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Structure-based design, synthesis and biological evaluation of β -glucuronidase inhibitors

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Received: 21 November 2013 / Accepted: 15 April 2014
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Abstract Using structure-based virtual screening approach, a coumarin derivative (**1**) was identified as β -glucuronidase inhibitor. A focused library of coumarin derivatives was synthesized by eco-benign version of chemical reaction, and all synthetic compounds were characterized by using spectroscopy. These compounds were found to be inhibitor of β -glucuronidase with IC_{50} values in a micromolar range. All synthetic compounds exhibited interesting inhibitory activity against β -glucuronidase, however, their potency varied substantially from $IC_{50} = 9.9$ – $352.6 \mu M$. Of twenty-one compounds, four exhibited a better inhibitory profile than the initial hit **1**. Interestingly, compounds **1e**, **1k**, **1n** and **1p** exhibited more potency than the standard inhibitor with IC_{50} values 34.2, 21.4, 11.7, and $9.9 \mu M$, respectively. We further studied their dose responses and also checked our results by using detergent Triton \times -100. We found that our results are true and not affected by detergent.

Electronic supplementary material The online version of this article (doi:10.1007/s10822-014-9745-z) contains supplementary material, which is available to authorized users.

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Keywords β -Glucuronidase · Coumarin derivative ·
Docking study

Introduction

The lysosomal acid hydrolase, β -glucuronidase (E.C. 3.2.1.31) has been studied extensively both as model of enzyme sorting and transport and as an example of hormonally and developmentally regulated enzyme [1]. Human β -glucuronidase is reported to synthesize as an 80 kDa monomer (653 amino acids) before proteolysis removing 18 amino acids from the C-terminal end to form a 78 kDa monomer [2, 3]. β -glucuronidase exists as a 332 kDa homotetramer [4]. β -Glucuronidase contains several notable structural formations, including a type of β barrel known as a jelly roll barrel and a TIM barrel [5].

It catalyzes the stepwise degradation of β -D-glucuronic acid residues from the non-reducing termini of glycosaminoglycans (Hyaluronic acid, heparan sulfate, dermatan sulfate, and chondroitin sulfate) to yield their respective

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glycosidase and hydrolysis results in release of alcohols and free glucuronic acid. Human β -glucuronidase is reported to be ubiquitously present in many organs and body fluids such as macrophages and other blood cells, liver, spleen, kidney, intestinal secretions, lung, muscle, bile, urine and serum [6]. To date, the only available three dimensional structures for β -glucuronidase is the X-ray crystal structure of human β -glucuronidase, determined by Jain et al. [5]. Structurally the enzyme is a tetramer of identical subunits from a single gene product. The native enzyme, human β -glucuronidase, has a molecular weight of 332,000 a.m.u., each monomer consisting of a single chain of 651 amino acid residues with four Asn-linked glycosylation sites. Each monomer is arranged into three structural domains, comprising residues 22–223, 224–342 and 343–632. The first domain is a highly distorted barrel-like structure with a jelly roll motif and two β -hairpin insertions. The second domain is similar in topology to the immunoglobulin constant domain, while the C-terminal domain forms an α/β or TIM-barrel motif. The last portion or the C-terminal domain is particularly important since it contains the active site of the enzyme. Amino acids Glu451, Glu540, and Tyr504 are proposed to be involved in catalytic process [5]. Enhanced activity of this enzyme have been reported in a variety of pathological conditions, including urinary tract infection [7–10], renal diseases [11], transplant rejection [12], epilepsy [13], and neoplasms of bladder [14], testes, larynx, and breast [15]. Furthermore, β -glucuronidase is reported to be released into the synovial fluid in inflammatory joint diseases such as rheumatoid arthritis, where these enzymes contribute to the symptoms of these diseases [16]. The over-expression of the enzyme also reported in some hepatic diseases and AIDS [17]. β -Glucuronidase is also found to be involved in the etiology of colon cancer and high intestinal level of the enzyme leads to higher incidence of colon carcinoma [18, 19]. This view has received support from the evidence that the administration of a bacterial β -glucuronidase inhibitor has resulted in a decrease in size of carcinogen-induced colonic tumors [20]. All these reports clearly suggest that the development of specific inhibitors of β -glucuronidase is of significant pharmacological importance. Stemming from our interest in the development of novel, potent β -glucuronidase inhibitors [21], we report herein the effective use of virtual screening protocol (using a combination of high-throughput docking with multiple scoring functions) for the identification of prospective ligands that bind to β -glucuronidase. In particular, recently we have reported an in-house molecular database, comprises of over 6,000 compounds of synthetic or natural origins [22]. These structurally characterized compounds fulfill the drug-like criteria according to Lipinski's rule of five [23], with the exceptions of a few naturally isolated compounds. This

