



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/bmcl

Ring-substituted 8-hydroxyquinoline-2-carboxanilides as photosystem II inhibitors

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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 2 June 2016

Revised 6 July 2016

Accepted 7 July 2016

Available online 7 July 2016

Keywords:

8-Hydroxyquinolines

Hill reaction

Photosystem II

Structure–activity relationships

ABSTRACT

Ring-substituted 8-hydroxyquinoline-2-carboxanilides inhibited photosynthetic electron transport (PET) through photosystem (PS) II. Their inhibitory efficiency depended on the compound lipophilicity, the electronic properties of the substituent R and the position of the substituent R on the benzene ring. The most effective inhibitors showing IC₅₀ values in the range 2.3–3.6 μM were substituted in C₍₃₎ by F, CH₃, Cl and Br. The dependence of the PET-inhibiting activity on the lipophilicity of the compounds was quasi-parabolic for 3-substituted derivatives, while for C₍₂₎ ones a slight increase and for C₍₄₎ derivatives a sharp decrease of the activity were observed with increasing lipophilicity. In addition, the dependence of PET-inhibiting activity on electronic Hammett's σ parameter of the substituent R was observed with optimum σ value 0.06 for C₍₄₎ and 0.34 for C₍₃₎ substituted derivatives, while the value of σ parameter did not significantly influence the PET-inhibiting activity of C₍₂₎ substituted compounds. Interactions of the studied compounds with chlorophyll *a* and aromatic amino acids present in the pigment–protein complexes mainly in PS II were documented by fluorescence spectroscopy. The section between P680 and plastoquinone Q_B occurring on the acceptor side of PS II can be suggested as the site of action of the compounds.

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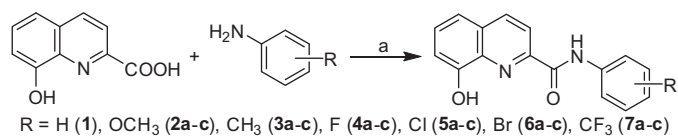
8-Hydroxyquinoline scaffold represents an important type of 'privileged structure' possessing a rich diversity of biological properties.¹ Some quinoline derivatives and their analogues/isosteres also show noteworthy herbicidal activities. Quinclorac belongs to the class of highly selective auxin herbicides and is used primarily to control weeds in rice crops.² Some other quinoline derivatives could be used to control undesirable plant growth.^{3–5} Also several recently described hydroxyquinoline-carboxamides reduced chlorophyll content in *Chlorella vulgaris* with IC₅₀ values about 5.9–10.9 μM.⁶ On the other hand, some quinoline derivatives originating from anthropogenic activities are environmental contaminants that are toxic to living organisms.^{7–9}

Quinoline derivatives were found to inhibit photosynthetic electron transport (PET) in plant chloroplasts. 2-Heptyl-1-hydroxy-4(1*H*)-quinolone and 4-hydroxy-2-nonylquinoline-*N*-oxide are potent inhibitors of PET in isolated thylakoids acting in photosystem (PS) II at the Q_B-site before the site of diuron and, in addition, at the cytochrome b₆f-complex.^{10,11} Also quinolone-*N*-oxides inhibited PET in PS II and in the cytochrome b₆f-complex.

The most potent inhibitors were found to be 2-methyl-3-alkyl-, 1-hydroxy-2-methyl-3-alkyl- and 1-hydroxy-2-alkyl-(1*H*)-quinolones with *n*-alkyl side chains varying from C₅ to C₁₇.¹² Displacement experiments with [¹⁴C]atrazine indicated that the quinolones share an identical binding site with other PS II commercial herbicides. Maximal inhibitory potency was achieved at the carbon chain length of 12–14 Å, and a further increase of the chain length resulted in a decreased activity. PET inhibition in spinach chloroplasts was also observed for several other quinoline derivatives.^{6,13–15}

Ring-substituted 8-hydroxyquinoline-2-carboxanilides were prepared according to Scheme 1 and published recently.¹⁶ Based on the above-mentioned observations,^{6,13–15} they were tested for their PET-inhibiting activity in spinach (*Spinacia oleracea* L.) chloroplasts, where PET through PS II, from H₂O to plastoquinone Q_B, was monitored spectrophotometrically as photoreduction of the artificial electron acceptor 2,6-dichlorophenol indophenol (DCPIP) according to Kralova et al.¹⁷ The studied compounds strongly inhibited photoreduction of DCPIP in spinach chloroplasts, and their activity was compared with the commercial PET inhibitor diuron. DMSO solutions of the studied compounds were added to

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Scheme 1. Synthesis of ring-substituted 8-hydroxyquinoline-2-carboxanilides **1-7c**: (a) PCl₃, chlorobenzene, microwave-assisted synthesis.¹⁶

chloroplasts due to the limited solubility of the compounds in water. The applied DMSO concentration (up to 4 vol %) did not affect the photochemical activity of spinach chloroplasts. Relationships between the structure and the PET inhibition of the studied compounds are discussed.

