molecular ion should undergo facile mass spectrometric fragmentation to give an m/z 257 ion. Consistent with the structure of Figure 3C, long-range H–C COSY (HMBC) experiments show couplings from the ‘diacetone’ unit hydrogens to its carbons as well as to the carbons at 9 and 9', as illustrated in the partial structure of Figure 4. From this one finds diastereotopic 10^1 - CH_2 hydrogens, consistent with the structure of Figure 4. The ^1H NMR chemical shifts at 2.47 and 2.78 ppm correspond to the new ^{13}C NMR signals at 37.6 ppm. Three new methyl singlets appear at 1.38, 1.47, and 1.98 ppm with ^{13}C NMR signals at 28.4, 29.5, and 27.5 ppm, respectively. The HMBC correlations found are consistent with the diacetone framework shown in Figure 4 connecting the two dipyrrynones.

The intramolecular cyclization of Figure 3A and B introduces a new stereogenic center (*), making the *gem*-dimethyls and the CH_2 hydrogens diastereotopic in **1** and **2** (Fig. 3C). In fact, the methyls of **1** are not equivalent in its

Table 1. ^{13}C and ^1H NMR chemical shifts^a of new tetrapyrrole compounds **1** and **2** and their precursor dipyrinones **3** and **4** in CDCl_3

Compd	^{13}C NMR sp^2 carbons	^{13}C NMR sp^3 carbons	H	^1H NMR
1	98.8 (d), 100.3 (d), 108.7 (d), 116.6 (s), 117.6 (s), 122.5 (s), 122.7 (s), 124.6 (s), 126.1 (s), 126.6 (s), 130.2 (s), 135.0 (s), 136.6 (s), 140.6 (s), 142.7 (s), 142.7 (s), 171.8 (s), 174.4 (s)	8.41 (q), 8.72 (q), 8.74 (q), 8.81 (q), 9.41 (q), 9.53 (q), 9.92 (q), 11.5 (q), 27.5 (q), 28.4 (q), 60.0 (s), 61.8 (s)	CH_3 CH_2 CH NH	1.38, 1.47, 1.55, 1.75, 1.82, 1.84, 1.98, 2.02, 2.04, 2.05, 2.11 (all s) 2.46 (1H, d, $J=13.0$ Hz), 2.78 (1H, d, $J=13.0$ Hz) 5.43 (s), 6.09 (s) 7.09 (s), 8.98 (s), 10.52 (s)
2	100.4 (d), 101.3 (d), 116.2 (s), 116.9 (s), 122.5 (s), 123.0 (s), 128.9 (s), 129.5 (s), 130.1 (s), 131.9 (s), 133.7 (s), 134.3 (s), 137.4 (s), 142.6 (s), 146.3 (s), 148.8 (s), 171.6 (s), 173.8 (s)	14.0 (q), 14.3 (q), 15.3 (q), 15.4 (q), 15.7 (q), 16.0 (q), 16.7 (t), 16.9 (t), 16.98 (q), 17.0 (t), 17.3 (q), 17.7 (t), 17.8 (t), 17.8 (t), 18.1 (t), 19.2 (t), 27.7 (q), 29.6 (q), 30.6 (q), 38.2 (t), 60.8 (s), 61.8 (s)	CH_3 CH_2 CH NH	0.85 (t, $J=7.63$ Hz), 0.92 (t, $J=7.43$ Hz), 1.01 (t, $J=7.63$ Hz), 1.05 (t, $J=7.63$ Hz), 1.07 (t, $J=7.63$ Hz), 1.16 (t, $J=8.41$ Hz), 1.19 (t, $J=7.43$ Hz), 1.43 (s), 1.46 (s), 1.95 (s) 2.15 \times 2 (q, $J=7.63$ Hz), 2.26 \times 2 (q, $J=7.63$ Hz), 2.48 (m, 8H) 2.32 (d, $J=11.5$ Hz), 2.78 (d, $J=13.1$ Hz), 5.38 (s), 6.11 (s), 7.15 (s) 7.15 (s), 8.8 (br s), 10.16 (br s)
3	101.4 (d), 119.7 (s), 121.4 (d), 121.5 (s), 124.3 (s), 124.6 (s), 128.3 (s), 142.6 (s), 174.4 (s)	8.5 (q), 9.6 (q), 10.1 (q), 10.3 (q)	CH_3 CH NH	1.90 (s), 2.03 (s), 2.12 (s) 6.17 (s), 6.83 (s) 10.23 (s), 10.95 (s)
4	97.4 (d), 118.8 (s), 123 (s), 124.5 (s), 127.6 (s), 128.4 (s), 129.0 (s), 146.6 (s), 171.4 (s)	17.6 (t), 16.9 (t), 16.3 (t), 16.2 (q), 15.4 (q), 14.7 (q), 13.6 (q)	CH_3 CH_2 CH NH	1.2 (12H) 2.4 (4H), 2.58 (4H) 6.82 (2H) 10.51 (s), 11.19 (s)

