

Total Synthesis of Pargamicin A

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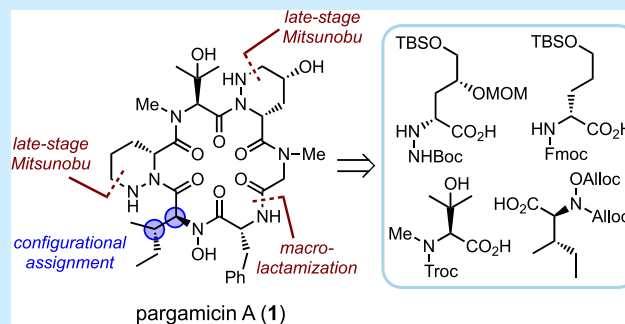


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ABSTRACT: We report the total synthesis and configurational assignment of pargamicin A, a highly oxidized nonribosomal peptide that potently inhibits the growth of drug-resistant bacteria. Our synthetic approach relies on late-stage piperazine ring formation and careful selection of condensation reagents to assemble the densely substituted hexapeptide backbone. This work enables the synthesis of pargamicin congeners for the development of structure–activity relationships and informs strategies for accessing other sterically congested piperazic acid-containing natural products.



Antimicrobially resistant infections are associated with approximately 3500 deaths per day, outpacing malaria and HIV/AIDS as a leading cause of mortality worldwide.¹ Methicillin-resistant *Staphylococcus aureus* (MRSA) and vancomycin-resistant *Enterococci* (VRE) are both designated as high-priority threats by the World Health Organization and now contribute to approximately 400 000 hospitalizations annually in the United States.² Given their prevalence in hospital settings, significant co-colonization of MRSA and VRE is frequently encountered in critically ill patients.³ Only a handful of drugs are currently approved to treat both pathogens, with strains resistant to these therapeutics already emerging in the clinic.⁴

Naturally occurring nonribosomal peptides (NRPs) represent a privileged class of antimicrobial lead compounds for drug development.⁵ Novel NRPs with promising antibiotic activity are regularly isolated and characterized, but challenges associated with their chemical synthesis continue to hinder detailed biological and structure–activity relationship (SAR) studies. This is particularly true in the case of NRPs harboring dense backbone substitution patterns, where sterically demanding condensation reactions, proclivity toward Cα epimerization, and amide bond lability complicate traditional peptide assembly approaches. Pargamicin A [PrgA (1)] is a nonribosomal cyclic hexapeptide isolated in 2002 from the fermentation broth of *Amycolatopsis* sp. (Figure 1).⁶ Although initially identified as a weak inhibitor of poly-ADP ribose glycohydrolase, PrgA was later found to exhibit submicromolar growth inhibitory activity against several MRSA and VRE bacterial strains.⁷ PrgA belongs to a family of more than 200 NRPs harboring one or more piperazic acid (Piz) residues.⁸ In addition to D-Piz, PrgA features γ-hydroxy-D-piperazic acid (γ-OH-D-Piz) and N-hydroxyisoleucine [(N-OH)-Ile] residues,

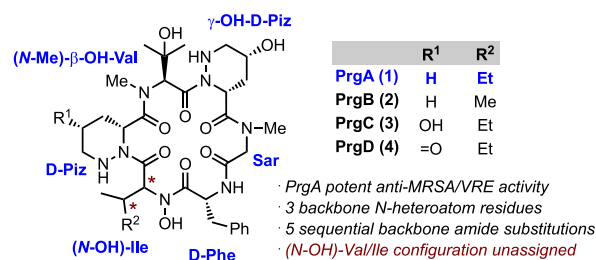


Figure 1. Structures of pargamicins A–D [PrgA–D, respectively (1–4)]. Residue abbreviations for PrgA provided in blue.

resulting in a peptide macrocycle with five sequential backbone amide substitutions. The stereochemistry of the (N-OH)-Ile residue remains unassigned. Preliminary mechanism-of-action studies showed that PrgA induces bacterial cell membrane depolarization and loss of function in a manner distinct to that of daptomycin.⁹ In 2017, Hashizume and co-workers identified additional family members [PrgB–D (2–4, respectively)] from the same culture broth.¹⁰ Although PrgC retains much of the antimicrobial activity of the parent compound, subtle changes to the (N-OH)-Ile and γ-OH-D-Piz residues in PrgB and PrgD result in diminished potency.

