

SYNTHETIC AND FERMENTATION-DERIVED ANGIOTENSIN-CONVERTING ENZYME INHIBITORS

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in the development of inhibitors of angiotensin-converting enzyme (EC 3.4.15.1) (ACE) has exploded since the announced discovery in 1977 of captopril (1), an orally effective inhibitor of ACE, by Cushman & Ondetti of the Squibb Institute for Medical Research. Following extensive clinical studies, ACE inhibitors have been heralded as a "major therapeutic advance" (2) and a "new approach to the therapy of hypertension" (3). ACE inhibitors have been the subject of numerous review articles (3-9), many symposia (10-12), editorials (13), and texts (14) during the last two years.

Based primarily on clinical studies with captopril, the utility of ACE inhibitors in most forms of hypertension has been established. In addition, the beneficial effect of captopril in congestive heart failure (15-17) has led to its recent approval for this use. Because of the ubiquitousness of ACE and the expanding research to identify those diseases associated with elevations in ACE activity (sarcoidosis, Gaucher's disease, diabetes mellitus, and hyperthyroidism), clinical studies with ACE inhibitors may expand into other pathological states (8, 18, 19). That ACE inhibitors may be useful in limiting experimental infarct size has also been reported (20).

Recently, a focal point in the research on ACE inhibitors has been the mechanism(s) by which ACE inhibitors exert their antihypertensive effects. This topic has been addressed in several excellent recent reviews (7, 9, 21-23) and will only be briefly mentioned here. In this regard, it is generally accepted that the inhibition of plasma angiotensin-converting enzyme, although known

to occur with ACE inhibitors, does not sufficiently explain their antihypertensive effects. Because of this, several theories have been advanced to explain the antihypertensive activity of ACE inhibitors. These include (a) inhibition of angiotensin II-induced facilitation of sympathetic neurotransmission in blood vessels, (b) tissue-specific inhibition of ACE, possibly within the central nervous system, kidney, or vasculature, (c) other actions of ACE inhibitors unrelated to the inhibition of the direct effects of angiotensin II. These latter actions include potential postsynaptic α -blocking activities, potential elevations in bradykinin or other peptides (substance P, enkephalins, etc) degraded by ACE, and possible indirect effects of angiotensin II mediated via prostaglandin derivatives. Clarification of this controversy awaits additional comparative data on the actions of multiple ACE inhibitors with regard to each of the mechanisms specified above.

We are currently entering an era that will see a rapidly expanding armamentarium of ACE inhibitors. The race to develop such inhibitors has begun in earnest, and over the next few years we shall no doubt see an emerging literature on subtle differences in the pharmacological activity of the newer ACE inhibitors. Such differences will help to elucidate the precise mechanism for their antihypertensive activity and may provide a rational basis for specific clinical implications for some of the newer agents.

This review focuses on the development of these newer ACE inhibitors, their structural relationship to captopril, and their current clinical status. Although I have attempted to present all of the ACE inhibitors under development, the rapid and dramatic growth in the plethora of available ACE inhibitors makes this task a formidable one. I have chosen to discuss only compounds on which published data, including recent abstracts, are available, and with only minor exceptions to review data generated within the last two years. No attempt has been made to review the voluminous patent literature.

ACE INHIBITORS FROM NATURAL PRODUCTS

The evolution of synthetic ACE inhibitors (Figure 1) began with the discovery that certain peptides isolated from the venom of the snake *Bothrops jararaca* were inhibitors of ACE (24). Of the several peptides isolated and examined for ACE inhibitory activity, the nonapeptide, later known as teprotide (SQ 20,881), was the most potent inhibitor [for reviews see (25–27)]. Since that discovery in the early 1970s, structure-activity correlations developed with the snake venom peptides have been used to synthesize small molecular-weight compounds with even greater bioavailability and affinity for ACE, and hence greater clinical utility. However, more recently, interest in the possibility of discovering novel structures (unrelated to teprotide or captopril) from natural products has been renewed.

