Pergamon

Tetrahedron Letters, Vol. 37, No. 25, pp. 4339-4340, 1996

0040-4039/96 $15.00 + 0.00

PII: S0040-4039(96)00840-4

A Short, Facile Synthesis of 2-Amino-1,5-dihydro-4H-pyrrolo[3,2-*d*]-pyrimidin-4-one (9-Deazaguanine)

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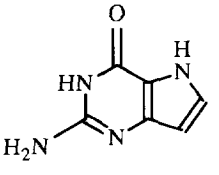
Abstract: 9-Deazaguanine has been synthesized in four steps in an overall isolated yield of 18% from ethyl (ethoxymethylene)cyanoacetate and diethyl aminomalonate.

We became interested in the synthesis of 2-amino-1,5-dihydro-4H-pyrrolo[3,2-*d*]pyrimidin-4-one (9-deazaguanine, **1**) for use as a possible intermediate in the large-scale preparation of peldesine **2**,[1] a potent inhibitor of purine nucleoside phosphorylase (PNP, EC 2.4.2.1) currently in Phase III clinical trials.



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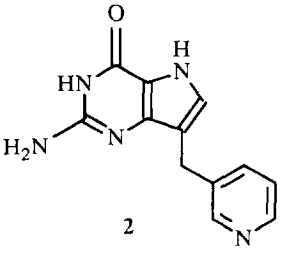

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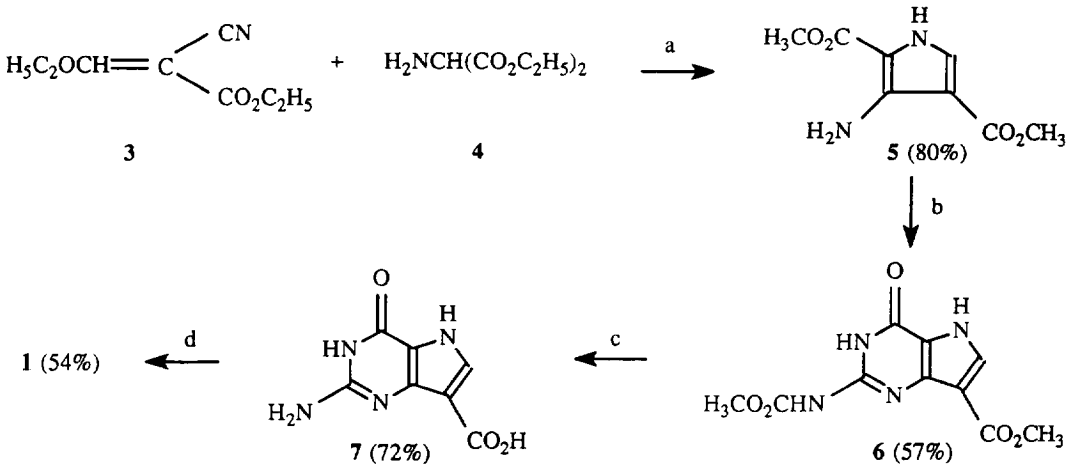
There have been three previously reported syntheses of **1**. The method of Imai[2] requires 10 steps and proceeds in an overall yield of less than 1%; the procedure reported by Kline[3] was difficult to reproduce in our hands; the recent synthesis described by Taylor[4] (who also could not reproduce Kline's method) requires seven steps from a commercially available starting material, and requires a chromatographic separation of isomers of a protected intermediate. We describe herein our discovery of a novel, economical four-step synthesis of **1** from readily available starting materials.

An approach based on a modification of the Knorr pyrrole synthesis using the commercially available masked aldehyde, ethyl (ethoxymethylene)cyanoacetate **3**, and diethyl aminomalonate **4** reacted at reflux with sodium methoxide in methanol for three hours gave an 80% yield of **5** as pale-yellow prisms (mp 172 - 174 °C, toluene). Enamine formation of **3** with **4**, ring formation, ester hydrolysis, decarboxylation, and ester transfer from ethyl to methyl all occur in one pot.

In order to convert the amino substituent in **5** to a guanidino substituent for cyclization to give the pyrrolo[3,2-*d*]pyrimidin-4-one ring system, **5** was reacted with the readily available 1,3-bis(methoxycarbonyl)-S-methylisothiourea[5] in acetic acid at 100 °C overnight. Under the reaction conditions, the protected guanidino intermediate cyclized to give **6** (white powder, mp > 300 °C) directly in 57% yield. This reaction sequence is reminiscent of a method published by Kim[6] to convert unreactive amines to guanidino derivatives. Hydrolysis of **6** with 10% sodium methoxide in methanol gave a 72% yield of **7** isolated as the hydrochloride (pale-brown solid, mp > 300 °C). Acid **7** was decarboxylated in polyphosphoric acid (PPA) at 180 °C for 2 h. Target **1** was



3 4

Reagents: a) 1. sodium methoxide, reflux, 3 h; 2. H_2O, AcOH; b) 1,3-bis(methoxycarbonyl)-S-methylisothiourea, AcOH, 100 °C, 14 h; c) 1. 10% sodium methoxide, 70 °C, 14 h; 2. AcOH; 3. 6 N HCl; d) 1. PPA, 180 °C, 2 h; 2. NH_4OH; 3. HCl.

obtained as tan needles (hydrochloride, mp > 300 °C) in 54% yield; the ^{1}H-NMR, mass spectrum, IR, UV and TLC (silica gel; 15% methanol in chloroform) were identical to an authentic sample of **1**[3].

In summary, a facile, four-step synthesis (overall isolated yield = 18%) of 9-deazaguanine **1** from economical and commercially available starting materials has been developed. Future reports will describe the conversions of intermediate **7** and target **1** to potent inhibitors of purine nucleoside phosphorylase.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: The authors would like to thank Dr. R. S. Klein for supplying an authentic sample of 9-deazaguanine, Dr. P. E. Morris for suggesting the use of PPA for the decarboxylation reaction and for other helpful discussions, and K. Caddis, C. Frank and C. Knight for obtaining the IR, UV and mass spectra.

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(*Received in USA* 21 *February* 1996; *revised* 9 *April* 1996; *accepted* 25 *April* 1996)