Total Synthesis of (−)-Fusarisetin A and Reassignment of the Absolute Configuration of Its Natural Counterpart

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Supporting Information

ABSTRACT: The first total synthesis of (−)-fusarisetin A, the enantiomer of naturally occurring acinar morphogenesis inhibitor (+)-fusarisetin A, was accomplished in 13 steps, leading to the reassignment of the absolute configuration of the natural product. The synthesis featured a Lewis acid-promoted intramolecular Diels−Alder reaction, a Pd-catalyzed O−C allylic rearrangement, a chemoselective Wacker oxidation, and a Dieckmann condensation/hemiketalization cascade.

Natural products serve as an abundant source in the search for anticancer agents due to unparalleled structural diversity and accompanying molecular modes of action.1 Recently, small molecules that inhibit cancer cell metastasis have received increasing interest in related drug discovery process,2 because such action may complement that of existing anticancer drugs such as the tubulin stabilizers/distabilizers and topoisomerase inhibitors. In May 2011, Ahn et al. reported the isolation of a biologically intriguing natural product, fusarisetin A (1, Figure 1), from a soil fungus, Fusarium sp. FN080326, which displays significant inhibition of acinar morphogenesis as well as cell migration and invasion without apparent cytotoxicity.3 The mechanism of action remains to be elucidated. The molecular structure of 1 was determined by employing X-ray crystallographic analysis (relative stereochemistry) and the exciton chirality circular dichroism method (absolute configuration).4 From a structural perspective, 1 exhibits a 6,6,5,5,5-fused pentacyclic ring system (Figure 1) bearing 10 stereogenic centers. Of particular interest is the intricate 5,5,5-angular tricycle motif, reminiscent of the molecular scaffolds of certain other natural products, such as chaetochalasin A4a phomopsichalasin,4b and diaporthichalasin4c (2−4, Figure 1). The interesting chemical structure as well as biological activity of fusarisetin A made it an attractive target for total synthesis. Herein, we report the first total synthesis of the proposed structure of this molecule.

From a strategic point of view, a successful synthesis of the 6,6,5,5,5-fused (n = 5 or 6) pentacyclic system shown in Figure 1 must solve the following problems: (1) construction of a decalin building block for the left-hand side of the molecule; (2) assembly of the S,S-spirobicyclic structure, especially introduction of the quaternary stereogenic center on the angular position of the S,n,S-fused tricyclic moiety; and (3) formation of the right-hand side n-membered ring (n = 5 or 6). Problem 2, the most severe synthetic challenge posed by the whole class of structurally related natural products, might ideally be solved together with problem 3 in one step or pot. Based on this general guideline, a retrosynthetic analysis of 1 was undertaken, as shown in Figure 2. We considered the initial disassembly of the 5-membered lactol and its neighboring spirobicycle through a retro hemiketalization/Dieckmann condensation sequence, to render tricyclic intermediate 5. The next obvious disconnection at the amide bond of 5, followed by dehydration of its secondary hydroxyl functionality, resulted in simplified tricyclic compound 6, which could be further disconnected to a trans-decalin derivative 7 by cleavage of its allylic C−C bond. Thus, an intramolecular S,S′- or a transition-metal-catalyzed allylation reaction was expected to give 6 in the forward direction. Compound 7 was envisioned to derive from a linear precursor such as 8 through a diastereoselective intramolecular Diels−Alder (D-A) reaction. The desired D-A substrate could be assembled from known aldehyde 9 and phosphonates 10 and 11 through double Horner−Wadsworth−Emmons (H-W-E) olefinations.

Based on the above analysis, we first investigated the preparation of trans-decalin 7 employing an intramolecular D-A reaction as the key transformation,5−7 as shown in Scheme 1.
Starting with aldehyde 9, which is readily prepared from (−)-citronellal or (−)-citronellol, we carried out H-W-E reaction with lithiated phosphonate 10.9 Reduction with DIBAL-H and acetylation of the resulting primary alcohol led to triene 12 with good overall efficiency (67%, 3 steps). Desilylation of 12 with HF-py and subsequent oxidation with Dess−Martin periodinane (79%, 2 steps) set the stage for a second H-W-E olefination. Aldehyde 13 was readily converted to ketoaldehyde 8 as a single E isomer in 66% yield by treatment with phosphonate 11 and KHMDS. With 8 in hand, we examined a variety of conditions for the intramolecular D-A reaction. To our delight, BF₃·OEt₂ was found to be an efficient promoter for this transformation, and trans-decalin 7 was obtained as a single isolable diastereomer in 63% yield.10 The structure of 7 was confirmed by X-ray crystallographic analysis of a later intermediate (vide infra). As we expected, a similar D-A reaction employing the methyl ester counterpart of 8 as substrate also proceeded smoothly to give the corresponding desired product, although the preparation of the methyl ester substrate from the corresponding phosphonate (counterpart of 11) and aldehyde 13 was much less effective. Interestingly, analogous D-A precursors with monocarbonyl dienophile (aldehyde and ester) led to a mixture of diastereomers, the major components of which were two endo cycloadducts, under thermal or Lewis acidic (only effective for aldehyde substrate) conditions. The diastereocchemical output of the above D-A processes indicated an unusual mode of interaction between the dicarbonyl substrate and commonly monocoordinate Lewis acid BF₃, which remains interesting for further investigations.11

