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Stereoselective synthesis of simplactone B via Prins cyclisation

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Abstract—The synthesis of simplactone B has been achieved through a series of nine steps in 85% overall yield using Prins cyclisation as the key step with high stereochemical control.

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1. Introduction

δ-Lactones are of great importance as structural components of a large number of organic natural products and as intermediates in the synthesis of several drugs and natural products. They represent important structural moieties in a large number of bioactive natural products such as mevinolin, compactin, pironetin, phomalactone^{1a} and asperlin,^{1b} massoialactone,^{1c} (3*R*,4*S*,5*S*,9*S*)-3,5,9-trihydroxy-4-methylundecanoic acid δ-lactone,^{1d} tetrahydro 6-(1-hydroxyundecyl)-2*H*-pyran-2-one^{1e} (Fig. 1) and as inhibitors of cholesterol biosynthesis.^{1f} Hence, the synthesis of δ-lactones^{2–4} is receiving increasing attention.

The δ -lactones, simplactones A **1** and B **2** possessing interesting cytotoxic activities were isolated from the Caribbean sponge, *Plakortis simplex*; their structures were proposed based on spectroscopic analyses and assigned as 4R,5S-5ethyl-4-hydroxytetrahydropyran-2-one for the former (**1**) and as 4R,5R-5-ethyl-4-hydroxytetrahydropyran-2-one for the latter (**2**)⁵ (Fig. 1).

Although a number of synthetic procedures for the construction of δ -lactones have been reported,⁶ there is an increasing demand for new convenient methods. We report here a new synthetic route to simplactone B **2** utilising the highly stereoselective Prins cyclisation and PCC mediated over oxidation from (*R*)-benzyl glycidyl ether **3**.

2. Results and discussion

Our synthetic approach is described in Scheme 1. Ring opening of epoxide in (*R*)-benzyl glycidyl ether **3** (obtained via Jacobsen's HKR methodology),⁷ which on treatment with butynyl lithium in the presence of $BF_3 \cdot OEt_2$, produced homopropargyl alcohol **4** in 90% yield.

Subjection of 4 to Birch reduction (Na in liq NH₃ at -33 °C) for 6 h resulted in diol 5 in 85% yield, which on selective protection of 1° hydroxy group as its benzyl ether in the presence of BnBr (1.1 equiv) and NaH in DMF produced key intermediate 6 in 70% yield with recovery of 18% of the starting material. Protection of the alcohol 6 as its MEM ether by treatment of the compound with MEMCl and DIPEA gave 7 in 99% yield. Compound 7 underwent crucial Prins cyclisation in the presence of TFA⁸ to produce alcohol 8 in 59% yield. This Prins cyclisation step proceeds through the formation of oxocarbenium ion generated in situ from the MEM ether 7, which undergoes intramolecular cyclisation in the presence of TFA giving rise to pyranyl trifluoroacetate, which upon hydrolysis with K₂CO₃ in MeOH⁸ and flash chromatography results in 8 as the only product. The stereochemistry of 8 was assumed on the basis of extensive previous studies^{8b} and also through further transformation to the known natural product B 2. Protection of 8 as MOM ether 9 by treatment with MOMCl and DIPEA followed by deprotection of benzylic ether linkage using Na in liquid ammonia yielded tetrahydropyran 10 in 99% yield. Oxidation of 10 using excess of PCC in refluxing conditions⁹ in benzene resulted in the lactone 11 in 83% (the only isolable isomer from column chromatography). This oxidation is presumed to proceed as shown in Scheme 2. Deprotection of MOM group of 11 using TFA in DCM furnished the target product simplactone B 2 in 85% yield. The spectroscopic (¹H NMR, ¹³C NMR, IR, mass) and physical data of the simplactone B 2 were in good agreement with the reported data.⁶

3. Conclusion

In summary, we have achieved the stereoselective synthesis of simplactone B via Prins cyclisation as the key step, through a series of nine steps in 85% overall yield. This

Keywords: Prins cyclisation; δ-Lactones; Simplactone B; PCC.

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Figure 1.



Scheme 1. Reagents, conditions and yields: (i) *n*-butyne, BuLi, BF₃·OEt₂, THF, -78 °C, 2 h, 90%; (ii) Na, liq NH₃, THF, 6 h, 85%; (iii) BnBr, NaH, DMF, 0 °C–rt, 6 h, 70%; (iv) (^{*i*}Pr)₂ NEt, MEMCl, DMAP, DCM, 0 °C–rt, 20 h, 99%; (v) TFA, DCM, rt, 5–6 h, then K₂CO₃, MeOH, rt, 1 h, 59%; (vi) (^{*i*}Pr)₂ NEt, MOMCl, DMAP, DCM, 0 °C–rt, 15 h, 99%; (vii) Li, liq NH₃, 5 min, 99%; (viii) PCC, benzene, reflux, 6 h, 83%; (ix) TFA, DCM, rt, 2 h, 85%.