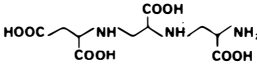
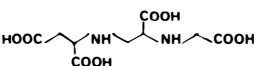
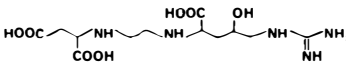
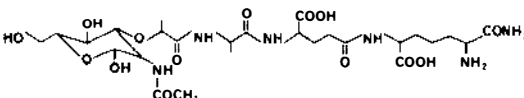
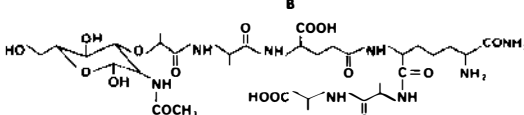
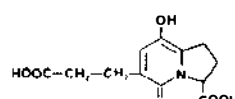
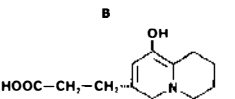
COMPOUND	SOURCE	STRUCTURE	REFERENCE
TEPROTIDE	BOTHROPS JARARACA	NONAPEPTIDE	25
ANCOVENIN	STREPTOMYCES	HEXADECAPEPTIDE	28
ASPERGILLOMARASMIN	ASPERGILLUS COLLETOTRICHUM FUSARIUM PYRENOPHORA	<p>A</p>  <p>B</p> 	29
L-681,176	STREPTOMYCES		30-31
MURACEIN	NOCARDIA	<p>A</p>  <p>B</p> 	32
A58365	STREPTOMYCES	<p>A</p>  <p>B</p> 	33-34

Figure 1 The structure and source of ACE inhibitors derived from natural products.

Ancovenin (28) is a hexadecapeptide isolated from streptomyces. It has been found to be approximately six-fold less potent than captopril as an ACE inhibitor. Other microorganism-derived peptide inhibitors (Figure 1) with even lower ACE inhibitory activity include the aspergillomarasmnes (29), L-681,176 (30-31), and muramyl peptides (muraceins) (32). Clearly, the low inhibitory activity and minimal bioavailability of such agents precludes any direct therapeutic or clinical utility for them.

The utility of natural products produced from microorganisms to provide small molecular-weight structural leads for the future development of novel

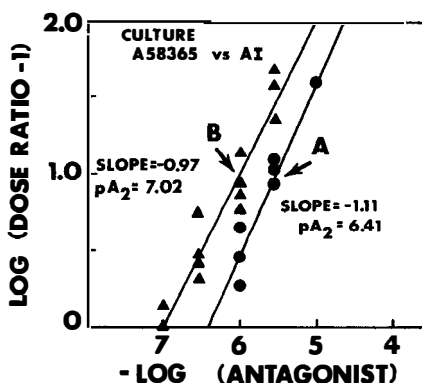


Figure 2 Schild plot for the effect of A58365A and A58365B to antagonize angiotensin I contractile responses in the isolated guinea pig ileum. Plot of the logarithm of dose ratio -1 against the negative logarithm of the molar concentration of antagonists yielded a straight line whose slope approximated one, indicating a competitive interaction of the antagonists with ACE. The intercept along the abscissa is the pA_2 value, which is equal to the negative logarithm of the dissociation constant (*i.e.* $-\log K_B$).

ACE inhibitors was advanced by the recent discovery of the angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors A58365A and A58365B produced by *Streptomyces chromofuscus* (33–34). These natural products are nonpeptide compounds. A58365A and B were competitive antagonists of angiotensin-converting enzyme as determined by the antagonism of angiotensin I contractile responses in the guinea pig ileum (Figure 2). These simple bicyclic dicarboxylic acid molecules showed relatively high *in vitro* affinity for ACE and may be considered natural product analogues of the newer bicyclic ACE inhibitors (see below). The identification of these agents supports the contention that efforts directed toward isolating microbially derived ACE inhibitors may well provide an avenue for the development of second and third generation ACE inhibitors of novel structures.

Other naturally occurring peptide ACE inhibitors have been identified from mammalian sources. These include a peptide derived from fibrin (35), ACTH-related peptides (36), and metabolites of thyrotropin-releasing hormone (37). The physiological function of such endogenous peptide inhibitors is a subject of current research and remains to be clarified.

SULFUR-CONTAINING ACE INHIBITORS

Based on the ACE inhibitory activity of the nonapeptide, teprotide, and the contention that an orally effective ACE inhibitor would find utility in hypertension, Cushman & Ondetti generated an elegant SAR that led to the discovery of the first potent and orally active ACE inhibitor, captopril (25–27). This discov-

ery was soon followed by the demonstration that captopril was effective in many animal models of hypertension and in almost all clinical forms of hypertension, including essential hypertension associated with low or normal plasma renin levels.

