STEREOSELECTIVE SYNTHESIS OF MEDICINALLY-RELEVANT DIHYDROISOQUINOLINONES

Mostafa M. Amer, Daniel J. Leonard, John W. Ward and Jonathan Clayden*

School of Chemistry, University of Bristol, Cantock's Close, Bristol BS8 1TS, UK

The dihydroisoquinoline ring system is found in some key biologically active compounds, not least among them the Amaryllidaceae alkaloids such as narciclasine and pancratistatin [1].

Part 1: Imidazolidinone derivatives of a range of aromatic α-amino acids [2], on treatment with phosgene and potassium iodide, undergo a mild Bischler-Napieralski-style cyclocarbonylation reaction that generates a tricyclic lactam by insertion of a C=O group between the amino acid nitrogen and the ortho position of the aryl substituent [3]. Regio- and diastereoselective functionalization of the lactam generates a library of substituted dihydroisoquinolinones and their congeners in enantioenriched form (Scheme 1).

Part 2: Remarkably, the enolate of the imidazolidinone 1 can be generated in the presence of the reactive, electrophilic chloroformyl group (Scheme 2) [4]. The enolate functions as a formal 1,3-dipole: alkylation of the nucleophilic enolate with benzylic electrophiles, followed by electrophilic cyclization of the N-chloroformylimidazolidinone 2 provides a dihydroisoquinolone in a formal [3+3] annulation. Introducing the nucleophilic aromatic component of the cyclization after formation of the N-chloroformyl imidazolidinone enables the synthesis of a much wider range of cyclized products, leading to dihydroisoquinolones bearing a variety of functionality on the aryl ring.

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