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8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde-(benzotriazol-1'-acetyl)hydrazone as a potential Mg^{2+} fluorescent chemosensor

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8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde-(benzotriazol-1'-acetyl)hydrazone as a potential Mg^{2+} fluorescent chemosensor

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8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde-(benzotriazol-1'-acetyl)hydrazone **1** was synthesized and found to show sensitivity and selectivity to Mg^{2+} . Compared to other metal ions, the fluorescence intensity of **1** increased 65-fold upon addition of Mg^{2+} with a low detection limit of 2.4 ppb in acetonitrile.

Keywords: 8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde-(benzotriazol-1'-acetyl)hydrazone; Fluorescent chemosensor; $Mg(II)$; Selectivity

1. Introduction

Mg^{2+} plays vital roles in most cellular and pathological processes [1, 2], such as enzyme cofactors in DNA synthesis, proliferation of cells and the photosynthesis of green plants [3]. Moreover, lack or overdose of Mg^{2+} can cause physiological diseases, such as cardiovascular disease and migraines, and it is important to monitor Mg^{2+} concentration in physiological environment and its distribution throughout living system. Detection and determination techniques of Mg^{2+} have attracted interest in biology, pharmaceutical studies, medicines, and chemistry [4]. Methods, such as atomic absorption, Mg^{2+} -selective electrodes, NMR, and fluorescent chemosensors, have been developed for detection of Mg^{2+} [5]. Fluorescent sensors have drawn increasing attention for simplicity, selectivity, sensitivity, potential application in biological systems, and real-time response in contrast to the traditional methods [6–8] resulting in design and synthesis of high selectivity and sensitivity fluorescent sensors for Mg^{2+} [9–13]. Many Mg^{2+} -selective chemosensors are based on crown ethers [14–17], polyethers [18], hydroxyquinoline derivatives [19–21], fluorescein [22], coumarin derivatives [23–26], and nanomaterial-based ionophores [27, 28]; many suffer from Ca^{2+} interference due to similar chemical properties and stronger binding affinity of Ca^{2+} compared to Mg^{2+} , reducing or even quenching the sensitivity of Mg^{2+} sensors [29, 30]. Only a few sensors can distinguish Ca^{2+} and Mg^{2+} , and display good competitive abilities against most transition metals [31, 32].

The compound, 8-hydroxyquinoline, is an excellent fluorophore with good coordination ability and superior optical properties, and is widely used in chemical and biological

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sensors. In this article, we report 8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde-(benzotriazol-1'-acetyl)hydrazide **1** as a selective and sensitive sensor for Mg²⁺; **1** could discriminate Ca²⁺ from Mg²⁺, displaying great selectivity over alkali, alkaline earth, and transition metal ions, with a low determination limit of 2.4 ppb in CH₃CN. The results show that **1** can be used as a potential chemosensor for Mg²⁺ detection.

2. Experimental

2.1. Materials and instrumentation

All chemicals were obtained from commercial suppliers and used without purification. ¹H NMR spectra were measured on Bruker 400 MHz instruments using TMS as an internal standard. The ESI-MS was determined on a Bruker esquire 6000 spectrometer. The UV-vis absorption spectra were determined on a Shimadzu UV-240 spectrophotometer. Fluorescence spectra were recorded on a Hitachi RF-4500 spectrophotometer equipped with quartz cuvettes of 1 cm path length. The IR spectra were obtained in KBr disks on a Thermo Mattson FTIR spectrometer from 4000–400 cm⁻¹.

Quantum yield was determined by an absolute method using an integrating sphere based upon that originally developed by de Mello *et al.* [33]. The experiment was conducted on an FLS920 from Edinburgh Instruments. The quantum yield was determined according to the equation: $\Phi_u = \Phi_s (F_u A_s n_u^2 / F_s A_u n_s^2)$, where Φ_u is the quantum yield, F is the integrated area under the corrected emission spectra, A is the absorbance at the excitation wavelength, n is the refractive index of the solution, and the subscripts *u* and *s* refer to the unknown and standard, respectively. Acridine orange ($\lambda_{ex} = 400$ nm, $\Phi_f = 0.20$) was used as the fluorescence standard.