6,000 compounds database was used for the search of potential candidates against β -glucuronidase. The libraries of 6,000 compounds were docked by GOLD docking program. Furthermore the top ranked docked poses of GOLD were re-scored by using four different scoring functions i.e. D-Score, G-Score, ChemScore and PMF score embedded in CScore module of Sybyl 7.3. Subsequently, consensus scoring was implemented and top 5 % (300 compounds) compounds (ranked by all the scoring functions) were selected and their binding modes were inspected visually. Analysis of docking results led us to choose four compounds (Fig. 2). These compounds were subjected to in vitro screening against β -glucuronidase inhibition.

Materials and methods

The 3D coordinates of the compounds were generated by Molecular Operating Environment [24] (MOE). The “Washing” module of MOE was applied to generate the physiologically relevant protonation state of compounds. The structures were minimized by MMFF94 force field and charges were added. These compounds were only considered in one tautomeric or protonation state during docking. Our in-house database [25, 26] comprises over 6,000 3D structures of small molecules stored in mol format [27].

Docking protocol

The 2.6 Å resolution X-ray crystal structure of human β -D-glucuronidase (PDB code 1BHG, the Protein Data Bank: <http://www.rcsb.org/pdb>) was retrieved for docking studies. The protein structure was checked for missing atoms, bonds and contacts. Hydrogen was added to enzyme structure. The B-chain of protein and hetero-atoms including cofactors were removed from the crystal structure. All the docking calculations were performed on Xeon 3.0 GHz Linux work station running under SUSE9.2, using GOLD [28] as the computational software.

GOLD4.0

The configuration file was defined by the following process. The docking site was defined as all atoms within 10 Å of a specified central point (x, y, z coordinates: 80.43, 84.41, 90.48). For each independent GA run, a maximum number of 1,000 GA operations was performed on a single population of 50 individuals. Operator weights for cross over, mutation and migration were set to 100, 100 and 0 respectively. To allow poor non bonded contacts at the start of each GA run, the maximum distance between hydrogen

donors and fitting points were set to 5.0 Å and non-bonded VdW energies were cut-off at 10 Å.

To build a protein model whose active site exists in the probable substrate-bound conformation, the known substrate *p*-nitrophenyl β-glucuronide was first docked into the active site of β-glucuronidase using the GOLD. From the docking results, a high-scoring docked pose of *p*-nitrophenyl β-glucuronide having the glucuronyl moiety oriented properly toward the key residues Glu451 and Glu540 involved in the enzyme catalysis reaction was chosen to represent its most probable binding mode. The obtained docking model was further subjected to energy minimization for refinement. Prior to energy minimization, the Glu451 residue in the active site was assigned a protonated form that was consistent with its role in acting as a proton donor during catalysis. In addition, a structural subset was specified as the ligand and the amino acid residues within a 10 Å radius of the ligand. The complex structure was then refined through a two-step minimization, allowing (i) only the ligand and the side chains of the subset to relax and then (ii) only all the atoms of the subset to relax. The energy minimization calculations were performed in SYBYL 7.1 using the Tripos force field, the Powell method, a distance-dependent dielectric constant of 1 r , and a non-bonded cutoff of 8 Å. The minimization was terminated when the energy gradient convergence criterion of 0.01 kcal/(mol.Å) was reached.

