Synthesis and Antifungal Activities of Some 2,6-Bis-(Un)Substituted Phenoxymethylpyridines

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Several 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines were synthesized and evaluated in vitro against Fusarium graminearum, Helminthosporium sorokinianum, Alternaria brassicae, Alternaria alternata, and Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum. Among all derivatives, compound 3a exhibited a broad-spectrum antifungal activity against the five phytopathogenic fungi.

Key words: 2,6-Bis-(Un)Substituted Phenoxymethylpyridines, Antifungal Activity, Phytopathogenic Fungi

Introduction

Recently, many reports have demonstrated that a number of biologically important molecules with pyridine scaffolds exhibit pharmacological activities, such as antimicrobial (De Almeida et al., 2007), antibacterial (Mishra et al., 2008), antiangiogenic (Hayashi et al., 2009), anti-inflammatory and antioxidant activities (Gonzalez et al., 2009). However, to the best of our knowledge, little attention has been paid to the antifungal activities of the simple 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines. As a consequence and in continuation of our program aimed at the discovery and development of bioactive molecules (Xu et al., 2002, 2007, 2009; Xu and Xiao, 2009), here we report the synthesis and antifungal activities of some simple 2,6-bis(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines.

Experimental

Synthesis of the 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines 3a – 3h

Eight simple 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines, 3a – 3h (Fig. 1), were prepared from 2,6-bis(p-tosyloxy)methyl)pyridine (1) (Bradshaw et al., 1990) with the (un)substituted phenols 2a – 2h in the presence of potassium carbonate and dimethylformamide at 80 ºC, as shown in Scheme 1, and characterized by proton nuclear magnetic resonance (1H NMR), electron ionization mass spectrometry (EI-MS), infrared spectrometry (IR), and melting points.

3a: Yield 58%. – White solid. – M.p. 78 – 79 ºC. – IR (KBr): ν = 2917, 2852, 1598, 1579, 1442, 1370, 1235, 1083, 1066 cm⁻¹. – 1H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.74 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (d, J =
8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.32 (m, 2H), 6.99 (m, 8H), 5.22 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 291 (M⁺, 29).

3b: Yield 83%. – Yellow solid. – M.p. 136–139 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2922, 2855, 1594, 1511, 1445, 1338, 1246, 1154, 1038 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.91 (dd, J = 8.0, 2.0 Hz, 2H), 7.84 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.63 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.56 (m, 2H), 7.16 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.09 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 5.33 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 381 (M⁺, 2).

3c: Yield 78%. – Pale yellow solid. – M.p. 163–165 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2910, 2838, 1589, 1510, 1442, 1375, 1251, 1171, 1111, 1054 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 8.24 (m, 4H), 7.81 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.48 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.09 (m, 4H), 5.30 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 381 (M⁺, 5).

3d: Yield 58%. – Pale yellow solid. – M.p. 115–116 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2917, 2852, 1583, 1444, 1364, 1230, 1057 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.75 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.44 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.26 (m, 4H), 6.93 (m, 4H), 5.17 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 359 (M⁺, 23).

3e: Yield 72%. – White solid. – M.p. 104–105 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2896, 2856, 1586, 1442, 1365, 1250, 1071 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.80 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.60 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.39 (dd, J = 7.6, 1.6 Hz, 2H), 7.20 (m, 2H), 6.99 (m, 4H), 5.28 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 359 (M⁺, 20).

3f: Yield 71%. – Yellow solid. – M.p. 49–50 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2922, 2852, 1583, 1447, 1366, 1256, 1158, 1077 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.73 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 7.46 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.17 (t, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 6.80 (m, 6H), 5.20 (s, 4H), 2.33 (s, 6H). – EI-MS: m/z = 319 (M⁺, 34).

3g: Yield 60%. – Yellow solid. – M.p. 176–177 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2921, 2856, 1591, 1504, 1451, 1365, 1252, 1150, 1041 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 9.90 (s, 2H), 7.86 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 7.79 (t, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.48 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.12 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 5.29 (s, 4H). – EI-MS: m/z = 347 (M⁺, 39).

