Synthesis and Pharmacological Evaluation of Melanostatin Analogues Containing Chiral β-Amino Acids as Proline Surrogates

Hugo F. Costa-Almeida¹, Sara C. Silva-Reis¹, Beatriz L. Pires-Lima¹, Xavier Cruz Correia¹, Xerardo García-Mera², José E. Rodríguez-Borges¹, Ivo E. Sampaio-Dias¹*

¹ LAQV/REQUIMTE, Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Faculty of Sciences, University of Porto, 4169-007 Porto, Portugal.
² Department of Organic Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Santiago de Compostela, E-15782 Santiago de Compostela, Spain.

Introduction

Parkinson’s disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disease of the central nervous system (CNS), affecting 20 million people worldwide and causing hundreds of thousands of deaths every year. Melanostatin (MIF-1, Figure 1) is a neuropeptide that acts as a positive allosteric modulator (PAM) of the Dopamine D₂ Receptors (D₂R), increasing the receptor’s affinity towards dopamine (DA), being thus considered as a possible pharmacological alternative in Parkinson’s therapy, which is focused on DA potentiation within the CNS.

Aim

Considering that proline (Pro) residue of MIF-1 is non-essential to the PAM activity of this neuropeptide and that Pro is not sensitive to chemical derivatizations in comparison with the remaining residues, we aimed to further explore and understand the role of Pro in MIF-1 activity. To accomplish this goal, several MIF-1 peptidomimetics were designed and synthesized bearing two different β-amino acid as Pro mimetics (Figure 1) in order to uncover the role of secondary amine at the N-terminus of this neuropeptide by replacing it with a primary amine.

Results and Conclusion

Functional pharmacological assays show that compound 12 has a similar potency to that of MIF-1 at 1 nM (EC₅₀ = 23.00 for 12 and 23.64 nM for MIF-1). This result may indicate that lower basicity at the N-terminal is well tolerated providing new insights on the rational design of MIF-1 analogues. Currently, compound 12 is undergoing toxicity and other biological evaluations.

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