The modeled complex structure of β-glucuronidase with the substrate *p*-nitrophenyl β-glucuronide was used for the prediction of a favorable binding mode of database compounds to β-glucuronidase by docking. The top ranked GOLD docked poses of all the compounds were further re-scored using the CScore module implemented in SYBYL 7.2 to estimate the binding affinity of the compounds. To support the virtual screening results dose dependent graphs are also given here. The O.D of compounds and their respective % inhibition at different concentration are given in dose–response curves.

2D similarity searching

MOE [24] was employed for similarity searching. We selected Molecular ACCess System (MACCS) structural keys [24] (166 bit positions) with the general form of Tanimoto coefficient [24]. MACCS consists of 166 structural substructures/patterns with 1–10 non-hydrogen atoms. As a default parameter, 85 % of overlap was selected.

Bioassay techniques with determination of IC₅₀ values

The concentration of test compounds that inhibited the enzyme activity by 50 % (IC₅₀ values) were determined by monitoring the effect of increasing concentrations of

compounds in the assay described below. The IC₅₀ values were calculated from inhibition data by using EZ-Fit Enzyme Kinetic Program (Perrella Scientific Inc., Amherst, USA).

β-Glucuronidase assay protocol

β-Glucuronidase activity was determined by measuring the absorbance at 405 nm of *p*-nitrophenol formed from the substrate by the spectrophotometric method. The total reaction volume was 250 μL. The reaction mixture contained 185 μL of 0.1 M acetate buffer, 5 μL of test compound solution, 10 μL of enzyme solution was incubated at 37 °C for 30 min. The plates were read on a multiplate reader (SpectraMax plus 384) at 405 nm after the addition of 50 μL of 0.4 mM *p*-nitrophenyl-β-D-glucuronide [29]. All assays were run in triplicate. Furthermore to avoid precipitation, the concentration of the compounds was decreased and the reaction volume was high (200 μL) so the chance of precipitation was less hence the addition of detergents was not needed.

Assay for antiglycation

Bovine serum albumin (BSA) was purchased from Research Organics (Cleveland, USA), while others chemicals {glucose anhydrous, trichloroacetic acid (TCA) sodium azide (NaN₃), dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), sodium dihydrogen phosphate (NaH₂PO₄), sodium chloride (NaCl), disodium hydrogen phosphate (Na₂HPO₄), potassium chloride (KCl), potassium dihydrogen phosphate (KH₂PO₄), and sodium hydroxide (NaOH) were purchased from the Sigma-Aldrich. Sodium phosphate buffer (pH 7.4), was prepared by mixing Na₂HPO₄ and NaH₂PO₄ (67 mM) containing sodium azide (3 mM). Phosphate buffer saline (PBS) was prepared by mixing NaCl (137 mM), Na₂HPO₄ (8.1 mM), KCl (2.68 mM), and KH₂PO₄ (1.47 mM) and pH 10 was adjusted with NaOH (0.25 mM). BSA (10 mg/mL) and glucoses anhydrous (50 mg/mL) solutions were prepared in sodium phosphate buffer. Test samples were prepared in DMSO (1 mM/mL).

