A NON-ENZYMATIC REACTION IN THE LATE BIOSYNTHESIS OF THE DECARESTRICTINE FAMILY

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In the late biosynthesis of the decarestrictines, inhibitors of the *de novo* formation of cholesterol isolated from the culture broth of *Penicillium simplicissimum* (FH-A 6090), a common pentaketide precursor undergoes post-polyketide modifications leading to the different members of the decarestrictine family. Besides subsequent enzymatically catalyzed reactions an unexpected non-enzymatic conversion was found to be the key step in the biosynthetic sequence. Under acidic conditions during fermentation the decarestrictines A_1 and A_2 (3 and 4) are converted into the main product decarestrictine D (2) and the new decarestrictine family are described. By the application of pH-static fermentations these results were successfully used to manipulate the secondary metabolite pattern of strain FH-A 6090 directing the fermentation process to produce desired members of the decarestrictine family.

The decarestrictines^{1~3)} were discovered by a chemical screening as products of *Penicillium* simplicissimum (strain FH-A 6090). These secondary metabolites are novel inhibitors of the *de novo* cholesterol biosynthesis, as demonstrated in cell line tests with HEP-G2 liver cells and in *in vivo* studies with normolipidemic rats. Most of the decarestrictines exhibit a 10-membered lactone ring with an exocyclic methyl group as characteristic structural elements³⁾.

Recently, our biosynthetic studies on the main metabolites decarestrictine B (1) and D (2) revealed that the carbon skeleton of the 10-membered lactones derive from an acetate polyketide starter unit (C-10/C-9), which is subsequently elongated by four malonate building blocks *via* the polyketide pathway (Fig. 1)⁴). The unusual oxygenation pattern was investigated by feeding experiments with sodium $[1^{-13}C, 1^{8}O_{2}]$ acetate resulting in $[1^{8}O]$ -incorporation into the lactone moiety at C-1 and at C-3 in both, decarestrictine B (1) and D (2). A fermentation performed under an $[1^{8}O_{2}]$ -enriched atmosphere indicated that the oxygen atoms of the oxirane ring in 1 as well as the oxygen at C-7 in 2 are introduced *via* oxygenase catalyzed steps. As a consequence of these earlier studies the decarestrictines obviously arise from a common pentaketide precursor, which is formed by a single polyketide synthetase performancing reduction, dehydration and finally lactonization steps. Subsequently, the proposed intermediate undergoes further post-polyketide modifications to result in the various members of the decarestrictine family⁴).

With the aim to manipulate the metabolite pattern we investigated in the late biosynthesis of the decarestrictine family. Reflecting the pH-time course of the fermentation the acid stability of the various decarestrictines was studied. Unexpectedly, a non-enzymatic reaction was found to be a key-step in this





Indirect incorporation

Table 1. Yields of the decarestrictines in non-influenced and pH-static fermentations of *Penicillium simplicissimum* (strain FH-A 6090) after 6 days.

Metabolite	Yield (mg/liter)			
	Non-influenced fermentation	pH 1.0	pH 2.5	pH 5.5
Decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4)	5		10	20
Decarestrictine B (1)	60	_	40	20
Decarestrictine D (2)	50	20	25	
Decarestrictine N/O (5/6)	5		5	
Decarestrictine E (8)	20	_	10	_
Decarestrictine F (7)	5		2	

biosynthetic sequence offering the opportunity to direct the metabolite pattern to desired products by using pH-static fermentation techniques.

Control of the Metabolite Pattern by pH-Static Fermentations

Regarding the typical pH time course during cultivation it seemed reasonable to suppose a correlation between the pH-value in the fermentation broth and the appearance of the 'decarestrictine D' or 'decarestrictine B'-related compounds⁴). Therefore, pH-static fermentations of the producing organism *Penicillium simplicissimum* (strain FH-A 6090) were considered to gain further information about biosynthetic relationships. In addition, we expected to manipulate the metabolite pattern *via* the pH-value in the fermentation broth. After a 48-hour period of non-influenced cultivation (10-liter scale), constant pH-values (pH 1.0, 2.5, 5.5, and 7.0) were obtained in the fermentation vessel by the addition of 1 M NaOH and/or 0.667 M citric acid. In 12-hour intervals the metabolite pattern was analyzed by TLC chromatography with chloroform - methanol (9:1) as solvent system and anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid as staining reagent¹). The results are summarized in Table 1.