Scheme 2.

synthesis is a propagating proof for the utilisation of Prins cyclisation in the natural product synthesis.

4. Experimental

4.1. General

Commercial reagents were used without further purification. All solvents were purified by standard techniques. Infrared (IR) spectra were recorded on a Perkin–Elmer 683 spectrometer. Optical rotations were obtained on a Jasco Dip 360 digital polarimeter. Melting points are uncorrected. NMR spectra were recorded in CDCl₃ on Varian Gemini 200, Bruker 300 or Varian Unity 400 NMR spectrometer. Chemical shifts (δ) are quoted in parts per million and are referenced to tetramethylsilane (TMS) as internal standard. Coupling constants (*J*) are quoted in hertz. Column chromatographic separations were carried out on silica gel (60–120 mesh). Mass spectra were obtained on Finnegan MAT

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1020B or micromass VG 70-70H spectrometer operating at 70 eV using a direct inlet system.

4.2. (R)-1-(Benzyloxy)-4-heptyn-2-ol (4)

Under nitrogen atmosphere, a solution of *n*-butyl lithium in hexane (71 mL, 115.2 mmol, 2.6 M solution in hexane) was added to a solution of butyne (8.2 g, 153.6 mmol) in THF (110 mL) at -78 °C and the mixture was stirred for 15 min. Then, $BF_3 \cdot OEt_2$ (14.0 g, 99.8 mmol) was added to the solution and stirring was continued for 15 min at -78 °C. Finally a solution of epoxide 3 (12.6 g, 76.8 mmol) in dry THF (40 mL) was added and after stirring the reaction mixture for 2 h at -78 °C, the reaction was quenched by adding saturated aqueous NH₄Cl solution (70 mL). The reaction mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate (2×150 mL) and dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄. Evaporation of the solvent resulted in crude alcohol, which was purified by column chromatography (SiO₂, 15% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) to afford pure alcohol 4 (15.0 g, 90%) as a colourless oil, $R_f = 0.45$.

[α]²⁵_D -10.8 (*c* 0.51, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 3447.1, 2920.8, 2856.7, 1635.0, 1113.0 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 7.34–7.25 (m, 5H), 4.55 (s, 2H), 3.91–3.81 (m, 1H), 3.55 (dd, 1H, *J*=9.8, 4.5 Hz), 3.44 (dd, 1H, *J*=9.8, 6.7 Hz), 2.39–2.35 (m, 2H), 2.18–2.07 (m, 2H), 1.10 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 137.9, 128.4, 127.7, 127.6, 77.1, 74.7, 73.3, 72.9, 69.1, 23.8, 14.1, 12.3; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 241 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₄H₁₈O₂Na [M+Na]⁺: 241.1204, found: 241.1197.

4.3. (2*R*,4*E*)-4-Heptene-1,2-diol (5)

To a blue solution of sodium metal (6.5 g, 282.7 mmol) in 200 mL of NH₃ was added dropwise a solution of **4** (7.6 g, 34.9 mmol) in THF (40 mL) at -78 °C. During the addition of the compound, the blue colour of the reaction mixture was maintained by the addition of sodium metal. After addition of the whole compound, the reaction mixture was stirred for 6 h at -33 °C. The reaction mixture was quenched with NH₄Cl (6.5 g) and the ammonia was left to completely evaporate. The mixture was then diluted with water (4×30 mL) and extracted with diethyl ether (250 mL). Organic layer was dried (Na₂SO₄) and concentrated. Column chromatography (SiO₂, 40% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) of the crude product gave the compound **5** (3.85 g, 85%) as a viscous liquid, R_f =0.3.

[α]_D²⁵ +2.83 (*c* 0.53, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 3421.2, 2926.0, 1644.5, 1074.2 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 5.60–5.49 (m, 1H), 5.44–5.29 (m, 1H), 3.72–3.58 (m, 2H), 3.39 (dd, 1H, *J*=6.8, 11.3 Hz), 2.82 (br s, 1H, OH), 2.19– 2.12 (m, 2H), 2.08–1.98 (m, 2H), 0.99 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 135.8, 124.0, 71.7, 66.1, 36.5, 25.5, 13.6; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 153 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₇H₁₄O₂Na [M+Na]⁺: 153.0891, found: 153.0899.

