

# Parazoanthines A–E, Hydantoin Alkaloids from the Mediterranean Sea Anemone *Parazoanthus axinellae*

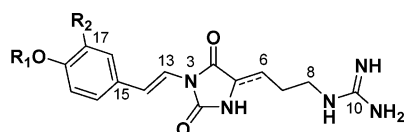
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Five new hydantoin alkaloids, named parazoanthines A–E (**1**–**5**), were isolated as the major constituents of the Mediterranean sea anemone *Parazoanthus axinellae*. Their structural elucidation was achieved through NMR spectroscopic and mass spectrometric analyses. The absolute configuration of the chiral compounds **1** and **4** was determined by comparison between experimental and TDDFT-calculated CD spectra. The configuration of the trisubstituted double bond of **2**, **3**, and **5** was deduced from the  $^3J_{\text{H6-C4}}$  coupling constant value. This family of alkaloids represents the first example of natural 3,5-disubstituted hydantoins that do not exhibit a methyl at N-3. All compounds were tested for their natural toxicity (Microtox assay), and parazoanthine C (**3**) exhibited the highest natural toxicity.

Relatively few chemical studies of zoanthids have been reported so far, despite evidence of their rich natural products chemistry.<sup>1</sup> Colonial sea anemones of the genus *Parazoanthus* have been identified in almost all the oceans, and they often have been described as epibionts of marine sponges belonging to the *Agelas* or *Axinella* genera. As sponges are known to exude toxic compounds, these zoanthids must have developed adaptative tools to minimize effects of such toxins. Two groups of compounds have been described from *Parazoanthus* species: fluorescent guanidine alkaloids of the zoanthoxanthin families,<sup>2–7</sup> and ecdysteroids.<sup>8</sup> As part of an ongoing research program to investigate the chemodiversity of Mediterranean invertebrates,<sup>9</sup> specimens of *Parazoanthus axinellae* were collected near Marseilles (Plane Island) as epibionts of the sponge *Axinella damicornis*. Because the LC-MS analyses of their crude extracts evidenced brominated compounds as major constituents, we decided to undertake the full chemical study of this species, from which only zoanthoxanthins have been previously described.<sup>2,3</sup> We report herein the isolation and structural characterization of a new class of alkaloids named parazoanthines A–E (**1**–**5**) with a rare 3,5-disubstituted hydantoin core.



	R <sub>1</sub>	R <sub>2</sub>
Parazoanthine A ( <b>1</b> ):	H	H
Parazoanthine B ( <b>2</b> ):	H	H
Parazoanthine C ( <b>3</b> ):	CH <sub>3</sub>	H
Parazoanthine D ( <b>4</b> ):	CH <sub>3</sub>	Br
Parazoanthine E ( <b>5</b> ):	CH <sub>3</sub>	Br

## Results and Discussion

Colonies of *P. axinellae* were carefully separated from the sponge *A. damicornis*. The fresh organisms were extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/MeOH (1:1), and the extract was purified by C<sub>18</sub> reversed-phase HPLC to

yield the five new parazoanthines A–E (**1**–**5**) along with the known paragraine, zoanthoxanthin, and pseudonorzoanthoxanthin.<sup>2,3</sup>