At a constant pH of 2.5 the typical metabolite pattern of a non-influenced fermentation with both major products, decarestrictine B (1, 40 mg/liter) and D (2, 25 mg/liter) was observed. Exclusively, decarestrictine D (2, 20 mg/liter), N and O (5 and 6, 5 mg/liter each) were formed at pH 1.0 in an early

stage of the cultivation. However, due to the instability of 5 and 6, decarestrictine D (2) was the only metabolite detectable after 6 days. To intercept acidic catalyzed conversions the decarestrictine producing organism was cultivated at pH 7.0, which resulted in poor growth and suppression of secondary metabolite formation. At pH 5.5, however, a satisfying cell growth and the production of decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4, 20 mg/liter) as well as of decarestrictine B (1, 20 mg/liter) as the only metabolites was observed.

The pH-static cultivations of *Penicillium simplicissimum* (strain FH-A 6090) allow to manipulate the metabolite pattern to direct the fermentation process to produce desired compounds. At pH 1.0 only the biologically most interesting¹) decarestrictine D (2) is present in the culture broth, which simplifies isolation and purification procedures especially in large scale fermentations. On the other hand, decarestrictine B (1) as well as the biosynthetic intermediates decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4) can be obtained in sufficient yields in pH-static fermentations at pH 5.5, while non-influenced fermentations reveal a mixture of various decarestrictines^{1~4}).

pH-Stability of the Decarestrictines

As a consequence of the pH-static fermentation studies the production of the different decarestrictines seems to be mainly dependant on the actual pH-value of the culture broth, which led us to investigate their pH-stabilities. In distilled water, adjusted to pH 2.5 or to pH 7.2 with 0.1 M HCl or 0.1 M NaOH the decarestrictines A to M^{2,3)} were stirred at 25°C for 7 days. This procedure roughly resembles the conditions in the culture broth of the producing organism strain FH-A 6090 at both, an early and late stage of a typical non-influenced fermentation. In an analytical scale (about 1 mg/ml solution of each metabolite) the stability of the samples were analyzed by TLC chromatography with chloroform-methanol (9:1) and anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid as staining reagent¹⁾. After 7 days at pH 7.2 decarestrictine B (1) showed a slight decomposition (ca. 20%) into a number of more polar components, which were not identified. The remaining decarestrictines tested were stable under these conditions. Furthermore, with the exception of decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4) and F (7) all metabolites appeared to be stable at pH 2.5 in accordance with the results observed during fermentation. After 36 hours a complete conversion of the decarestrictines A_1 and A₂ (3 and 4) into decarestrictine D (2) as well as into the new decarestrictines N (5) and O (6) was found. The 3:1 ratio of the diastereoisomeric educts decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4) resulted in nearly the same ratio for decarestrictine D (2) and the mixture of N and O (5 and 6). Applying the pH-static fermentation technique (pH 5.5, 10-liter scale) we obtained satisfying yields (20 mg/liter) of decarestrictine A₁/A₂ (3/4) sufficient to study the mechanism of the acidic conversion as well as to elucidate the structures of the new decarestrictines N and O.

150 mg of the isolated mixture of decarestrictine A_1 and A_2 were treated under the same reaction conditions described above. After 36 hours the reaction mixture was adsorbed on a XAD-16 column, eluted with methanol-water (4:1) and chromatographed on a silica gel column (chloroform-methanol, 9:1). The obtained sample of purified decarestrictine D (2, yield 65 mg) corresponds completely with the authentic metabolite^{1,2}). The second reaction product (yield 23 mg) appeared to be chromatographically homogenous, but NMR spectroscopic investigations revealed a mixture of two components in a ratio of 4:3. The new compounds were named decarestrictine N (major product) and O.