^a Chemical shifts in δ (ppm) downfield from $(\text{CH}_3)_4\text{Si}$ in $\sim 5 \times 10^{-3}$ M solutions at 25 °C.

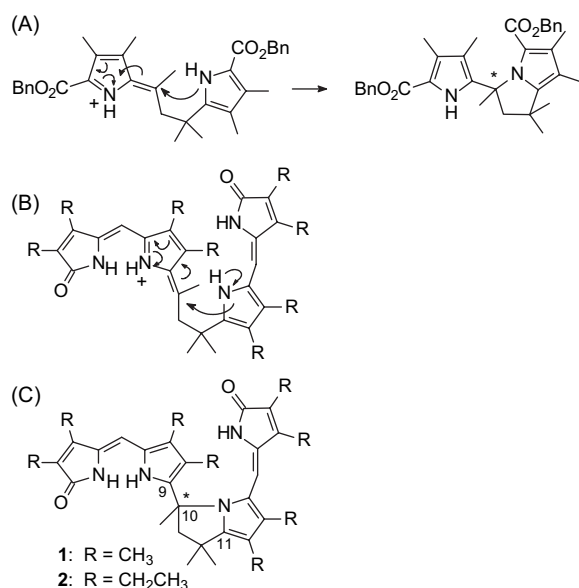


Figure 3. (A) N-protonated conformational isomer of the Xie–Smith diacetone dipyrrole of Figure 1B, oriented for intramolecular cyclization; (B) upper) The diacetone tetrapyrrole of (A), conformationally oriented and activated for cyclization to (C) the proposed structures of new pyrrolizine tetrapyrroles **1** and **2**.

^{13}C NMR spectrum (see Fig. 4), nor are the methylene hydrogens in the ^1H NMR.

2.2. X-ray crystal structure

After many failed attempts to grow a crystal of **1** suitable for X-ray crystallography, its octaethyl analog **2** was prepared, and exhibited NMR data well correlated to those of **1**

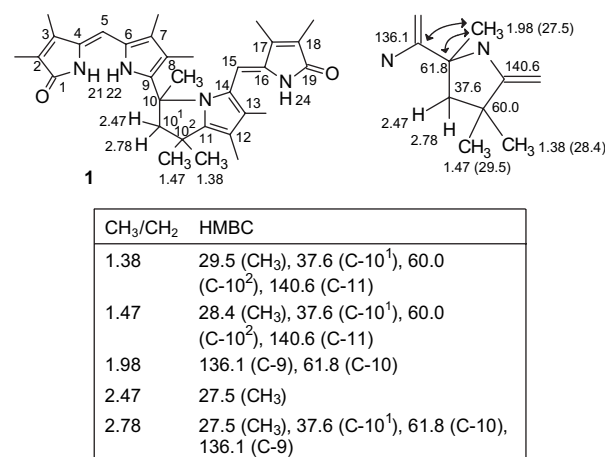


Figure 4. The structure of **1** (left) and partial central structure (right) with HMBC correlations.