2.2. Synthesis of **1**

As seen in Scheme S1, **1** was obtained by refluxing 8-hydroxyquinoline-5-carbaldehyde **2** (0.346 g, 2 mmol) [34] and benzotriazol-1-acetic hydrazide **3** (0.402 g, 2 mmol) [35] in ethanol (20 mL) in a 50 mL round bottom bottle for 10 h, during which a light yellow precipitate appeared. The resulting precipitate was filtered and washed three times with hot ethanol, recrystallized from dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) to give **1** (0.512 g, 72%); m.p. > 300 °C. ¹H-NMR(400 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ (ppm) 11.76 (s, 1H), 9.49 (d, J = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 8.93–8.94 (m, 1H), 8.62 (s, 1H), 8.07 (d, J = 11.2 Hz, 1H), 7.85–7.89 (m, 2H), 7.68–7.74 (m, 1H), 7.55–7.58 (m, 1H), 7.39–7.46 (m, 1H), 7.16–7.19 (m, 1H), and 6.13 (s, 2H); IR: 3433, 3007–3210, 2978, 2894, 1692, 1617, 1599, 1574, 1511, 1457, 1418, 1293, 1238, 1006, 786, and 745. EI-MS *m/z*: 357.1 ([M+H]⁺).

3. Results and discussion

The optical responses of **1** towards Mg²⁺ were investigated by absorption and fluorescence emission spectra in CH₃CN. As shown in figure S1, the absorption spectra of chemosensor **1** in CH₃CN exhibited two bands at 280 and 354 nm with respective molar absorption coefficients of 2.62×10^4 and 1.56×10^4 M⁻¹ cm⁻¹, which correspond to π , π^* transition of **1**. Upon addition of Mg²⁺, the absorbance bands at 280 and 354 nm gradually decreased, while a new peak at 318 nm and a broad band from 390 to 450 nm appeared.

The clear isosbestic points at 249, 291, and 368 nm indicate formation of a stable **1**-Mg²⁺ complex.

Fluorescence properties of the probe were also investigated. The fluorescence response behavior of **1** towards increasing concentration of Mg²⁺ is shown in figure 1. Chemosensor **1** shows a weak emission at 450 nm with increasing Mg²⁺ from 0.1 to 1 equiv; a new emission peak appeared at 525 nm and the fluorescence intensity gradually reached 65-fold with a fluorescence quantum yield (Φ) of 0.149. The emission wavelength of **1** red-shifts from 450 to 525 nm in CH₃CN, as shown in scheme 1.

To investigate the selectivity of **1** towards Mg²⁺, the related alkali, alkaline earth, and other metal ions, such as Li⁺, Na⁺, K⁺, Ca²⁺, Ba²⁺, Zn²⁺, Cd²⁺, Al³⁺, Cr³⁺, Co²⁺, Ni²⁺, Cu²⁺, Hg²⁺, Ag⁺, and Fe³⁺ were introduced to observe the changes of fluorescence intensity of **1** (figure 2).

The metal ions display very weak fluorescence enhancement and **1** can distinguish Ca²⁺ from Mg²⁺, exhibiting excellent selectivity towards Mg²⁺ compared to other cations. To confirm **1** as an ion-selective fluorescence chemosensor, competitive experiments were also taken into consideration. Compound **1** was treated with 2 equiv of Mg²⁺ in the presence of 2 equiv of other metal ions, and the changes of fluorescence emission intensity are shown in figure S2.