With 7 in hand, we turned our attention to the synthesis of a 6,6,5-fused tricyclic intermediate such as 6 (Figure 2), according to our retrosynthetic analysis. The allylic hydroxyl functionality of 7 was released by treatment with K₂CO₃ in MeOH to afford alcohol 14, which was subsequently activated under mesylation conditions. However, without observation of the corresponding mesylate, O-allylation compound 15 was immediately generated in 93% yield, as shown in Scheme 2. In an alternative attempt, the re-acetylated product from 14 was subjected to standard Pd-catalyzed allylic substitution conditions [Pd(PPh₃)₄, LiOAc] but also rapidly converted into the hydrofuran 15. Interestingly, under very mild transesterification conditions [Ag(TFA), Et₃N, MeOH, or trifluoroethanol] cyclicization product 15 or 16 was readily formed from 7 in one pot in high yield. The structure of 16 was unambiguously proven by X-ray crystallographic analysis (Figure 3),13 which also confirmed the stereochemistry of D-A product 7. At this point, it became obvious that the O-allylation product was kinetically more favored than the desired C-allylation product in this particular case. Thus, proper conditions to activate the allylic C–O bond are desired, since the spontaneous and irreversible reconstruction of an allylic C–C bond would drive the “equilibrium” to the C-allylation side.14 Considering that the basicity and leaving ability of β-ketoester enolate are similar to those of phenoxide, we rationalized that a transition metal complex that promotes the substitution of a phenyl allyl ether would fit the requirement. Much to our delight, treatment of 15 or 16 with Pd(OAc)₂ and electron-rich ligand PBU₃ cleanly rendered the expected C-allylation product 17 or 18, respectively, in satisfactory yield. The vinyl group of these compounds was postulated to repose in the desired orientation based on the diastereoselectivity of the O-allylation reaction.
confirmed at a later stage by X-ray crystallographic analysis (vide infra).

Having successfully assembled the left half of 1, we entered the last stage of our total synthesis journey: construction of the spirobicyclic moiety and the 5-membered lactol, as shown in Scheme 3. The amino acid side chain was introduced by aminolysis of trifluoroethyl ester 18 with methyl amine 19 derived from D-serine at elevated temperature, furnishing 20 in 72% yield. The next challenge would be the chemo- and regioselective Markovnikov hydration of the terminal \( \text{C} \equiv \text{C} \) bond of 20. However, oxymercuration of 20 with a variety of Hg(II) species proved to be fruitless, while electrophilic activators such as cationic halogen and selenium reagents preferentially reacted with the more electron-rich and distorted endocyclic \( \text{C} \equiv \text{C} \) bond. Although a similar example of selective dihydroxylation of the terminal \( \text{C} \equiv \text{C} \) bond in the presence of endocyclic competitor using Sharpless AD-mix-\( \beta \) was reported,\(^{17}\) 20 decomposed into an intractable mixture under such conditions. Despite the failure of this attempt, we were inspired that transition-metal-mediated reactions, which are often more sensitive to steric rather than electronic effects, may offer the solution to this selectivity problem. To our delight, Wacker oxidation of 20 furnished the desired ketone 21 in good yield while sparing the endocyclic \( \text{C} \equiv \text{C} \) bond. Unfortunately, the next move toward alcohol 5 through chemo- and diastereoselective reduction also proved to be problematic. Treatment of 21 with sterically hindered hydride sources such as L-Selectride, Red-Al, and LiAlH(O\( \text{t}-\text{Bu} \))\(_3\) resulted in diol 22, the undesired diastereomer of 5, as the major product. 22 was further subjected to Dieckmann condensation conditions (NaOMe/MeOH) to render the 5-epimer of fusarisetin A (23) with good overall efficiency from 21. The structure of 23 was unambiguously determined by X-ray crystallographic analysis (Figure 3),\(^{13}\) which also confirmed the vinyl group direction of 18. Commonly used asymmetric ketone reduction methods also proved to be unsuccessful: Corey–Bakshi–Shibata reduction conditions\(^{18}\) led to complete
decomposition of the substrate, while Noyori reduction\textsuperscript{19} gave a ca. 1:1 mixture of 5 and 22 in poor yield. Finally, we were pleased to find Luche reduction as a suitable mean for the selective reduction, affording a ca. 5:1 mixture of 5 and 22. This mixture underwent Dieckmann condensation in the presence of NaOMe in MeOH, followed by a spontaneous hemiketalization, furnishing a synthetic sample of the proposed structure of fusarisetin A (1) in 41% yield over 2 steps, together with a small portion of its 5-epimer (23). The physical properties of synthetic 1 matched those reported for the natural material,\textsuperscript{9} except for the sign of its optical rotation \{synthetic: $[\alpha]_D^{23} = -88.0$ (c = 0.15 in MeOH); natural: $[\alpha]_D^{25} = +84.6$ (c = 0.2 in MeOH)\}. Thus, the absolute configuration of naturally occurring 1 was reassigned as that of 24 based on our total synthesis.

In conclusion, we developed an efficient synthetic strategy for the total synthesis of the enantiomer of fusarisetin A, a newly discovered acinar morphogenesis inhibitor possessing an intricate structure, and reassigned the absolute configuration of the natural product through our synthesis. The synthesis featured an intramolecular Diels–Alder reaction, a Pd-mediated O→C allylic rearrangement, a chemoselective Wacker oxidation, and a Dieckmann condensation/hemiketalization cascade. The reported synthetic strategy and methods are expected to be applicable to the construction of other structurally or biosynthetically related natural products, as well as designed analogues of fusarisetin A, and thus to facilitate the exploration of its mechanism of action on a molecular level.

**ASSOCIATED CONTENT**

Supporting Information

Experimental procedures and compound characterization. This material is available free of charge via the Internet at http://pubs.acs.org.

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**REFERENCES**

13. CCDC-854787 and CCDC-854788 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for 16 and 23, respectively, and are available free of charge from The Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre via www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/data_request/cif.