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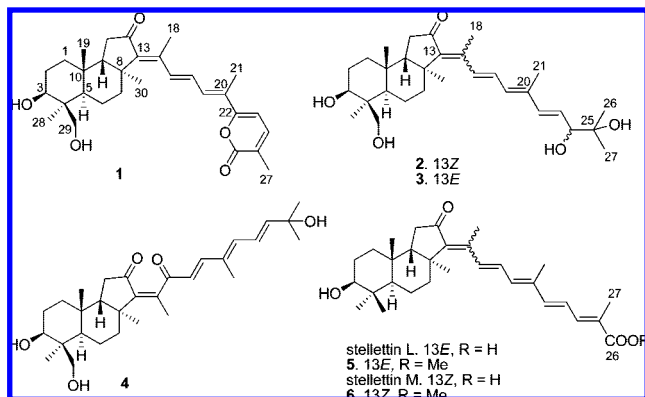
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Chemical examination of the marine sponge *Rhabdastrella* aff. *distincta* resulted in the isolation of six new isomalabaricane triterpenes, rhabdastrellins A–F (**1–6**), which were present as minor components, along with stelletins L and M. Their structures were elucidated on the basis of extensive spectroscopic data analyses and comparison with spectroscopic data of known analogues. The cytotoxicity of compounds **1–6** against a small panel of human tumor cell lines was also evaluated.

Sponges of the genus *Rhabdastrella* (Ancorinidae) are widely distributed in tropical oceans, with about 19 species being documented.<sup>1</sup> Previous chemical investigations mainly focused on *R. globostellata*, from which about 30 isomalabaricane triterpenoids were isolated.<sup>2–8</sup> Isomalabaricane is a trivial name representing a group of compounds possessing a *trans-syn-trans* tricyclic nucleus conjugated to a polyene side chain. This rare class of triterpenoids is mostly found in marine sponges from the genera *Stelletta*, *Jaspis*, *Geodia*, and *Rhabdastrella*, all of which belong to the order Astrophorida.<sup>9–14</sup> Isomalabaricanes were previously reported to significantly inhibit the growth of tumor cells. In the South China Sea, two species of these yellow sponges (*Rhabdastrella globostellata* and *R. aff. distincta*) were previously examined chemically, from which 12 isomalabaricane analogues were isolated.<sup>7,8</sup> The present work reports on the isolation and structural elucidation of six new isomalabaricane triterpenoids (**1–6**) that were isolated as minor components.



### Results and Discussion

Bioassay-guided fractionation of a MeOH extract of *R. aff. distincta* revealed that the CHCl<sub>3</sub>-soluble fraction exhibited inhibitory activity against human tumor cell lines HL-60, BGC-823, and

MDA-MB-423. This cytotoxic fraction was then subjected to repeated chromatographic separation followed by semipreparative HPLC purification to obtain rhabdastrellins A–F (**1–6**), together with stelletins L and M. The latter compounds were recently reported from the sponge *Stelletta tenuis*.<sup>11</sup>

