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Synthesis and anti-Candida activity of novel 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazole derivatives

Ludovic T. Maillard ^{a,*}, Sébastien Bertout ^b, Ophélie Quinonéro ^a, Gülşen Akalin ^d, Gülhan Turan-Zitouni ^c, Pierre Fulcrand ^a, Fatih Demirci ^e, Jean Martinez ^a, Nicolas Masurier ^a

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:
Received 30 October 2012
Revised 8 January 2013
Accepted 12 January 2013
Available online 23 January 2013

Keywords: Thiazole Hydrazone Candida spp. Antifungal activity

ABSTRACT

Eighteen new hydrazino-1,3-thiazole derivatives were evaluated against 8 strains of multi-resistant *Candida* spp. Introduction of an indolyl moiety linked to the hydrazone function enhanced the in vitro anti-*Candida* activity, with an activity spectrum towards *Candida albicans* strains. Introduction of a (*S*)-2-aminoethyl chain on the thiazole nucleus largely enhanced the in vitro antifungal activity, with a selectivity oriented towards non-*C. albicans* species.

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Candida albicans is a diploid opportunistic fungal pathogen present in the gastrointestinal and genitourinary flora of most healthy humans and other mammals. Among opportunistic fungal pathogens, C. albicans is the main causative agent of mucosal and deepseated mycoses. However, over the last two decades it was gradually replaced by other Candida species in mucosal and systemic infections. One of the principal problems in the treatment of Candida infections is the spread of antifungal drug resistance mainly in patients chronically subjected to antimycotic therapy and more especially in severely immuno-compromised subjects, cancer, transplants as well as surgery patients. The frequency of invasive fungal infections as well as the antifungal resistance dramatically increase despite the introduction of new drugs, like new azole or echinocandin derivatives.^{2,3} In particular, a significant number of Candida species (i.e., Candida glabrata and Candida krusei) that exhibit high minimum inhibitory resistance (MIC) to azole-based agents can acquire echinocandin resistance.^{4,5} As consequences, new drugs are urgently needed to enhance the therapeutic arsenal to overcome the rapid development of multi-resistant strains.

In ongoing work to identify new antifungal derivatives, we have preliminary screened a library of heterocyclic compounds toward a set of multi-resistant *Candida* strains (data not shown). Among the tested compounds, the substituted 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazole **1a** has shown an inhibitory activity (MIC of 16 μ g/mL) against one resistant strain of *Candida krusei* (Fig. 1 and Table 1). Few other 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazole analogues that exhibit significant antimicrobial activity have been recently reported in the literature.^{6–9} Those bearing a bicyclic or heterocyclic ring on the hydrazone function and a phenyl at C-4 position of the thiazole nucleus are particularly active and present micromolar or submicromolar MIC against several *Candida* spp. strains.^{6–8} Thus, such template could be seen as a starting point for further optimization of novel antifungal agents.

In order to develop new potent anti-fungal compounds, a new set of 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazoles based on compound **1a** was synthesized and their anti-*Candida* activity were studied. Two series of 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazoles were designed. In the first series (series A, Fig. 1), the disubstituted phenyl ring was preserved and the indane moiety on the hydrazino-part was replaced by unsaturated and saturated carbocycles (cyclohexyl and naphthyl), oxoheterocycles (furyl and benzofuryl) and aza-heterocycles (pyrrolyl, imidazolyl, indolyl, imidazo[1,2-a]pyridinyl and imidazo[2,1-b] thiazolyl). The choice of such aza-heterocycles was due to our particular interest in this field. ¹² In series B, substituted

^a Institut des Biomolécules Max Mousseron, UMR 5247, CNRS, Universités Montpellier I et II, UFR des Sciences Pharmaceutiques et Biologiques, 15 Avenue Charles Flahault, 34093 Montpellier Cedex 5 France

^b UMI 233 lRD-UM1-UY1-UCAD 'TransVIHMI' Equipe Infections parasitaires et fongiques liées au VIH UFR Sciences Pharmaceutiques et Biologiques, 15 Avenue Charles Flahault, BP 14491, 34093 Montpellier Cedex 5, France

^c Department of Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, Anadolu University, 26470 Eskişehir, Turkey

^d Department of Biochemistry, Faculty of Pharmacy, Anadolu University, 26470 Eskişehir, Turkey

^e Department of Pharmacognosy, Faculty of Pharmacy, Anadolu University, 26470 Eskişehir, Turkey

^{*} Corresponding author. Tel.: +33 4 11 75 96 04; fax: +33 4 11 75 96 41. E-mail address: ludovic.maillard@univ-montp1.fr (L.T. Maillard).