In 96-well plate assays, each well contained 60 μL reaction mixtures (20 μL BSA (10 mg/mL), 20 μL of glucose anhydrous (50 mg/mL) and 20 μL test sample). Glycated control contain 20 μL BSA, 20 μL glucose and 20 μL sodium phosphate buffer, while blank control contains 20 μL BSA and 40 μL sodium phosphate buffer [30]. Reaction mixture was incubated at 37 °C for 7 days. After incubation, 6 μL TCA 100 % was added in each well and centrifuged (15,000 rpm) for 4 min at 4 °C. After centrifugation, the pellets were rewashed with 60 μL of TCA (5 %). The supernatant containing glucose, standard inhibitor and interfering substance, was removed and pellet

containing, AGE-BSA were dissolved in 60 μ L of PBS. Fluorescence spectrum (ex. 370 nm), and change in fluorescence intensity (370–440 nm), based on AGEs formation, were monitored by using Spectrofluorimeter RF-1500 (Shimadzu, Japan).

% inhibition was calculated through the following formula:

$$\% \text{ Inhibition} = 1 - \left[\frac{\text{(Fluorescence of test sample)}}{\text{(Fluorescence of glycated)}} \right] \times 100$$

Phosphodiesterase I inhibition assay

Activity against snake venom was assayed by taking 33 mM Tris-HCl buffer pH 8.8, 30 mM Mgacetate with 0.000742 U/well final concentration of enzyme using a microtiter plate assay and 0.33 mM bis-(*p*-nitrophenyl) phosphate (Sigma N-3002) as substrate. From Merck Cystein and EDTA were used as positive controls ($IC_{50} = 748 \pm 0.015$, 274 ± 0.007 μ M, respectively). After 30 min pre-incubation of the enzyme with the test samples, enzyme activity was monitored spectrophotometrically at 37 °C on a microtitre plate reader (Spectra-Max, Molecular Devices) by following the rate (change in OD/min) of release of *p*-nitrophenol from *p*-nitrophenyl phosphate at 410 nm. All assays were conducted in triplicate [31–34].

Results and discussion

Structure based virtual screening experiment was performed targeting the active site amino acid residues (Glu451, Glu540, and Tyr504) of β -glucuronidase. The crystal structure of human β -glucuronidase was retrieved from the Protein Data Bank (PDB code: 1BHG). To scrutinize the performance of our molecular modeling process, the chromogenic derivative of known physiological substrate *p*-nitro phenyl β -glucuronide [35] was first docked into the active site of β -glucuronidase using GOLD [28]. The purpose of such initial modeling was to build a protein model whose active site exists in the probable substrate-bound conformation. The modeled substrate-bound structure of human β -glucuronidase showed that the glycosidic bond of *p*-nitrophenyl D-glucuronide was properly oriented towards the catalytic residues Glu451 and Glu540 (Figure S1 in supporting information). It has been proposed for human β -glucuronidase that during the catalysis, Glu451 acts as an acid/base catalyst while Glu540 serve as a nucleophilic residue [36]. This modeled protein structure was then used in the prediction of a favorable binding mode. Ranking of database compounds was achieved via GOLD docking program. GOLD was used with two scoring functions GOLD-Score [21] and ASP. [22].

Table 1 Inhibition of β -glucuronidase by compounds **1–5**, calculated as ($IC_{50} \pm SEM$)

| Compound ID | ($IC_{50} \pm SEM$) |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1 | 113.6 ± 4.00 |
| 2 | 172 ± 00 |
| 3 | 194 ± 1.88 |
| 4 | 266 ± 12.8 |
| d-Saccharic acid ^a | 48.4 ± 1.25 |

SEM standard error of the mean

^a standard drug

Additionally, the CScore module of Sybyl7.3 [25] were utilized to re-score the top scored docked poses obtained by GOLD, by using four scoring functions (D-score, G-score, ChemScore, and PMF-score).

The activity of target protein was determined as described in supporting information. ^aD-Saccharic acid (standard inhibitor for β -glucuronidase inhibitory activity). The ranks and scores of compounds **1–4**, obtained by all the above mentioned scoring functions are reported in supporting information (Table 1).