(Table 1). A suitable crystal was grown, and its X-ray structure (Fig. 5) confirms the proposed structures (Fig. 3C) of the tetrapyrrole and clearly indicates a new N(3)–C(10) linkage connecting a pyrrole ring to C(10) to form a 1*H*,1*H*,3*H*-pyrrolizine moiety. It also indicates that one lactam ring bends around the C(16)–C(17) bond toward the *anti*-clinal conformation while the other lactam maintains the *syn*-periplanar. The corresponding torsion angles, 116° and 0.3°, respectively, for N(3)–C(16)–C(17)–C(18) and N(2)–C(06)–C(05)–C(04) (Fig. 5, upper) clearly indicate the conformations about the lactams, presumably determined by the requirements for intermolecular hydrogen bonding in the crystal (Fig. 5, lower). The torsion angles of the exocyclic double bonds, 8.8° and 7.2°, respectively, for N(4)–C(18)–C(17)–C(16) and N(1)–C(04)–C(05)–C(06) indicate little distortion from planarity. The N(2)–C(09)–C(10)–N(3)

In a 100 mL round bottom flask equipped with a magnetic stir bar and drying tube, CH_2Cl_2 (25 mL) was cooled in an ice-water bath. SnCl_4 (1 mL, 17 mmol) was added to the cool solution and stirred for 5 min. Acetone (2 mL, 27.2 mmol) was added to the solution; the solution turned cloudy, then turned clear after 1 min. The mixture was stirred, cooled in an ice-water bath for 5 min at which time a solution of dipyrinone (100 mg, 0.376 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (25 mL) was added in one portion. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 23 h, with drying tube attached, after which it was poured into 100 mL of ice water and stirred for 1 h. The organic layer was separated from the aqueous layer and extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (3×20 mL). The combined extracts were washed with H_2O (3×100 mL) and dried (Na_2SO_4). After the solvent was removed (rotovap), the residue was purified by radial chromatography (eluent 2% $\text{MeOH}/\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$) and crystallized to give the pure tetrapyrrole. Thus, 90 mg (38%) of crystalline **1**, mp 247 °C (dec), and 40 mg (34%) of crystalline **2**, mp 216 °C (dec) were obtained. Their ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectral data are in Table 1. Their UV-vis spectra showed ϵ^{max} (λ^{max} , nm): **1**, 32,750 (410^{sh}), 38,000 (389) and **2**, 36,900 (412^{sh}) and 40,800 (394) in CHCl_3 . **1**, 40.900 (415^{sh}), 46.200 (395) and **2**,

Table 2. Crystal data and structure refinement for tetrapyrrole **2**

Empirical formula	C ₄₀ H ₅₆ N ₄ O ₂
Formula weight	624.92
Temperature	100(2) K
Wavelength	0.71073 Å
Crystal system	Triclinic
Space group	<i>P</i> -1
Unit cell dimensions	<i>a</i> =11.5155(5) Å, α =102.7000(10)° <i>b</i> =12.0482(6) Å, β =108.7370(10)° <i>c</i> =14.3998(7) Å, γ =92.6000(10)°
Volume	1831.07(15) Å ³
Z	2
Density (calculated)	1.133 mg/m ³
Absorption coefficient	0.070 mm ⁻¹
<i>F</i> (000)	680
Crystal size	0.11×0.05×0.03 mm ³
Theta range for data collection	1.75–25.00°
Index ranges	–13≤ <i>h</i> ≤13, –14≤ <i>k</i> ≤14, –17≤ <i>l</i> ≤17
Reflections collected	19,815
Independent reflections	6447 [<i>R</i> (int)=0.0718]
Completeness to theta=25.00°	100.0%
Absorption correction	SADABS
Max. and min. transmission	0.9977 and 0.9925
Refinement method	Full-matrix least-squares on <i>F</i> ²
Data/restraints/parameters	6447/0/415
Goodness-of-fit on <i>F</i> ²	0.994
Final <i>R</i> indices [<i>I</i> >2σ(<i>I</i>)]	<i>R</i> 1=0.0521, <i>wR</i> 2=0.1125
<i>R</i> indices (all data)	<i>R</i> 1=0.0976, <i>wR</i> 2=0.1246
Largest diff. peak and hole	0.370 and –0.339 eÅ ⁻³

42,400 (415^{sh}) and 47,100 (397) in CH₃OH and **1**, 43,850 (411^{sh}), 49,100 (391) and **2**, 43,950 (411^{sh}), 50,250 (393) in (CH₃)₂SO. Anal. for **1** calcd for C₃₂H₄₀N₄O₂ (512.7): C, 74.97; H, 7.86; N, 10.93. Found: C, 74.53; H, 7.79; N, 10.75. Anal. for **2** calcd for C₄₀H₅₆N₄O₂ (624.9): C, 76.88; H, 9.03; N, 8.97. Found: C, 76.79; H, 8.64; N, 8.97.