Compound **1** was isolated as an optically active colorless oil, and its molecular formula C<sub>15</sub>H<sub>19</sub>N<sub>5</sub>O<sub>3</sub> was deduced from HRESIMS data ( $m/z$  318.15547 [M + H]<sup>+</sup>). From the nine unsaturations four were assigned to a *para*-substituted phenol group due to the characteristic <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR signals at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.25 (2H, d,  $J$  = 8.5 Hz, H-16 and H-20), 6.76 (2H, d,  $J$  = 8.5 Hz, H-17 and H-19),  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  127.5 (C, C-15), 128.3 (CH, C-16 and C-20), 116.6 (CH, C-17 and C-19), and 158.6 (C, C-18) (Table 1). A disubstituted double bond was further evidenced by the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR signals at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.42 (1H, d,  $J$  = 15.0 Hz, H-14), 6.95 (1H, d,  $J$  = 15.0 Hz, H-13),  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  121.7 (CH, C-14), and 116.5 (CH, C-13) ppm. A HMBC correlation between the equivalent protons H-16 and H-20 and C-14 allowed us to locate the double bond adjacent to the phenol ring, while the downfield shift of the H-13 doublet ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.95) suggested the presence of a nitrogen atom at the other side of the double bond. The large  $J_{\text{H13-H14}}$  (15.0 Hz) coupling constant was indicative of an *E* configuration for this double bond. Even if NMR signals at C-14 were expected to be more shielded than those at C-13 due to the mesomeric donor effect of the N-3, the opposite was observed. An explanation may be given by (i) the decrease in the donor effect of the nitrogen due to the electron-withdrawing effect of both  $\alpha$ -carbonyl moieties and (ii) the involvement of the opposite mesomeric donor effect associated with the *para*-hydroxy group. The same observation can be made with makaluvamine E, which shows closely related functional groups.<sup>10</sup> The presence of an additional C<sub>4</sub> alkyl chain was indicated by the sequential H-5/H<sub>2</sub>-6/H<sub>2</sub>-7/H<sub>2</sub>-8 COSY correlations. The sixth unsaturation was assigned to a guanidine function placed at the C-8 end of this alkyl chain due to a key H<sub>2</sub>-8/C-10 HMBC correlation. Confirmation was made by the observation of a characteristic fragment by ESIMS-MS at  $m/z$  260.1 [M + H – CH<sub>4</sub>N<sub>3</sub>]<sup>+</sup>. Additional HMBC correlations between H-5/C-4, H-5/C-2, H-13/C-4, and H-13/C-2 allowed us to link both chains to the same carbonyl moieties. A 3,5-disubstituted hydantoin core was the only structural cycle in accordance with the latter HMBC correlations, the signals at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  174.0 (C, C-4) and 157.3 (C, C-2), and the molecular formula. To assign the absolute configuration at C-5, we decided to use circular dichroism (CD) analyses because of the presence of a carbonyl function adjacent to the stereocenter.<sup>11</sup> Both enantiomers were consequently submitted to geometry optimization by the DFT

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**Table 1.**  $^1\text{H}$  (500 MHz,  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ ) and  $^{13}\text{C}$  (125 MHz,  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ ) NMR Data for **1–5**

position	parazoanthine A ( <b>1</b> )		parazoanthine B ( <b>2</b> )		parazoanthine C ( <b>3</b> )		parazoanthine D ( <b>4</b> )		parazoanthine E ( <b>5</b> )	
	$\delta_{\text{C}}$ , mult.	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ , m ( $J$ in Hz)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ , m ( $J$ in Hz)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ , m ( $J$ in Hz)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ , m ( $J$ in Hz)	$\delta_{\text{C}}$	$\delta_{\text{H}}$ , m ( $J$ in Hz)
2	157.3, qC		154.5		154.5		157.1		154.2	
4	174.0, qC		162.8		162.9		173.9		162.7	
5	56.9, CH	4.16, t (5.5)	131.3		131.3		57.0	4.18, t (5.5)	131.0	
6a	29.9, $\text{CH}_2$	1.92, m	110.2	5.80, t (7.5)	110.2	5.82, t (7.5)	29.9	1.92, m	110.4	5.81, t (7.5)
6b		1.81, m						1.79, m		
7a	25.2, $\text{CH}_2$	1.75, m	27.4	2.53, q (7.0)	27.5	2.53, q (7.0)	25.2	1.75, m	27.5	2.55, q (7.0)
7b		1.66, m						1.65, m		
8	41.9, $\text{CH}_2$	3.23, t (7.0)	41.2	3.37, t (7.0)	41.3	3.37, t (7.0)	41.9	3.23, t (7.0)	41.2	3.39, t (7.0)
10	158.6, qC		158.8		158.8		158.7		158.6	
13	116.5, CH	6.95, d (15.0)	116.2	7.00, d (15.0)	116.9	7.05, d (15.0)	118.4	7.03, d (15.0)	117.9	7.06, d (15.0)
14	121.7, CH	7.42, d (15.0)	121.9	7.44, d (15.0)	121.5	7.47, d (15.0)	119.6	7.43, d (15.0)	119.8	7.44, d (15.0)
15	127.5, qC		128.3		129.5		131.2		131.2	
16	128.3, CH	7.25, d (8.5)	128.4	7.26, d (8.5)	128.4	7.36, d (8.5)	131.5	7.60, d (2.0)	131.5	7.61, d (2.0)
17	116.6, CH	6.76, d (8.5)	116.6	6.76, d (8.5)	115.3	6.90, d (8.5)	112.9		112.9	
18	158.5, qC		158.6		161.0		157.0		157.0	
19	116.6, CH	6.76, d (8.5)	116.6	6.76, d (8.5)	115.3	6.90, d (8.5)	113.5	7.01, d (8.5)	113.5	7.01, d (8.5)
20	128.3, CH	7.25, d (8.5)	128.4	7.26, d (8.5)	128.4	7.36, d (8.5)	127.5	7.37, dd (8.5, 2.0)	127.5	7.37, dd (8.5, 2.0)
$\text{CH}_3\text{-O}$					55.7	3.80, s	56.8	3.88, s	56.7	3.88, s