The molecular formula C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>40</sub>O<sub>5</sub> of rhabdastrellin A (**1**) was determined through HREIMS (*m/z* 487.3408 [*M* + 1]<sup>+</sup>, calcd 487.3418) and NMR data, implying 11 degrees of unsaturation. The UV absorption maxima at 312 and 395 nm in MeOH suggested the presence of a highly conjugated polyene chromophore, while the IR absorptions at 3265 and 1688 cm<sup>−1</sup> implied the presence of carbonyl and hydroxyl functionalities. The <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum exhibited 30 carbon resonances, including 10 olefinic carbons, six methyl groups, a ketone (δ<sub>C</sub> 206.2, qC, C-12), and an ester-type carbonyl carbon (δ<sub>C</sub> 161.8, qC), which was attributed to an unsaturated δ-lactone as indicated in stelletins A–C.<sup>15</sup> The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **1** showed three tertiary methyl resonances at δ<sub>H</sub> 0.75 (3H, s, H-19), 1.46 (3H, s, H-28), and 1.19 (3H, s, H-30) and three olefinic methyl resonances at δ<sub>H</sub> 2.68 (3H, s, H-18), 1.71 (3H, s, H-21), and 1.98 (3H, s, H-27). In addition, five olefinic protons represented an ABX spin system at δ<sub>H</sub> 6.99 (1H, d, *J* = 15.2 Hz, H-15), 7.06 (1H, dd, *J* = 10.4, 15.2 Hz, H-16), and 7.58 (1H, d, *J* = 10.4 Hz, H-17) and an AB spin system at δ<sub>H</sub> 5.62 (1H, d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, H-23) and 6.40 (1H, d, *J* = 6.8 Hz, H-24). These NMR spectroscopic features were characteristic of an isomalabaricane triterpene and were very similar to those of jaspolid B.<sup>14</sup> The only difference was that a methyl group at C-4 of the latter was replaced by a hydroxymethylene unit (δ<sub>H</sub> 3.22, 4.32, δ<sub>C</sub> 63.9) in **1**, which was confirmed from the HMBC correlations of the hydroxymethylene protons to C-3 (δ<sub>C</sub> 80.4, CH), C-4 (δ<sub>C</sub> 43.6, qC), and C-5 (δ<sub>C</sub> 47.1, CH) and a long-range *W*-coupling to C-28 (δ<sub>C</sub> 23.8, CH<sub>3</sub>). Complete assignments of protons and carbons of **1** (Tables 1 and 2) were established through 2D NMR experiments (<sup>1</sup>H–<sup>1</sup>H COSY, HMQC, and HMBC). The geometry of the tricyclic core was determined as *trans-syn-trans* based on NOE interactions between H<sub>3</sub>-19/H-9 (δ<sub>H</sub> 1.52, dd) and H<sub>3</sub>-30/H-5 (δ<sub>H</sub> 1.62, d) and the comparable NMR data between **1** and jaspolid B.<sup>14</sup> The double doublet of H-3 (δ<sub>H</sub> 3.24, dd, *J* = 5.7, 12.1 Hz) indicated an axial orientation of H-3 and consequently a 3β-hydroxy group, in contrast to a broad singlet for H-3β of the known analogues.<sup>4</sup> The β-orientation of the hydroxymethylene group at C-4 was evident from the NOESY correlations between H<sub>3</sub>-19/H-29a (δ<sub>H</sub> 4.32, d) and H-3/H<sub>3</sub>-28. The significant downfield shift of H<sub>3</sub>-18 (δ<sub>H</sub> 2.68, s) due to its location in the deshielding zone of the ketone group at

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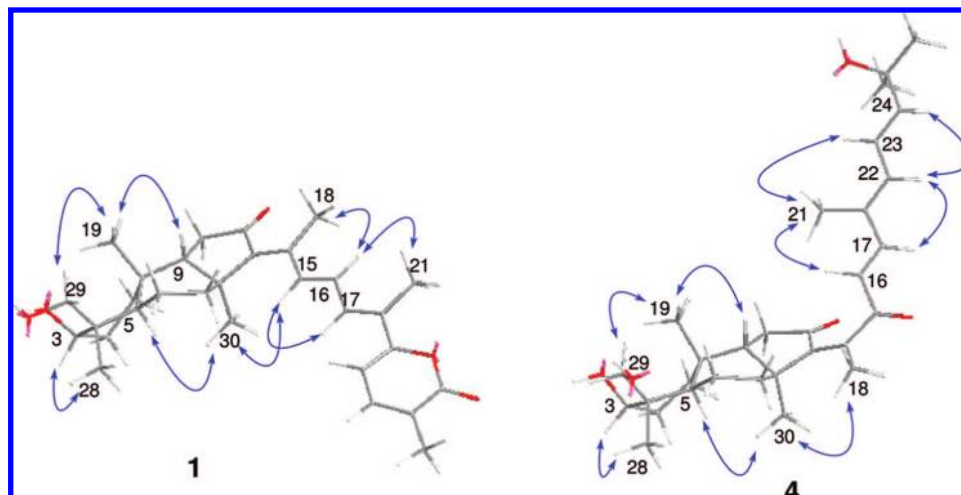
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**Figure 1.** NOESY interactions observed for compounds **1** and **4**.

