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Alkynenitriles: stereoselective chelation controlled conjugate addition–alkylations

Fraser F. Fleming,* Venugopal Gudipati and Omar W. Steward

Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry, Duquesne University, Mellon Hall, Pittsburgh, PA 15282-1530, USA

Received 4 April 2003; revised 1 May 2003; accepted 14 May 2003

Abstract—Chelation-controlled conjugate addition of Grignard reagents to γ -hydroxyalkynenitriles stereoselectively generates tri- and tetra-substituted alkenenitriles. *t*-BuMgCl-initiated deprotonation of hydroxyalkynenitriles followed by addition of a second Grignard reagents triggers a facile conjugate addition leading to a cyclic magnesium chelate. Protonation of the chelate stereoselectively generates trisubstituted nitriles whereas the addition of *t*-BuLi causes conversion to an ‘ate’ complex that allows alkylation with aldehyde electrophiles. The chelation-controlled conjugate addition–alkylation generates tri- and tetra-substituted alkenenitriles that are otherwise difficult to synthesize. © 2003 Elsevier Science Ltd. All rights reserved.

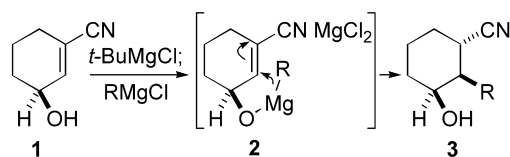
1. Introduction

Chelation provides a powerful means of bond construction.¹ Temporary chelation dramatically accelerates many reactions by virtue of the close proximity imparted on the two reactive centers, essentially harnessing the inherent entropic advantages of intramolecular reactions² in a formal intermolecular process. Tethering the two reacting centers generally imposes precise geometric constraints on the transition state resulting in high stereoselectivity during bond formation,³ in some cases affording stereoisomers that are otherwise difficult to access.⁴

Conjugate addition⁵ and carbometallation⁶ reactions, especially, are dramatically enhanced by chelation. The enhanced reactivity is readily apparent by comparing chelation-controlled⁷ and organocopper⁸ conjugate additions to alkenenitriles—substrates that are generally recalcitrant acceptors in anionic conjugate addition reactions.⁹ For example, sequential deprotonation of **1** with *t*-BuMgCl (Scheme 1) and alkyl exchange from a variety of Grignard reagents triggers a stereoselective conjugate

addition through chelate **2** whereas cuprates are unreactive toward cyclohexenecarbonitrile (**1**, HO=H).

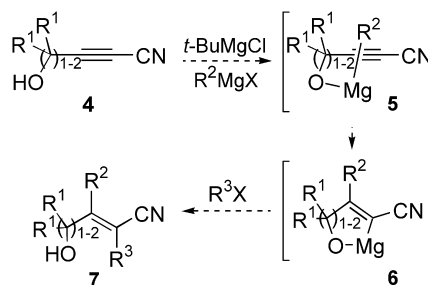
The enhanced reactivity, and high stereoselectivity, of chelation-controlled conjugate additions to alkenenitriles suggested extending the strategy to alkynenitriles. The attraction lies not only in enlarging chelation-controlled conjugate additions to incorporate *sp*-hybridized acceptors,¹⁰ but in stereoselectively assembling tri-substituted alkenenitriles (Scheme 2, R³=H).¹¹ Conceptually, chelation-controlled conjugate addition, followed by intercepting the intermediate vinyl organometallic **6** with carbon electrophiles,¹² provides a concise route to tetra-substituted alkenenitriles **7** for which few syntheses exist.¹³ This account describes the scope of chelation-controlled conjugate additions to hydroxyalkynenitriles¹⁴ and the first series of conjugate addition–alkylation reactions with alkynenitriles. Collectively these chelation-controlled conjugate addition reactions stereoselectively assemble tri- and tetra-substituted alkenenitriles that are otherwise challenging synthetic targets.



Scheme 1. Chelation-controlled conjugate addition.

Keywords: conjugate addition; alkynenitriles.

* Corresponding author. Tel.: +1-412-396-6031; fax: +1-412-396-5683; e-mail: flemingf@duq.edu



Scheme 2. Chelation-controlled conjugate addition–alkylation of alkynenitriles.

