Synthesis, Characterization, Molecular docking and Structure-Activity Relationships of Novel Thiazolo[3,2-\( a \)]pyrimidines as Prospective Acetylcholinesterase Inhibitors

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45 Compounds

On going

Biological activity

DFT study

Molecular docking

Full characterization
Abstract: Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) is the enzyme that catalyzes the hydrolysis of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (ACh) into acetic acid and choline, a crucial mechanism for regulation of neurotransmission at synapses in all nervous systems. According to the cholinergic hypothesis, depleted levels of ACh are associated with Alzheimer's disease. As part of a program aimed at preparing new bioactive heterocycles with kinase and AChE inhibition properties, we designed and synthesized a series of (Z)-2-arylidene- and 2-aminomethylene derivatives of thiazolo[3,2-a]pyrimidine by a convenient multicomponent method. The products were fully characterized by 1D- and 2D-NMR, high resolution ESI-MS/MS and single crystal X-ray diffraction analysis, which indicated a consistent Z configuration at the arylidene and aminomethylene double bond. Additionally, molecular docking simulations of the series of 2-arylidene/aminomethylene-thiazolo[3,2-a]pyrimidine derivatives to human AChE (PDB ID: 4m0f, chain A) were conducted to investigate the binding mode of those compounds in comparison to Territrem B (TB), used as positive control. The results indicate that some of the test compounds have binding energies to AChE that are comparable, or better, than the positive control, TB. Biological activity studies are underway to assess the activities of the new compounds.

Keywords: Thiazolopyrimidines; acetylcholinesterase; molecular docking; enzyme inhibition
Alzheimer’s disease

❖ Alzheimer’s disease (AD) was first identified more than 100 years ago.

❖ 70 years passed before AD was recognized as the most common cause of dementia, as well as a major cause of death in elderly people.

❖ Worldwide, nearly 47 million people have Alzheimer’s or a related dementia (see map).

❖ The global cost of Alzheimer’s and dementia is estimated to be $605 billion.

Disease mechanistic hypothesis

Cholinergic hypothesis

➢ One of the oldest mechanistic theories for the onset of AD is the **cholinergic hypothesis**.

➢ Acetylcholinesterase (AChE) is the enzyme that catalyzes the hydrolysis of the neurotransmitter acetylcholine (ACh) into acetic acid and choline.

➢ According to the cholinergic hypothesis, depleted levels of ACh are associated with Alzheimer's disease.

➢ ACh hydrolysis is a crucial mechanism for regulation of neurotransmission at synapses in all nervous systems.

➢ We designed and synthesized a novel series of thiazolo[3,2-α]pyrimidine derivatives with prospective AChE inhibition properties.

Scheme 1: Reaction conditions: 

a) ClCH$_2$COOEt, AcONa.3H$_2$O, EtOH, Reflux; 
b) ClCH$_2$CN, EtOH, 50°C; 
c) EtOH, HCl/H$_2$O; 
d) Ar-CHO, piperidine, EtOH, Reflux (10 min-3h); 
e) One pot: amine, DMF-DMA, dry 1,4-dioxane, Reflux, 5-60 min.

4a: R$_1$ = H, R$_2$ = Ph, Ar= 4-chlorophenyl 
4b: R$_1$ = 4-OH, R$_2$ = Ph, Ar= 2-(phenoxy)acetic acid 
4c: R$_1$ = 3,4-OH, R$_2$ = Me, Ar= 5-(3,4-Dichlorophenyl)furfuryl 
4d: R$_1$ = 3,4-OH, R$_2$ = Me, Ar= furfuryl 
4e: R$_1$ = 3,4-OH, R$_2$ = Me, Ar= 4-hydroxyphenyl 
4f: R$_1$ = 3-NO$_2$, R$_2$ = Me, Ar= 5-(3,4-Dichlorophenyl)furfuryl 

5a: R$_1$ = 4-Cl, R$_2$ = Me, Amine= morpholine 
5b: R$_1$ = 4-Cl, R$_2$ = Me, Amine= 4-methylpipеразин 
5c: R$_1$ = 3,4-OH, R$_2$ = Me, Amine= morpholine 
5d: R$_1$ = 3-NO$_2$, R$_2$ = Me, Amine= morpholine 
5e: R$_1$ = H, R$_2$ = Ph, Amine= 4-hydroxypiperidine 
5f: R$_1$ = 3,4-OH, R$_2$ = Me, Amine= 4-hydroxypiperidine
Results and discussion - Representative Experimental Data

Figure 1. \(^1\text{H}\). NMR spectrum of compound 4e.
Figure 2. Diagrams of the molecular structure of compounds 1 (R_1 = H, R_2 = Ph), 3 (R_1 = 4-OH, R_2 = Ph), 4a and 5a obtained by single crystal X-ray diffraction, showing a Z configuration at the methylene double bond for 4a and 5a.

Results and discussion - Representative Experimental Data

Figure 3. (a) The 3D Hirshfeld surface mapped with $d_{\text{norm}}$, with red colored regions showing the main shorter contacts with neighboring molecules; (b) Summary of 2D fingerprint plots showing the relative contributions of specific intermolecular contacts in the crystal of compound 3 ($R_1$= 4-OH, $R_2$=Ph).
Results and discussion - Representative Experimental Data

Figure 4. Electrostatic potential surface (EPS) maps of compounds 4a and 5a optimized with B3LYP/6-31+G(d) level of theory in the gas phase. EPS was used to visualize the reactive sites for electrophilic (red regions) and nucleophilic (blue regions) attack in the molecules.
Figure 5. Comparison of the binding free energies of compounds 4a-f, 5a-f and the control, Territrem B * , to human AChE. Compound 4e shows the best binding energy (-10.7 kcal/mol) to AChE. Several of the test compounds bound better than the positive control, Territrem B (-8.9 kcal/mol).

Figure 6. Molecular docking of 4e to human AChE, showing the relevant interactions with nearby amino acid residues.
Figure 7. A more clear view of 4e docked to human AChE, showing the H-bond (green line) and hydrophobic (blue dashed line) interactions with catalytic (S203, H447 and E202) and peripheral sites.
Conclusions

➢ We have characterized a set of selected racemic 2-arylidene/aminomethylene thiazolo[3,2-α]pyrimidines of potential interest for therapeutic uses (Scheme 1).

➢ By using X-ray diffraction studies, we were able to establish that formation of the 2-arylidene/aminomethylene double bond was stereoselective for the Z configuration (Figure 2).

➢ The 3D dnorm Hirshfeld surface map was generated in order to investigate the intermolecular interactions in the crystal for compound 3 (R₁ = 4-OH, R₂ = Ph) (Figure 3).

➢ EPS maps have been calculated for the optimized structures by DFT at B3LYP/6-31+G(d) level of theory to visualize the reactive sites of representative molecules (Figure 4).
Conclusions

➢ Molecular docking to human AChE indicated that compounds 4e, 4d, 4c, 4f, and 5f have the best binding energies (-10.7, -10.5, -10.3, -10 and -10.2 kcal/mol, respectively) and compare favourably with the positive control, Territrem B (-8.9 kcal/mol) (Figure 5).

➢ Molecular docking of 4e to human AChE, showed the establishment of H-bond and hydrophobic interactions with catalytic (S203, H447 and E202) and peripheral triads (W286, Y341 and Y124) (Figure 7).

➢ The compounds reported herein are currently undergoing biological testing.
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