

Synthesis of New Isoxazole Analogs of Curcuminoid

Vo Thi Nga, Le Thanh Huy, Hoang Minh Hao*



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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Structure-activity relationship analysis demonstrated that the β -diketone moiety present in the curcumin skeleton is necessary for biological activities. Structural modifications on the pharmacophores can be envisioned as a strategy to afford novel analogs possessing promising biological activities. Curcumin-based analogs containing an isoxazole ring have been synthesized and showed inhibitory activity against cancer cell lines. **Methods:** In this respect, an isoxazole cyclization of the free 1,3-diketone group in curcuminoids (**1-7**) bearing -OH/-OCH₃/-F groups in aromatic rings with hydroxylamine hydrochloride was performed in acetic acid as solvent and catalyst to afford isoxazole-containing curcuminoids. NMR and MS measurements were used to interpret the chemical structures of synthesized compounds. **Results:** Seven isoxazole analogs of curcuminoids (**1a-7a**) were synthesized in yields of 30-61%, and their chemical structures were elucidated by NMR and MS spectra. Five new compounds (**3a-7a**) were reported for the first time among synthesized structures. **Conclusion:** This work demonstrated the synthesis of five novel isoxazole-containing curcuminoids (**3a-7a**), along with two known ones (**1a, 2a**).

Key words: Curcuminoid, isoxazole curcuminoid, β -diketone, isoxazole cyclization

INTRODUCTION

Natural products, secondary metabolites derived from natural sources have been demonstrated as a source of potential drug leads^{1,2}. Curcumin (**1**), a major constituent of *Curcuma longa* L. exhibited several interesting biological activities³. Therefore, curcumin has been found to be a natural lead for the development of potentially new drug candidates. However, the clinical application of curcumin has been limited in the body due to its poor solubility and rapid metabolism⁴. Structure-activity relationship (SAR) studies reported that the substituents in the aromatic ring and the β -diketone moiety present in curcumin are responsible for biological responses and kinetic stability. In this respect, several curcumin analogs have been developed from the curcumin skeleton through chemical modifications on the 1,3-diketone group to optimize the curcumin scaffold⁵⁻¹².

Among numerous curcumin-based analogs, isoxazole curcuminoid constituting a five-membered heterocycle with one nitrogen atom and one oxygen atom at adjacent position exhibited a highly potent multidrug-resistant anti-mycobacterial activity⁵, increased growth inhibitory activity against cancer cell lines, and anti-tumor activity⁸⁻¹⁴. In the present work, we report the synthesis of isoxazole curcuminoids by converting the β -diketone moiety into its corresponding isoxazole framework (Scheme 1).

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Chemicals

Curcuminoids (**1-7**) were synthesized according to our previous work, and their NMR/MS data have been described in our early report⁷. The free 1,3-dicarbonyl curcuminoids were used as starting materials for isoxazole cyclization. Hydroxylamine hydrochloride (NH₂OH.HCl, 99%, ACROS Organics), acetic acid (100%, Merck), dichloromethane (DCM, 99.8%, JTBaker, USA), *n*-hexane (CH, 98.5%, JTBaker, USA) and ethyl acetate (EA, 98.5%, JTBaker, USA) were used as received without further purification.

General synthetic procedure for isoxazole curcuminoids (1a-7a)

Isoxazole curcuminoids (**1a-7a**) were synthesized by following a procedure published in the literature^{13,14}. Curcuminoid (0.6 mmol) from our previous work and hydroxylamine hydrochloride (1.2 mmol) was transferred into a 50 mL round-bottom flask and dissolved in 10 mL glacial acetic acid. The solution was stirred at 80 °C for 8-24 h. Careful monitoring via thin-layer chromatography (TLC) was necessary to stop the reaction in time. The resulting product was neutralized by 20.0 mL saturated NaHCO₃ and extracted with DCM (3 × 40 mL). The combined organic phase was dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄. Solvent was removed