Table 1. Hydroxyalkynenitrile synthesis

$ \begin{array}{c} \text{R}^1 \\ \\ \text{R}^2\text{O}-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1 \\ \text{8} \end{array} \xrightarrow[\text{B. Dowex, MeOH}]{\text{A. BuLi; PhOCN}} \begin{array}{c} \text{R}^1 \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1-\text{CN} \\ \text{4} \end{array} $				
Entry	Alkyne	Method	Alkynenitrile	Yield (%)
1	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{THPO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1 \\ \text{8a} \end{array} $	A+B	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1-\text{CN} \\ \text{4a} \end{array} $	84
2	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{THPO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1 \\ \text{8b} \end{array} $	A+B	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1-\text{CN} \\ \text{4b} \end{array} $	76
3	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{C}(\text{Me})_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1 \\ \text{8c} \end{array} $	A	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{C}(\text{Me})_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{R}^1-\text{CN} \\ \text{4c} \end{array} $	80

2. Results and discussion

A prerequisite for chelation-controlled conjugate addition reactions is an efficient synthesis of diverse hydroxyalkynenitriles. A general route to hydroxyalkynenitriles must overcome the instability of the parent 4-hydroxybutynenitrile (**4a**) toward base¹⁵ and silica gel chromatography¹⁶ that stems partly from the enhanced electrophilicity imparted by the proximal hydroxyl group,¹⁷ and partly from the accessibility of the electrophilic β -carbon. Moderating the reactivity by THP protection of the hydroxyl group¹⁸ proved admirable in allowing a high yielding deprotonation–cyanation¹⁹ route to the chromatographically stable THP-protected alkynenitrile that was subsequently converted to spectroscopically pure **4a** on exposure to Dowex 50-X4 (Table 1, entry 1).

Table 2. Conjugate additions to alkynenitriles

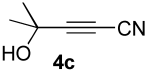
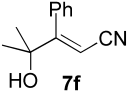
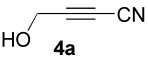

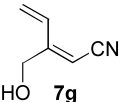
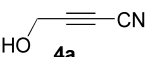

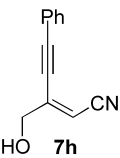
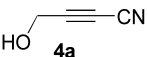
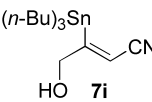
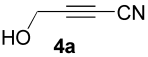
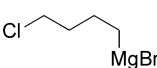
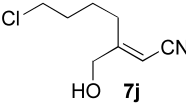
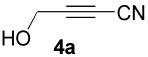
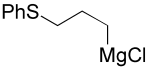
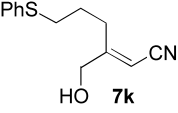
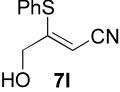
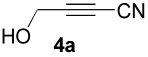
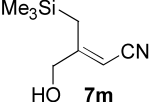
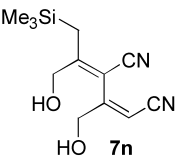
$ \begin{array}{c} \text{R}^1\text{R}^1 \\ \quad \\ \text{HO}-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4} \end{array} \xrightarrow[\text{R}^2\text{MgX (1.1 equiv)}]{t\text{-BuMgCl (1 equiv)}} \begin{array}{c} \text{R}^1\text{R}^1 \quad \text{R}^2 \\ \quad \quad \\ \text{HO}-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7} \end{array} $				
Entry	Alkynenitrile	Grignard reagent	Alkenenitrile	Yield (%)
1	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4a} \end{array} $	MeMgCl	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{Me} \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7a} \end{array} $	92
2	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{C}(\text{Me})_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4c} \end{array} $	MeMgCl	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{Me} \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{C}(\text{Me})_2-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7b} \end{array} $	70
3	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4a} \end{array} $	<i>i</i> -PrMgBr	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{CH}_2\text{CH}_3 \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7c} \end{array} $	87
4	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4a} \end{array} $	<i>t</i> -BuMgCl	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{C}(\text{Me})_3 \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7d} \end{array} $	60
5	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}\equiv\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{4a} \end{array} $	PhMgCl	$ \begin{array}{c} \text{Ph} \\ \\ \text{HO}-\text{CH}_2-\text{C}=\text{C}-\text{CN} \\ \text{7e} \end{array} $	92

Analogous lithiation–cyanations of alkynes **8b** and **8c** generate the chromatographically stable alkynenitriles **4b** and **4c** (Table 1, entries 2–3), with the sterically hindered nitrile **4c** imparting sufficient stability for direct double lithiation–cyanation of the hydroxyalkyne **8c** (Table 1, entry 3).

Hydroxyalkynenitriles **4a** and **4c** react with a range of Grignard reagents in an efficient chelation-controlled conjugate addition (Table 2). Experimentally, *t*-BuMgCl deprotonates the γ -hydroxyalkynenitriles permitting conjugate addition upon addition of a slight excess of a second, potentially more valuable, Grignard reagent. *t*-BuMgCl is an excellent sacrificial base for the initial deprotonation²⁰ since no transfer of the *t*-butyl group occurs during deprotonation at -78°C , whereas warming to ambient temperature with excess *t*-BuMgCl efficiently induces conjugate addition of the *t*-butyl group (Table 2, entry 4). High steric demand is tolerated in the Grignard reagent and in the alkynenitrile, although the reaction efficiency is reduced relative to reactions with less-substituted counterparts (compare Table 2, entry 1 with entries 4 and 9; entry 1 with entry 2; and entry 5 with entry 6).