In order to evaluate the efficacy of scoring functions to identify the known inhibitors from the random database, five known inhibitors (Fig. 2) [37–41] were included in 6,000 compounds. All the above mentioned scoring functions were able to identify the known inhibitors in the top 5 % of the screened database. After the docking/scoring protocol, top 5 % of the ranked database (predicted by all the above mentioned scoring functions) was selected and the docked poses were inspected visually. Analysis of docking results led us to choose four compounds (Fig. 2).

These compounds were subjected to in vitro screening against β -glucuronidase inhibition. All the selected compounds showed biological activities in micro-molar range. The IC_{50} value of compounds **1–4** ranged between 113.6 ± 4.00 to 266 ± 12.8 μ M (Table 1).

In addition 2D similarity searches were conducted by using the Tanimoto coefficient with MACCS keys (166 bits) as implemented in MOE [24]. The chemical structures of 5,7,8,3',4',5'-hexahydroxyflavone-*O*- β -D-glucuronide and Scopoletin were used as queries (Figure S2). Compounds **1–4** were returned with the best Tanimoto values ranging from 0.66 to 0.88. 2D Similarity profile is summarized in Table-1 in supplementary information. Detailed information about virtual screening strategy and the flow chart of high throughput docking (Figure S3) is described in the Supporting Information.

The binding mode of compound **1**, obtained by GOLD, is presented in Fig. 1a, while the binding mode of compounds **2–4** is shown in supporting information (Figure S4). Molecular docking investigations have clearly demonstrated that all the compounds displayed a good steric and chemical complementarities with the ligand binding site. Compound **1** was found to be completely surrounded

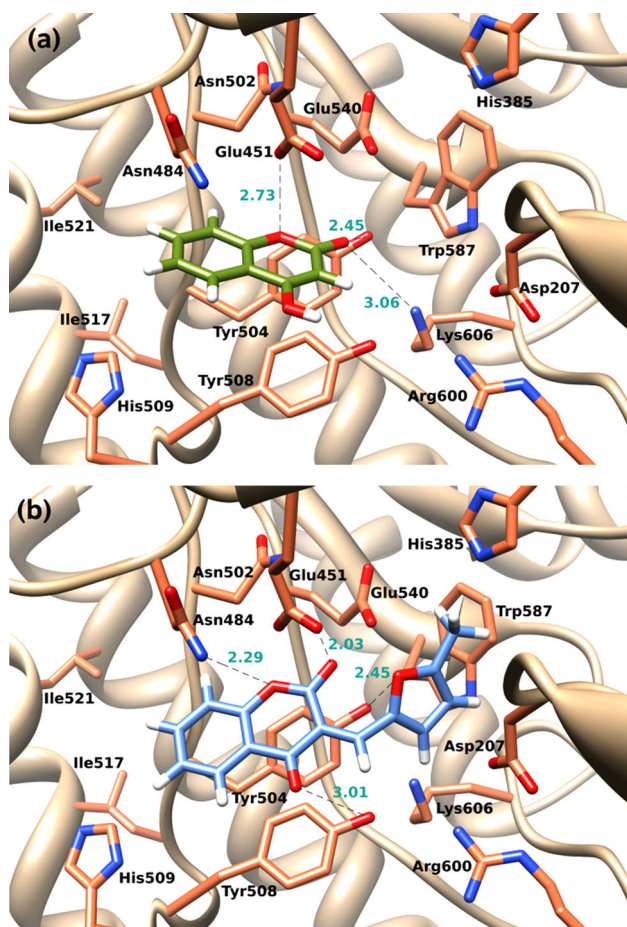


Fig. 1 Binding mode analysis of compound **1** (a) and compound **1p** (b) in the catalytic binding site of β -glucuronidase. Hydrogen bonds are indicated as *dashed lines*

by the catalytic amino acid residues in the active site of the enzyme and mediating strong hydrogen bond with OE2 of Glu451 (2.73 Å). The carbonyl oxygen of the compound **1** created a hydrogen bond with hydroxyl group of Tyr504 (2.45 Å) and the side chain amino nitrogen of Lys606 (3.06 Å). Additionally, the benzopyrone moiety of compound **1** depicted π - π interaction with the side chain phenol ring of Tyr504. In addition, several hydrophobic interactions with Tyr205, Asp207, Asn484, Asn450, Asn502, Tyr504, Tyr508, Glu540, Arg600 and Lys606

which contribute to stabilization of compound **1** in complex with β -glucuronidase.