**Table 1.**  $^1\text{H}$  NMR Data for Rhabdastrellins A–F (**1**–**6**)

no.	<b>1</b> <sup>a</sup>	<b>2</b> <sup>b</sup>	<b>3</b> <sup>a</sup>	<b>4</b> <sup>c</sup>	<b>5</b> <sup>a</sup>	<b>6</b> <sup>a</sup>
1	1.04 m; 1.24 m	1.38 m; 1.59 m	1.04 m; 1.25 m	1.44 m; 1.65 m	1.00 m; 1.12 m	1.03 m; 1.21 m
2	1.23 m; 1.42 m	1.84 m	1.49 m	1.82 m	1.02 m; 1.47 m	1.02 m; 1.60 m
3	3.24 dd (5.7, 12.1)	3.47 dd (5.5, 11.0)	3.17 dd (6.5, 11.0)	3.46 dd (5.5, 11.5)	3.05 dd (5.0, 11.0)	3.10 dd (5.5, 11.0)
5	1.62 d (10.8)	1.81 m	1.64 m	1.86 m	1.49 m	1.44 m
6	1.58 ; 1.44 m	1.82 m; 1.54 m	1.68 m	1.92 m; 1.69 m	1.15 m; 1.51 m	1.31 m; 1.58 m
7	1.56 m; 1.96 m	2.10 m	2.11 m	2.24 m; 2.11 m	2.06 m	1.02 m; 1.81 m
9	1.52 dd (8.1, 15.7)	1.79 m	1.52 m	1.99 m	1.50 m	1.56 m
11	2.10 m; 1.92 m	2.11 m	2.16 m	2.16 m; 2.26 m	2.08 m	2.19 m
15	6.99 d (15.2)	8.12 d (15.5)	6.83 d (15.0)		6.77 d (15.0)	9.00 d (15.0)
16	7.06 dd (10.4, 15.2)	7.10 dd (11.5, 15.5)	7.14 dd (11.5, 15.0)	6.15 d (15.5)	6.98 dd (11.5, 15.0)	7.10 dd (11.5, 15.0)
17	7.58 d (10.4)	6.25 d (11.5)	6.42 d (11.5)	7.05 d (16.0)	6.50 d (11.5)	6.51 d (11.5)
18	2.68 s	2.07 s	2.76 s	1.98 m	2.60 s	1.91 s
19	0.75 s	1.04 s	0.70 s	1.12 s	0.68 s	0.81 s
21	1.71 s	1.95 s	1.84 s	1.95 s	1.72 s	2.13 s
22		6.45 d (15.5)	6.59 brd (15.5)	6.49 d (11.5)	6.50 d (15.0)	6.46 d (15.0)
23	5.62 d (6.8)	5.97 dd (6.5, 15.5)	5.92 dd (7.5, 15.0)	6.72 dd (11.5, 15.0)	6.57 dd (11.0, 15.0)	6.61 dd (11.5, 15.0)
24	6.40 d (6.8)	3.97 d (6.5)	3.94 d (7.0)	6.14 d (15.0)	7.61 d (11.0)	7.69 d (11.5)
26		1.14 s	1.20 s	1.35 s		
27	1.98 s	1.14 s	1.22 s	1.35 s	2.03 s	1.86 s
28	1.46 s	1.23 s	1.38 s	1.27 s	0.76 s	0.88 s
29	4.32 d (11.5)	3.41 d (11.0)	4.16 d (11.0)	3.65 d (11.5)	1.03 s	1.13 s
30	3.22 d (11.5)	4.06 d (11.0)	3.35 d (11.0)	3.98 d (11.5)		
OCH <sub>3</sub>	1.19 s	1.39 s	1.28 s	1.48 s	1.20 s 3.48 s	1.18 s 3.59 s

<sup>a</sup> In  $\text{C}_6\text{D}_6$ . <sup>b</sup> In acetone- $d_6$ . <sup>c</sup> In  $\text{CD}_3\text{OD}$ .

C-12, along with the upfield shift of H-15 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.99, d), was in agreement with **13E**. The coupling constant ( $J_{\text{H-15/H-16}} = 15.2$  Hz) in conjunction with NOE interactions between H<sub>3</sub>-18/H-16 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.06, dd) and H-16/H<sub>3</sub>-21 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.71, s) defined **15E** and **17E** geometries in the side chain.

