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Synthesis and Anticancer Effect of B-Ring Trifluoromethylated Flavonoids

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Abstract—A series of B-ring trifluoromethylated flavonoids derivatives were prepared and tested in vitro against human gastric adenocarcinoma cell line (SGC-7901). Among these derivatives, 5,7-dipropoxy-2-(4'-trifluoromethylphenyl)-chromen-4-one 5c had the strongest activity against SGC-7901 cell.

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Introduction

Stomach cancer is the type most commonly seen in China. In recent years, there has been a growing interest in the search for anti-stomach cancer substances with high efficacy, low toxicity and minimum side effects. One approach is to search for it from plant origin. Flavonoids are a broad class of polyphenolic secondary metabolites abundant in plants and in a variety of common foods such as apples, onions, tea and red wine. Apart from their important biological roles in nitrogen fixation and chemical defense, flavonoids possess a broad range of pharmacological properties including anti-oxidant, anti-cancer, anti-viral and antiinflammatory properties.2 In anti-cancer area, flavonoids can inhibit the metabolism of the carcinogen benzo[α]pyrene by hamster embryo cells in tissue culture³ and markedly augment the cytotoxicity of TNF (tumor necrosis factor-α).⁴ Flavonoids are also found to have tyrosinase inhibitory activity,5 moderate aromatase inhibitory activity⁶ and inhibition of estradiol-induced DNA synthesis.⁷ However, most of the anticancer activities were low. It is known that fluorine is the most electronegative element and the van der Waals radius of fluorine is close to that of hydrogen, the introduction of the CF₃ group into organic molecules

Figure 1.

often changes their physiological, physical and chemical properties dramatically, without the introduction of extra steric demand. Many efforts were made to introduce the trifluoromethyl group into different types of organic molecules in order to improve their stability and lipophilicity.⁸ To our best knowledge, the introduction of fluorine moiety into the aryl part of the flavonoids molecule can enhance their biological activities including anti-bacterial activity, anti-fungal activity and antiviral activity.9 Very recently, newly fluorinated 3,4dihydroxychalcones have been reported to have interesting biological activities, including anti-peroxidation activity and in vitro anti-tumor activities. 10 However, there were few literature references reported on the synthesis of trifluoromethylated flavonoids. Earlier studies¹¹ of A-ring trifluoromethylated flavonoids (7methyl-8-trifluoromethyl-chrysin 1 and fluoromethyl-7-acetoxychrysin 2, Fig. 1) in our laboratory, showed some activities against SGC-7901 tumor cell. As the presence of a hydrophobic substituent on the

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Scheme 1.

Scheme 2.

B-ring of flavonoids considerably enhanced biological activities, ¹² we were interested in the introduction of trifluoromethyl group into the B-ring of flavonoids. Herein, we describe the synthesis of B-ring trifluoromethylated flavonoids derivatives and their anticancer activities against human gastric adenocarcinoma cell line (SGC-7901).

Chemistry

Condensation of phloroglucinol with chloroacetonitrile catalyzed by ZnCl₂ and followed by hydrolysis with HCl gas provided ketone 3 (Scheme 1).¹³ Treatment of 3

with α,α,α,α-trifluoro-p-tolualdehyde in the presence of excess NaOH in H₂O/EtOH and followed by acidification with aqueous HCl gave the expected compound 4. The alkylation of 4 was carried out with alkyl halides in the presence of K₂CO₃ in acetone to afford compounds 5a–g. When CH₃I, CH₃CH₂Br and CH₃CH₂CH₂Br were used as alkylating agents, it was interesting that the alkylation of 4 gave expected compounds 5a–c as well as unexpected compounds 6a–c. The ratio of 5a–c: 6a–c was changed from 1:1 (in the case of CH₃I) to 2:1 (in the case of CH₃CH₂Br and CH₃CH₂CH₂Br). Treatment of 5a–c with CH₃I, CH₃CH₂Br and CH₃CH₂CH₂Br in the presence of K₂CO₃ in acetone resulted in no reaction and 5a–c was recovered. These