The fact that the clinical use of captopril exceeded initial expectations spurred interest in the development of other ACE inhibitors. Initially, synthesis was directed toward compounds structurally similar to captopril (Figure 3). These included YS980 (36–39), SA446 (40–44), pivalopril (RHC 3659) (45–47), CL242,817 (48–50), and zofenopril (51), all sulfur-containing structures with an affinity for ACE lower than or similar to that of captopril. YS980 and SA446 are more lipophilic structures than captopril; hence, they may distribute to the central nervous system (CNS) to inhibit brain ACE to a greater extent than captopril. Pivalopril, CL242,817, and zofenopril contain protected sulfhydryl groups and may serve as prodrugs. More recently, chemists from both Ciba-Geigy (52) and Wyeth Laboratories (53, 54) independently reported on the synthesis of the bicyclic molecule WY-44,221, a compound shown to be 10–20 times more potent than captopril. It is interesting to note that such a minor chemical change could result in a marked improvement in ACE inhibition. In general, however, little novel chemistry and only minor pharmacological advantage emerged with these new sulfur-containing compounds.

Using computer graphics to postulate the favored spatial orientation of functional groups for ACE inhibition, Hassall and co-workers (55) designed the bicyclic rigid molecule compound III, which had *in vitro* activity close to that of captopril. Also using computer modeling to generate energy minimized conformations, Thorsett and colleagues (56) investigated a series of mercaptomethyl lactams similar to those previously reported by Klutchko and colleagues (57) and found that seven or eight membered lactam rings optimized ACE inhibitory activity. The mercapto lactam 5d compared favorably with captopril in terms of ACE inhibition *in vitro*. Both these latter sulfhydryl-containing compounds served as prototypes for the development of non-sulfhydryl rigid lactam ACE inhibitors (see below).

Of the sulfur-containing ACE inhibitors that followed in the wake of captopril, clinical studies have been reported only for pivalopril (47). These studies suggest that pivalopril has a rapid onset of action with a short duration based on serum ACE inhibition. No clinical data are reported on pivalopril in hypertensive patients or on the other sulfur-containing compounds, although zofenopril has been selected for clinical study (51).

During this flurry of chemical activity, captopril continued to be evaluated clinically. Initial clinical tests used relatively high doses of captopril to insure clinical efficacy. As clinical experience expanded, side effects attributed to captopril emerged (58–60). These included skin rashes and loss of taste, along with proteinuria and alterations in the haematopoietic system. Although the

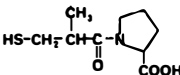
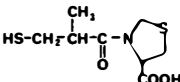
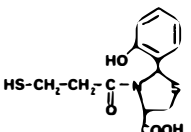
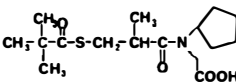
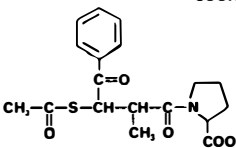
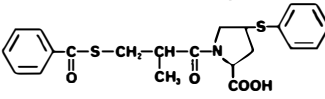
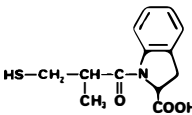
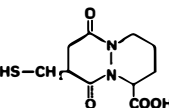
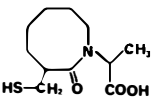
COMPOUND	STRUCTURE	REFERENCE
CAPTOPRIL		25-27
YS 980		36-39
SA 446		40-42
PIVALOPRIL (RHC 3659)		45-47
CL 242,817		48-50
ZOFENOPRIL (SQ 26,991)		51
WY-44,221		52-54
III		55
MERCAPTOLACTAM (5d)		56

Figure 3 The structures of ACE inhibitors that contain sulfur.

cause of these side effects remains unclear, their resemblance to side effects produced by penicillamine, another sulfhydryl-containing molecule, led some to implicate captopril's sulfhydryl moiety as a causative factor (60). This possibility, coupled with the potential for multiple interactions of sulfur-containing molecules, led to a rapid redirection of synthetic effort in the development of ACE inhibitors, although reduced dosage has minimized the occurrence of side effects in the use of captopril (61, 62).