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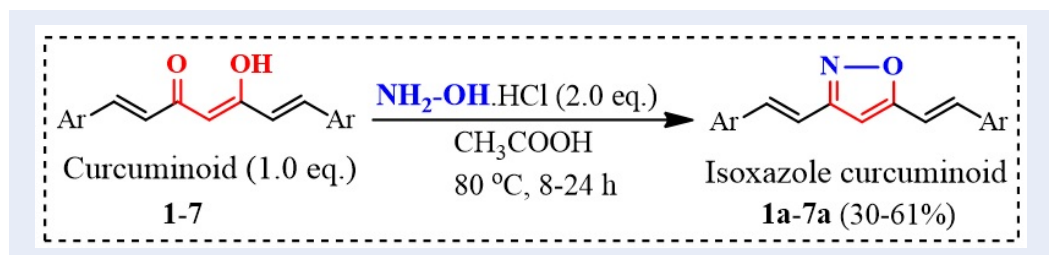


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Scheme 1: Synthesis of isoxazole-containing curcuminoids (**1a-7a**) from free 1,3-dicarbonyl curcuminoids (**1-7**).

by using a rotary evaporator. The pure isoxazole curcuminoids were obtained by using flash column chromatography (CC) (SiO₂, using a gradient of CH/EA = 1:0^o:7:3).

Analytical method

CC was performed on Merck silica gel (0.040-0.063 mm). TLC was carried out on precoated silica gel 60 F254 plates from Merck (Germany), and sample spots on TLC were detected by UV light at $\lambda = 254$ and 365 nm. Melting points (m.p) of pure products were determined by the M5000 melting point meter (Germany) with a heating rate of 2.0 °C/min. Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance (500, 600 MHz (¹H), 125, 150 MHz (¹³C)). Mass spectrometry (MS) measurements were performed on an Agilent 1200 series LC-MSD.

RESULTS

The isoxazole cyclization of the β -diketone group afforded five new isoxazole-containing curcuminoids (**3a-7a**), along with two known analogs (**1a**, **2a**)^{15,16} in a 30-61% yield. Chemical structures of synthesized compounds (Figure 1) were assigned by NMR and MS spectra.

4,4'-((1E,1'E)-isoxazole-3,5-diylbis(ethene-2,1-diyl))bis(2-methoxyphenol) (1a): Yield 44% (96.4 mg), white solid, C₂₁H₁₉NO₅ [365.13 g/mol]; $R_f = 0.34$ (CH/EA = 1:1); m.p. 163.6 °C (lit.¹⁵ 162 °C) ¹H-NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): $\delta = 3.95$ (s, OCH₃, 3H), 3.96 (s, OCH₃, 3H), 5.76 (s, Ar-OH, 1H), 5.79 (s, Ar-OH, 1H), 6.41 (s, H₄, 1H), 6.79 (d, H₆, ³J (H,H) = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 6.91 (d, H_{5''}, ³J (H,H) = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 6.92 (d, H_{5'}, ³J (H,H) = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 6.96 (d, H₂, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.01 (d, H_{2''}, ⁴J (H,H) = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.02 (d, H_{2'}, ⁴J (H,H) = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 7.06-7.08 (dd, H_{6''}, ³J (H,H) = 8.0 Hz, ⁴J (H,H) = 2.0 Hz, 2H), 7.08 (d, H₇, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.26 (d, H₁, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): $\delta = 55.9$ (OCH₃), 55.9

(OCH₃), 97.6 (C₄), 108.2 (C_{2''}), 108.8 (C_{2'}), 110.9 (C_{5''}), 113.8 (C_{5'}), 114.6 (C_{6''}), 114.8 (C_{6'}), 121.5 (C₂), 121.6 (C₆), 128.2 (C_{1''}), 128.5 (C_{1'}), 134.8 (C₁), 135.6 (C₇), 146.7-147.0 (C_{4',4''}, C_{3',3''}, 4C), 162.2 (C₅), 168.5 (C₃). ESI-MS m/z calc for [M+H]⁺: 366.14; found: 366.00.