Table 1. In vitro cytotoxicity against the SGC-7901 cell line

Compd	$IC_{50} (\mu M)$	Compd	$IC_{50} (\mu M)$
1	5.90	8	17.75
2	8.60	9a	8.28
4	6.62	9b	28.52
5a	4.37	9c	5.61
5b	44.02	9d	5.26
5e	2.70	9e	4.16
5d	5.00	11	4.31
5e	30.83	12a	21.19
5f	18.06	12b	15.60
5g	9.02	12c	3.05
6a	10.08	12d	14.72
6b	72.46	12e	5.35
6c	8.64		

results indicated **6a-c** was not formed from **5a-c**. The mechanism for the formation of **5a-c** was under investigation.

The same procedure as described above can smoothly convert resorcinol to B-ring trifluoromethylated flavonoids 9a–e via intermediates 7 and 8 (Scheme 2). We also prepared trifluomethylated aurones from resorcinol (Scheme 2). Treatment of 7 with sodium methoxide in MeOH gave benzofuranone 10. Condensation of 10 with α,α,α -trifluoro-p-tolualdehyde in the presence of excess NaOH in H₂O/EtOH afforded the expected aurone 11. The alkylation of 11 with alkyl halides in the presence of K_2CO_3 in acetone produced 12a–e.

Biological Activity

All the above compounds were tested for their in vitro anticancer activity against SGC-7901 cell by MTT-Based Assay. The assays were performed in 96-well plates essentially as described by Mosmann. ¹⁵ The IC₅₀ concentration represents the concentration which results in a 50% decrease in cell growth after 6 days incubation. The given values are mean values of three experiments.

Results and Discussion

The pharmacological activity against the SGC-7901 cell is summarized in Table 1. It appeared that these closely related molecules displayed a remarkable difference in cytotoxicity. As shown in Table 1, we disclosed that 5a, 5c, 5d, 9c, 9d, 9e, 11, 12c and 12e showed stronger cytotoxicity towards SGC-7901 cell than 1, and 4, 5a, 5c, 5d, 9a, 9c, 9d, 9e, 11, 12c and 12e showed stronger cytotoxicity towards SGC-7901 cell than 2. 5,7-Dipropoxy-2-(4'-trifluoromethylphenyl)-chromen-4-one was identified as the most potent inhibitor of SGC-7901 tumor cell. Although general structure-activity relationship of those compounds was not elucidated from these data, the following points were noteworthy: (1) Compound 4 had stronger activity against SGC-7901 tumor cell than 8. This was probably due to the formation of intramolecular hydrogen bond of 5-hydroxyl group in 4. (2) Compounds 5a, 5b and 5c had stronger activities than 6a, 6b and 6c, respectively, suggesting that introduction of an alkyl group at the 3-position of the C-ring resulted in a significant decrease in anti-SGC-7901 tumor cell activity. (3) Comparing 5e-g with 4, we found that alkylated compounds had less activities than compound 4, meanwhile among them, compounds with longer alkyl chain showed better activity. (4) When the hydroxy group of flavonoids was transformed into propoxy or allyloxy group, the resulted compounds 5c, 9c, **9d** and **12c** were more active for inhibition of SGC-7901 cell than parent compounds 4, 8 and 11, respectively. However, the anti-tumor activity of the ethylated compounds 5b, 9b, and 12b decreased dramatically. (5) Comparing 9a-e with 8, the results showed that, apart from 9b, the alkylated compounds were more active than 8, the activity was enhanced with longer alkyl chain. (6) Comparing 12a-e with 11, we disclosed that 6-alkoxy (except allyloxy compound 12c) substituted products 12a, 12b, 12d and 12e had less activity than compound 11. However, it may increase activity when the alkyl chain was prolonged. (7) It was known that flavonoid containing a y-pyrone ring was necessary for their anti-bacterial property.9 However, for the flavonoids that we obtained with trifluoromethyl group bound on B-ring, apart from that 9a had stronger activities against SGC-7901 tumor cell than 12a, compounds 8, 9b, 9d had less activities than 11, 12b and 12c, respectively.