NON-SULFHYDRYL ACE INHIBITORS

Patchett and co-workers elegantly accomplished the replacement of the sulfhydryl moiety in captopril by designing a series of substituted N-carboxymethyl-dipeptides (63) (Figure 4). The dicarboxylic acid compound, enalaprilic acid (MC422), was a potent inhibitor of ACE with approximately ten times greater affinity for ACE than captopril (64, 65). Although enalaprilic acid showed high affinity for ACE, oral bioavailability was poor in both animals (65) and man (66). This problem was partially overcome by the development of the ethyl ester, enalapril (MK421). Enalapril has become a prototype for a generation of ACE inhibitors that are prodrugs that must be hydrolyzed for ACE inhibition. Relative to captopril, enalapril has a slower onset of action (65, 67), which may be related both to the need for hydrolysis to the active moiety and to poor oral absorption (although oral absorption is improved compared to enalaprilic acid) (68). The major clinical advantage of enalapril resides in its relatively long duration of action (69, 70), which should permit once or at most twice daily dosing for maintenance of blood pressure reduction. In addition, unlike captopril, plasma ACE inhibition can be used as a rough index of plasma levels of enalapril, since enalapril-induced ACE inhibition was stable on storage whereas captopril-induced ACE inhibition was not (23). Although developed to minimize captopril-like side effects, mucocutaneous reactions (71, 72) and reversible leucopenia have been reported with enalapril (73). The occurrence of such side effects will be placed in perspective as the clinical use of enalapril expands pending its approval by the Food and Drug Administration.

During the development of enalapril, the lysine derivative of enalaprilic acid (lisinopril, MK521) was found to be a potent ACE inhibitor with affinity for ACE similar to enalaprilic acid. Lisinopril offered the singular advantage of oral activity similar to enalapril, in spite of the fact that it was a dicarboxylic acid (66, 74, 75). Blood pressure after lisinopril (2.5 and 5 mg) was significantly reduced for more than twenty-four hours in hypertensive patients, indicating that once daily dosing will be likely with this agent (76, 77).

The development of these two novel ACE inhibitors has opened a new era in the synthesis of ACE inhibitors. Shortly after the identification of enalapril and lisinopril, researchers at both Schering Corporation (78, 79) and Warner-Lambert/Parke-Davis Research Laboratories (80-82) independently reported on the synthesis and development of indolapril (SCH31846, CI907), a close analog of enalapril. Like enalapril, indolapril is a prodrug that must be hydrolyzed to the diacid for ACE inhibition. Indolapril's duration of action appears similar to that of enalapril. The ethyl ester, CI-906, is an analog of both enalapril and indolapril (80, 81). However, unlike these other ethyl ester derivatives, CI906 showed relatively high affinity for ACE, an affinity that was

COMPOUND	STRUCTURE	REFERENCE
ENALAPRIL (MK-421)		63
LISINAPRIL (MK-521)		74-77
INDOLAPRIL (CI 907) (SCH 31846)		78-82
CI 906		80-81
RO 31-2848		83
CGS 14824 A		84-85
HOE 498		86-88
CGS13945		89-93
20		94
REV 6000-A		95-96

Figure 4 The structures of ACE inhibitors that do not contain sulfur or sulfhydryl moieties.

only three-fold less than that of its diacid metabolite (81). Why CI-906 showed such high affinity for ACE relative to enalapril and indolapril remains to be determined. Should this in vitro activity be translated to the in vivo situation, CI-906 might have a more rapid onset of action (due to activity of the parent compound) and a longer duration of action (due to activity of the diacid) than

enalapril or CI-907. However, initial preclinical data evaluating inhibition of an angiotensin I pressor response in conscious rats and dogs did not reveal any major differences in the time course among these three ACE inhibitors (80). Clinically, CI-906 (5 and 10 mg, p.o.) lowered blood pressure for twelve to twenty-four hours without adverse effects in hypertensive patients (82), effectiveness similar to enalapril and lisinopril. CI-925, the dimethoxy derivative of CI-906, has a rapid onset and long duration of ACE inhibition in preclinical studies and is currently also undergoing clinical evaluation (H. Kaplan, personal communication).