Chelation-controlled conjugate additions of alkyl, vinyl, aryl, and alkynyl Grignards exclusively generate *E*-alkenenitriles.²¹ Modest halogen, silicon, and sulfur functionality is tolerated in the Grignard reagent (Table 2, entries 10–12) although the instability²² of the Grignard prepared from 3-chloropropyl phenylsulfide²³ (Table 2, entry 11) causes concomitant formation of **7f**, presumably through conjugate addition of PhSMgCl formed by cyclization of the Grignard reagent.

Table 2 (continued)

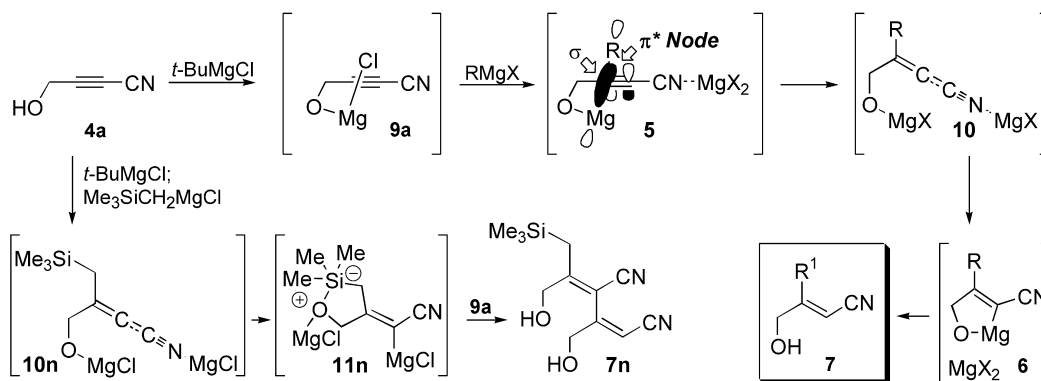
Entry	Alkynenitrile	Grignard reagent	Alkenenitrile	Yield (%)
6	 4c	PhMgCl	 7f	66
7	 4a	 MgBr	 7g	87
8	 4a	 MgBr	 7h	85
9	 4a	(<i>n</i> -Bu) ₃ SnMgCl	 7i	70
10	 4a	 MgBr	 7j	78
11	 4a	 MgCl	 7k	42
			 7l	53
12	 4a	Me ₃ SiCH ₂ MgCl	 7m	38
			 7n	19

Chelate **6** is surprisingly unreactive toward alkylation—even being unreactive toward benzaldehyde!²⁴ The low nucleophilicity of chelate **6** is consistent with the inability of **6** to act as a vinyl Grignard reagent in a second chelation-controlled conjugate addition with alkynenitrile **9a** (Scheme 3). Competitive conjugate addition of the chelate **6** is only observed with Me₃SiCH₂MgCl (Table 1, entry 12), presumably reflecting formation of the silicate **11n**²⁵ from **10n** which unmasks a more reactive C–Mg bond²⁶ that competes with the hindered Me₃SiCH₂MgCl for **9a**.

Mechanistically, the stepwise chelation controlled conjugate addition directly parallels the analogous reactions of hydroxyalkenenitriles.⁷ *t*-BuMgCl-induced deprotonation of the γ -hydroxyalkynenitrile followed by halogen–alkyl exchange^{5b} (Scheme 3), leads to the alkylmagnesium

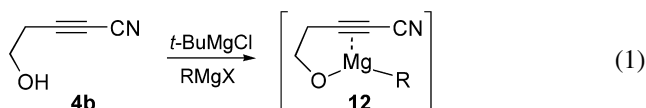
alkoxide **5** that triggers the key anionic conjugate addition. Alkyl transfer from **5** requires overlap of the σ carbon–magnesium bond with the π^* -LUMO where the π^* -node precludes a concerted addition²⁷ as does the large distance between the magnesium and α -carbon atoms. Alkyl transfer from **5**, with activation of the nitrile by MgX₂, leads directly to the magnesiated alkenenitrile **10** that will equilibrate²⁸ to the cyclic chelate **6**.²⁹ Subsequent protonation of **6** generates the corresponding alkenenitrile **7** with retention of stereochemistry.⁶

Chelation is essential for the conjugate addition. A control experiment in which the THP-protected alkynenitrile **4a** HO=OTHP is exposed to *n*-BuMgCl leads to 90% recovery of unreacted nitrile. Similarly, positioning the hydroxyl group two atoms removed from the alkynenitrile prevents