Rhabdastrellin B (**2**) had a molecular formula of  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{46}\text{O}_5$  as established through HRFABMS ( $m/z$  487.3408 [ $\text{M} + \text{H}$ ]<sup>+</sup>, calcd for 487.3418) and NMR data. A comparison of the NMR data (Tables 1 and 2) revealed that **2** possessed the same tricyclic nucleus substructure as that of **1**. The hydroxyl substitution at C-3 and C-29 was evident from the proton resonances at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.41 (1H, d,  $J = 11.0$  Hz, H-29a) and 4.06 (1H, d,  $J = 11.0$  Hz, H-29b) for  $\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ -29, and  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.47 (1H, dd,  $J = 5.5, 11.0$  Hz, H-3), in association with the DQF-COSY and HMBC correlations. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum for the side chain in **2** presented five conjugated olefinic protons, which were ascribed to an ABX spin system at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  8.12 (1H, d,  $J = 15.5$  Hz, H-15), 7.10 (1H, dd,  $J = 11.5, 15.5$  Hz, H-16), and 6.25 (1H, d,  $J = 11.5$  Hz, H-17) and an AB spin system at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.45 (1H, d,  $J = 15.5$  Hz, H-22) and 5.97 (1H, dd,  $J = 6.5, 15.5$  Hz, H-23). In addition, the side chain contained four methyl groups resonating at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  2.07 (3H, s, H-18), 1.95 (3H, s, H-21), and 1.14 (6H, s, H-26, H-27) and a hydroxymethine proton at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.97 (d,  $J$

$= 6.5$  Hz, H-24). The complete proton and carbon assignments were obtained from the  $^1\text{H}$ – $^1\text{H}$  COSY, HMQC, and HMBC spectra (Tables 1 and 2). 2D NMR data analysis indicated that the side chain of **2** was identical to that of globostellatic acid **1**<sup>4</sup> with the substitution of hydroxyl groups at C-24 and C-25, respectively. The similar NOESY correlations and NMR data of **2** compared to those of the tricyclic skeleton in **1** confirmed a *trans-syn-trans* ring junction, while OH-3 and  $\text{CH}_2\text{OH}$ -29 were  $\beta$ -oriented. The values of coupling constants  $J_{\text{H-15/H-16}} = 15.5$  Hz and  $J_{\text{H-22/H-23}} = 15.5$  Hz, along with the NOESY correlations of H<sub>3</sub>-21/H-16 and H<sub>3</sub>-21/H-23, indicated **15E**, **17E**, and **22E**, whereas **13Z** was assigned by a NOESY cross-peak between H<sub>3</sub>-18/H<sub>3</sub>-30. The chemical shift of H-15 at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  8.12 (d) implied its location in the deshielding environment of the ketone group, which also supported the assignment of **13Z**. The configuration of the chiral center at C-24 was undefined.

The molecular formula of rhabdastrellin C (**3**) as established by HRFABMS is identical to that of **2**. A comparison of the NMR data (Tables 1 and 2) confirmed that **3** was a stereoisomer of **2** at C-13. This was evident from the downfield shift of H<sub>3</sub>-18 at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  2.76 (3H, s) and upfield shift of H-15 at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.83 (1H, d,  $J = 15.0$  Hz) being similar to those of **1** and indicating a **13E**-configuration