In conclusion, we have designed and synthesized a series of trifluoromethylated flavonoids. The preliminary biological activity screening tests indicated that 5,7-Dipropoxy-2-(4'-trifluoromethyl phenyl)-chromen-4-one **5c** was the most active compound against SGC-7901 tumor cell.

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15. Mosman, T. J. Immunol. Methods 1983, 65, 55. 16. All the new compounds were characterized by detailed spectroscopic analysis. 4 MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 322; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1682 (C=O), 3096, 3312 (OH); ¹H NMR $(300 \text{ MHz}, \text{ DMSO-}d_6)$: 6.100 (1H, d, J = 1.5 Hz), 6.230 (1H, d, J = 1.5 Hz), 6.688 (1H, s), 7.801 (2H, d, J = 8.1 Hz), 8.076 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 11.006 (1H, s), 11.082 (1H, s). ¹⁹F NMR $(300 \,\text{MHz}) - 70.95$. Anal. calcd for $C_{16}H_9F_3O_4$: C, 59.64, H, 2.82; Found C, 59.44, H, 2.85. **5a** MS (EI, 70 ev) *m/z*: 350; IR υ_{max} (cm $^{-1}$, KBr): 1705 (C=O); ^{1}H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl $_{3}$): 3.952 (3H, s), 3.972 (3H, s), 6.156 (1H, d, J=1.8 Hz), 6.412(1H, d, J=1.8 Hz), 6.755 (1H, s), 7.671 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz),7.958 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -62.686. **5b** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 378; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.447–1.596 (6H, m), 4.162– 4.293 (4H, m), 6.184 (1H, d, J=1.5 Hz), 6.412 (1H, d, J=1.5 Hz)Hz), 6.765 (1H, s), 7.717 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 8.004 (2H, d, J = 8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -76.240. **5c** MS (EI, 70 eV) m/z: 406; IR $\upsilon_{\rm max}$ (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.066–1.114 (6H, m), 1.839–1.970 (4H, m), 4.014-4.111 (4H, m), 6.147 (1H, s), 6.373 (1H, s), 6.708 (1H, s), 7.670 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 7.958 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -63.108. Anal. calcd for $C_{22}H_{21}F_3O_4$: C, 65.02, H, 5.21; Found C, 64.57, H, 5.19. **5d** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/ z: 502; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1702 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 5.137 (2H, s), 5.298 (2H, s), 6.277 (1H, d, J=1.8), 6.480 (1H, d, J=1.8), 6.757 (1H, s), 7.333–7.507 (10H, m), 7.685 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 7.968 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz). 19 F NMR (300 MHz) -62.768. Anal. calcd for $C_{30}H_{21}F_3O_4$: C, 71.71, H, 4.21; Found C, 71.69, H, 4.17. 5e MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 518; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1707 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.683-1.896 (26H, m), 4.038-4.108 (4H, m), 6.132 (1H, d, J=1.2 Hz), 6.363 (1H, d, J=1.2 Hz), 6.704 (1H, s), 7.661 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz), 7.950 (2H, d, J=8.4). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -62.709. HRMS calcd for $C_{30}H_{37}F_3O_4$: 518.26158; Found: 518.26439. **5f** MS (EI, 70 ev) *m/z*: 546; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.884-0.920 (6H, m), 1.501-1.274 (20H, m), 1.826-1.941 (4H, m), 4.057-4.150 (4H, m), 6.151 (1H, d, J=1.2), 6.382 (1H, d, J = 1.2 Hz), 6.722 (1H, s), 7.682 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz), 7.972 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -76.194. HRMS calcd for C₃₂H₄₁F₃O₄: 546.29234; Found: 546.29570. 5g MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 602; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1703 (C= \overline{O}); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.884–0.920 (6H, m), 1.298–1.496 (28H, m), 1.822-1.938 (4H, m), 4.053-4.145 (4H, m), 6.146 (1H, d, J = 1.2 Hz), 6.378 (1H, d, J = 1.2), 6.717 (1H, s), 7.679 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 7.967 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -76.194. HRMS calcd for $C_{36}H_{49}F_3O_4$: 602.35545; Found: 602.35829. **6a** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 364; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1696 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 2.079 (3H, s), 3.965 (3H, s), 4.185 (3H, s), 6.530 (1H, s), 6.730 (1H, s), 7.675 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 7.947 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR $(300 \,\mathrm{MHz})$ -76.261. HRMS. calcd for $C_{19}H_{15}F_3O_4$: 364.08929; Found: 364.09225. **6b** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 406; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.081 (3H, t, J=7.2), 1.433 (3H, t, J=6.9), 1.501 (3H, t, J = 6.9), 2.655 (2H, q, J = 7.2 Hz), 4.163 (2H, q, J = 6.9 Hz), 4.456 (2H, q, J = 6.9 Hz), 6.491 (1H, s), 6.703 (1H, s), 7.665