B3LYP/6-31++G(d, p) approach, and their CD spectra were calculated using the TDDFT B3LYP/6-31++G(d, p) approach.<sup>12,13</sup> The experimental CD spectrum of **1** exhibited a negative Cotton effect at 281 nm and was in excellent agreement with the calculated CD spectrum of **1** with the *S* absolute configuration at C-5.<sup>14</sup> Interestingly, a similar negative Cotton effect has already been observed with hydantoin amino acids with the *S* configuration.<sup>15</sup>

Compound **2** was isolated as a colorless oil, and its molecular formula  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{17}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$  was deduced from HRESIMS data ( $m/z$  316.13928  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ). NMR data were very similar to those of parazoanthine A (**1**), and an additional unsaturation was evidenced by the replacement of the  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  signals of the methine at C-5 and the methylene at C-6 in the NMR spectra of **1** by signals at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.80 (1H, t,  $J = 7.5$  Hz, H-6),  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  131.3 (C, C-5), and 110.2 (CH, C-6) (Table 1). Compound **2** was then assumed to be the  $\Delta^{5,6}$  derivative of **1**, which was confirmed by key COSY and HMBC correlations (Figure 1a). In order to assign the configuration of the trisubstituted C-5/C-6 double bond, the coupling constant  $^3J_{\text{H6-C4}}$  has been measured by a non-proton-decoupled  $^1\text{H}$ – $^{13}\text{C}$  HMBC experiment. The obtained value of 5.4 Hz was consistent with a *cis* configuration between H-6 and C-4, indicating a *Z* configuration of the double bond (Figure 1b).<sup>16</sup>

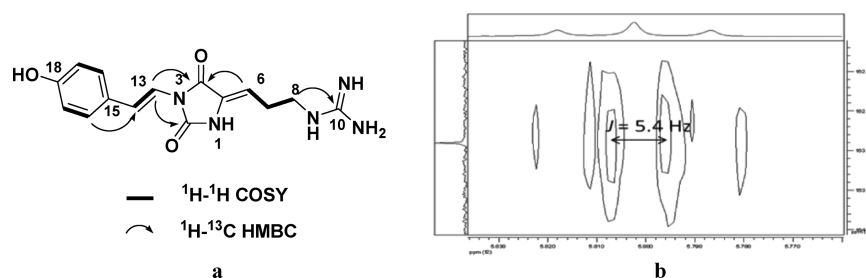
Compound **3** was isolated as a colorless oil, and its molecular formula  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{19}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$  was deduced from HRESIMS data ( $m/z$  330.15640  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ). The molecular formula suggested the addition of a methylene unit compared to **2**, and the close NMR data suggested a strong similarity between both compounds. The replacement of the hydroxy group in **2** by a methoxy group in **3** was supported by the new NMR signals at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.80 (3H, s,  $\text{CH}_3\text{-O}$ ) and  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  55.7 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $\text{CH}_3\text{-O}$ ) and was further confirmed by the key  $\text{CH}_3\text{-O/C-18}$  HMBC correlation.

Compounds **4** and **5** were obtained as colorless oils, and their molecular formulas  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{20}\text{BrN}_5\text{O}_3$  and  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{18}\text{BrN}_5\text{O}_3$  were deduced from the clusters of two peaks (1:1) at  $m/z$  410.08203 ( $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ )/