**Table 2.**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR Data for Rhabdastrellins A–F (1–6)

no.	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>a</sup>	4 <sup>c</sup>	5 <sup>a</sup>	6 <sup>a</sup>
1	32.9 CH <sub>2</sub>	33.7 CH <sub>2</sub>	32.9 CH <sub>2</sub>	34.2 CH <sub>2</sub>	33.4 CH <sub>2</sub>	33.1 CH <sub>2</sub>
2	25.8 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.5 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.2 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.8 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.4 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.2 CH <sub>2</sub>
3	80.4 CH	80.3 CH	80.4 CH	80.8 CH	79.0 CH	78.7 CH
4	43.6 qC	44.1 qC	43.5 qC	44.7 qC	39.2 qC	38.8 qC
5	47.1 CH	47.8 CH	47.2 CH	48.3 CH	46.8 CH	46.5 CH
6	18.7 CH <sub>2</sub>	19.7 CH <sub>2</sub>	18.8 CH <sub>2</sub>	20.1 CH <sub>2</sub>	18.7 CH <sub>2</sub>	18.3 CH <sub>2</sub>
7	39.5 CH <sub>2</sub>	39.3 CH <sub>2</sub>	39.8 CH <sub>2</sub>	38.0 CH <sub>2</sub>	40.0 CH <sub>2</sub>	38.2 CH <sub>2</sub>
8	44.7 qC	45.3 qC	44.5 qC	44.3 qC	45.0 qC	44.5 qC
9	49.7 CH	51.0 CH	49.7 CH	52.5 CH	49.9 CH	49.8 CH
10	35.1 qC	37.2 qC	35.0 qC	36.7 qC	35.6 qC	35.4 qC
11	36.4 CH <sub>2</sub>	36.0 CH <sub>2</sub>	36.4 CH <sub>2</sub>	35.6 CH <sub>2</sub>	36.6 CH <sub>2</sub>	36.7 CH <sub>2</sub>
12	206.2 qC	206.6 qC	206.6 qC	206.2 qC	206.1 qC	204.9 qC
13	148.9 qC	147.1 qC	147.2 qC	148.3 qC	148.1 qC	147.4 qC
14	139.2 qC	142.7 qC	140.0 qC	144.0 qC	138.3 qC	140.6 qC
15	137.0 CH	133.5 CH	133.4 CH	203.8 qC	135.4 CH	135.4 CH
16	128.1 CH	131.3 CH	131.5 CH	125.2 CH	131.4 CH	129.8 CH
17	130.0 CH	132.3 CH	132.2 CH	150.3 CH	143.4 CH	136.3 CH
18	14.4 CH <sub>3</sub>	16.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	14.4 CH <sub>3</sub>	17.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	14.5 CH <sub>3</sub>	15.5 CH <sub>3</sub>
19	22.4 CH <sub>3</sub>	22.7 CH <sub>3</sub>	22.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	22.6 CH <sub>3</sub>	22.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	22.0 CH <sub>3</sub>
20	130.4 qC	138.8 CH	137.7 qC	134.5 qC	140.0 qC	138.2 qC
21	12.3 CH <sub>3</sub>	13.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	12.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	12.4 CH <sub>3</sub>	12.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	12.4 CH <sub>3</sub>
22	158.6 qC	136.3 CH	136.3 CH	141.0 CH	143.4 CH	143.9 CH
23	102.5 CH	131.1 CH	129.5 CH	123.6 CH	125.0 CH	123.9 CH
24	138.5 CH	79.8 CH	79.5 CH	148.9 CH	138.7 CH	138.8 CH
25	124.5 qC	73.0 qC	72.5 qC	71.5 qC	128.2 qC	128.0 qC
26	161.8 qC	25.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	23.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	29.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	168.3 qC	168.0 qC
27	16.6 CH <sub>3</sub>	25.9 CH <sub>3</sub>	26.3 CH <sub>3</sub>	29.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	13.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	12.8 CH <sub>3</sub>
28	23.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	24.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	23.6 CH <sub>3</sub>	24.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	16.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	15.9 CH <sub>3</sub>
29	63.9 CH <sub>2</sub>	64.2 CH <sub>2</sub>	63.7 CH <sub>2</sub>	65.2 CH <sub>2</sub>	29.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	29.0 CH <sub>3</sub>
30	25.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	24.9 CH <sub>3</sub>	25.8 CH <sub>3</sub>	25.2 CH <sub>3</sub>	26.1 CH <sub>3</sub>	24.6 CH <sub>3</sub>
OCH <sub>3</sub>					51.5 CH <sub>3</sub>	51.2 CH <sub>3</sub>

<sup>a</sup> In C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>. <sup>b</sup> In acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub>. <sup>c</sup> In CD<sub>3</sub>OD.

of **3**. This assignment was also supported from the NOESY correlation between H-15/H<sub>3</sub>-30. The coupling constants ( $J_{\text{H-15/H-16}} = 15.0$  Hz,  $J_{\text{H-22/H-23}} = 15.5$  Hz) and the NOESY correlations between H-16/H<sub>3</sub>-21 and H-17/H-22 were consistent with *E*-geometries of  $\Delta^{15}$ ,  $\Delta^{17}$ , and  $\Delta^{22}$ .

The molecular formula of rhabdastrellin D (**4**) was established as C<sub>30</sub>H<sub>44</sub>O<sub>5</sub> by HRFABMS and NMR data, implying nine degrees of unsaturation. The  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data of **4** (Tables 1 and 2) were assigned through 2D NMR ( $^1\text{H}$ – $^1\text{H}$  COSY, HMQC, HMBC) data analyses. Apart from the NMR data for the tricyclic core of an isomalabaricane skeleton, which showed close similarity with those of **1**–**3**, the NMR spectroscopic data for the side chain were nearly identical to those of globostellatic acid A,<sup>16</sup> as observed by a conjugated ketone group at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  203.8 (qC, C-15), a hydroxylated carbon at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  71.5 (qC, C-25), eight olefinic carbons (three for quaternary carbons and five for methines), and four methyl groups. The composition of the side chain was unambiguously established by 2D NMR. The similar NOESY correlations and NMR data of **4** compared to those of **1**–**3** suggested that **4** possessed the same configurations of the tricyclic skeleton and its substituents as assigned for the latter compounds. The geometries of 13*Z*, 16*E*, 20*E*, and 23*E* were evident from the *J* values of H-16 and H-22 and the NOESY cross-peaks between H<sub>3</sub>-18/H<sub>3</sub>-30, H-16/H<sub>3</sub>-21, and H-17/H-22.