Figure 1. Structures of lead compound 1a and new synthesized compounds.

aminomethyl groups were introduced instead of the phenol part to increase the solubility of indanyl-thiazolylhydrazones.

The 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazole scaffold was easily accessed by Hantzsch cyclization between appropriate thiosemicarbazones and α -chloromethylketones. ^{6-8,10,11} To synthesize series A, appropriate carbonyl compounds **3a–k** were reacted with thiosemicarbazide in refluxing ethanol. Compounds **3a–j** were commercially available, while compound **3k** was prepared by Vilsmeier–Hack formylation of 3-methyl-6-phenylimidazo[2,1-*b*][1,3]thiazole **6**, according to the method of Andreani (Scheme 1). ¹³ The selectivity of the formylation was attested by ¹H NMR analysis: disappearance of the 7.57 ppm singlet signal of H-5 of compound **6** and presence of a singlet at 6.50 ppm of H-2 of the thiazole nucleus. Finally, the thiosemicarbazones **4a–k** were subsequently condensed with the 2-chloro-1-(2-hydroxy-5-methoxyphenyl)-ethanone **5**¹⁴ to offer thiazolylhydrazones **1a–k**, which were isolated in 37–92% yields (Scheme 1).

For series B, α-chloromethylketones **8a-d** were synthesized from natural *N*-benzyloxycarbonyl (Z) protected amino-acids, that were, alanine, phenylalanine, tryptophan or proline (Scheme 2), according to literature procedures.^{15–17} Briefly,

diazoketones 7a-d were obtained by carboxylic acid activation with isobutyl chloroformate (IBCF) in the presence of triethylamine at 0 °C followed by subsequent diazomethane treatment. Compounds **7a-d** conversion into the corresponding α -chloromethylketones 8a-d was performed by treatment with HCl in diethyl ether. Thereafter, 8a-d were successively condensed with thiosemicarbazone 4a to access 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazoles 2a-d in 53-81% yields. Final deprotection of the benzyloxycarbonyl group was initially envisioned by hydrogenolysis with activated palladium on barium sulfate. However, under these conditions, deprotection failed. Finally, treatment of compounds 2a-d with 33% HBr in acetic acid and subsequent treatment by HCl in diethyl ether offered the corresponding amino derivatives 2e-h as hydrochloride salts. Compounds 2e, f, h were isolated in good yields (67-93%) while 2g was obtained in only 20% yield. For this reason, this compound was not evaluated for its antifungal activity. As expected the introduction of a basic nitrogen on the scaffold enhanced the water solubility of compounds 2e-h as compared to 1a (Table 1).

All synthesized compounds were fully characterized by analytical and spectral data. Hydrazones 1a-k and 2a-h could exist as

Scheme 1. Synthesis of compounds 1a-k (series A).

$$\begin{array}{c} O \\ HO \\ R \end{array} \begin{array}{c} 1. \ NEt_{3,} \ IBCF \\ 2. \ CH_{2}N_{2} \end{array} \begin{array}{c} N_{2} \\ R \end{array} \begin{array}{c} NHZ \\ R \end{array} \begin{array}{c} HCI \\ Et_{2}O \end{array} \begin{array}{c} O \\ R \\ 8a-d \end{array} \end{array}$$

Scheme 2. Synthesis of compounds **2a-h** (series B).

couples of diastereoisomers *E/Z*. However, in each case only one isomer was detected by HPLC, ¹H and ¹³C NMR analysis. Configuration of **1a–k** and **2a–h** could not be unambiguously assigned by

NMR studies. However analytical studies of the E/Z hydrazine interconversion reported in the literature indicates that the (E)-form dominates on (Z)-form.¹⁸

Table 1Minimal inhibitory concentration (MIC) of compounds **1a–k**, **2a–f** and **2h**, amphotericin B, fluconazole, itraconazole, voriconazole and caspofungin against eight strains of *Candida* spp.