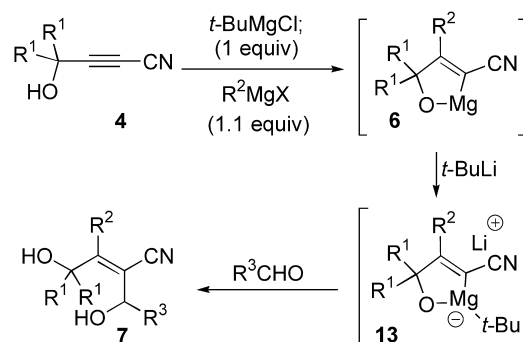
Scheme 3. Chelation-controlled conjugate addition mechanism.

the conjugate addition. The inability of alkyne nitrile **4b** to undergo chelation controlled conjugate addition is surprising given the related carbometallation of butynols with Grignard reagents,⁶ and the apparently more favorable proximity achieved by increasing the length of the tether (Eq. (1)). Although speculative, the inability of a chelation-controlled conjugate addition with **4b** may stem from an interaction³⁰ between magnesium and the π -bond³¹ which positions the alkyl group away from the alkyne and deactivates the alkyne nitrile nitrogen toward complexation with magnesium dihalide.



The poor nucleophilicity of the chelate **6** is surprising for a formal 'dianion.' Efforts to activate the chelate **6** by weakening the Mg- sp^2 bond focused on the addition of *t*-BuLi for conversion to the more reactive magnesium ate species **13** (Scheme 4).³² Although not proof for the intermediacy of an ate complex, the addition of *t*-BuLi sufficiently activates **6** for a stereoselective³³ alkylation with aldehydes³⁴ that is consistent with a retentive

alkylation^{6a} through a cyclic ate complex (Table 3). The overall sequence of *t*-BuMgBr deprotonation, RMgX conjugate addition, *t*-BuLi ate activation, and alkylation is remarkably efficient for several Grignard reagents and even with the potentially enolizable aldehyde 3-phenylpropanal (Table 3, entries 3–6). Collectively, the three component coupling stereoselectively generates tetra-substituted alkenenitriles that are otherwise difficult to synthesize.

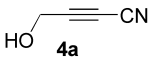

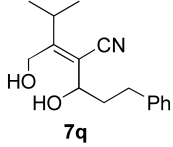
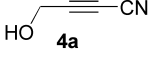

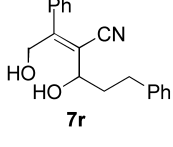
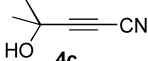

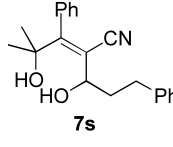
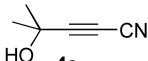

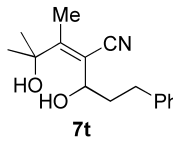


Scheme 4. Chelation-controlled conjugate addition-alkylations.

Table 3. Alkyne nitrile conjugate addition-alkylations

Entry	Alkyne nitrile	Grignard Reagent	Aldehyde	Alkenenitrile	Yield (%)
1		PhMgCl	PhCHO		60
2		<i>i</i> -PrMgBr	PhCHO		72

Table 3 (continued)

Entry	Alkynenitrile	Grignard Reagent	Aldehyde	Alkenenitrile	Yield (%)
3		<i>i</i> -PrMgBr			65
4		PhMgCl			57
5		PhMgCl			57
6		MeMgCl			61

Temporary chelation of Grignard reagents to γ -hydroxyalkynenitriles triggers a facile conjugate addition reaction. *t*-BuMgCl-initiated deprotonation of γ -hydroxyalkynenitriles and addition of a slight excess of a second Grignard reagent causes a stepwise conjugate addition resulting in the formation of a cyclic magnesium chelate. Protonation of the chelate stereoselectively generates tri-substituted alkenenitriles whereas addition of *t*-BuLi generates a more reactive ate complex that alkylates aromatic and aliphatic aldehydes with complete stereochemical fidelity. Collectively the chelation-controlled conjugate addition–alkylation generates a range of tri- and tetra-substituted alkenenitriles that are otherwise difficult to synthesize.

3. Experimental³⁵

3.1. Data for compounds

3.1.1. 4-(Tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-but-2-yne nitrile. A hexanes solution of *n*-BuLi (5.4 mL, 8.6 mmol) was added to a -78°C , THF solution of **8a**¹⁸ (1.2 g, 8.6 mmol) followed, after 15 min, by a THF solution of PhOCN¹⁹ (1.3 equiv.). The cooling bath was removed and, after 15 min, aqueous NaOH (6 M) was added and followed by ether extraction. The combined extracts were washed sequentially with NaOH (6 M), and saturated NaCl, passed through a short plug of silica gel (5×1 cm column), dried over NaSO₄, concentrated and purified by radial chromatography (1:9 EtOAc/hexanes) to yield 1.3 g (92%) of 4-(tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-but-2-yne nitrile as oil: IR (film) 2304, 2265 cm^{-1} ; ¹H NMR 1.52–1.84 (m, 6H), 3.54–3.58 (m, 1H), 3.75–3.83 (m, 1H), 4.37 (s, 2H), 4.76 (s, 1H); ¹³C NMR δ 18.6, 25.0, 29.9, 53.6, 59.7, 62.0, 81.6, 97.7, 104.6; MS *m/e* 164 (M–H).