The binding mode analysis of compound **2** (Figure S4a in the Supporting Information) revealed that the compound is stabilized by hydrogen bonds with important active site amino acid residues. The hydrogen bonding was observed between the carbonyl oxygen of the compound **2** and the binding site residues Arg600 and Lys606. The carbonyl oxygen of **2** accepts hydrogen bonds with the side chain guanidinium moiety of Arg600 and the side chain amino group of Lys606 with the distance of 2.29 and 1.79 Å, respectively. The phenyl ring of the compound **2** is stabilized by the π - π interactions provided by the side chain phenol ring of Tyr504 and Tyr508 (Fig. 2).

Similar to the binding mode of compound **2**, the carbonyl moiety of compound **3** also mediates hydrogen bonding interactions with the side chains of Arg600 and Lys606. The observed hydrogen bond distance between the side chain guanidinium (N ϵ 2) of Arg600 was 2.84 Å, while the hydrogen bond distance between the carbonyl moiety and the side chain amino nitrogen (N ζ) was 1.41 Å. In addition, compound **3** also mediates hydrogen bonding with side chain of Asp207 (1.85 Å).

The predicted docked pose of compound **4** revealed that it is hydrogen bonded to the imidazole ring of His385. The N ϵ 2 of imidazole ring of His385 served as hydrogen bond acceptor and accepted the phenolic hydroxyl hydrogen of compound **4** with the distance of 1.94 Å. Furthermore the phenol group of Tyr508 provides π - π interaction to the benzene of chromen moiety of compound **4**. The predicted binding mode of compound **4** is presented in Figure S4b in the Supporting Information.

Subsequently, we decided to scrutinize the inhibitory potential of these compounds against other available enzymes. Compound **1** was randomly screened against phosphodiesterase inhibition and for anti-glycation potential. Compounds **2** and **4** were tested for urease inhibitory activity (screening protocols are described in the Supporting Information). Compound **1** found to be inactive against urease and phosphodiesterase. Similarly, no anti-glycation activity was observed. However, interestingly compounds **2** and **4** showed anti-urease activities in micromolar range.

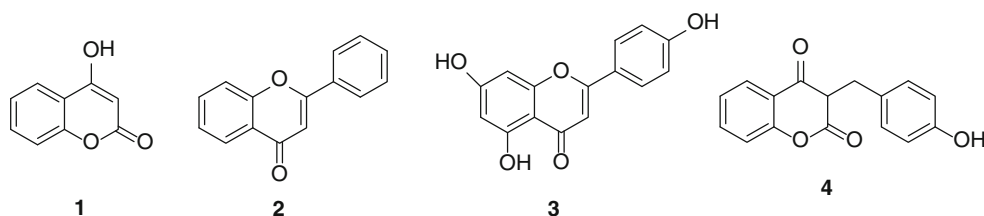
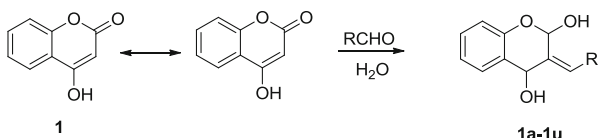
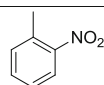
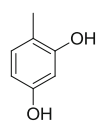
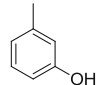
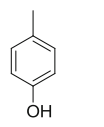
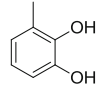
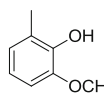
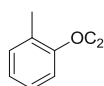
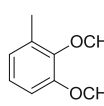
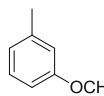
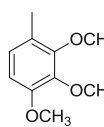
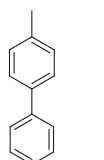