Despite their promising anti-MRSA/VRE activity, there remains no reported chemical synthesis of a member of the pargamicin family.¹¹ Our goal was to develop an approach

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amenable to SAR studies through residue substitution. Candidate sites for macrolactamization in PrgA are limited due to the presence of a single secondary amide linkage between the D-Phe and Sar residues. Moreover, difficulties associated with incorporating preformed Ne-protected Piz residues into such sequences are well-documented and are attributed to steric bulk and strong electronic deactivation from the N^α -(acyloxy)amino group.^{8a,12} We expected that a more efficient assembly of the peptide chain could be achieved using protected linear precursors to the D-Piz and γ -OH-D-Piz residues and formation of the diazinane rings at a late stage of the synthesis (Figure 2). At the outset of our campaign, we also

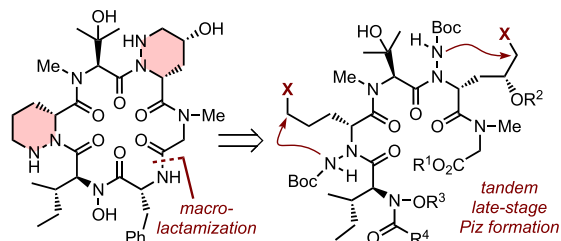
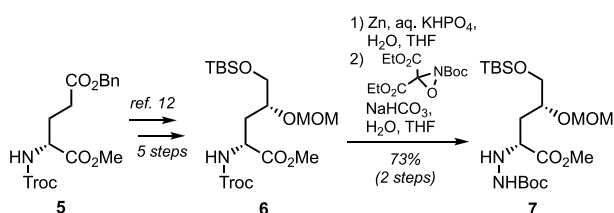


Figure 2. Late-stage Piz formation approach to PrgA (1).

hypothesized the configuration of the unassigned (N -OH)-Ile residue to be 2*S*,3*S* based on the alternating L/D pattern found in related macrocyclic nonribosomal hexapeptide natural products.^{8b}

We recently reported the synthesis of a linear precursor to γ -OH-D-Piz that can be incorporated into a growing peptide chain.¹³ This approach relies on diastereoselective C_γ electrophilic hydroxylation of a D-Glu derivative. We employed this protocol to prepare intermediate **6** in five steps from Troc-D-Glu(Bn)-OMe (Scheme 1). Removal of the Troc group in **6**

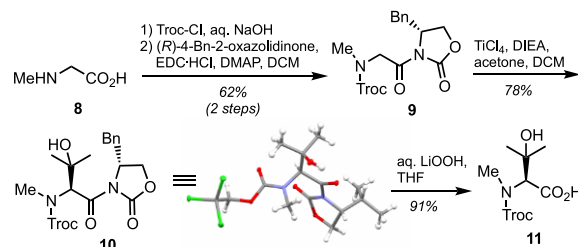
Scheme 1. Synthesis of γ -OH-D-Piz Precursor 7



was followed by electrophilic amination with 2-*tert*-butyl-3,3-diethyl oxaziridine-2,3,3-tricarboxylate (TBDOT)¹⁴ to provide building block **7** in 73% yield over two steps.

The (N -Me)- β -OH-Val residue in PrgA is encountered in other biologically active NRPs such as the luzopeptins, quinoxapeptins, and the fungicidal aureobasidin A. Two previous enantioselective syntheses of protected derivatives of (N -Me)- β -OH-Val have been achieved in six and eight steps.¹⁵ We developed a four-step chiral auxiliary approach that relies on aldol reaction between a protected sarcosine (Sar) derivative and acetone. Thus, Troc protection of **8** followed by EDC/DMAP-mediated condensation with Evans' (*R*)-4-benzyl-2-oxazolidinone auxiliary provided **9** in 62% yield over two steps (Scheme 2). Reaction of the titanium enolate of **9** with acetone afforded the desired aldol product **10** as a single diastereomer, whose configuration was confirmed by X-ray crystallography.¹⁶ Removal of the auxiliary with LiOOH then provided **11** in 91% yield.

Scheme 2. Synthesis of 11



With building blocks **7** and **11** in hand, we proceeded with assembly of the linear hexapeptide precursor to PrgA. Methyl ester hydrolysis of **7** followed by HATU-mediated condensation with H-Sar-OBn afforded dipeptide **12** in 70% yield over two steps (Scheme 3). Activation of **11** with Ghosez's reagent and condensation with **12** in the presence of sodium bicarbonate afforded **13** in 74% yield without detectable epimerization. Troc deprotection with activated Zn was followed by condensation with Fmoc-protected hydroxynorvaline derivative **14**¹⁷ in the presence of chloro- N,N,N',N' -tetramethylformamidium hexafluorophosphate (TCFH) and 2,4,6-collidine to afford tetrapeptide **15** in 67% yield over two steps. Activation with TCFH was critical to the success of this sterically demanding condensation. Other coupling reagent/base combinations such as HATU/DIPEA, Ghosez's reagent/ NaHCO_3 , PyBrOP/DIPEA, BEP/NMI, or *i*-BuOCOC/ NMM failed to afford **15** in any appreciable amount. Removal of the Fmoc group was followed directly by treatment with TBDOT to provide di- N -aminated tetrapeptide **16** in 85% yield over two steps. Condensation of Alloc-(N -OAlloc)-Ile-Cl (**17**)¹⁷ with the hydrazide group in **16** provided **18** in 67% yield. The stability of acid chloride **17** is noteworthy given the proclivity of N -Alloc-protected α -amino acid chlorides to undergo N -carboxyanhydride (NCA) formation. Indeed, Alloc-Ile-OH and the Alloc-protected analogue of **11** both rapidly converted to their NCA derivatives upon treatment with either thionyl chloride or Ghosez's reagent. In the case of **17**, strong induction from the allyl carbonate substituent on $N\alpha$ likely inhibits cyclization.¹⁸