The molecular formula of rhabdastrellin E (**5**) was determined as C<sub>31</sub>H<sub>44</sub>O<sub>4</sub> by HREIMS ( $m/z$  480.3235 [ $\text{M}]^+$ , calcd 480.3240) and was 14 amu higher than that of stelletin L.<sup>11</sup> The  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data of **5** were almost superimposable to those of stelletin M except for the presence of an additional methoxy group ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.48, s;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  51.5, CH<sub>3</sub>). The HMBC cross-peak between the methoxy protons and the carbonyl carbon at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  168.3 (qC, C-26) confirmed that **5** is a methyl ester of stelletin L at the terminal carboxylic acid C-26. The stereochemistry of **5** was identical to stelletin L on the basis of the similarities of NMR and NOE data.

The NMR data of rhabdastrellin F (**6**) indicated that the congener **6** is a 13*Z* isomer of **5** and closely resembled stelletin M.<sup>11</sup> The

13*Z*-configuration was evident from the chemical shifts of H-15 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  9.00, d, *J* = 15.0 Hz) and H<sub>3</sub>-18 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.91, s) in association with the NOESY correlation between H<sub>3</sub>-18/H<sub>3</sub>-30. The methyl ester group at the terminus of the side chain was recognized by the  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR resonances of a methoxy group ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  3.59, s;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  51.2, CH<sub>3</sub>) and its protons showing HMBC correlation to the carbonyl carbon at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  168.0 (qC, C-26).

The methylation of stelletin L was achieved with the help of ethereal diazomethane to yield compound **5**, while stelletin M was completely converted to **6** using the same method. These facts further supported the structural assignments of compounds **5** and **6**.

Rhabdastrellins A–E (**1**–**6**) were tested against a small panel of human tumor cell lines including HL-60, BGC-823, and MDA-MB-435. Compound **1** possessed moderate inhibitory activity toward HL-60 (IC<sub>50</sub> = 4.2  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ), while the rest were inactive (IC<sub>50</sub> > 10  $\mu\text{g}/\text{mL}$ ).

Isomalabaricane triterpenoids are a group of unstable natural products, which are easily isomerized at C-13 or autoxidized in the polyene side chain upon exposure to light or storage at room temperature. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of the crude extract obtained from the fresh sponge indicated that it mostly contains isomalabaricanes with 13*E*-configuration (H-15 of most isomalabaricanes appeared around 7.0 ppm). Thus, the 13*Z* isomers are suggested to be the artifacts produced during isolation.

## Experimental Section

**General Experimental Procedures.** Optional rotations were measured with a WZZ-1S digital automatic polarimeter. UV spectra were recorded on a Shimadzu UV-210A spectrophotometer. IR spectra were determined on a Thermo Nicolet Nexus 470 FT-IR spectrometer.  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra were recorded on an AVANCE-500 FT 500 MHz NMR spectrometer using TMS as an internal standard. EIMS were performed with a Bruker APEX-II mass spectrometer, while HREIMS and HRFABMS were obtained on GCT-MS instruments (Micromass UK). Column chromatography was carried out on Si gel (160–200 and 200–300 mesh), and GF<sub>254</sub> Si gel for TLC was provided by Qingdao Marine Chemistry Co. Ltd. HPLC chromatography was performed on an Alltech instrument (426-HPLC pump, Alltech UV–vis-200 detector) with a Kromasil semipreparative column (10  $\mu\text{m}$ , ODS, 10 mm  $\times$  250 mm).

**Animal Material.** The marine sponge *Rhabdastrella* aff. *distincta* Thiele, 1900 (Demospongiae; Astrophorida; Ancorinidae) was collected from the coral reef of Hainan, the South China Sea, in June 2002. The species was identified by one of the authors (N.J.V.). A voucher specimen is deposited at the State Key Laboratory of Natural and Biomimetic Drugs, Peking University (HS-14), and the Zoological Museum of Amsterdam (ZMA POR. 16728).