Fig. 2 The structures of compounds **1-4**, identified by virtual screening

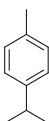


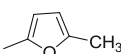
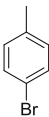

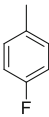

Scheme 1 β -Glucuronidase inhibitory activities of coumarin diones (**1a–1u**). *SEM* standard error of the mean, *N/D* not determined

|  | | |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Compounds | R | IC ₅₀ ± SEM (μ M) |
| 1a |  | 282.3 ± 2.32 |
| 1b |  | 56.2 ± 0.60 |
| 1c |  | 174.3 ± 1.63 |
| 1d |  | 266.1 ± 2.8 |
| 1e |  | 34.2 ± 0.49 |
| 1f |  | 61.6 ± 1.52 |
| 1g |  | 151.6 ± 4.36 |
| 1h |  | 87.7 ± 2.6 |
| 1i |  | 85.7 ± 2.13 |
| 1j |  | 226 ± 5.37 |
| 1k |  | 21.4 ± 0.16 |

According to this preliminary study, compound **1** was identified as a specific inhibitor of β -glucuronidase; Results are summarized in scheme.

These preliminary studies suggested that compound **1** possess a significant inhibitory activity and can serve as useful starting point for further studies. We therefore

Scheme 1 continued

| Compounds | R | IC ₅₀ ± SEM (μM) |
|-----------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1l |  | 48.1 ± 3.20 |
| 1m | —CH ₂ (CH ₂) ₇ CH ₃ | 352.6 ± 6.43 |
| 1n |  | 11.7 ± 0.48 |
| 1o |  | 75.9 ± 3.6 |
| 1p |  | 9.9 ± 0.34 |
| 1q |  | 108 ± 0.54 |
| 1r |  | 176 ± 0.56 |
| 1s |  | 96.2 ± 1.65 |
| 1t |  | 87.7 ± 0.96 |
| 1u | —CH ₂ (CH ₂) ₅ CH ₃ | N/D |

decided to make a small library of derivatives of compound **1**. We assume that different derivatives of compound **1** (4-hydroxy coumarin) can further enhance/improve the potency and selectivity of the ligand against β -glucuronidase. In particular, coumarins are a large class of compounds, which are reported to have a large number of biological and therapeutically important properties, including antiviral, antifungal, anticoagulant, antithrombotic, tuberculostatic, antioxidant and antitumor activities [29]. Due to the physiological importance of coumarins, we synthesized a small focused library of compound **1** derivative, with the aim of increasing the potency and selectivity against the β -glucuronidase enzyme.

Several methods are reported for the synthesis of coumarin analogues [42–45]. In these reactions, different types of chemicals are used that can be hazardous for environment. To reduce the use and generation of hazardous chemicals, we have utilized environmental friendly version

of organic reaction. Eco-benign versions of organic reactions are potential candidates for the synthesis of biologically active compounds because of low cost, non-inflammability and non toxicity [22]. However, so far as we know, there are no reports concerning the use of eco-benign synthesis of coumarin analogues. Scheme 1

The synthesis was achieved by a single step chemical reaction. A mixture of aryl aldehyde (1.0 g, 10 mmol) and 4-hydroxy coumarin (1.6 g, 10 mmol), in water (10 mL) was stirred at 100 °C. Heating and stirring was continued for 1–2 h at 100 °C. The reaction was monitored by TLC. After the completion of reaction, the solid was filtered and washed subsequently with boiling water and hexane. After drying in vacuum, the coumarin diones were obtained as solid products.