3,5-di((E)-styryl)isoxazole (2a): Yield 56% (91.7 mg), white solid, C₁₉H₁₅NO [273.12 g/mol]; $R_f = 0.43$ (CH/EA = 9:1); m.p. 168.3 °C ¹H-NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 7.03 (s, H₄, 1H), 7.23 (d, H₆, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.26 (d, H₂, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 2H), 7.30 – 7.38 (m, H_{2',2''}, 2H), 7.38 – 7.46 (m, H_{1,7,6',6'',4',4''}, 6H), 7.67 (dd, H_{3',3'',5',5''}, ³J (H,H) = 7.5 Hz, 4H); ¹³C-NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 99.2 (C₄), 113.3 (C₆), 115.6 (C₂), 127.1 (C_{2',6'}, 2C), 127.2 (C_{2'',6''}, 2C), 128.8 (C_{4'}), 128.8 (C_{4''}), 128.9 (C_{3',5'}, 2C), 129.1 (C_{3'',5''}, 2C), 134.4 (C_{1'}), 135.3 (C_{1''}), 135.6 (C₁), 136.2 (C₇), 161.9 (C₅), 168.0 (C₃). ESI-MS m/z calc for [M+H]⁺: 274.13; found: 273.90.

3,5-bis((E)-4-methoxystyryl)isoxazole (3a): Yield 48% (95.9 mg), yellow solid, C₂₁H₁₉NO₃ [333.14 g/mol]; $R_f = 0.28$ (CH/EA = 4:1); m.p. 172.2 °C ¹H-NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 3.83 (s, OCH₃, 3H), 3.84 (s, OCH₃, 3H), 6.41 (s, H₄, 1H), 6.80 (d, H₆, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 6.90 (d, H_{3',3'',5',5''}, ³J (H,H) = 8.0 Hz, 4H), 6.97 (d, H₂, ³J (H,H) = 17.0 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (d, H₇, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (d, H₁, ³J (H,H) = 16.0 Hz, 1H), 7.45 (d, H_{2',2'',6',6''}, ³J (H,H) = 9.0 Hz, 4H); ¹³C-NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 55.3 (OCH₃), 55.4 (OCH₃), 97.7 (C₄), 111.0 (C₆), 114.0 (C₂), 114.3 (C_{3',5'}, 2C), 114.4 (C_{3'',5''}, 2C), 128.3 (C_{2',6'}, 2C), 128.4 (C_{1'}), 128.5 (C_{2'',6''}, 2C), 128.7 (C_{1''}), 134.4 (C₁), 135.2 (C₇), 160.2 (C_{4'}), 160.5 (C_{4''}), 162.2 (C₅), 168.6 (C₃). ESI-MS m/z calc for [M+H]⁺: 334.15 found: 333.90.

3,5-bis((E)-2-fluorostyryl)isoxazole (4a): Yield 61% (113.1 mg), yellow solid, C₁₉H₁₃F₂NO [309.10 g/mol]; $R_f = 0.59$ (CH/EA = 9/1); m.p. 120.1 °C ¹H-NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 6.57 (s, H₄, 1H), 7.07 (d, H₆, ³J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.07-7.12 (m, H_{3',3''},