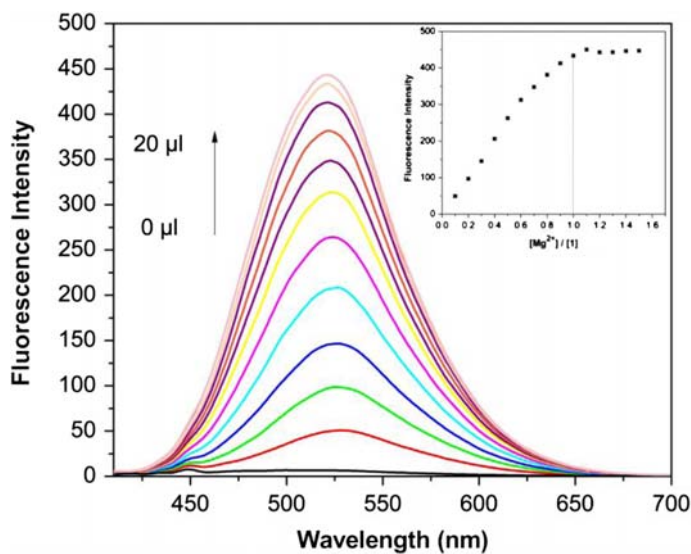
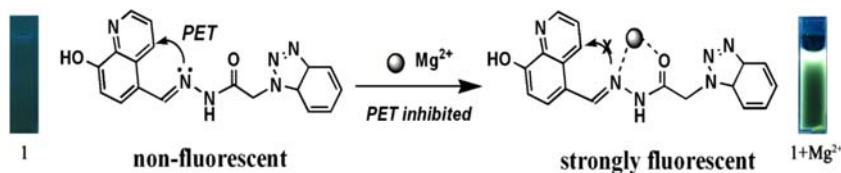


Figure 1. Fluorescence emission response upon titration of 1.0 mM Mg(II) into a 10.0 μ M solution of **1** at 25 $^{\circ}$ C in CH₃CN, λ_{ex} = 395 nm and λ_{em} = 525 nm. Inset: the increase in fluorescence emission intensity related to the amounts of Mg(II) added.



Scheme 1. Proposed binding mode of chemosensor **1** with Mg²⁺.

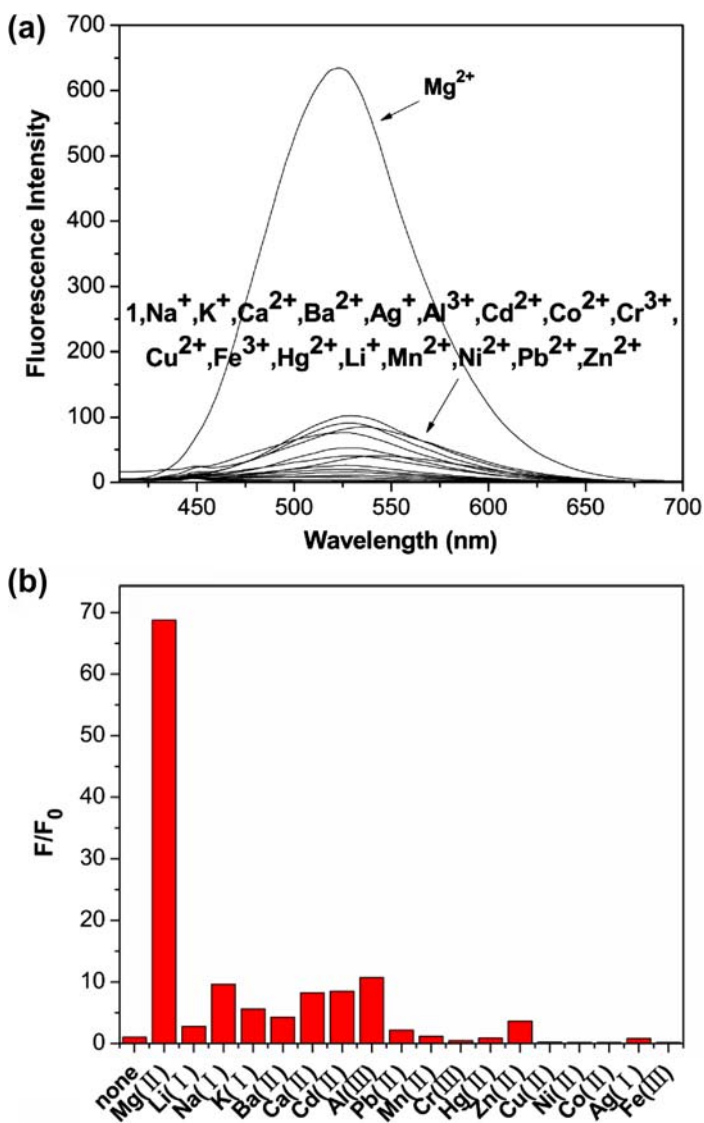


Figure 2. (a) Fluorescence spectra of **1** (1.0×10^{-5} M) upon addition of 1 equiv of different metal ions in CH₃CN when excited at 395 nm. (b) Bar diagram showing the relative emission intensity.