Compound	$c \log D^{a}$	Maximum aqueous solubility ^b	Tested fungi (MIC values μg/mL)							
			C. albicans		C. glabrata		C. krusei		C. parapsilosis	
			5.O.A. ^c	7.O.A. ^d	R*e	724 ^f	$730^{\rm g}$	6258 ^h	ANF8 ⁱ	22019
1a	4.29	<0.05 mM	>16	>16	>16	>16	16	>16	>16	>16
1b	2.45	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1c	2.91	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	8	16	>16	16
1d	4.38	ND	>16	2	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1e	3.77	ND	0.25	0.5	2	>16	0.5	>16	0.25	>16
1f	3.65	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1g	3.72	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1h	2.03	ND	16	>16	16	8	16	>16	>16	16
1i	2.77	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1j	1.53	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
1k	5.19	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	2	>16	4	>16
2a	4.79	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
2b	5.89	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
2c	5.96	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	8	>16	>16	8
2d	5.57	ND	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
2e	2.64	0.7 mM	>16	>16	16	8	8	0.125	0.5	8
2f	4.29	0.15 mM	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16	>16
2h	3.11	0.9 mM	>16	>16	>16	>16	16	>16	>16	>16
Amphotericin B	_		0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	1	1	0.5	1
Fluconazole	_		32	>64	0.125	64	64	16	1	64
Itraconazole	_		0.5	>16	0.03	2	1	0.5	0.03	0.5
Voriconazole	_		0.25	>16	0.25	8	16	2	0.06	0.25
Caspofungin	_		0.5	0.25	0.5	0.5	2	2	8	0.5

^aCalculated log D (pH 7.4) of compounds 1 and 2 (data obtained from ACD/Labs, ACD/cLog D, Advanced Chemistry Development, Inc., Toronto, Canada, 2010).

^bDetermined in PBS buffer at pH 7.0.

^cClinical fluconazole resistant *C. albicans* isolate.

^dClinical azoles resistant *C. albicans* isolate.

^eC. albicans caspofungin resistant laboratory strain.

^fClinical voriconazole resistant *C. glabrata* isolate.

^gClinical voriconazole resistant isolate.

 $^{^{\}mathrm{h}}$ C. glabrata fluconazole resistant reference strain.

ⁱC. glabrata laboratory strain of C. parapsilosis, anidulafungin resistant.

^jReference strain of *C. parapsilosis* sensible to reference drugs.

Table 2Cytotoxicity of selected compounds to mouse fibroblast (NIH/3T3) cell line

	Concentration (µg/mL) ^a							
	0.5	1	31.3	62.5				
1d	83.7 ± 1.3	69.2 ± 0.2	45.3 ± 2.4	52.7 ± 3.9				
1e	91.9 ± 10.7	80.6 ± 8.2	70.6 ± 3.2	50.2 ± 4.6				
1k	94.6 ± 6.3	90.0 ± 0.1	64.1 ± 2.1	59.5 ± 2.9				
2e	93.6 ± 4.0	92.6 ± 1.8	36.2 ± 4.1	32.4 ± 1.2				

^a Values represent mean ± standard deviation of triplicate determinations.

Compounds 1a-k, 2a-f and 2h were evaluated for their antifungal activity against 8 Candida spp. strains (C. albicans, C. glabrata, C. krusei and Candida parapsilosis) and compared with five reference drugs, that were, amphotericin B, itraconazole, fluconazole, voriconazole and caspofungin (Table 1). Several resistant strains to one or several reference drugs (see Table 1) were chosen to evaluate the potential activity of synthesized compounds against multi-resistant Candida spp. Prior testing, each Candida spp. isolate was subcultured on a qualified medium to ensure purity and optimal growth. The susceptibility assays were determined by the microbroth dilution method performed in sterile flat-bottom 96-well microplates (Difco Laboratories, Detroit, USA) as described in CLSI guidelines, M27-A3 document.¹⁹ Compounds 1d, 1e, 1k and 2e that achieved the strongest anti-Candida activity were also analyzed to estimate their cytotoxic effects (Table 2). Cytotoxicity was evaluated using the MTT cell proliferation/viability assay on mouse 3T3/NIH fibroblast cells, which were originally obtained from the American Type Culture Collection (ATCC, USA). The level of cellular MTT reduction was quantified as previously described in literature with small modifications.^{20–22}