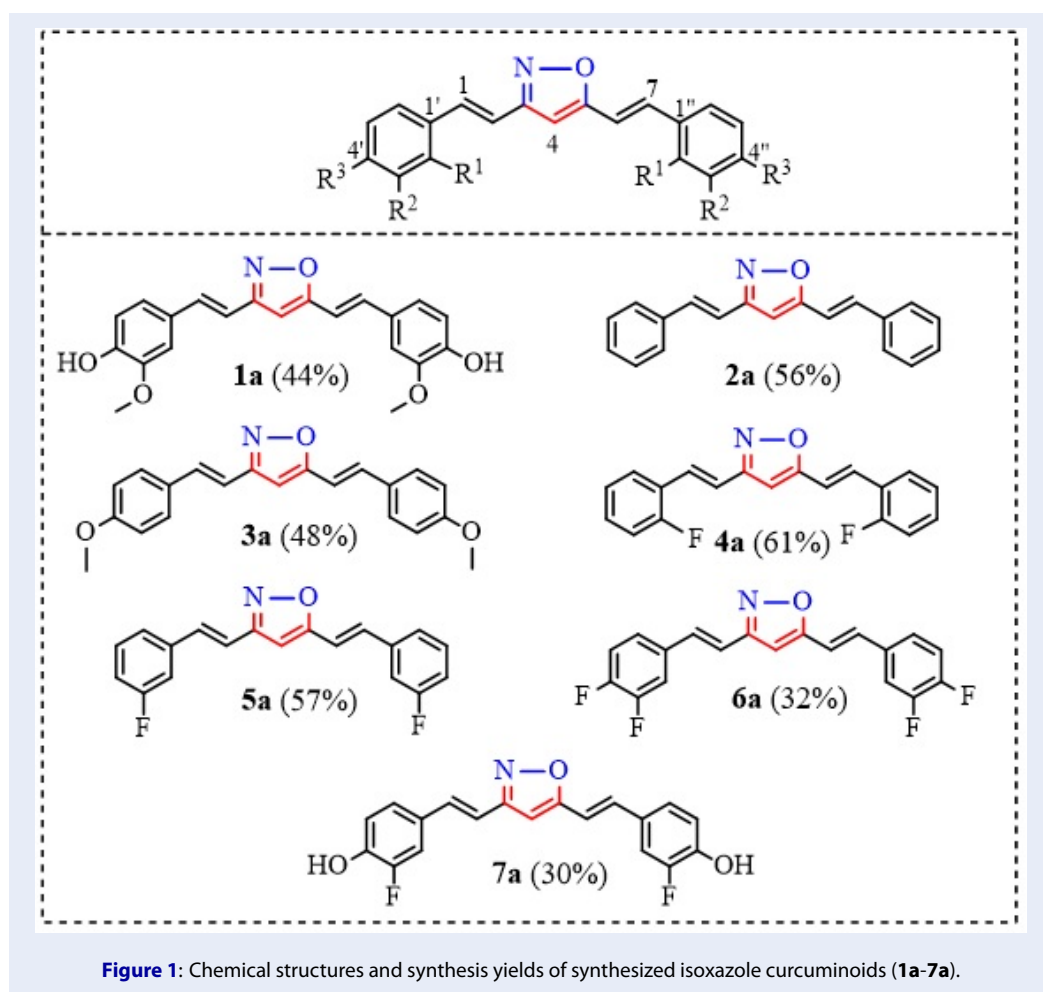


Figure 1: Chemical structures and synthesis yields of synthesized isoxazole curcuminoids (1a-7a).

2H), 7.15-7.19 (td, $H_{5',5''}$, 3J (H,H) = 7.5 Hz, 4J (H,H) = 1.0 Hz, 2H), 7.20 (d, H_2 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H); 7.28-7.32 (m, $H_{6',6''}$, 2H), 7.33 (d, H_7 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H) 7.46 (d, H_1 , 3J (H,H) = 17.0 Hz, 1H); 7.53-7.63 (td, $H_{4',4''}$, 3J (H,H) = 7.5 Hz, 4J (H,H) = 1.5 Hz, 2H); ^{13}C -NMR (125 MHz, $CDCl_3$, ppm): 98.9 (C_4), 115.5 (C_6), 115.9 ($C_{3''}$), 116.0 ($C_{3'}$), 118.3 (C_2), 123.5 ($C_{1''}$), 123.7 ($C_{1'}$), 124.4 ($C_{5',5''}$), 127.4 ($C_{4'}$), 127.8 (C_1), 128.1 (C_7), 128.2 ($C_{4''}$), 130.2 ($C_{6''}$), 130.4 ($C_{6'}$), 159.6-161.9 ($C_{2',2''}$, 2C), 162.1 (C_5), 168.3 (C_3). ESI-MS m/z calc for $[M+H]^+$: 310.11; found: 309.90.