Following the identification of indolapril and CI-906, several additional bicyclic ACE inhibitors have been synthesized. These include bicyclic lactam derivatives that possess a seven-membered lactam ring as in R031-2848 (83) and CGS14824A (84), the active isomer of the seven-membered lactams reported by Parsons et al (85). The increase in lactam ring size from five and six carbons improved affinity for ACE.

The bicyclic ACE inhibitor HOE-498 is a structural variant of enalapril and indolapril. Based on blockade of angiotensin I (AI) pressor response, intravenously administered HOE 498 showed similar potency to enalapril, yet oral or intraduodenal administration of HOE-498 resulted in approximately ten-fold greater potency than enalapril (86). Thus the bioavailability of HOE-498 was greater than that of enalapril, consistent with previous observations suggesting the relatively poor oral bioavailability of enalapril. The greater oral activity of HOE-498 relative to enalapril was also reflected in a better reduction in blood pressure and inhibition of plasma and tissue ACE following oral administration to stroke-prone, spontaneously hypertensive rats (87). Initial reports (87) with HOE-498 also suggest a different distribution of tissue ACE inhibitory effectiveness (heart, adrenal, and brain ACE were markedly inhibited by HOE-498 and not by MK-421 at 10 mg/kg, p.o.). Furthermore, clinical data with HOE-498 confirm the high potency and long duration of activity with regard to plasma ACE inhibition in normal volunteers (88). Should these differences observed with HOE-498 relative to indolapril or enalapril be maintained with further scrutiny, the dramatic effect on pharmacological activity produced by minor structural modification of ACE inhibitors will become obvious.

As a departure from the phenethylamine ester side chain in previously discovered ACE inhibitors, scientists at Ciba-Geigy and Tanabe Seiyaku Company have synthesized bicyclic ACE inhibitors with markedly different side chains (Figure 4). This modification resulted in a disappointing reduction in activity. Both these compounds, CGS 13945 (89-93) and compound 20 (94), are esters that must be hydrolyzed for *in vivo* ACE inhibitory activity. *In vitro* affinity for ACE of the diacid forms of these molecules, as well as *in vivo* activity of the esters, was lower than that reported for compounds with the

phenethylamine side chain, such as in enalapril. In fact, CGS 13945, although possessing a long duration of action, was less effective than captopril in inhibiting the AI pressor response in both rats and dogs after intravenous and oral administration (90). Likewise, CGS 13945 was less potent in inhibiting human plasma ACE activity after oral administration than was captopril (92, 93). The effectiveness of CGS 13945 in hypertensive patients has not yet been reported.

Lastly, REV 6000A is a newly revealed ACE inhibitor of a nonrigid bicyclic structure in which the proline nitrogen is not enclosed in a ring structure. Although REV 6000A possesses a long duration of action, it appears to be less potent than enalapril after oral administration to animals (95, 96). Clinical data on this compound are not yet available.

PHOSPHOROUS-CONTAINING ACE INHIBITORS

In a search for ACE inhibitors with novel properties, Holmquist & Vallee (97) and Galardy (98–100) were the first to demonstrate that the carboxyl or mercapto moiety proposed as the ligand for the active site zinc ion on ACE could be replaced by a phosphorous group with the retention of reasonable ACE inhibitory activity (Figure 5). This observation paved the way for Thorsett and colleagues (101) in the Merck Sharp & Dohme Laboratories and Powell and colleagues (102) from the Squibb Institute for Medical Research to design phosphorous-containing molecules as potential candidates for clinical therapy.

As with other described ACE inhibitors, SQ 28,555 is a prodrug with *in vitro* ACE inhibitory activity similar to that of captopril. SQ 28,555 was orally effective in animal studies and had a relatively long duration of action based on reductions in mean arterial pressure following oral administration in animals (102). Although clinical data on phosphorous-containing ACE inhibitors has not yet been reported, this new class of ACE inhibitors, when studied in more detail, may produce a new profile of pharmacological activity.