3.1.2. 4-Hydroxy-but-2-yne nitrile (4a). An anhydrous methanolic solution (15 mL) of 5-(tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-pent-2-yne nitrile (0.6 g) and Dowex (pre washed with anhydrous methanol) was stirred at room temperature for 1.5 h. The reaction was then filtered, the residue concentrated, and retreated with Dowex for 1.5 h to yield 295 mg (100%) of **4a** as oil: IR (film) 3447, 2308, 2245 cm^{-1} ; ¹H NMR δ 2.39 (br, 1H), 4.40 (s, 2H), 2.38 (s, 1H); ¹³C NMR δ 50.6, 59.6, 83.1, 104.6.

3.1.3. 5-(Tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-pent-2-yne nitrile. A hexanes solution (1.6 M) of *n*-BuLi (0.52 mL, 0.84 mmol) was added to a -78°C , THF solution of **8b**³⁶ (0.13 g, 0.84 mmol) followed, after 15 min, by a THF solution of PhOCN (1.3 equiv.). The cooling bath was removed and, after 15 min, aqueous NaOH (6 M) was added and followed by ether extraction. The combined extracts were washed sequentially with NaOH (6 M), and saturated NaCl, passed through a short plug of silica gel (5×1 cm column), dried over NaSO₄, concentrated and purified by radial chromatography (1:10 EtOAc/hexanes) to yield 0.12 g (80%) of 5-(tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-pent-2-yne nitrile as oil: IR (film) 2314, 2261 cm^{-1} ; ¹H NMR δ 1.57–1.84 (m, 6H), 2.65–2.69 (m, 2H), 3.52–3.65 (m, 2H), 3.81–3.92 (m, 2H), 4.64 (brs, 1H); ¹³C NMR δ 19.2, 20.6, 25.3, 30.4, 55.9, 62.3, 63.7, 84.7, 99.0, 105.1; MS *elm* 178 (M–H).

3.1.4. 5-Hydroxy-pent-2-yne nitrile (4b). A methanolic solution (10 mL) of 5-(Tetrahydro-pyran-2-yloxy)-pent-2-yne nitrile (0.12 g) and Dowex (pre-washed with anhydrous methanol) was stirred at room temperature for 1.5 h. The reaction was then filtered, the residue concentrated, and retreated with Dowex for 1.5 h to yield 63 mg (100%) of **4b** as an oil: IR (film) 3434, 2315, 2263 cm^{-1} ; ¹H NMR δ 2.12 (s, 1H), 2.65–2.61 (s, *J*=6.0 Hz, 2H), 3.82 (s,

2H); ^{13}C NMR δ 23.0, 56.1, 59.3, 85.0, 105.0 MS *m/e* 95 (M+H).

3.1.5. 4-Hydroxy-4-methyl-pent-2-ynenitrile (4c). A hexanes solution (1.6 M) of *n*-BuLi (2.96 mL, 4.75 mmol) was added to a -78°C , THF solution of **8c** (0.4 g, 4.75 mmol) followed, after 15 min, by a THF solution of PhOCN (1.3 equiv.). The cooling bath was removed and, after 15 min, aqueous NaOH (6 M) was added and followed by ether extraction. The combined extracts were washed sequentially with NaOH (6 M), and saturated NaCl, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated and, purified by radial chromatography (1:9 EtOAc/hexanes) to yield 0.41 g (80%) of **4c** as oil, identical to material previously synthesized.³⁷

3.2. General conjugate addition procedure

A THF solution of *t*-BuMgCl (1.0 equiv., 1–2 M) was added to a -78°C , THF solution of the γ -hydroxyalkyne-nitrile (1 equiv.) followed, after 5 min, by a THF solution of the appropriate Grignard reagent (1.1 equiv., 1–3 M). After 45 min, the reaction mixture was allowed to warm to room temperature (15 min) and then saturated aqueous NH_4Cl was added. The crude reaction mixture was extracted with EtOAc the combined organic extracts were dried (Na_2SO_4), passed through a short plug of silica gel (2×1 cm column), concentrated, and purified by radial chromatography.