(2H, d, J=8.1 Hz), 7.953 (2H, d, J=8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) - 76.214. HRMS calcd for $C_{22}H_{21}F_3O_4$: 406.14311; Found: 406.13919. **6c** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 448; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹ KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.941–1.951 (15H, m), 2.637 (2H, m), 4.062 (2H, m), 4.381 (2H, m), 6.507 (1H, s), 6.720 (1H, s), 7.686 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 7.971 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz)J = 7.8 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -63.107. HRMS calcd for C₂₅H₂₇F₃O₄: 448.18953; Found: 448.19087. **8** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 306; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1683 (C=O), 3072 (OH); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CD₃COCD₃): 6.818 (1H, s), 6.857 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 8.4), 6.899 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.692 (1H, d, J=8.4Hz), 7.774 (2H, d, J=6.8 Hz), 8.220 (2H, d, J=6.8 Hz), 10.138 (1H, s). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -68.627. Anal. calcd for C₁₆H₉F₃O₃: C, 62.75, H, 2.96; Found C, 62.90, H, 3.44. **9a** MS (EI, 70ev) m/z: 320; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1702 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.972 (3H, s), 6.806 (1H, dd, J = 2.1, 9.3 Hz), 6.821 (1H, s), 7.709 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz), 7.726 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.745 (1H, d, J=9.3 Hz), 8.009 (2H, d, J=8.4Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -71.206. **9b** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 334; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1693 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.492 (3H, t, J = 6.9 Hz), 4.163 (2H, q, J = 6.9 Hz), 6.759 (1H, dd, J=2.1 Hz, 6.6), 6.780 (1H, s), 7.680 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz), 7.697 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.705 (1H, d, J=6.6Hz), 7.975 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -71.206. Anal. calcd for C₁₈H₁₃F₃O₃: C, 64.67, H, 3.92; Found C, 65.23, H, 4.21. **9c** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 348; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1706 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.086 (3H, t, J = 7.5), 1.856–1.925 (2H, m), 4.059 (2H, t, J = 6.6 Hz), 6.763 (1H, dd, J=2.4, 6.6 Hz), 6.781 (1H, d, J=6.6 Hz), 6.794 (1H, d, J=6.6 Hz)s), 7.690 (2H, d, J = 8.1 Hz), 7.704 (1H, d, J = 2.4 Hz), 7.988 (2H, d, J = 8.1 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -71.203. Anal. calcd for C₁₉H₁₅F₃O₃: C, 65.52, H, 4.34; Found C, 65.32, H, 4.32. **9d** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 346; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1707 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 4.681–4.652 (2H, m), 5.505– 5.363 (2H, m), 6.028-6.120 (1H, m), 6.770 (1H, s), 6.786 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 7.5 Hz), 6.798 (1H, d, J=7.5 Hz), 7.670 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 7.709 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.960 (2H, d, J=7.8Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -67.021. Anal. calcd for $C_{19}H_{13}F_3O_3$: C, 65.90, H, 3.70; Found C, 65.89, H, 3.89. **9e** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 418; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1701 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.909 (3H, t, J = 6.6 Hz), 1.313– 1.880 (12H, m), 4.088 (2H, t, J = 6.6 Hz), 6.764 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 6.6 Hz), 6.779 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 6.789 (1H, s), 7.688 (2H, d, J=6.8 Hz), 7.712 (1H, d, J=6.6 Hz), 7.985 (2H, d, J=6.6 Hz)J = 6.8 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -68.437. Anal. calcd for C₂₄H₂₅F₃O₃: C, 68.89, H, 6.02; Found C, 69.10, H, 6.13. 