

**α -Diaminobutyric Acid-Linked Hairpin Polyamide-Alkylator
Conjugates**

Thesis by

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In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

California Institute of Technology

Pasadena, California

2008

(Defended September 14, 2007)

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...for my parents...

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank my research adviser, Peter Dervan, for providing me with the opportunity to work in his lab and for teaching me so much about science and research. I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Professors Dennis Dougherty, Doug Rees, William Goddard, and Linda Hsieh-Wilson, as well as our collaborators at Scripps — Professor Joel Gottesfeld and James Chou.

I thank the Dervan lab members, past and present, for all of their help and support, lab-related and otherwise: Adam Poulin-Kerstien, Ray Doss, Ryan Stafford, Dave Chenoweth, Katy Muzikar, Claire Jacobs, Carey Hsu, Jim Puckett, Christian Dose, Jim Sanchez, Justin Cohen, Steve Fiacco, Eric Fechter, Julie Poposki, Mareike Goeritz, John Phillips, Nick Nickols, Dan Harki, Rachel Wang, Mike Brochu, Anne Viger, Britton Boras, John Sadowski, Bogdan Olenyuk, and Tim Best. I especially thank Ben Edelson, for all of his time and patience with me when I first joined the lab, and Michelle Farkas, who I was very lucky to have been paired with. Being a member of Team Chl has shown me how valuable good teamwork can be in the lab.

The other founding members of the Hsieh-Wilson lab — Nelly Khidekel, Katherine Poulin, Sarah Tully, Nathan Lamarre-Vincent, Ray Doss, Lori Lee, and Cristal Gama — were an ideal group to start grad school with, and Ross Mabon and Sabine Arndt were wonderful first postdocs to work with. In particular, working with Sarah Tully and Ross Mabon made running those late-night 50 g columns just a little bit more bearable. In addition, Scott Ross and Mona Shahgholi have been extremely knowledgeable and helpful.

Even if I had not received a PhD, the friendships I have developed at Caltech outside of lab would have made grad school worthwhile. Matthew Marsden has been the embodiment of patience, support, and caring, and I would not have accomplished this without him. I find Katherine Poulin-Kerstien to be inspiring, and she has graciously taught me a great deal about swimming, softball, and food. I hope she knows how much I treasure our friendship. I will always be grateful to Eddie Branchaud for starting the Caltech Classroom Connection and giving me the opportunity to play such an integral part in its development. In addition, Eddie has been a wonderful friend, late-night conversationalist, and likewise education-minded scientist/engineer.

Some of my best memories of grad school will be of those first few months living at Club 202 with Sarah Miller and Nelly Khidekel and hanging out with Eddie, Brian, Nathan, Ian, and the rest of the gang. I have admired Sarah's loyalty and wonderful way with words, and Nelly has been my "go-to" person for conversations on everything from current events to the latest gossip to the meaning of life. She has been the truest of friends, and I greatly value her friendship.

There are many more friends I have to thank for teaching and supporting me and with whom I have had such great times, and I hope they all know how much they mean to me. In addition, I would like to thank the many members of the Caltech staff with whom I have interacted — they have made grad school easier, especially the staff of the student health center.

Through the years, a number of people and programs — including EMPAC, Perspectives on Science, and two NSF-REU programs — have encouraged and helped me in pursuing chemistry. In particular, my high school chemistry teacher, Ms.

(Cassandra) Whitsett, supplied me with an extremely strong foundation in chemistry and has provided me with years of guidance and good conversation. Her influence has certainly helped to shape the person I am today.

And most importantly, my deepest thanks go to my family. My parents have been unwavering in their love and support. They have done so much more for me than any child could reasonably expect from her parents, and I hope they know how much I love and appreciate them. I have also been extremely lucky to have had my brother and a great deal of my extended family living so close by. I have treasured all of our lunches and get-togethers, and I hope they continue for a very long time.

Abstract

The ability to control gene expression through the use of DNA sequence-specific, cell-permeable molecules holds therapeutic promise. Pyrrole-imidazole polyamides are a class of synthetic ligands that can be programmed to bind a broad repertoire of DNA sequences with affinities and specificities comparable to natural DNA-binding proteins. These ligands are generally linked via a turn moiety, resulting in a ‘hairpin’ structure. Conjugation of polyamides to the non-specific DNA alkylator chlorambucil produces molecules capable of the sequence-specific alkylation of DNA that can arrest gene transcription. We have identified α -diaminobutyric acid (α -DABA) as a new turn moiety that can give polyamide-chlorambucil conjugates distinctive biological properties in cellular and small animal models; this may be due to their increased DNA alkylation specificities relative to the standard γ -DABA-linked conjugates. A general characterization of α -DABA-linked polyamides and their conjugates is reported.

Also described is the development of a modular synthesis of chondroitin sulfate (CS) glycosaminoglycans — a class of linear, sulfated oligosaccharides that play critical roles in neuronal development, cell division, and spinal cord injury. CS structure *in vivo* is complex and heterogeneous, hampering efforts to understand its precise biological roles. Access to CS molecules of precisely defined structures is critical to understanding their structure-function relationships. The reported synthetic route is capable of accessing CS structures of defined lengths and sulfation motifs, providing a new approach to understanding these important molecules.

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