3,5-bis((E)-3-fluorostyryl)isoxazole (5a): Yield 57% (105.7 mg), yellow solid, $C_{19}H_{13}F_2NO$ [309.10 g/mol]; R_f = 0.26 (CH/EA = 9:1); m.p. 157.8 °C 1H -NMR (500 MHz, $CDCl_3$, ppm): 6.50 (s, H_4 , 1H), 6.94 (d, H_6 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.01 (m, $H_{4',4''}$, 2H), 7.13 (d, H_2 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.14 (d, H_7 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.21 (d, $H_{2''}$, 4J (H,H) = 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.23 (d, $H_{2'}$, 4J (H,H) = 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (d, $H_{6',6''}$, 3J (H,H) = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.31 (d, H_1 , 3J (H,H)

= 17.0 Hz, 1H), 7.33 (m, $H_{5',5''}$, 2H); ^{13}C -NMR (125 MHz, $CDCl_3$, ppm): 99.1 (C_4), 113.3 – 113.5 ($C_{2',2''}$, 2C), 114.1 (C_6), 115.7 – 116.1 ($C_{4',4''}$, 2C), 117.4 (C_2), 122.8 – 123.2 ($C_{6',6''}$, 2C), 130.3 – 130.4 ($C_{5',5''}$, 2C), 133.8 (C_7), 134.6 (C_1), 138.1 ($C_{1',1''}$, 2C), 161.7 ($C_{3''}$), 162.2 ($C_{3'}$), 164.1 (C_5), 167.9 (C_3). ESI-MS m/z calc for $[M+H]^+$: 310.11; found: 309.90.

3,5-bis((E)-3,4-difluorostyryl)isoxazole (6a): Yield 32% (66.3 mg), yellow solid, $C_{19}H_{11}F_4NO$ [345.08 g/mol]; R_f = 0.45 (CH/EA = 9:1); m.p. 164.7 °C 1H -NMR (500 MHz, $CDCl_3$, ppm): 6.47 (s, H_4 , 1H), 6.85 (d, H_6 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.01 (d, H_2 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.08 (d, H_7 , 3J (H,H) = 16.5 Hz, 1H), 7.17-7.23 (m, $H_{2',2'',5',5''}$, 4H), 7.29 (d, H_1 , 3J (H,H) = 15.5 Hz, 1H), 7.32 (m, $H_{6',6''}$, 2H); ^{13}C -NMR (125 MHz, $CDCl_3$, ppm): 99.1 (C_4), 113.8 (C_6), 115.2 – 115.4 ($C_{6',6''}$, 2C), 117.1 (C_2), 117.7 – 117.9 ($C_{2',2''}$, 2C), 123.3 ($C_{5''}$), 123.8 ($C_{5'}$), 124.8 ($C_{1',1''}$, 2C), 132.8 (C_1), 133.6 (C_7), 149.6 ($C_{3',3''}$), 151.7 ($C_{4',4''}$), 161.5 (C_5), 167.8 (C_3). ESI-MS m/z calc for $[M+H]^+$: 346.09; found: 345.80.