4.3. X-ray structure

Crystals of **2** were grown by slow diffusion of diethyl ether into a solution of CH₂Cl₂. A crystal of 0.11×0.05×0.03 mm³ was placed onto the tip of a 0.1 mm diameter glass capillary and mounted on a Bruker SMART Apex system for data collection at 100(2) K. A preliminary set of cell constants was calculated from reflections harvested from three sets of 20 frames for **2**. These initial sets of frames were oriented such that orthogonal wedges of reciprocal space were surveyed (final orientation matrices determined from global least-squares refinement of 1432 reflections for **2**). The data collection was carried out using Mo K α radiation (0.71073 Å graphite monochromator) with a frame time of 20 s for **2** and a detector distance of 4.94 cm. A randomly oriented region of reciprocal space was surveyed to the extent of two hemispheres and to a resolution of 0.66 Å. Four major sections of frames were collected with 0.3° steps in ω at 600 different ϕ settings and a detector position of 36° in 2 θ for **2**. The intensity data were corrected for absorption and decay (SADABS).⁸ Final cell constants were calculated

from the xyz centroids of strong reflections from the actual data collection after integration (SAINT 6.45, 2003).⁹ Crystal data and refinement information for **2** are provided in Table 2.

The structure was solved and refined using SHELXL-T-L.¹⁰ The triclinic space group *P*-1 for **2** was determined based on systematic absences and intensity statistics. A direct-methods solution was calculated, which provided non-hydrogen atoms from the E-map. Full-matrix least squares/difference Fourier cycles were performed for structure refinement. All non-hydrogen atoms were refined with anisotropic displacement parameters unless stated otherwise. Hydrogen atom positions were placed in ideal positions and refined as riding atoms with relative isotropic displacement parameters (a C–H distance fixed at 0.96 Å and a thermal parameter 1.2 times the host carbon atom). Tables of atomic coordinates, bond lengths and angles, anisotropic displacement parameters, hydrogen coordinates, and isotropic displacement parameters have been deposited at the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, CCDC No. 609283 for **2**.

Acknowledgements

We thank the U.S. National Institutes of Health (HD-17779) for generous support of this research. N.T.S. thanks the National Institutes of Health for fellowship support. We also thank the National Science Foundation (CHE-0226402) for providing fund to purchase the X-ray diffractometer used in this work.

References and notes

- Xie, H.; Smith, K. M. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1992**, 33, 1197–1200.
- Xie, M.; Lightner, D. A. *Tetrahedron* **1993**, 49, 2185–2200.
- Tu, B.; Ghosh, B.; Lightner, D. A. *Tetrahedron* **2004**, 60, 9017–9029.
- Ghosh, B.; Catalano, V. J.; Lightner, D. A. *Monatsh. Chem.* **2004**, 135, 1305–1317.
- (a) Black, D. St. C.; Craig, D. C.; Kumar, N. *Tetrahedron Lett.* **1991**, 32, 1587–1590; (b) Zhang, X.; Li, X.; Lanter, J. C.; Sui, Z. *Org. Lett.* **2005**, 7, 2043–2046.
- Montforts, F.-P.; Schwartz, U. M. *Liebigs Ann. Chem.* **1985**, 1228–1253.
- Bonnett, R.; Buckley, D. G.; Hamzesh, D. *J. Chem. Soc., Perkin Trans. 1* **1981**, 322–324.
- Sheldrick, G. M. *SADABS, vers. 2.1*; Bruker Analytical X-ray Systems: Madison, WI, 2003.
- SAINT, vers. 6.45; Bruker Analytical X-ray Systems: Madison, WI, 2003.
- Sheldrick, G. M. *SHELXT-L, vers. 6.14*; Bruker Analytical X-ray Systems: Madison, WI, 1997.