The PET-inhibiting activity was expressed by the negative logarithm of IC₅₀ value (compound concentration in mol/L causing 50% inhibition of PET). The activity of the most potent compound **4b** (R = 3-F; IC₅₀ = 2.3 μM) was comparable with that of the standard DCMU (IC₅₀ = 1.9 μM). However, also other 3-substituted compounds **3b** (R = 3-CH₃; IC₅₀ = 2.7 μM), **6b** (R = 3-Br; IC₅₀ = 3.4 μM) and **5b** (R = 3-Cl; IC₅₀ = 3.6 μM) were very effective PET inhibitors. The dependences of log(1/IC₅₀) on the lipophilicity of the compounds expressed as log *k*¹⁶ are presented in Figure 1. The lipophilicity of the compounds is additionally expressed and listed in Table 1 as log *P* values predicted by sw. ACD/Percepta ver. 2012 for comparison. Below discussed relationships are valid both for log *k* and log *P* values, therefore the dependence of log(1/IC₅₀) on log *P* values is not illustrated. Based on the obtained results it can be stated that the C₍₃₎ substituted compounds expressed the highest PET-inhibiting activity, and the dependence of their PET-inhibiting activity on lipophilicity was quasi-parabolic (Fig 1). The lipophilicity of the most active compounds (IC₅₀ range 2.3–3.6 μM) varied in the range from 0.9420 to 1.2357 for log *k* (from 2.76 to 3.31 for log *P*). On the other hand, while the PET-inhibiting activity of C₍₂₎ substituted compounds increased slightly with increasing compound lipophilicity, the activity of C₍₄₎ substituted compounds showed a strong decrease (Fig. 1).

Electronic properties of individual anilide substituents expressed as Hammett's σ constants (predicted by sw. ACD/Percepta ver. 2012, see Table 1) were determined as another parameter that could influence PET-inhibiting activity. For C₍₃₎ and C₍₄₎ substituted derivatives increasing σ values of halogen substituents caused a gradual decrease of activity expressed as IC₅₀, namely from 2.3 μM (**4b**, R = 3-F; σ = 0.34) to 21.3 μM (**7b**, R = 3-CF₃; σ = 0.43) and from 5.6 μM (**4c**, R = 4-F; σ = 0.06) to 477.6 μM (**7c**, R = 4-CF₃; σ = 0.51), respectively, whereby anilides

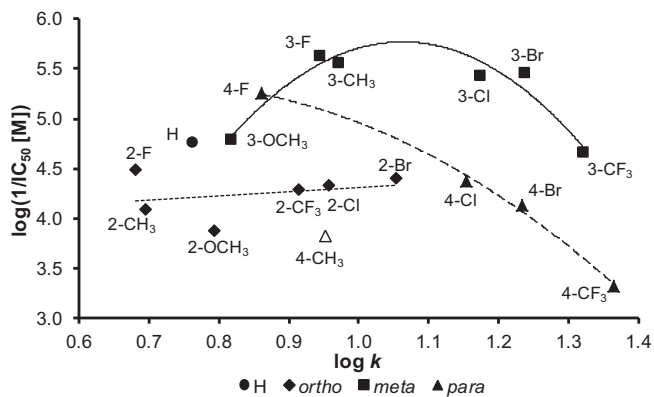


Figure 1. Relationships between PET inhibition log(1/IC₅₀) [M] in isolated spinach chloroplasts and lipophilicity expressed as log *k*. (Compound **3c** (4-CH₃) not included in SAR discussion is marked by empty symbol.).