3.2.1. 4-Hydroxy-3-but-2-enenitrile (7a). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (20 mg) and MeMgCl provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 22 mg (92%) of **7a** spectrally identical to material previously synthesized.^{21a}

3.2.2. (2E)-4-Hydroxy-3,4-dimethylpent-2-enenitrile (7b). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4c** (20 mg) and MeMgCl provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 16.1 mg (70%) of **7b** as an oil: IR (film) 3410, 2932, 2215, 1601 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.37 (s, 6H), 2.08 (s, 3H), 5.63 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ 17.8, 28.5, 73.6, 94.1, 117.5, 169.6; MS *m/e* 126 (M+H).

3.2.3. (2E)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-4-methylpent-2-enenitrile (7c). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (12.9 mg) and *i*-PrMgBr provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 17.3 mg (87%) of **7c** as an oil: IR (film) 3447, 2221, 1628 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.16 (d, $J=7.2$ Hz, 6H), 1.21 (br s, 1H), 3.10 (sept, $J=7$ Hz, 1H), 4.30 (s, 2H), 5.53 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ 20.5, 32.2, 61.0, 91.9, 116.9, 172.1; MS *m/e* 126 (M+H).

3.2.4. (2E)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-4,4-dimethylpent-2-enenitrile (7d). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (16.2 mg) and *t*-BuMgCl provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 16.5 mg (60%) of **7d** as an oil: IR (film) 3483, 2219, 1636 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.32 (s, 9H), 1.75 (s, 1H), 4.32 (s, 2H), 5.72 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ 28.9, 36.2, 62.4, 91.4, 118.0, 173.2; MS *m/e* 140 (M+H).

3.2.5. (2E)-4-Hydroxy-3-phenylbut-2-enenitrile (7e). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (15 mg) and PhMgCl provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 27 mg (92%) of **7e** as an oil:³⁸ IR (Film) 3446, 3060, 2221, 1623 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 2.37 (br s, 1H), 4.52 (s, 2H), 5.78 (s, 1H), 7.43 (s, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 64.6, 94.2, 117.4, 127.2, 128.9, 130.1, 134.7, 163.6; MS *m/e* 159.

3.2.6. (2E)-4-Hydroxy-4-methyl-3-phenylpent-2-enenitrile (7f). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4c** (20 mg) and PhMgCl, provided after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 22.6 mg (66%) of **7f** as a light brown solid: IR (film) 3440, 3060, 2229, 1614 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.39 (s, 6H), 1.86 (s, 1H), 5.97 (s, 1H), 7.19–7.44 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 28.7, 73.6, 97.1, 116.9, 127.7, 128.4, 128.7; HRMS (ESI) calcd for (M+Na⁺) $\text{C}_{12}\text{H}_{13}\text{NONa}^+$ 210.0889, found 210.08933.

3.2.7. (2E)-3-(Hydroxymethyl) penta-2, 4-dienenitrile (7g). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (21.3 mg) and vinyl magnesium bromide provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 25 mg (87%) of **7g** as an oil: IR (film) 3423, 2218, 1635, 1582 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 2.08 (s, 1H), 4.51 (s, 2H), 5.54 (d, $J=11$ Hz, 1H), 5.58 (d, $J=17$ Hz, 1H), 5.69 (s, 1H), 6.87 (dd, $J=17, 11$ Hz, 1H); ^{13}C NMR: 61.0, 95.7, 116.6, 120.9, 131.4, 158.0; MS *m/e* 109.

3.2.8. (2E)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-5-phenylpent-2-en-4-yne-nitrile (7h). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (30 mg) and $\text{PhC}\equiv\text{CMgCl}$ ³⁹ provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:3 EtOAc/hexanes), 57.6 (85%) mg of **7h** as an oil: IR (film) 3347, 3067, 2224, 2192, 1589 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 2.36 (s, 1H), 4.39 (s, 2H), 5.93 (s, 2H), 7.36–8.74 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR: 64.1, 83.2, 100.9, 102, 116.7, 121.2, 128.5, 129.9, 132.3, 145.8 MS *m/e* 183 (M⁺).

3.2.9. (2Z)-4,4-Dibutyl-3-(hydroxymethyl)-4-stannaoct-2-enenitrile (7i). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (10 mg) and $(\text{Bu})_3\text{SnMgCl}$ ⁴⁰ provided, after purification by radial chromatography (1:4 EtOAc/hexanes), 32 mg (70%) of **7i** as oil: IR (film) 3422, 2217, 1654 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 0.91 (t, $J=7.0$ Hz, 9H), 1.12–1.64 (m, 18H), 4.42 (s, 2H), 6.26 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ 10.1, 13.6, 27.2, 29.0, 68.1, 105.5, 118.9, 176.7; MS *m/e* 373 (M⁺).