We next explored the possibility of forming both Piz heterocycles under Mitsunobu conditions at the linear pentapeptide stage. Acidolysis of the TBS ethers in **18** was thus followed by gentle heating of the diol in the presence of DIAD and PPh_3 to provide **19** in 68% yield. We observed no elimination across the $\text{Ca}-\text{Na}$ bond of the base-labile Alloc-(N -OAlloc)-Ile residue under these conditions.¹⁸ We later confirmed the synthetic timing of this tandem cyclization to be important, as attempts to form the Piz heterocycles at the linear hexapeptide or macrocyclic hexapeptide stage were unsuccessful. Removal of both Alloc groups in **19** with Pd_0 in the presence of 1,3-dimethylbarbituric acid (NDMBA) was followed by selective N -acylation of the terminal hydroxylamine with Fmoc-D-Phe-Cl to afford **20** in 54% yield. The C- and N-termini of hexapeptide **20** were then deprotected by treatment with Et_2NH followed by hydrogenolysis to give the corresponding linear zwitterion.

Initial attempts at macrolactamization resulted in poor yields and significant cyclo-oligomer formation even at high dilutions. We then used LCMS to screen the relative efficiency of macrocyclization effected by a variety of condensation reagents at a substrate concentration of 1 mM (Figure 3). Activation of the C-terminal carboxylate with diphenylphosphoryl azide

features pipelicolic acid (Pip) in place of both Piz residues and lacks the hydroxyl groups of (*N*-OH)-Ile and (*N*-Me)- β -OH-Val in the natural product. Compound **1** exhibited low micromolar MIC values against drug-susceptible, drug-resistant, multidrug-resistant, and pan-drug-resistant strains of *S. aureus*, *Enterococcus* spp., and *Streptococcus* spp. (Table 1 and Table S2). The 50th percentile and 90th percentile minimal inhibitory concentrations (MIC₅₀ and MIC₉₀, respectively) of **1** compared favorably to those of vancomycin, linezolid, and daptomycin against a panel of isolates of *S. aureus* (MIC₅₀ = MIC₉₀ = 3.13 μ g/mL), *Enterococcus* spp. (MIC₅₀ = MIC₉₀ = 3.13 μ g/mL), and *Streptococcus* spp. (MIC₅₀ = 1.56 μ g/mL; MIC₉₀ = 3.13 μ g/mL). PrgA was inactive or only poorly active against Gram-negative pathogens, with the exception of fastidious Gram-negative *Moraxella catarrhalis* and an influx-proficient/efflux-deficient mutant of *Escherichia coli* (D21f2tolC). Simplified analogue **22** exhibited no appreciable bacterial growth inhibition at 50 μ g/mL, highlighting the importance of side chain and backbone oxidations for the activity of PrgA. Synthetic **1** was also evaluated for hemolysis of defibrinated red blood cells. Only minimal hemolytic activity was observed at concentrations of ≤ 50 μ M, with 38% cell lysis evident at 100 μ M (Figure S1).

In summary, we achieved the first chemical synthesis and configurational assignment of PrgA. Contiguous backbone amide-modified residues and unusual side chain oxidations posed unique challenges in assembling the hexapeptide natural product. Our ultimately successful route required careful selection of condensation conditions and late-stage Piz heterocycle formation. The order of operations also proved to be critical, as several convergent fragment condensation and preformed Piz incorporation approaches failed to provide desired intermediates. This work should enable the synthesis of PrgA congeners featuring targeted residue substitutions and inform strategies for accessing other sterically congested Piz-containing natural products. Efforts to develop SAR around this family of potent antimicrobial agents are currently underway in our laboratory.

■ ASSOCIATED CONTENT

Data Availability Statement

The data underlying this study are available in the published article and its online Supporting Information.

SI Supporting Information

The Supporting Information is available free of charge at <https://pubs.acs.org/doi/10.1021/acs.orglett.2c03861>.

Detailed experimental procedures, characterization data for novel compounds, copies of RP-HPLC, HRMS, and NMR spectra, and biological assay data (PDF)

Accession Codes

CCDC 2217835 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data can be obtained free of charge via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif, or by emailing data_request@ccdc.cam.ac.uk, or by contacting The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033.

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Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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