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## ACCEPTED MANUSCRIPT

## Aryl- or heteroaryl-based hydrazinylphthalazine derivatives as new potential antitrypanosomal agents

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**ABSTRACT:** A series of twenty phthalazinyl-hydrazones were synthesized and tested as potential anti-*Trypanosoma cruzi* agents. The phthalazines containing 5nitroheteroaryl moiety **31** and **3m** displayed an excellent *in vitro* antitrypanosomal profile, exhibiting low micromolar  $EC_{50}$  values against proliferative epimastigote of *T*. *cruzi* and minimal toxicity toward Vero cells. These derivatives were more potent than the reference drug benznidazole against the epimastigote stage of the parasite. Structureproperty analysis indicates that the highly conjugated 5-nitroheteroaryl moiety connected to the phthalazin scaffold play an important role in the antichagasic activity of these phthalazines. The decrease on the mitochondrial dehydrogenase activity and significant ROS production found for the parasites treated with **31** and **3m** suggest that both nitro-derivatives can act through an oxidative stress mechanism.

**Keywords:** *Trypanosoma cruzi*, phthalazine, nitroheterocycle, mitochondrial dehydrogenase, epimastigotes.

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