3.2.10. (2E)-7-Chloro-3-(hydroxymethyl)-hept-2-enenitrile (7j). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (15 mg) and chlorobutyl-magnesium bromide⁴¹ provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 25 mg (78%) of **7j** as an oil: IR (Film) 3435, 2220, 1639 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.63–1.73 (m, 2H), 1.80–1.89 (m, 2H), 2.42 (t, $J=7.5$ Hz, 2H), 3.57 (t, $J=6.0$ Hz, 2H), 4.26 (s, 2H), 5.59 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR: 25.3, 31.2, 31.6, 44.3, 63.9, 94.3, 116.8, 166.2; MS *m/e* 173 (M+H).

3.2.11. (2E)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-6-phenylthiohex-2-enenitrile (7k) and (2Z)-4-hydroxy-3-phenylthiobut-2-enenitrile (7l). Performing the general conjugate addition

procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (16 mg) and $\text{PhS}(\text{CH}_2)_3\text{MgCl}$ ²² provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 19.3 mg (42%) of **7k** and 20 mg (53%) of **7l** as an oils. For **7k** IR (film) 3426, 3060, 2219, 1632, 1584 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.60 (br s, 1H), 1.78–1.88 (m, 2H), 2.51 (dd, $J=8$ Hz, 2H), 2.95 (t, $J=7.3$ Hz, 2H), 4.20 (s, 2H), 5.57 (s, 1H), 7.17–7.60 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 27.6, 31.0, 33.5, 64.0, 94.6, 126.4, 129.0, 129.8, 165.7; MS *elm* 233. For **7l** IR (film) 3438, 3058, 2216, 1579 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 2.03 (s, 1H), 4.07 (s, 2H), 5.81 (s, 1H), 7.27–7.55 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 64.1, 93.6, 127.9, 129.9, 134.7, 162; MS *m/e* 191 (M^+).

3.2.12. (2Z)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-5,5-dimethyl-5-sila-hex-2-enenitrile (7m) and (2E)-1-[1-(2,2-dimethyl-2-sila-propyl)-2-hydroxyethylidene]-2-(hydroxymethyl)prop-2-ene-1,3-dicarbonitrile (7n). Performing the general conjugate addition procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (20 mg) and $(\text{CH}_3)_3\text{SiCH}_2\text{MgCl}$ provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 16 mg (38.3%) of **7m** and 14 mg (19.4) of **7n** as an oils. For **7m**: IR (Film) 3456, 2215, 1620; ^1H NMR δ 0.12 (s, 9H), 1.94 (s, 2H), 4.13 (s, 2H), 5.39 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ -1.0, 24.6, 65.3, 89.2, 118.1, 166.7; MS *m/e* 169. For **7n**: IR (Film) 3456, 2221, 1630 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 0.22 (s, 9H), 2.38 (s, 2H), 4.27 (s, 2H), 4.36 (s, 2H), 5.84 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR δ -0.8, 28.0, 62.4, 63.3, 100.2, 100.6, 116.3, 157.1, 167.5; MS *m/e* 250 ($\text{M}+\text{H}$).

3.3. General conjugate addition–alkylation procedure

A THF solution of *t*-BuMgCl (1.0 equiv., 1–2 M) was added to a -78°C , THF solution of the γ -hydroxyalkynenitrile (1 equiv.) followed, after 5 min, by a THF solution of the appropriate Grignard reagent (1.1 equiv., 1–3 M). After 45 min, the reaction mixture was allowed to warm to room temperature (15 min), re-cooled to -78°C , and then a hexanes solution of *t*-BuLi (1.2 equiv., 1.5 M) was added. The cooling bath was then removed, and after 15 min neat aldehyde (1.5 equiv.) was added, followed, after a further 30 min, by aqueous saturated NH_4Cl . The crude reaction mixture was extracted with EtOAc, the combined extracts were passed through a short plug of silica gel (2×1 cm column), concentrated, and purified by radial chromatography.

3.3.1. (2Z)-4-Hydroxy-2-(hydroxyphenylmethyl)-3-phenylbut-2-enenitrile (7o). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (10 mg), PhMgCl and PhCHO provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 19.6 mg (60%) of **7o** as a light brown solid (mp 123–125°C); IR (film) 3388, 2219, 1595 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 4.55–4.57 (m, 2H), 5.40–5.42 (m, 1H, exchanges with D_2O), 5.94–5.96 (m, 1H), 6.21 (d, $J=4.0$ Hz, 1H, exchanges with D_2O), 7.26–7.50 (m, 10H); ^{13}C NMR δ 60.6, 67.6, 117.4, 118.2, 125.9, 127.3, 128.1, 138.5, 141.6, 156.0 MS *m/e* 247 ($\text{M}-\text{H}_2\text{O}$).