In an initial screening program to determine potential anti-Candida activities of 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazoles, compound 1a was chosen as the first hit for further derivatization (MIC of 16 µg/mL against a fluconazole/voriconazole resistant C. krusei strain). Replacement of the indanyl nucleus by various aliphatic or aromatic carbocycles or heterocycles was initially studied (series A compounds). Surprisingly when the indanyl nucleus was replaced by the structurally related 1,3-benzodioxol-5-yl moiety (compound **1b**, Scheme 1, Table 1), the anti-Candida activity was lost. Introduction of a cyclohexyl or a naphtyl ring was previously used to design 2-hydrazino-1.3-thiazoles with good anti-Candida activities. In our case, insertion of a cyclohexyl (compounds 1c) or a naphthyl ring (compound 1d) led to only a weak activity enhancement. These disappointing results led us to switch to other modulations consisting in the introduction of various aza-heterocycles. The best activities were obtained when the indanyl substituent was replaced by an indole ring: compound 1e presented a good anti-Candida activity, with a selectivity oriented towards C. albicans. In particular, this compound showed similar or better activity than reference drugs for several Candida strains. We assumed that the biological activity was enhanced by the presence of a NH hydrogen bond donor in the carbocyclic part. This hypothesis was confirmed when we introduced an imidazo-[1,2-a]pyridinyl substituent (compound 1f), which is usually viewed as an azaindolyl isostere. 23,24 Imidazo[1,2-a] pyridine does not have any hydrogen bond donating group making 1f inactive toward all Candida strains. That was also the case when indole was replaced by benzofurane (compound 1g). Similar results were obtained with series containing a five-membered heteroaromatic substituent: the pyrrole derivative 1h was more active than its furyl counterpart 1i. Surprisingly, although imidazole had a hydrogen bond donor, compound 1i was totally inactive whatever the strain considered. This might be due to a higher hydrophilicity of the molecule ($c \log D = 1.53$) compared to compound **1h** ($c \log D = 2.03$). The

hydrophobicity balance was already proved to be important in such series to obtain anti-*Candida* activity. Finally, some activity was recovered for the substituted imidazo[2,1-b]thiazolyl derivative (compound 1k). This compound showed a relative high $c\log D$ (5.19), which suggested the partial influence of this parameter to obtain activity in this series.

In the second series (series B, compounds **2a–h**, Scheme 2, Table 2), we replaced the phenol moiety at C-4 of the thiazole ring in **1a** by different aminoalkyl substituents. When the amino group was protected with a Z group, no significant anti-Candida activity was detected (compounds **2a–d**). Among the unprotected derivatives (compounds **2e–f** and **2h**), compound **2e** showed an interesting activity against several Candida spp., with a selectivity oriented towards non-Candida albicans species. In particular, a high activity was detected against the C. krusei 6258 strain, which presents a multi-resistant profile against several reference drugs. To determine the selectivity of 2-hydrazino-1,3-thiazoles towards fungi, the most active compounds **1d**, **1e**, **1k** and **2e** were finally evaluated for their cytotoxic activity against mouse fibroblast cells. The cytotoxic profile (Table 2) showed a weak toxicity at 0.5 µg/mL for all tested compounds, with more than 83% of cell viability.

In conclusion, we have synthesized a series of hydrazino-1,3thiazoles based on compound 1a. Their in vitro anti-Candida activity was evaluated against 8 strains of multi-resistant Candida spp. Preliminary structure activity relationships have shown that substitution of the hydrazine by a hydrogen bond donating heterocycle enhanced the anti-Candida activity. In particular, introduction of an indolyl substituent instead of the indanyl led to interesting compounds, especially active against C. albicans strains. Moreover, replacement of the phenol moiety in compound **1a** by a (S)-2-aminoethyl chain (compound 2e) largely enhanced the antifungal activity, with a selectivity oriented towards non Candida albicans species. Based on these results, derivatives 1e and 2e represent good starting points for the development of novel anti-Candida spp. agents. Synthesis of next generation compounds combining modifications on both sides of the scaffold will be reported in due course.

Acknowledgments

The authors are grateful to G. Tambutet (Université Montpellier 2, France), C. Lamoureux and M. Aussedat (Faculté de Pharmacie de Montpellier, France) for technical assistance.

Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.bmcl.2013. 01.039.

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