Decarestrictine N (5) and O (6)

A HR-FAB mass spectrum of the mixture showed only one molecular ion at $m/z = 217.1076 [(M + H)^+]$ pointing to an identical composition of decarestrictine N and O (C₁₀H₁₆O₅). The structure elucidation of





both, decarestrictine N and O from the mixture was possible because of well separated NMR signal patterns in acetone- d_6 . A priory the ¹³C NMR spectrum revealed the presence of 19 signals, but a ¹H-¹³C NMR spectrum proved the signal at δ 74.0 to originate from two carbons [C-4 of decarestrictine N (5) and C-6 of decarestrictine O (6)]. Decarestrictine N exhibits close structural similarities to the 10-membered lactone decarestrictine D (2), which was expressed by comparison of the chemical shifts of the ${}^{13}C$ NMR spectra (125.7 MHz, acetone- d_6). An identical constitution of decarestrictine N (5) in respect to D (2) resulted from ¹H-¹H as well as ¹H-¹³C correlated 2D NMR spectra. However, some differences were found by comparison of the ¹H NMR signals. Most strikingly, the coupling constants of 3-H (N (5): $J_{3,2-\text{Ha}} = 4.0$ and $J_{3,2-\text{Hb}} = 10.5 \text{ Hz}$; D (2): $J_{3,2-\text{Ha}} = 6.9$, and $J_{3,2-\text{Hb}} = 2.4 \text{ Hz}$ point to an opposite stereochemistry at this center of chirality. Although the signal at δ 4.45 (4-H) appeared as a multiplet, we discuss the 4R-configuration because of both, the multiplet signal pattern and mechanistic aspects in the formation of 5 (see below). Inspection of the coupling constants of 7-H and 9-H in 5 gave evidence for analogous configurations at these centers of chirality in comparison to 2. The E-configuration of the double bond at C-5 was deduced from the coupling constant of 5-H/6-H ($J_{5,6}$ =15.5 Hz). Compared to 2 decarestrictine N (5) obviously exhibit opposite stereochemistry at C-3 and C-4, although all stereochemical aspects have not been proven.

The ¹³C NMR spectrum of decarestrictine O (6) exhibits the typical signals of a 10-membered lactone of the decarestrictine type, namely an exocyclic methyl group (δ 21.4, q, C-10), a lactone carbonyl group (δ 170.7, s, C-1), as well as two CH₂-groups (δ 45.1, t, C-2 and δ 39.8, t, C-8). A ¹H-¹H COSY NMR spectrum showed a connected coupling pattern from 2-H₂ to 10-H₃: methyl group (δ 1.28, 10-H₃), methine group (δ 5.04, 9-H), methylene group (δ 1.31, 8-H_b; δ 2.31, 8-H_a), two methine groups (δ 3.40, 7-H and δ 4.25, 6-H), the methine protons of a double bond (δ 5.55, 5-H and δ 5.40, 4-H), a further methine group (δ 4.45, 3-H), and a methylene group (δ 1.36, 2-H_b; δ 2.90, 2-H_a). The signal assignments are in accordance with the data obtained from a ¹H-¹³C 2D NMR spectrum. Based on proton coupling constants **6** exhibits an identical stereochemistry at C-3 (*R*) and C-7 (*S*) than decarestrictine D (**2**). Mechanistic aspects of the oxirane ring opening let us discuss a *trans*-position of the hydroxy groups at C-6/C-7. A close examination of the culture broth of strain FH-A 6090 had already shown that a TLC spot corresponding to decarestrictine N (**5**) and O (**6**) is detectable in the early acidic fermentation stage⁴).

Mechanistic Aspects of the Non-Enzymatic Reaction

In contrast to the epoxide moiety containing decarestrictines B (1), E (8) and F (7), the oxirane ring in decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4) is accessible for acid catalyzed opening (pH 2.5 in the fermentation broth). Obviously, a regio- and stereoselective ring opening resulted in allylic carbocation intermediates being stereoisomers at C-3. The oxygen of the former epoxide remains at C-7 in S-configuration, which had



Fig. 3. Proposed mechanism of the non-enzymatic conversion of decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4) into decarestrictine D (2), N (5), and O (6).