4.4. (2*R*,4*E*)-1-(Benzyloxy)-4-hepten-2-ol (6)

To a suspension of NaH (4.2 g, 105.0 mmol) in dry DMF (30 mL) at $0 \degree C$ was added diol 5 (3.9 g, 30.0 mmol) in

DMF (15 mL) in a dropwise manner. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min and again the mixture was cooled to 0 °C. After addition of BnBr (3.9 mL, 33.0 mmol), the reaction was brought to room temperature and stirred for 6 h, cooled to 0 °C and quenched with saturated NH₄Cl solution (70 mL) carefully. Then EtOAc (150 mL) was added, organic layer was separated, washed with H₂O (3×30 mL) and brine solution (30 mL) and dried in vacuo. Column chromatography (SiO₂, 15% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) of the crude product afforded **6** (4.62 g, 70%) along with 18% recovered starting material **5**. Compound **6** was a colourless oil, R_f =0.7.

[α]²⁵₂ +6.86 (*c* 0.51, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 3445.8, 2924.5, 2860.7, 1454.1, 1102.0 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 7.34–7.25 (m, 5H), 5.58–5.45 (m, 1H), 5.43–5.29 (m, 1H), 4.53 (s, 2H), 3.84–3.68 (m, 1H), 3.44 (dd, 1H, *J*=10.5, 5.3 Hz), 3.31 (dd, 1H, *J*=10.5, 5.7 Hz), 2.18–2.13 (m, 2H), 2.06–1.97 (m, 2H), 0.97 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 138.0, 135.6, 128.4, 127.7, 127.5, 124.2, 73.9, 73.3, 70.1, 36.7, 25.6, 13.7; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 253 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₄H₂₀O₂Na [M+Na]⁺: 243.1360, found: 243.1368.

4.5. 1-[((2*R*,4*E*)-2-((2-Methoxyethoxy)methoxy)hept-4-enyloxy)methyl]benzene (7)

To the alcohol **6** (1.76 g, 8.0 mmol) in anhydrous CH_2Cl_2 (20 mL) at 0 °C were added diisopropylethyl amine (6.9 mL, 40 mmol), DMAP (99 mg) and MEMCl (2.73 mL, 24 mmol) successively and the mixture was stirred for 20 h at room temperature and then quenched by adding water (20 mL) and extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (2×25 mL). The organic extracts were washed with brine (10 mL), dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and concentrated under reduced pressure to remove the solvent and the crude oil was purified by column chromatography (SiO₂, 10% EtOAc in hexane eluent) to afford the pure product **7** (2.44 mg, 99%) as a colourless liquid, R_f =0.6.

[α]²⁵₂ +1.88 (*c* 0.79, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 2926.0, 2878.2, 1454.2, 1112.6, 1041.7 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 7.33–7.26 (m, 5H), 5.55–5.42 (m, 1H), 5.39– 5.28 (m, 1H), 4.76 (d, 1H, *J*=7.5 Hz), 4.72 (d, 1H, *J*=7.5 Hz), 4.50 (s, 2H), 3.83–3.73 (m, 1H), 3.70–3.60 (m, 2H), 3.49–3.43 (m, 4H), 3.34 (s, 3H), 2.31–2.11 (m, 2H), 2.06–1.94 (m, 2H), 0.95 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 138.3, 134.9, 128.3, 127.8, 127.5, 124.4, 94.8, 75.8, 73.2, 71.7, 69.3, 66.9, 58.9, 35.0, 25.5, 13.6; MS (ESIMS): *m*/*z* 331 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₈H₂₈O₄Na [M+Na]⁺: 331.1885, found: 331.1897.

4.6. (2*R*,4*R*,5*R*)-2-[(Benzyloxy)methyl]-5-ethyltetrahydro-2*H*-4-pyranol (8)

Trifluoroacetic acid (6.93 mL, 90.0 mmol) was added slowly to a solution of compound 7 (1.85 g, 6.0 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (40 mL) at room temperature under nitrogen atmosphere. The reaction mixture was stirred for 5–6 h, and then saturated aqueous sodium hydrogen carbonate solution (60 mL) was added and pH was adjusted to >7 by addition of triethylamine. The layers were separated, the aqueous layer was extracted with CH_2Cl_2 (4×30 mL), the organic layers were combined, washed with brine (10 mL) and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was dissolved in methanol (20 mL) and stirred with potassium carbonate (1.65 g) for 0.5 h. Methanol was then removed under reduced pressure and water (15 mL) was added. The mixture was extracted with dichloromethane (3×20 mL), washed with brine (6 mL) and the combined organic layers were dried (Na₂SO₄) and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. Column chromatography (SiO₂, 25% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) of the crude afforded **8** (0.89 g, 59%) as a colourless oil, *R_f*=0.35.