Cu^{2+} , Zn^{2+} , Ni^{2+} , Co^{2+} , and Fe^{3+} quenches the fluorescence of chemosensor **1** because of stronger binding abilities than Mg^{2+} . But Hg^{2+} and Pb^{2+} display little influence on fluorescence intensity attributed to the configuration of **1** when binding with metals. The influence of alkali and alkaline earth metal ions can be ignored. Thus, chemosensor **1** can be used as a Mg^{2+} selective fluorescent sensor in the presence of many common metal ions. Reversibility of target ion binding is important in the design of a chemosensor; reversibility of Mg^{2+} binding to **1** was investigated by ethylene diamine tetraacetic acid (EDTA) titration. As seen in figure S3, with increasing concentration of EDTA-2Na, the

fluorescence intensity of **1**-Mg²⁺ decreased gradually. Figure S4 shows the detection limit of chemosensor **1** was 2.4 ppb, which indicates that **1** was highly sensitive to Mg²⁺.

The binding mode between **1** and Mg²⁺ was investigated by fluorescence titration and Job's plot. The inset of figure 1 is the binding isotherm from the fluorescence titration, fitted to a 1:1 stoichiometry of **1**-Mg²⁺ complex. Figure S5 shows the plot of $F_0/(F - F_0)$ versus $[\text{Mg}^{2+}]^{-1}$, the good linear relation further confirmed that Mg²⁺ and **1** form **1**-Mg²⁺ with 1:1 binding, and the binding constant of **1**-Mg²⁺ is $6.37 \times 10^6 \text{ M}^{-1}$. The 1:1 stoichiometry of Mg²⁺ binding to **1** was also proved by Job's plot (figure S6).

From ¹H NMR titrations in DMSO-d₆ (DMSO-d₆ was chosen as solvent because of poor solubility for **1** in CD₃CN), as shown in figure S7, the -NH (H_a) resonance of **1** was at 11.77 ppm, -N=C-H (H_b) at 8.51 ppm and -CH₂- (H_{c,d}) at 6.14 ppm. In the presence of Mg²⁺ up to 1.0 equiv, H_a and H_{c,d} experience a slight upfield shift to 11.76 and 6.13 ppm, respectively. The proton H_b suffered a slight downfield shift to 8.52 ppm, possibly due to deshielding effects of the metal ion interacting with **1**, indicating involvement of the carbonyl O and N (-N=C-H) binding with Mg²⁺. The fluorescence signaling mechanisms of chemosensor **1** were mainly based on photoinduced electron transfer (PET) and intramolecular charge transfer [36, 37]. Before addition of Mg²⁺, the lone pair electrons from the Schiff-base nitrogen contributed to the PET phenomenon, which quenched fluorescence emission of **1**. As seen in scheme 1, accompanied by increasing amounts of Mg²⁺, the PET was gradually inhibited and fluorescence intensity increased quickly. The fluorescence was turned from "off" to "on" and displays bright yellow fluorescence.

4. Conclusion

We have prepared a Mg²⁺-fluorescent chemosensor **1**, which displays excellent sensitivity towards Mg²⁺ with a low detection limit of 2.4 ppb in CH₃CN. Compound **1** also shows selectivity against other metal ions, especially Ca²⁺, which can seriously influence the selectivity of a probe. Results from this work demonstrate that **1** can be used as a potential fluorescent chemosensor for Mg²⁺ detection. Compared to previous work by Liu, Chattopadhyay and Phaniband [38–40], Schiff-base compounds which have more than two chelating points display potential in recognition of traditional and alkaline metal ions. It also gives a good idea to design a simple chemosensor.

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