3h: Yield 49%. – White solid. – M.p. 164–168 °C. – IR (KBr): ν = 2954, 2861, 1579, 1450, 1367, 1249, 1185, 1070 cm⁻¹. – ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ = 7.73 (t, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.31 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 6.80 (d, J = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 5.20 (s, 4H), 1.30 (s, 18H). – EI-MS: m/z = 403 (M⁺, 0.5).

Fig. 1. Chemical structures of the 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxy methylpyridines 3a–3h.
Antifungal assay of the 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines 3a–3h

Subsequently, compounds 3a–3h were screened in vitro for their antifungal activities against phytopathogenic fungi by the poisoned food technique (Xu et al., 2007). Five phytopathogenic fungi, namely Fusarium graminearum, Helminthosporium sorokinianum, Alternaria brassicae, Alternaria alternata, and Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum, were used for the biological assays. Potato dextrose agar (PDA) medium was prepared in flasks and sterilized. Compounds 3a–3h were dissolved in acetone before mixing with PDA, and the final concentration of the test compounds in the medium was fixed at 100 μg/mL. The medium was then poured into sterilized Petri dishes. All types of fungi were incubated in PDA at (28 ± 1) °C for 5 d to get new mycelium for the antifungal assays. Then mycelium disks of approx. 5 mm diameter cut from the culture medium were picked up with a sterilized inoculation needle and inoculated in the centre of each PDA Petri dish. The inoculated Petri dishes were incubated at (28 ± 1) °C for 4 d. Acetone without any compound mixed with PDA served as control, while hymexazole (Binzhou De’dong Chemical Engineering Co., Ltd., Shandong province, China), a commercial agricultural fungicide, served as positive control. For each treatment, three replicates were conducted. The radial growth of the fungal colonies was measured, and the data were statistically analyzed. The inhibitory effects of the test compounds on these fungi in vitro were calculated by the formula

\[
\text{inhibition rate (\%) } = \left( \frac{C - T}{C} \right) \cdot 100
\]

where \( C \) represents the diameter of fungal growth on untreated PDA, and \( T \) represents the diameter of fungal growth on treated PDA.

Results and Discussion

As indicated in Table I, some 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines (Fig. 1) showed certain antifungal activity at 100 μg/mL. For example, compounds 3a and 3h inhibited the growth of F. graminearum by 41.1% and 22.0%, respectively; compounds 3a and 3g inhibited the growth of H. sorokinianum by 33.0% and 18.9%, respectively; compound 3a inhibited the growth of A. brassicae by 42.7%; compounds 3a and 3f inhibited the growth of A. alternata by 39.8% and 28.6%, respectively; compounds 3a, 3e, and 3h inhibited the growth of F. oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum by 47.6%, 20.8%, and 21.4%. Interestingly, among all the 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridine derivatives, compound 3a exhibited broad-spectrum antifungal activities against the above-mentioned five phytopathogenic fungi, and the percentage inhibitions of 3a on the growth of F. graminearum, H. sorokinianum, A. brassicae, A. alternata, and F. oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum were 41.1%, 33.0%, 42.7%, 39.8%, and 47.6%, respectively.
From the comparative study, some structure-activity relationships of the 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines 3a–3h could be drawn as follows:

(1) It doesn’t matter whether electron-donating groups (like in 3f and 3h) or electron-withdrawing groups (like in 3b–3e, and 3g) were introduced at the phenyl ring of 3a, the inhibition rates of the corresponding compounds were all lower than that of 3a.

(2) Especially when the nitro group was introduced at the phenyl ring of 3a, the corresponding inhibition rates of 3b and 3c were less than 10% against the five tested phytopathogenic fungi.

(3) 2,6-Bis(4-t-butylphenoxymethyl)pyridine (3h) displayed no inhibitory activity at all against A. brassicae.

In conclusion, eight simple 2,6-bis-(un)substituted phenoxymethylpyridines, 3a–3h, were synthesized and evaluated in vitro against Fusarium graminearum, Helminthosporium sorokinianum, Alternaria brassicae, Alternaria alternata, and Fusarium oxysporum f. sp. vasinfectum. Among all the derivatives, compound 3a exhibited broad-spectrum antifungal activities against the above-mentioned five phytopathogenic fungi.

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