[α] $_{D}^{25}$ +8.33 (*c* 0.54, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 3442.0, 2923.4, 2856.9, 1455.2, 1373.1, 1102.7, 1065.7 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 7.31–7.25 (m, 5H), 4.53 (s, 2H), 3.99 (dd, 1H, *J*=4.5, 11.3 Hz), 3.55–3.31 (m, 4H), 3.01 (t, 1H, *J*=11.3 Hz), 1.92 (ddd, 1H, *J*=1.5, 6.0, 12.1 Hz), 1.85–1.71 (m, 1H), 1.46–1.23 (m, 3H, including OH), 1.15–0.98 (m, 1H), 0.94 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 138.1, 128.2, 127.6, 127.4, 75.7, 73.3, 72.9, 72.0, 69.9, 45.7, 37.9, 20.9, 11.4; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 273 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₅H₂₂O₃Na [M+Na]⁺: 273.1466, found: 273.1472.

4.7. (2*R*,4*R*,5*R*)-2-[(Benzyloxy)methyl]-5-ethyltetrahydro-4-(methoxymethoxy)-2*H*-pyran (9)

To the alcohol **8** (500 mg, 2.0 mmol) in anhydrous CH₂Cl₂ (10 mL) at 0 °C were added diisopropylethyl amine (1.38 mL, 8.0 mmol), DMAP (20 mg) and MOMCI (0.75 mL, 6.0 mmol) successively and the mixture was stirred for 15 h at room temperature and then quenched by adding water (6 mL) and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (2×15 mL). The organic extracts were washed with brine (4 mL), dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and concentrated under reduced pressure to remove the solvent and the crude was purified by column chromatography (SiO₂, 10% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) to afford the pure product **9** (582 mg, 99%) as a colourless liquid, R_f =0.6.

[α]²⁵₂ -36.58 (*c* 0.51, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 2924.7, 2855.9, 1458.0, 1373.5, 1103.3, 1039.4 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 7.34–7.22 (m, 5H), 4.70 (d, 1H, *J*=7.0 Hz), 4.55 (s, 2H), 4.53 (d, 1H, *J*=7.0 Hz), 4.01 (dd, 1H, *J*=4.7, 11.7 Hz), 3.54–3.25 (m, 7H, including s for OMe), 3.04 (t, 1H, *J*=11.4 Hz), 2.04–1.98 (m, 1H), 1.86–1.68 (m, 1H), 1.60–1.39 (m, 1H), 1.36–1.25 (m, 1H), 1.14–0.95 (1H), 0.90 (t, 3H, *J*=7.4 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 138.1, 128.3, 127.7, 127.6, 95.1, 75.6, 73.4, 73.2, 70.4, 63.1, 55.5, 32.8, 31.9, 22.6, 14.0; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 317 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₇H₂₆O₄Na [M+Na]⁺: 317.1728, found: 317.1723.

4.8. [(2*R*,4*R*,5*R*)-5-Ethyltetrahydro-4-(methoxy-methoxy)-2*H*-2-pyranyl]methanol (10)

To a solution of lithium (52.5 mg, 7.5 mmol) in liq NH₃ (10 mL) was added compound **9** (440 mg, 1.5 mmol) in dry THF (3 mL). The mixture was stirred for 5 min and quenched with solid NH₄Cl (406 mg). Ammonia was allowed to evaporate and the residual mixture was taken in diethyl ether (20 mL) and washed with water (2×4 mL), brine (1×4 mL) and dried (Na₂SO₄). Removal of the solvent and

purification by column chromatography (SiO₂, 30% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) of the crude product afforded alcohol **10** (303 mg, 99%) as a colourless liquid, R_f =0.25.