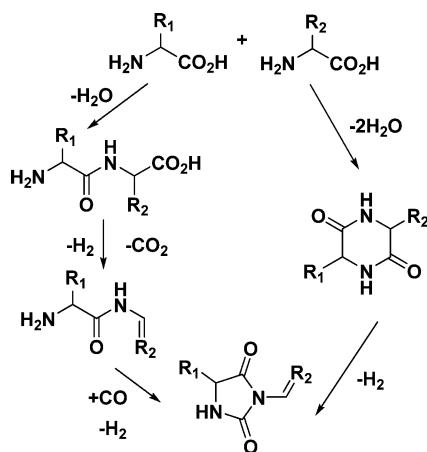
412.1 and  $m/z$  408.06650 ( $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ )/410.1, respectively, in the HRESIMS, indicative of monobrominated compounds. On the basis of their NMR spectra, it appeared that the aromatic part of **1–3** was clearly modified in the case of **4** and **5**. A trisubstituted *ortho/para* benzene ring was indeed evidenced by the characteristic  $^1\text{H}$  NMR aromatic signals pattern (Table 1). Comparison of aromatic NMR signals between **4** and **5**, on one hand, and **3**, on the other hand, allowed location of the bromine atom at the *ortho* position of the methoxy group due to characteristic  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR chemical shifts at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  113.5 (C, C-17), 131.5 (CH, C-16), and 157.0 (C, C-18). The difference between **4** and **5** arises from the presence of a *Z*  $\Delta^{5,6}$  double bond for **5** as for **2** and **3**. The absolute configuration at C-5 of the reduced compound **4** was assumed to be identical to that of **1** because the CD spectrum showed the same characteristic negative Cotton effect at 280 nm.

The originality of this family of alkaloids lies in the 3,5-disubstituted hydantoin core, where all other examples of closely related natural products were unsubstituted at N-3 or bore a methyl group at this position. Furthermore, hydantoins have been postulated as a key connection between the origin of peptides and purines.<sup>17</sup> These structural features raised the issue of the biosynthetic origin of the hydantoin core. Two hypothetical pathways are described in Scheme 1. The key reaction of the first pathway is a monocarbonylation occurring after peptidic ligation of two amino acids. The second hypothetical pathway involves the ring contraction of a putative diketopiperazine formed by a double condensation between two amino acids. Diketopiperazines are common marine natural products produced by microorganisms, but the ring contraction remains unproven in this family of compounds.<sup>18</sup>

All compounds were tested for their antitumor (MDA-MB-231, HT-29, and A-549) and antimalarial (FcB1) activities, and none of them exhibited significant bioactivity. Nevertheless, during a screening of marine organisms for their natural toxicity, *P. axinellae* was found to exhibit the most bioactive extract among the

**Figure 1.** (a) Key COSY and HMBC correlations of parazoanthine B (**2**). (b) Non-proton-decoupled H-6/C-4 HMBC correlation.

## Scheme 1. Hypothetical Pathways for Hydantoin Biosynthesis



cnidarians.<sup>19</sup> We then decided to evaluate all the isolated compounds in this Microtox assay.<sup>20</sup> Parazoanthine C (**3**) showed the highest natural toxicity ( $EC_{50} = 1.64 \mu\text{M}$ ) and may consequently be responsible for the results obtained with the extract.

## Experimental Section

**General Experimental Procedures.** Optical rotations were measured on a Perkin-Elmer 343 polarimeter equipped with a 10 cm microcell. UV measurements were performed on a Varian Cary 300 Scan UV–visible spectrophotometer. CD spectra were measured using a JASCO J-810 spectropolarimeter. IR spectra were obtained with a PerkinElmer Paragon 1000 FT-IR spectrophotometer. NMR experiments were performed on a Bruker Avance 500 MHz spectrometer. Chemical shifts ( $\delta$  in ppm) are referenced to the carbon ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  49.0) and residual proton ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.31) signals of  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ , the solvent, with multiplicity (s singlet, d doublet, t triplet, q quadruplet, and m multiplet). Low-resolution electrospray ionization (ESI) mass spectra were obtained with a Bruker Esquire 3000 Plus spectrometer in the positive mode. High-resolution mass spectra (HRESIMS) were conducted on a LTQ Orbitrap mass spectrometer (Thermo Finnigan). HPLC purification was carried out on a Waters 600 system equipped with a Waters 717 plus autosampler, a Waters 996 photodiode array detector, and a Sedex 55 evaporative light-scattering detector (Sedere, France).

**Animal Material.** Colonies of *Parazoanthus axinellae* (Schmidt, 1862) (Parazoanthidae) were collected as epibionts of the sponge *Axinella damicornis* by scuba (−20 m) off the Marseilles coast (Plane Island, France) in June 2008. A voucher specimen (no. 080623Ma4-28) has been deposited at the Centre d’Océanologie de Marseille, France.

