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Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters 17 (2007) 1033–1036
Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters

3,4-Dihydro-2*H*-benzoxazinones as dual-acting 5-HT$_{1A}$ receptor antagonists and serotonin reuptake inhibitors

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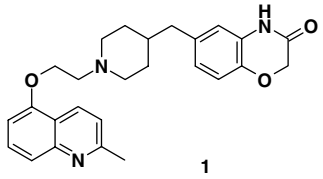
Received 27 October 2006; revised 8 November 2006; accepted 12 November 2006
Available online 15 November 2006

Abstract—Investigation of halogen substitution in lead compound **1** has led to the identification of analogues which combine high affinity for 5-HT$_{1A}$ receptors and potent serotonin reuptake inhibitory activity. Several compounds show an improved selectivity over 5-HT$_{1B}$ and 5-HT$_{1D}$ receptors and a superior pharmacokinetic profile in the rat.

Drugs which selectively inhibit the reuptake of serotonin (SSRIs) and therefore elevate 5-HT levels in the brain are the most effective antidepressant agents in use. Although they offer several advantages over the older tricyclic antidepressants, they still suffer several limitations. They are only effective in approximately 70% of the depressed population and induce side effects such as nausea and sexual dysfunction.[1] In addition, several weeks of treatment with SSRIs are required before the onset of antidepressant activity.[2] The latency to therapeutic onset is thought to be due to the time taken to desensitise 5-HT$_{1A}$ autoreceptors and SSRIs only acutely elevate brain 5-HT levels after this desensitisation process has occurred.[3] Therefore, a combined SSRI-5-HT$_{1A}$ receptor antagonist should have a faster onset of action than an SSRI alone. Indeed, in preclinical studies, co-administration of a 5-HT$_{1A}$ antagonist with an SSRI results in an immediate increase in CNS 5-HT levels[4] and also shortens the onset of anxiolytic activity in a rat model of anxiety.[5]

Furthermore, pindolol (a 5-HT$_{1A}$ receptor antagonist) has been reported to accelerate the antidepressant action of SSRIs in several clinical trials.[6]



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A series of 3,4-dihydro-2*H*-benzoxazinones **1** have already been described (*inter alia*) as 5-HT$_{1A}$ receptor ligands with potent 5-HT reuptake inhibition.[7] However, further profiling highlighted significant affinity for 5-HT$_{1B}$ and 5-HT$_{1D}$ receptors and only moderate in vivo metabolic stability (CLb 50 mL/min/kg) in rat. This *Letter* now describes the further optimization of the pharmacological and pharmacokinetic profiles of this series of compounds.

In an attempt to rationalise the in vivo clearance data, in vitro metabolic studies were carried out. Metabolite identification using rat microsomes suggested that both the quinoline and benzoxazinone ring systems in **1** were potentially vulnerable to oxidation and prompted the preparation of halogenated analogues. Halogenated quinoline and benzoxazinone analogues were prepared according to Schemes 1 and 2.[8] Reaction of di- and

Keywords: 5-HT1A; SSRI; Benzoxazinone.
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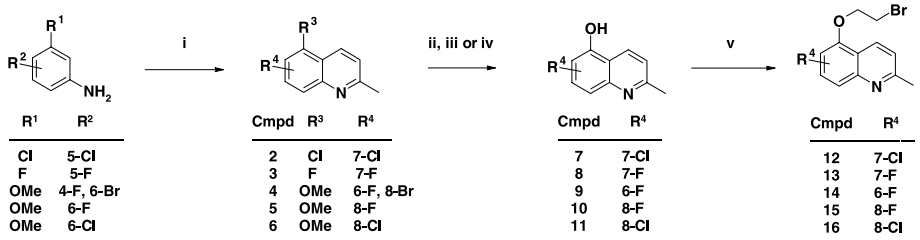
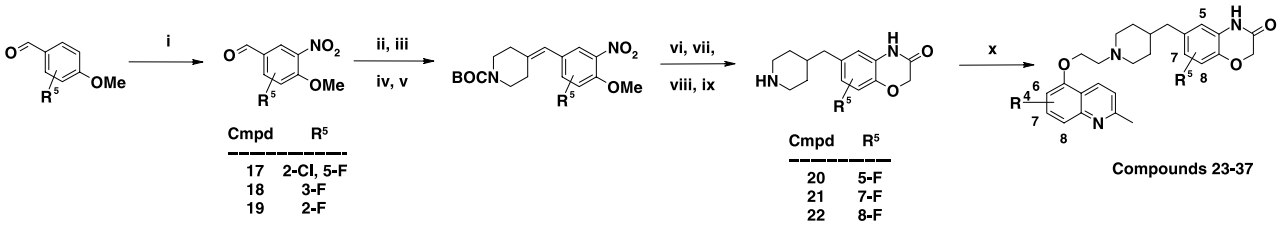
doi:10.1016/j.bmcl.2006.11.031