**Extraction and Isolation.** The freeze-dried sponge sample (4.2 kg, wt) was homogenized and extracted with MeOH. The concentrated extract was partitioned between H<sub>2</sub>O and CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> to obtain a CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> extract (5.0 g), which was subjected to Si gel column chromatography using a gradient of petroleum ether (PE)–acetone (5:1, 2:1, 1:1) as eluant to obtain six fractions (FA–FF). The polar fraction FF (30 mg) was separated on a Si gel column with the eluant of PE–acetone (3:1) to afford **1** (4.0 mg) and stelletins M (6.8 mg) and L (3.4 mg). Fraction FE (90 mg) was subjected to a Sephadex LH-20 column with PE–CHCl<sub>3</sub>–MeOH (5:5:1) as eluant to get a mixture of isomalabaricane triterpenes (35 mg), and this mixture was subsequently purified on a Si gel column eluting with PE–acetone (5:1) to yield **2** (3.0 mg), **3** (1.5 mg), and **4** (4.0 mg). Fraction FD (30 mg) was separated on a semipreparative HPLC with MeOH–H<sub>2</sub>O (85:15) as a mobile phase to obtain **5** (2.7 mg) and **6** (4.2 mg).

**Methylation of Stelletins L and M.** To a flask with stelletin L (3.8 mg) was added ethereal diazomethane reagent. The flask was left at room temperature under stirring overnight. The reacted product was concentrated and subjected to a silica gel column eluting with PE–acetone (4:1) to yield **5** (4.0 mg). Stelletin M (3.5 mg) was reacted in the same manner as described for stelletin L to yield **6** (2.3 mg).

**Rhabdastrellin A (1):** yellow oil; [ $\alpha_{\text{D}}$ ] –17.2 (c 0.25, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 312, 395 nm<sup>–1</sup>; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3265, 2956, 2872, 1688, 1432



$\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; EIMS  $m/z$  480  $[\text{M}]^+$ ; HREIMS  $m/z$  480.2872  $[\text{M}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{40}\text{O}_5$ , 480.2876).

**Rhabdastrellin B (2):** yellow oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} +56.2$  ( $c$  0.23, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 259, 369  $\text{nm}^{-1}$ ; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3390, 2930, 2873, 1686, 1450, 1171, 1027  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; FABMS  $m/z$  487  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$ ; HRFABMS  $m/z$  487.3408  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{47}\text{O}_5$ , 487.3418).

**Rhabdastrellin C (3):** yellow oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} -231.1$  ( $c$  0.12, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 257, 368  $\text{nm}^{-1}$ ; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3356, 2978, 2857, 1673, 1452, 1170, 1028  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; FABMS  $m/z$  487  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$ ; HRFABMS  $m/z$  487.3423  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{47}\text{O}_5$ , 487.3418).

**Rhabdastrellin D (4):** yellow oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} +140.3$  ( $c$  0.31, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 225, 324  $\text{nm}^{-1}$ ; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3404, 2930, 2872, 1715, 1631, 1598, 1377, 1025  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; FABMS  $m/z$  485  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$ ; HRFABMS  $m/z$  485.3255  $[\text{M} + 1]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{45}\text{O}_5$ , 485.3261).

**Rhabdastrellin E (5):** yellow oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} -37.8$  ( $c$  0.15, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 296, 393  $\text{nm}^{-1}$ ; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3284, 2927, 2857, 1704, 1437, 1167  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; EIMS  $m/z$  480  $[\text{M}]^+$ ; HREIMS  $m/z$  480.3235  $[\text{M}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{31}\text{H}_{44}\text{O}_4$ , 480.3240).

**Rhabdastrellin F (6):** yellow oil;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}} -27.3$  ( $c$  0.12, acetone); UV ( $\lambda_{\text{max}}$ ) 298, 371, 392  $\text{nm}^{-1}$ ; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3325, 2929, 2870, 1704, 1438, 1169  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; EIMS  $m/z$  480  $[\text{M}]^+$ ; HREIMS  $m/z$  480.3221  $[\text{M}]^+$  (calcd for  $\text{C}_{31}\text{H}_{44}\text{O}_4$ , 480.3240).

**Cytotoxic Assays.** The cytotoxic activity of compounds **1–6** was tested against human tumor cell lines (HL-60, BGC-823, MDA-MB-423). The bioassays were performed in the same manner as described previously.<sup>8</sup>

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