4,4'-(1E,1'E)-isoxazole-3,5-diylbis(ethene-2,1-diyl)bis(2-fluorophenol) (7a): Yield 30% (61.4 mg), yellow solid, C₁₉H₁₃F₂NO₃ [341.09 g/mol]; *R_f* = 0.25 (CH/EA = 7:3); m.p. 214.3 °C ¹H-NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 6.37 (s, H₄, 1H), 6.71 (d, H₆, ³J(H,H) = 16.2 Hz, 1H), 6.85 (d, H₂, ³J(H,H) = 16.2 Hz, 1H), 6.91 (m, H_{2',2''}, 2H), 6.99 (d, H₇, ³J(H,H) = 16.2 Hz, 1H), 7.07 (d, H_{5',5''}, ³J(H,H) = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.15 (d, H₁, ³J(H,H) = 16.8 Hz, 1H), 7.17 (m, H_{6',6''}, 2H); ¹³C-NMR (150 MHz, CDCl₃, ppm): 97.9 (C₄), 111.3 (C₆), 113.9 – 114.0 (C_{6',6''}, 2C), 114.2 (C₂), 118.1 – 118.2 (C_{2',2''}, 2C), 123.7 (C_{5''}), 124.0 (C_{5'}), 128.7-130.9 (C_{1',1''}, 2C), 133.9 (C₁), 134.7 (C₇), 145.8 (C_{3',3''}), 150.9 (C_{4''}), 152.5 (C_{4'}), 162.0 (C₅), 168.3 (C₃). ESI-MS *m/z* calc for [M+H]⁺: 342.10; found: 341.90.

DISCUSSION

The isoxazole analogs (**1a-7a**) were prepared by treatment of free β-diketone curcuminoids (**1-7**) with hydroxylamine hydrochloride in acetic acid at 80 °C. Acetic acid here plays dual roles: as a solvent to dissolve reactants and catalysts for isoxazole cyclization. First, under acidic conditions, an oxime is generated via an acid-catalyzed mechanism, similar to the imine formation between a carbonyl group reacting with a primary amine^{6,7}. Then, the protonation of the second carbonyl group is occurred rendering it more electrophilic. Then, the oxygen atom is sufficiently nucleophilic to attack a protonated carbonyl group directly to give an isoxazole ring.

The structures of the synthesized compounds were elucidated by ¹H- and ¹³C-NMR, MS spectra. The ¹H-NMR spectra of isoxazole curcuminoids (**1a-7a**) exhibited a singlet (s, 1H) at δ ~ 5.8-6.5 ppm, which was assigned to the signal of proton bonded to the central carbon of a three-carbon pattern in isoxazole ring. The doublet signal (³J_{H-H} ~ 16.0 Hz) at 6.5-7.8 ppm is characteristic of *trans*-configuration in the seven-carbon chain of isoxazole analogs. Compared to respective mother structures, curcuminoids (**1-7**), the signal for carbonyl carbon (δ ~ 183 ppm)⁷ disappeared and the imine bond (>C=N) formation was inferred from an incoming peak at δ ~ 167 ppm observed at ¹³C NMR spectra, which confirmed the presence of isoxazole ring.

CONCLUSIONS

In summary, we reported a synthetic procedure that enables access to isoxazole-containing curcuminoids. Curcuminoids possessing a free 1,3-dicarbonyl group

underwent an isoxazole cyclization with hydroxylamine hydrochloride using acetic acid as solvent and catalyst to yield seven isoxazole curcuminoids (**1a-7a**). The isolated yields of the isoxazole cyclization are in the range of 30 to 61%. NMR spectra assigned the synthesized structures in combination with ESI-MS measurements. With the results shown above, we could, for the first time, demonstrate the synthesis of five novel isoxazole curcuminoids (**3a-7a**), along with two known compounds (**1a**, **2a**).

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CC: Column chromatography
 CH: *n*-Hexane
 DCM: Dichloromethane
 d: Doublet
 dd: Doublet-doublet
 EA: Ethyl acetate
 HSQC: Heteronuclear single quantum correlation
 lit: Literature
 m: multiplet
 m.p: melting point
 MS: Mass spectrometry
 NMR: Nuclear magnetic resonance
 td: Triplet-doublet
 TLC: Thin layer chromatography
 UV: Ultraviolet

COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Supporting Information contains ¹H, ¹³C-NMR, HSQC, and MS spectra of the isoxazole containing curcuminoids (**1a-7a**).

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Vo Thi Nga: ¹H-, ¹³C-NMR and MS analysis, writing-original draft preparation; Le Thanh Huy: laboratory work-up, writing-original draft preparation. Hoang Minh Hao: conceptualization, supervision, writing-review and editing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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