3.3.2. (2Z)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-2-(hydroxyphenyl-methyl)-4-methylpent-2-enenitrile (7p). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (20 mg), *i*-PrMgCl and PhCHO provided, after purification by radial chromatography (4:6

EtOAc/hexanes), 41.1 mg (72%) of **7p** as an oil: IR (Film) 3414, 2217, 1603 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.09 (d, $J=6.7$ Hz, 3H), 1.15 (d, $J=7.1$ Hz, 3H), 2.64 (s, 1H), 3.13–3.22 (m, 1H), 3.45 (s, 1H), 4.30 (ABq, $\Delta\nu=31.5$ Hz, $J=12.3$ Hz, 2H), 5.79 (s, 1H), 7.32–7.45 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 20.2, 20.3, 35.2, 57.0, 70.0, 116.5, 117.0, 126.0, 128.7, 140.1, 163.4 MS *m/e* 231 ($\text{M}-\text{H}$).

3.3.3. (2Z)-3-(Hydroxymethyl)-2-(1-hydroxy-3-phenyl-propyl)-4-methylpent-2-enenitrile (7q). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (12 mg), *i*-PrMgCl and 3-phenylpropanal provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 24.9 mg (65%) of **7q** as an oil: IR (film) 3410, 2214, 1603 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.07 (d, $J=6.4$ Hz, 3H), 1.15 (d, $J=6.3$ Hz, 3H), 1.70 (br s, 1H), 1.97–2.21 (m, 2H), 2.32 (br s, 1H), 2.74 (t, $J=7.5$ Hz, 2H), 3.14–3.23 (m, 1H), 4.14 (s, 2H), 4.55 (t, $J=6.8$ Hz, 1H), 7.12–7.31 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR δ 20.2, 20.4, 31.8, 35.1, 36.8, 57.0, 67.4, 116.3, 117.1, 126.2, 128.4, 128.5, 140.8, 164.3.

3.3.4. (2E)-4-Hydroxy-2-(1-hydroxy-3-phenylpropyl)-3-phenylbut-2-enenitrile (7r). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4a** (15 mg), PhMgCl and 3-phenylpropanal provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 30.9 mg (57%) of **7r** as an oil. IR (film) 3386, 2216, 1602 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 2.1–2.24 (m, 2H), 2.74–2.78 (m, 2H), 3.20 (brs, 2H), 4.39 (ABq, $\Delta\nu=40.0$ Hz, $J=13.4$ Hz, 2H), 4.69 (t, $J=7$ Hz, 1H), 7.20–7.38 (m, 10H); ^{13}C NMR: 31.7, 37.1, 62.3, 67.6, 116.9, 118.2, 126.3, 127.8, 128.4, 128.6, 128.8, 129.6, 137.5, 140.6, 157.4.

3.3.5. (2Z)-4-Hydroxy-2-(1-hydroxy-3-phenylpropyl)-4-methyl-3-phenylpent-2-enenitrile (7s). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4c** (17 mg), PhMgCl and 3-phenylpropanal provided, after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 28.5 mg (57%) of **7s** as an oil; IR (film) 3434, 2215, 1602 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.25 (s, 3H), 1.36 (s, 3H), 1.40–1.60 (m, 2H), 2.01–2.27 (m, 2H), 2.72–2.92 (s, 2H), 5.22–5.27 (m, 1H), 7.20–7.71 (m, 10H); ^{13}C NMR: 30.6, 31.4, 32.1, 37.2, 67.1, 74.9, 116.8, 120.1, 126.1, 127.1, 127.9, 128.5, 139.4, 141.2, 165.1; HRMS (ESI) calcd for ($\text{M}+\text{Na}^+$) $\text{C}_{21}\text{H}_{23}\text{NO}_2$ 344.1621, found 344.1611.

3.3.6. (2Z)-4-Hydroxy-2-(1-hydroxy-3-phenylpropyl)-3,4-dimethylpent-2-enenitrile (7t). Performing the general conjugate addition–alkylation procedure with a THF solution (5 mL) of **4c** (20 mg), MeMgCl and 3-phenylpropanal, provided after purification by radial chromatography (3:7 EtOAc/hexanes), 29 mg (61%) of **7t** as an oil: IR (film) 3433, 2211, 1602 cm^{-1} ; ^1H NMR δ 1.21–1.37 (m, 1H), 1.34 (s, 3H), 1.42 (s, 3H), 1.94–2.20 (m, 2H), 2.09 (s, 3H), 2.65–2.85 (m, 3H), 5.07–5.12 (m, 1H), 7.18–7.46 (m, 5H); ^{13}C NMR: 22.0, 29.7, 30.3, 32.0, 37.3, 66.8, 75.2, 116.5, 117.7, 125.9, 128.4 (doubled), 141.3, 161.8; MS *m/e* 259 ($\text{M}-\text{OH}$).

Acknowledgements

Financial support of this research from NIH, and travel funds from NSF, are gratefully acknowledged.

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