been proven via fermentations in $[^{18}O_2]$ -enriched atmosphere causing label-incorporation into 7-OH in decarestrictine D (2, see Fig. 1)⁴⁾. In an S_N1-type reaction the hypothetic carbocation intermediate reacts with a molecule of water either at C-4 or at C-6. Considering the stereochemistry at C-3 as well as the ratio of the educts (3:1), decarestrictine A₁ (3; major product) resulted in both, decarestrictine D (2; attack at C-4) and decarestrictine O (6; attack at C-6). In analogy, decarestrictine A₂ (4) is converted into decarestrictine N (5; attack at C-4), while the expected minor product from the attack at C-6 could not be isolated. Since decarestrictine D (2) and N (5) were found to be the major products of this non-enzymatic step, the nucleophilic addition is favoured at position C-4 in the hypothetic intermediate. Stereochemically, the spatial position of the α -hydroxy groups should direct the nucleophile to result in *trans*-diols either at C-3/C-4 in 2 and 5 or at C-6/C-7 in 6.

Discussion

In combination, the results from the analysis of the fermentation time $course^{1,4}$, the experiments with stable isotope-labeled precursors⁴), the pH-static cultivations as well as non-enzymatic conversions of the different decarestrictines illustrate the biosynthetic relationships in the decarestrictine family, depicted in Fig. 4.

Obviously, the fungal polyketide synthase forms the hypothetic intermediate 9, leading to decarestrictine F (7) by oxygenation of the Z-configurated double bond at C-6/C-7 via a monooxygenase catalyzed reaction⁴). At this point, the biosynthetic pathway branches off into two parts, namely to the 'decarestrictine B'-, and to the 'decarestrictine D'-related compounds. A non-stereospecific reduction of the keto group at C-3 in decarestrictine F (7) results in the diastereoisomeric mixture decarestrictine A₁/A₂ (3/4, ratio 3 : 1). Being the key step in the following course of conversions the pH-value in the fermentation broth triggers the metabolite pattern produced. Under acidic conditions (pH < 3.0) the intermediates A₁/A₂ were converted in a non-enzymatic reaction into decarestrictine D (2), the biologically most interesting compound, as well as the new minor components decarestrictine N (5) and O (6).



Fig. 4. Biosynthetic relationships of the decarestrictine family.

In pH-static fermentations (pH>3.0) the decarestrictines A_1/A_2 (3/4) appeared to be stable. Besides 3 and 4 a second major metabolite, decarestrictine B (1), was formed. Starting from decarestrictine F (7) a regio- and stereoselective addition of water at the double bond at C-4/C-5 seems to result in decarestrictine B (1), because in experiments with both, [¹⁸O]-labeled acetate and oxygen gas no label-incorporation into 5-OH was detectable⁴⁾. This supports the assumption that 5-OH originates *via* a hydratase catalyzed reaction from water. Further enzymatic derivatization of decarestrictine B (1) seem to yield in additional 'decarestrictine B'-related compounds like decarestrictine E (8), I (10), and M (11). Remarkably, in static (non-shaken) cultivations using roux-flasks (pH 4.5 to 6.0) decarestrictine D (2) embodies the most stabile and main metabolite during 40 days, whereas *e.g.* decarestrictine B (1), underlies catabolic processes. The observed stability of 2 correlates with the isolation of decarestrictine D (identical with tuckolide) from the sclerotium of *Polyphorus tuberaster*, called 'the stone that grows'¹³).

Up to our present knowledge, non-enzymatic steps in the biosynthesis of secondary metabolites have