[α] $_{25}^{25}$ -50.52 (*c* 0.48, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 3448.4, 2926.3, 1038.0 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): 4.70 (d, 1H, *J*=7.0 Hz), 4.53 (d, 1H, *J*=7.0 Hz), 4.01 (dd, 1H, *J*=4.7, 11.5 Hz), 3.61–3.28 (m, 7H, including s for OMe), 3.07 (t, 1H, *J*=11.4 Hz), 1.94 (ddd, 1H, *J*=1.9, 6.6, 12.4 Hz), 1.85–1.72 (m, 1H), 1.58–1.43 (m, 1H), 1.39–1.24 (m, 1H), 1.14–0.97 (m, 1H), 0.91 (t, 3H, *J*=7.4 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 50 MHz): δ 95.2, 77.4, 76.7, 70.2, 65.9, 55.5, 43.8, 33.9, 20.8, 11.1; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 227 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₁₀H₂₀O₄Na [M+Na]⁺: 227.1259, found: 227.1251.

4.9. (4*R*,5*R*)-5-Ethyltetrahydro-4-(methoxymethoxy)-2*H*-2-pyranone (11)

Powdered molecular sieves (3 Å, 600 mg) were heated under N₂ at 320 °C with a Bunsen burner for 1 h. It was allowed to come to room temperature and pyridinium chlorochromate (1.39 g, 7.0 mmol) and dry benzene (10 mL) were added. To this mixture was added a solution of **10** (285 mg, 1.4 mmol) in benzene (4 mL) and stirred under reflux for 6 h. Then, it was cooled to room temperature, diethyl ether (20 mL) was added and the reaction mixture was filtered through a short pad of Celite and silica gel (1:1). The filter cake was washed thoroughly with ether (2×8 mL) and the filtrate was concentrated under vacuo. The residue after flash chromatography (SiO₂, 20% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) afforded the lactone **11** (218 mg, 83%) as a colourless liquid, R_f =0.4.

[α]²⁵_D -18.6 (*c* 0.1, CHCl₃); IR (Neat): 2966.0, 2929.0, 1743.0, 1244.0, 1038.0 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 4.65 (d, 1H, *J*=7.1 Hz), 4.63 (d, 1H, *J*=7.1 Hz), 4.45 (dd, 1H, *J*=11.4, 4.3 Hz), 3.96 (dd, 1H, *J*=11.4, 7.2 Hz), 3.84– 3.76 (m, 1H), 3.36 (s, 3H), 2.77 (dd, 1H, *J*=5.2, 17.2 Hz), 2.6 (dd, 1H, *J*=5.1, 17.2 Hz), 1.91–1.79 (m, 1H), 1.66– 1.51 (m, 1H), 1.45–1.25 (m, 1H), 1.02 (t, 3H, *J*=7.5 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 170.7, 95.6, 73.5, 69.2, 55.9, 40.7, 35.6, 21.9, 11.5; MS (ESIMS): *m/z* 211 [M+Na]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₉H₁₆O₄Na [M+Na]⁺: 211.0946, found: 211.0954.

4.10. (*4R*,5*R*)-5-Ethyltetrahydro-4-hydroxy-2*H*-2-pyranone (2)

Compound **11** (113 mg, 0.6 mmol) was dissolved in CH₂Cl₂ (2 mL) and then TFA (0.185 mL, 4 mmol) was added dropwise at room temperature. After stirring the mixture at room temperature for 2 h, the reaction mixture was quenched with saturated NaHCO₃ solution (6 mL) and extracted with CH₂Cl₂ (2×6 mL). The combined organic extracts were washed with brine (6 mL), concentrated in vacuo and the residue was subjected to column chromatography (SiO₂, 40% EtOAc in hexane as eluent) to afford the alcohol **2** (73 mg, 85% yield) as a semisolid, R_f =0.3.

 $[\alpha]_D^{25}$ -23.0 (*c* 0.45, CHCl₃) (lit.^{6b} $[\alpha]_D^{25}$ -23.1 (*c* 1.0, CHCl₃)); IR (Neat): 3474.9, 2968.9, 2924.7, 1717.9,1273.9, 1004.0 cm⁻¹; ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 300 MHz): δ 4.45 (dd, 1H, *J*=4.5, 11.9 Hz), 4.01–3.88 (m, 2H), 2.82

(dd, 1H, J=5.2, 17.1 Hz), 2.53 (dd, 1H, J=5.9, 17.1 Hz), 2.29 (br s, OH), 1.86–1.52 (m, 2H), 1.46–1.25 (m, 1H), 1.02 (t, 3H, J=8.2 Hz); ¹³C NMR (CDCl₃, 75 MHz): δ 170.7, 69.8, 67.1, 43.2, 39.2, 19.9, 11.5; MS (ESIMS): m/z 145 [M+H]⁺; HRMS (ESI) calcd for C₇H₁₃O₃ [M+H]⁺: 145.0864, found: 145.0860.

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