The inhibitory potential of the coumarin derivatives were assessed against β -glucuronidase activity by measuring the absorbance at 405 nm of *p*-nitrophenol released

from the substrate by the spectrophotometric method. The total reaction volume was 250 μL . The reaction mixture contained 185 μL of 0.1 M acetate buffer, 5 μL of test compound solution and 10 μL of enzyme solution which was incubated at 37 $^{\circ}\text{C}$ for 30 min. The plates were read on a multiplate reader (SpectraMax plus 384) at 405 nm after the addition of 50 μL of 0.4 mM *p*-nitrophenyl- β -D-glucuronide (26). All assays were run in triplicate.

All synthetic compounds exhibited interesting inhibitory activity against β -glucuronidase, however, their potency varied substantially from $\text{IC}_{50} = 9.9\text{--}352.6\text{ }\mu\text{M}$. Of the twenty-one compounds, four exhibited a better inhibitory profile than the initial hit **1**. Interestingly, compounds **1e**, **1k**, **1n** and **1p** exhibited more potency than the standard inhibitor with IC_{50} values 34.2, 21.4, 11.7, and 9.9 μM , respectively. The results are summarized in Scheme 1. We repeat our experiment with Triton \times -100 as detergent as procedure described in [46] and we got same results.

The binding mode analysis revealed that the coumarin moiety of all these derivatives oriented similar to compound **1**, in the binding site of β -glucuronidase. Compounds **1p**, the most potent analogue of the series with an IC_{50} of 9.9 μM , showed that electron rich five-membered heterocyclic ring substitutions is the primary determinant of the inhibitory activity. The docking analysis revealed the electron rich heterocyclic ring interact with the electro-positive side chain of His385. Furthermore, methyl substituent of **1p** exhibited additional Van der Waals interactions with His385, and thus contribute in the stabilization of the ligand. Additionally, the side chain indole ring of Trp587 is involved in π - π stacking with the furan moiety of compound **1p**. Moreover, the first carbonyl oxygen of compound **1p** form a hydrogen bond with the side chain hydroxyl hydrogen of Tyr504 (3.01 \AA), while another carbonyl oxygen of compound **1p** is involved in hydrogen bonding with the side chain hydrogen of Glu451 (2.03 \AA). The hydrogen bond distance between the ring oxygen of the coumarin moiety and the side chain amidic nitrogen of Asn484 was found to be 2.29 \AA . While the hydrogen bond distance between the side chain hydroxyl of Tyr405 and the furan oxygen was about 2.45 \AA . As shown in Fig. 1b, compound **1p** is also stabilized by several hydrophobic interactions with Asp207, Asn502, Tyr508, His509, Ile517, Ile521, Trp587, Arg600, and Lys606 in the active site of β -glucuronidase. Therefore, it is observed in a detailed binding mode analysis that the binding of the inhibitors in the active site of β -glucuronidase can be facilitated by the introduction of multiple hydrogen bonds with the side chain and backbone groups. Furthermore, the hydrophobic interactions with the residues near the active site can play a significant role in stabilizing the inhibitors in the active site of β -glucuronidase. This may serve as key

features for future designing of the selective β -glucuronidase inhibitors.

In order to elucidate the β -glucuronidase binding mechanism and orientation of coumarin derivatives in more detail, molecular dynamic simulation study is in process and the results will be published later.

Conclusion

In summary, we have employed a computer-aided drug design strategy, involving structure based virtual screening and in vitro enzyme assay in a consecutive manner to identify potent β -glucuronidase inhibitors. Compound **1** was identified as a starting point for the development of more potent and selective inhibitors. Subsequently, we synthesized and tested a focused library of coumarin derivatives based on the structure of **1** which exhibited a significant potency with IC_{50} values ranging between 9.9 and 352.6 μM . The proposed scaffold of β -glucuronidase inhibitors offers the possibility of convenient further modifications that could give rise to structures with improved inhibitory activity and selectivity toward the enzyme.

Acknowledgments The authors are thankful to Higher Education Commission (HEC) Pakistan for providing financial support under “National Research Program for Universities” to Project No. 20-1394.

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