been reported only in rare cases. ROHR^{$5 \sim 8$}) described that in the biosynthetic formation of the urdamycin family the S-methyl group of urdamycin E is introduced by a non-enzymatic nucleophilic Michael addition of methylmercaptane at the 5-position of urdamycin A (=aquayamycin). Furthermore, urdamycin C and D are formed by condensations of urdamycin A with 4-hydroxypyruvic acid and indole-3-pyruvic acid, respectively, while urdamycin H is build up *via* an unusual non-enzymatic ring contraction reaction. The spontaneous reactions without participation of enzymes were found to be late steps in the biosynthetic sequence of the urdamycin family. A second example has been observed for the late biosynthesis of the macrolactones of the desertomycin family, in which γ -lactone formation in the side chain as well as ring enlargement reaction from a 42- to a 44-membered macrolactone moiety not necessarily need enzymatic catalysis⁹⁾. These results are in accordance with the above mentioned findings in the decarestrictine family, in which non-enzymatic steps are also involved in the late biosynthetic sequence. We presume a more frequent occurrence of non-enzymatic reactions in the secondary metabolism of organisms, especially of those, which result in a wide spectrum of related compounds⁶⁾. These aspects reveal further arguments in the discussion of meaning and evolution of secondary metabolism^{10,11}. Regarding the 'playing-ground hypothesis' of ZÄHNER¹²) a further facette has to be considered with the coincidentally occurring transformations of secondary metabolites by non-enzymatic reactions.

Experimental

General

FAB mass spectra were taken with a Finnigan MAT 8230. ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were measured with Varian VXR-500S. Chemical shifts are expressed in δ values (ppm) with tetramethylsilane (TMS) as internal standard. The multiplicities of the ¹³C NMR values were assigned by attached proton test (APT). Fermentation was carried out in a 10-liter fermenter (Biostat E) from Braun Dissel (Melsungen, Germany). TLC was performed on silica gel plates (Merck, HPTLC-ready-to-use-plates, silica gel 60F₂₅₄ on aluminium foil or glass) and column chromatography on silica gel 60 (0.040~0.063 mm, Merck) and Sephadex LH-20 (Pharmacia).

Fermentation

Penicillium simplicissimum (strain FH-A 6090, deposited in the German Culture Collection: DSM 4209) was grown on agar slates containing malt extract 2%, yeast extract 1%, $(NH_4)_2HPO_4$ 0.05%, agar 1.5%, pH 6.0 prior to sterilization (medium A). A piece of agar (1 cm²) from this storage culture was used to inoculate a 300-ml Erlenmeyer flask containing 100 ml of medium A omitting agar (medium B). After cultivation on a rotary shaker (140 rpm) at 25°C for 5 days 300 ml of these cultures were used to inoculate a 10-liter fermenter with pH-measuring and regulation equipment containing medium B (200 rpm, aeration 5 liters/minute). The fermentation process was analyzed for a total of 7 days. 48 hours after inoculation the pH-value was adjusted to pH 1.0, 2.5, 5.5, or 7.0 with 0.667 M citric acid and/or 1 M NaOH. Every 12 hours a 10 ml sample of the culture broth was extracted twice with 5 ml of ethyl acetate. The combined organic layers were evaporated to dryness and the oily crude extract was dissolved in 200 μ l of chloroform - methanol (9:1). The production of secondary metabolites was analyzed by TLC chromatography (solvent system: CHCl₃-MeOH, 9:1; staining reagent: anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid). In order to isolate the decarestrictines A₁/A₂ (**3/4**) the culture of the pH-static fermentation at pH 5.5 was harvested after 72 hours. The isolation and purification protocol followed the procedure as previously described¹).

pH-Stability of the Decarestrictines

In 1 ml of distilled water, which had been adjusted at pH=2.5 with $0.1 \times HCl$ or at pH=7.2 with $0.1 \times NaOH$, about 1 mg of the different decarestrictines were stirred at 25°C for a total of 7 days. After 1, 6, 14, 22, 36, and 144 hours the stability of each sample was analyzed by TLC chromatography (solvent system: CHCl₃-MeOH, 9:1; staining reagent: anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid).

Decarestrictine N (5) and O (6)

150 mg of a mixture of decarestrictine A_1/A_2 (3/4, 3:1) yielded from a pH-static fermentation at pH 5.5 were dissolved in 50 ml of distilled water, adjusted to pH=2.5 with 0.1 N HCl, and stirred at 25°C for

36 hours. TLC analysis revealed about 100% conversion (after 6 hours *ca.* 40%) into decarestrictine D (2) and N/O (5/6) in a ratio of 3:1. The mixture was neutralized by the addition of 0.1 N NaOH and adsorbed on an Amberlite XAD-16 column (10×3 cm). After washing the column with 50 ml of distilled water, the products were eluted with 50 ml of methanol. The dried eluate (135 mg) was chromatographed on silica gel (column: 30×2 , chloroform - methanol, 9:1) to yield 65 mg (43.3%) of pure decarestrictine D (2) and 23 mg (15.3%) of a mixture of decarestrictine N (5), and O (6) in a ratio of 4:3. The mass spectra and NMR data were obtained from the mixture. NMR signal assignments arose from partial subtraction of the signals.