Table 1

Predicted values of lipophilicity log *P*, experimentally determined values of lipophilicity log *k* and electronic Hammett's σ parameters of substituents R, IC₅₀ values related to PET inhibition in spinach chloroplasts in comparison with diuron (DCMU, 3-(3,4-dichlorophenyl)-1,1-dimethylurea) standard

| Compd | R ¹ | log <i>k</i> | log <i>P</i> ^a | σ ^a | PET IC ₅₀ [μM] |
|-----------|--------------------|--------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 | H | 0.7600 | 2.55 | 0 | 16.6 |
| 2a | 2-OCH ₃ | 0.7935 | 2.67 | -0.28 | 134.6 |
| 2b | 3-OCH ₃ | 0.8164 | 2.61 | 0.12 | 16.0 |
| 2c | 4-OCH ₃ | 0.7129 | 2.51 | -0.27 | b |
| 3a | 2-CH ₃ | 0.6944 | 2.90 | -0.17 | 81.6 |
| 3b | 3-CH ₃ | 0.9686 | 2.90 | -0.07 | 2.7 |
| 3c | 4-CH ₃ | 0.9521 | 2.90 | -0.17 | 150.0 |
| 4a | 2-F | 0.6806 | 2.59 | 0.06 | 32.1 |
| 4b | 3-F | 0.9420 | 2.76 | 0.34 | 2.3 |
| 4c | 4-F | 0.8598 | 2.59 | 0.06 | 5.6 |
| 5a | 2-Cl | 0.9566 | 3.07 | 0.22 | 46.0 |
| 5b | 3-Cl | 1.1718 | 3.28 | 0.37 | 3.6 |
| 5c | 4-Cl | 1.1543 | 3.05 | 0.23 | 42.5 |
| 6a | 2-Br | 1.0536 | 3.16 | 0.22 | 38.9 |
| 6b | 3-Br | 1.2357 | 3.31 | 0.39 | 3.4 |
| 6c | 4-Br | 1.2347 | 3.19 | 0.23 | 72.7 |
| 7a | 2-CF ₃ | 0.9147 | 3.36 | 0.51 | 51.2 |
| 7b | 3-CF ₃ | 1.3206 | 3.44 | 0.43 | 21.3 |
| 7c | 4-CF ₃ | 1.3653 | 3.27 | 0.51 | 477.6 |
| DCMU | — | — | — | — | 1.9 |

^a Predicted using sw. ACD/Percepta ver. 2012.

^b Not determined due to precipitation during experiment.

4b and **7c** were the most active compounds among C₍₃₎ and C₍₄₎ substituted derivatives. On the other hand, the value of σ parameter did not significantly influence the PET-inhibiting activity of C₍₂₎ substituted compounds.

From the above-mentioned results it is evident that beside lipophilicity and electronic properties, the PET-inhibiting activity of the studied compounds is significantly affected by the position of substituents R on the phenyl ring. For example, the lower PET-inhibiting activity of C₍₂₎ substituted derivatives as compared to C₍₃₎ and C₍₄₎ substituted ones was observed previously for several esters of 2-, 3- and 4-substituted alkoxyphenylcarbamic acids.^{18,19} In these series, the lower inhibitory activity of 2-alkoxy substituted derivatives in comparison with their 3- and 4-substituted analogues can be explained by a secondary steric effect, which is induced due to interactions between the alkoxy substituent and the carbamate group.²⁰ The lower activity of the tested C₍₂₎ substituted 8-hydroxyquinoline-2-carboxanilides could be connected with intramolecular interactions of the substituent R with the NH group resulting in reduced interaction of these compounds with photosynthetic proteins embedded in thylakoid membranes. On the other hand, the strong activity decrease with increasing lipophilicity of 4-substituted compounds could be caused by the limited solubility of more lipophilic compounds. Summarizing, it could be concluded that for PET-inhibiting activity, sufficient (but not too high) lipophilicity enabling easier penetration of the compounds into the lipids of photosynthetic membranes is necessary. On the other hand, the increasing electronegativity of halogen substituents in positions C₍₃₎ and C₍₄₎ was reflected in a gradual activity decrease.

The detection of PET through PS II (from the intermediate Z' situated on the donor side of PS II to Q_B located on the acceptor side of PS II) was performed according to Xiao et al.²¹ and Sersen et al.²² using the artificial electron donor 1,5-diphenylcarbazide (DPC) acting in the Z'/D' intermediate.²³ The application of DPC to chloroplasts, the activity of which was inhibited by compounds **4b** (R = 3-F) or **6b** (R = 3-Br) to 85%, resulted in a gradual restoration of PET with increasing DPC concentration. The complete restoration of PET occurred only when the concentration of DPC was higher by more than one order of magnitude than the concentration of the applied inhibitor. Therefore it could be assumed that

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