Scheme 1. Reagents and condition: (i) crotonaldehyde, 5 N HCl, reflux (22–86%); (ii) NaOMe, MeOH (38–79%), then BBr_3, CH_2Cl_2 (51–82%); (iii) H_2, Pd/C, EtOH then BBr_3, CH_2Cl_2 (48–78%); (iv) BBr_3, CH_2Cl_2 (51–82%); (v) $BrCH_2CH_2Br$, K_2CO_3, MEK, 85 °C (71–81%).



Scheme 2. Reagents and condition: (i) HNO_3, AcOH (58–89%); (ii) $NaBH_4$, MeOH (79–99%); (iii) NBS, PPh_3 (48–76%); (iv) $P(OEt)_3$; (v) *N*-Boc-4-piperidone, *t*-BuOK, THF (74–88% over two steps); (vi) LiCl, DMF (34–57%); (vii) H_2, Pd/C, EtOH (78–99%); (viii) chloroacetylchloride (63–74%); (ix) trifluoroacetic acid, CH_2Cl_2 (76–99%); (x) diisopropylethylamine, isopropanol, reflux (39–74%).

tri-substituted anilines with crotonaldehyde gave the corresponding quinolines **2**–**6**. The 5-halo substituent in both **2** and **3** could be selectively displaced with sodium methoxide and then reacted with BBr_3 to afford 7-halo quinolinols **7** and **8**. Similarly, the 8-halo quinolinols **10** and **11** were derived from methoxy precursors **5** and **6**, respectively. Regioselective synthesis of the 6-fluoroquinoline analogue **9** however required the use of a blocking group; an *ortho*-bromo substituent was used to control the Skraup reaction as this could be readily removed by hydrogenation. Alkylation of phenols **7**–**11** was achieved using 1,2 dibromoethane to afford the coupling partners **12**–**16**. The synthesis of halogenated benzoxazinones (Scheme 2) required construction of the parent ring system. Nitration of substituted anisoles gave compounds **17**–**19**. Reduction of the aldehyde to the benzyl alcohol allowed formation of the benzyl bromide using NBS and subsequent transformation into the benzyl phosphonate. Wadsworth–Emmons coupling with *N*-Boc-4-piperidone ensued in high yield and was followed by a straightforward three-step sequence for the construction of the oxazinone ring. Removal of the Boc-protecting group gave piperidines **20**–**22** which were coupled with **12**–**16** to afford target compounds **23**–**37**.

All compounds were evaluated using the displacement of tritiated WAY100635 from human cloned 5-HT_{1A} receptors expressed in CHO cells.[9] The potency at the 5-HT reuptake site (serotonin transporter, SerT) was assessed by measuring the inhibition of reuptake of tritiated 5-HT into rat cortical synaptosomes.[10]

Halogenation at either the 6- or 8-position of the quinoline ring gave a 10-fold reduction in potency at 5-HT_{1A} receptors (Table 1) when compared to **1**. In contrast, 5-HT_{1A} affinity could be maintained with a small substituent at the quinoline 7-position, but more interestingly this modification introduced high selectivity over 5-HT_{1B} and 5-HT_{1D} receptors. These selectivity data could be rationalised by docking **1** into our 5-HT_1 receptor homology models (Fig. 1).[11] These suggest that a 7-F or 7-Cl substituent could be accommodated by the 5-HT_{1A} receptor and would reside

Table 1. 5-HT_1 receptor binding affinities, SerT potency[a,b,c]

Compound	R^4	5-HT_{1A} pK_i[a]	5-HT_{1B} pK_i[a]	5-HT_{1D} pK_i[a]	SerT pK_i
1	H	8.6	8.0	8.8	8.1
23	8-F	7.7	6.1	7.1	8.1
24	8-Cl	7.4	6.8	7.2	7.9
25	7-F	9.1	<6.0	6.4	7.8
26	7-Cl	8.8	5.9	6.1	8.0
27	7-CN	7.7	6.0	6.6	7.0
28	6-F	7.3	7.5	8.6	8.0

[a] All pK_i values represent the mean of at least three experiments, each within 0.3 of the mean.
[b] Receptors and radioligands used in binding assays: 5-HT_{1B} human cloned receptors in CHO cells, [^{3}H]5-HT; 5-HT_{1D} human cloned receptors on CHO cells, [^{3}H]5-HT.
[c] All new compounds gave satisfactory NMR, MS and analytical data.