**Extraction and Isolation.** The colonies of *P. axinellae* were carefully separated from the sponge *A. damicornis*. The material (17.2 g) was extracted three times with  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2/\text{MeOH}$  (1:1) at room temperature, yielding 1.1 g of extract after evaporation. The extract was fractionated by RP- $\text{C}_{18}$  flash chromatography (elution with a decreasing polarity gradient of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{MeOH}$  from 1:0 to 0:1, then  $\text{MeOH}/\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$  from 1:0 to 0:1). The  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{MeOH}$  (1:3) (195 mg) fraction was then subjected to RP- $\text{C}_{18}$  semipreparative HPLC (Phenomenex, Luna  $\text{C}_{18}$ , 250 mm  $\times$  10 mm, 5  $\mu\text{m}$ ) with a gradient of  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{MeOH}/\text{TFA}$  (from 28:72:0.1 to 30:70:0.1, flow 3.0 mL  $\text{min}^{-1}$ ) to afford pure compounds **1** (1.4 mg), **2** (2.0 mg), **3** (1.4 mg), **4** (1.7 mg), and **5** (2.9 mg).

**Computational Methods.** Quantum chemical calculations were performed on both enantiomers of compound **1**. The Gaussian03W package<sup>21</sup> has been used for the conformational search as well as for circular dichroism calculations. Density functional theory (DFT) with the B3LYP functional<sup>12</sup> and Pople’s 6.31++G(d, p) basis set<sup>13</sup> was used on the lowest energy conformer. TDDFT was employed to calculate excitation energy (in eV) and rotatory strength  $R$  in dipole velocity ( $R_{\text{vel}}$ ) and dipole length ( $R_{\text{len}}$ ) forms. The calculated rotatory strengths were simulated in an ECD curve by using a corrected Gaussian function.

$$\Delta\epsilon(E) = \frac{1}{2.296 \times 10^{-39} \sqrt{2\pi\Delta}} \sum_a \Delta E_{0a} R_{0a} e^{-\left(\frac{E - \Delta E_{0a}}{2\Delta}\right)^2}$$

where  $\Delta$  is half the width of the band at  $1/\epsilon$  peak height expressed in energy units. The parameters  $\Delta E_{0a}$  and  $R_{0a}$  are the excitation energies and the rotatory strengths for transition from 0 to  $a$ , respectively,  $\Delta = 0.1$  eV and  $R_{\text{vel}}$  were used.

**Parazoanthine A (1):** colorless oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} -13$  (c 0.1, MeOH); UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 265 (3.94) nm; CD (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  ( $\Delta\epsilon$ ) 281 (−0.19) nm; IR (film)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3365, 2953, 2917, 2854, 1714, 1657, 1624  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR see Table 1; ESIMS  $m/z$  318.2  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ; HRESIMS  $m/z$  318.15547  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{20}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$ , 318.15607,  $\Delta -1.9$  ppm).

**Parazoanthine B (2):** colorless oil; UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 255 (3.20), 232 (3.39) nm; IR (film)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3345, 2957, 2924, 2854, 1719, 1669  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR see Table 1; ESIMS  $m/z$  316.2  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ; HRESIMS  $m/z$  316.13928  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{15}\text{H}_{18}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$ , 316.14042,  $\Delta -3.5$  ppm).

**Parazoanthine C (3):** colorless oil; UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 254 (3.91), 230 (3.25) nm; IR (film)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3365, 2953, 2917, 2854, 1714, 1657, 1624  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR see Table 1; ESIMS  $m/z$  330.2  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ; HRESIMS  $m/z$  330.15640  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{20}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$ , 330.15607,  $\Delta 0.9$  ppm).

**Parazoanthine D (4):** colorless oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} -9.4$  (c 0.1, MeOH); UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 270 (3.21) nm; CD (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  ( $\Delta\epsilon$ ) 279 (−0.62) nm; IR (film)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3345, 2957, 2924, 2854, 1719, 1669  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR see Table 1; ESIMS  $m/z$  410.1 (100), 412.1 (100)  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ; HRESIMS  $m/z$  410.08203  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{21}\text{BrN}_5\text{O}_3$ , 410.08223,  $\Delta -0.5$  ppm).

**Parazoanthine E (5):** colorless oil; UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 264 (3.45), 235 (3.10) nm; IR (film)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3365, 2953, 2917, 2854, 1714, 1657, 1624  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR see Table 1; ESIMS  $m/z$  408.1 (100), 410.1 (100)  $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$ ; HRESIMS  $m/z$  408.06650 (calcd for  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{19}\text{BrN}_5\text{O}_4$ , 408.06658,  $\Delta -0.2$  ppm).

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**Supporting Information Available:** Spectroscopic data;  $^1\text{H}$ ,  $^{13}\text{C}$ , and 2D NMR spectra for **1–5**, experimental and calculated CD spectra for compound **1**. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at <http://pubs.acs.org>.

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