Decarestrictine N (5): Rf 0.26 (chloroform - methanol, 9:1), 0.90 (1-butanol - acetic acid - water, 4:1:5, upper phase), violet colorization after staining with anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid on silica gel TLC plates; HRFAB-MS m/z 217.1076 [(M+H)⁺], MW 216.24 (C₁₀H₁₆O₅); ¹H NMR (500 MHz, acetone- d_6) δ 1.17 (d, $J_{10,9} = 6.6$ Hz, 10-H₃), 1.36 (dd, $J_{2a,2b} = -15.0$, and $J_{2a,3} = 4.0$ Hz, 2-H_a), 2.36 (dd, $J_{2b,2a} = -15.0$, and $J_{2b,3} = 10.5$ Hz, 2-H_b), 2.40 (m, 8-H₂), 3.67 (ddd, $J_{3,2a} = 4.0$, and $J_{3,2b} = 10.5$ Hz, 3-H), 4.45 (m, 4-H), 4.67 ~ 4.74 (m, 7-H and 9-H), 5.70 (ddd, $J_{5,6} = 15.5$, $J_{5,4} = 3.0$, and $J_{5,7} = 1.0$ Hz, 5-H), 5.99 (ddd, $J_{6,5} = 15.5$, $J_{6,4} = 1.5$ Hz, and $J_{6,7} = 5.5$ Hz, 6-H); ¹³C NMR (125.7 MHz, acetone- d_6) δ 23.2 (q, C-10), 39.4 (t, C-2), 44.8 (t, C-8), 67.9 (d, C-9), 70.0 (d, C-7), 74.0 (d, C-4), 76.1 (d, C-3), 126.7 (d, C-5), 131.7 (d, C-6), 170.3 (s, C-1).

Decarestrictine O (6): Rf 0.26 (chloroform - methanol, 9:1), 0.90 (1-butanol - acetic acid - water, 4:1:5, upper phase), violet colorization after staining with anisaldehyde-sulfuric acid on silica gel TLC plates; HRFAB-MS m/z 217.1076 [(M + H)⁺], MW 216.24 (C₁₀H₁₆O₅); ¹ H NMR (500 MHz, acetone- d_6) δ 1.28 (d, $J_{10,9} = 6.5$ Hz, 10-H₃), 1.31 (8-H_b), 1.36 (dd, $J_{2a,2b} = 15.0$, and $J_{2b,3} = 2.0$ Hz, 2-H_b), 2.31 (m, $J_{8a,8b} = 13.0$, and $J_{8a,7} = 3.6$ Hz, 8-H_a), 2.90 (dd, $J_{2b,2a} = 14.0$, and $J_{2a,3} = 7.0$ Hz, 2-H_a), 3.40 (m, 7-H), 4.25 (m, $J_{6,5} = 8.5$ Hz, and $J_{6,4} = 1.0$ Hz, 6-H), 4.45 (m, 3-H), 5.04 (qd, $J_{9,10} = 6.5$ Hz, and $J_{9,8b} = 3.6$ Hz, 9-H), 5.40 (ddd, $J_{4,5} = 16.0$, $J_{3,4} = 9.0$, and $J_{4,6} = 1$ Hz, 4-H), 5.55 (ddd, $J_{5,6} = 8.5$, $J_{5,4} = 16.0$, and $J_{3,5} = 0.5$ Hz, 5-H); ¹³C NMR (125.7 MHz, acetone- d_6) δ 21.4 (q, C-10), 39.8 (t, C-8), 45.1 (t, C-2), 71.3 (d, C-3), 73.2 (d, C-9), 74.0 (d, C-6), 76.9 (d, C-7), 131.1 (d, C-4), 135.8 (d, C-5), 170.7 (s, C-1).

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