11 MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 306; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1778 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CD₃COCD₃): 6.781 (1H, s), 6.822 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 7.8 Hz), 6.864 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.656 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz), 7.821 (1H, d, J=7.8), 8.174 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz), 10.118 (1H, s). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -70.772. Anal. calcd for C₁₆H₉F₃O₃: C, 62.75, H, 2.96; Found C, 62.69, H, 2.97. **12a** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 320; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1702 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 3.974 (3H, s), 6.798 (1H, s), 6.818 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 7.8 Hz), 7.710 (1H, d, J=2.1), 7.715 (2H, d, J=8.4), 7.747 (1H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 8.004 (2H, d, J=8.4)Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -70.493. **12b** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 334; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1700 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 1.499 (3H, t, J=6.9 Hz), 4.175 (2H, q, J=6.9 Hz), 6.760 (1H, dd, J = 2.1, 7.8 Hz), 6.784 (1H, d, J = 2.1 Hz), 6.799(1H, s), 7.690 (2H, d, J=8.4 Hz), 7.715 (1H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 7.990 (2H, d, J = 8.4 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) -73.059. Anal. calcd for C₁₈H₁₃F₃O₃: C, 64.67, H, 3.92; Found C, 65.45, H, 4.22. **12c** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 346; IR v_{max} (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1707 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 4.664-4.691 (2H, m), 5.369–5.515 (2H, m), 6.033–6.126 (1H, m), 6.787 (1H, s), 6.814 (1H, d, J=2.1), 7.671 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 7.675 (1H, d, J=7.5)Hz), 7.719 (1H, dd, J = 2.1, 7.5 Hz), 7.978 (2H, d, J = 7.8 Hz). 19 F NMR (300 MHz) -56.761. Anal. calcd for $C_{19}H_{13}F_3O_3$: C, 65.89, H, 3.78; Found C, 65.76, H, 3.99. **12d** MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 396; IR $\upsilon_{\rm max}$ (cm⁻¹, KBr): 1699 (C=O); ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 5.221 (2H, s), 6.815 (1H, s), 6.880 (1H, dd, J=2.1,9.0), 7.425–7.470 (5H, m), 7.456 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 7.703 (2H, d, J=7.8), 7.747 (1H, d, J=9.0 Hz), 7.996 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz). ¹⁹F NMR (300 MHz) –74.146. Anal. calcd for C₂₃H₁₅F₃O₃: C, 69.70, H, 3.81; Found C, 69.76, H, 3.91. **12e**

MS (EI, 70 ev) m/z: 404; IR $v_{\rm max}$ (cm $^{-1}$, KBr): 1699 (C=O); 1 H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃): 0.887 (3H, t, J=6.9 Hz), 0.925–1.873 (10H, m), 4.079 (2H, t, J=6.9 Hz), 6.756 (1H, dd, J=2.1, 9.0 Hz), 6.773 (1H, d, J=2.1 Hz), 6.777 (1H, s), 7.677 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz), 7.696 (1H, d, J=9.0 Hz), 7.972 (2H, d, J=7.8 Hz). 19 F NMR (300 MHz) -67.871. Anal. calcd for $C_{23}H_{23}F_{3}O_{3}$: C, 68.31, H, 5.73; Found C, 68.92, H, 6.21.