MISCELLANEOUS INHIBITORS

On route to the discovery of the potent ACE inhibitors previously mentioned, several other compounds have been reported (Figure 6). Reports of di-peptide and tri-peptides as weak inhibitors of angiotensin-converting enzyme have prompted Almquist and colleagues (103–106) to direct a synthetic effort toward the development of potent and orally effective tri-peptide analogs as inhibitors of ACE. In general, this effort has not met with great success. However, the most recent preclinical demonstration of antihypertensive activity following the oral administration of peptides that inhibit ACE may prompt further synthetic effort in this area (107). The possibility of success here must be

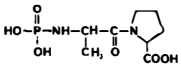
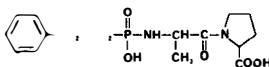
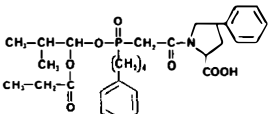
COMPOUND	STRUCTURE	REFERENCE
N-PHOSPHORYL-ALA-PRO		98-100
PHENETHYLPHOSPHONAMIDE		101
SQ 28555		102

Figure 5 The structure of ACE inhibitors that contain phosphorous.

tempered by the suggestion that, although such peptides possess ACE inhibitory activity, the antihypertensive activity may result from other actions of these peptides.

Replacement of the amide moiety in compounds such as captopril with a ketone has resulted in active ACE inhibitors, although activity was somewhat lower than that found for the corresponding amide analogs (108). In vivo and clinical data on such compounds are not available.

Harris and colleagues (109) have demonstrated that hydroxamate derivatives of di-peptides, known to be inhibitors of other zinc-containing enzymes, are

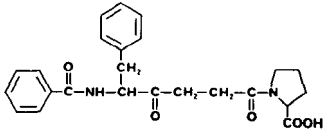
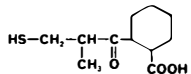
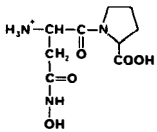
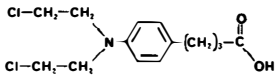
COMPOUND	STRUCTURE	REFERENCE
PEPTIDE ANALOGUES		103
MERCAPTOKETO ACIDS		108
DIPEPTIDE HYDROXAMATES		109
CHLORAMBUCIL		110

Figure 6 The structure of miscellaneous ACE inhibitors.

also relatively weak inhibitors of angiotensin-converting enzyme. Such inhibitors appear less potent than captopril and may lack specificity for angiotensin-converting enzyme. Furthermore, no *in vivo* data are reported on di-peptide hydroxamates.

Chlorambucil and its proline derivative have been reported to produce irreversible inhibition of ACE (110). Because this anticarcinogenic agent is a nitrogen mustard alkylating agent, specificity of action may be minimal.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The availability of potent and orally effective angiotensin-converting enzyme inhibitors will no doubt have a major impact on the future clinical therapy of hypertension and probably other disease states. It remains the challenge of the pharmacologist to decipher the subtle differences in the pharmacological profile of activity of these various ACE inhibitors and to capitalize on that information in order to determine the precise mechanism or mechanisms responsible for the antihypertensive activity of this class of agents. With the availability of these agents, this will be the challenge of the next few years.

The area of research involving ACE inhibitors, from their synthesis to the unravelling of their pharmacological activities, is a major example of a therapeutic breakthrough and benefit resulting entirely from the dedication and motivation of research accomplished within the pharmaceutical industry. Irvine H. Page has made this point before with reference to the overall development of antihypertensive agents (111). In his words:

It must be evident that this was an extraordinary period in the history of the treatment of hypertension. Within about fifteen years, a panoply of highly effective drugs had been made available wholly through the skills of chemists in the pharmaceutical industry. These scientists have received little or no recognition by the medical community for this amazing achievement. . . . It is important to realize that drug innovation begins with investigators who work in the chemical laboratories in cooperation with pharmacologists, is followed by studies in patients by clinicians, and results in large-scale government finance and committee-directed studies. Each of these steps has its importance, but to date the first has been generally ignored.

The perceived importance of this group of antihypertensive agents has fostered considerable competition within the pharmaceutical industry. This is perhaps best reflected in the number of patents filed on ACE inhibitors and in the dual development of chemical compounds by different pharmaceutical companies (i.e. indolapril, WY44,221 and CGS14824A). This healthy competition will undoubtedly result in the improved therapy of hypertension, congestive heart failure, and other disease states.

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