

Synthesis of novel porphyrin-based lipids and their antibacterial activity

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Abstract The purpose of this study was to investigate the antibacterial activity of newly developed cationic amphiphilic lipids having porphyrin as head group against two types of gram-positive bacteria and three types of gram-negative bacteria. The antibacterial activity of quantitatively prepared porphyrin-based amphiphilic lipids is evaluated by the disc-diffusion method against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus subtilis*, *Escherichia coli*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae* and *Proteus vulgaris*. These results are compared with the standard antibacterial activity of chloramphenicol. Both lipids showed antibacterial behaviour against gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria.

Keywords Porphyrin · Cationic lipid · Antibiotic · Antibacterial activity

Abbreviations

DCM	Dichloromethane
DDQ	2,3-Dichloro-5,6-dicyano-1,4-benzoquinone
ROS	Reactive oxygen species
S.A	<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i>
E.C	<i>Escherichia coli</i>
P.V	<i>Proteus vulgaris</i>
K.P	<i>Klebsiella pneumoniae</i>

B.S *Bacillus subtilis*
MPs Metalloporphyrins

Introduction

The growth of infectious diseases has become exponential in the recent past. The problem tends to be more complex because of the increase of bacterial resistance (Boyce, 1990) against the broadly used agents. Taking into account a great number of infections resulting from different bacterial species and fungi, the development of compounds with high antibacterial, antifungal activities with novel mechanism of action is an urgent need. Natural and synthetic porphyrins have relatively low toxicity in vitro and in vivo. Porphyrins are capable of effecting microbial and viral pathogens through the large number of different mechanisms. In addition, their ability for numerous chemical modifications place porphyrins into a group of compounds that present an outstanding source for discovery of novel procedures, materials and agents active against a wide range of pathogenic microorganisms (Stojiljkovic *et al.*, 2001).

Antimicrobial and antiviral activities of porphyrins are based on their ability to catalyse peroxidase–oxidase reactions, generate reactive oxygen species (ROS) by absorbing photons and partition into lipids of bacterial membranes. Light-dependent, photodynamic activity of natural and synthetic porphyrins (Mariusz *et al.*, 2007; Lasocki *et al.*, 1999; Lambrechts *et al.*, 2005) against gram-positive and gram-negative bacteria has been well demonstrated. Some non-iron metalloporphyrins (MPs) (Ghazaryan *et al.*, 2008; Stojiljkovic *et al.*, 1999; Xu *et al.*, 2008) possess a powerful light-independent antimicrobial activity that is based on the ability of these compounds to increase the sensitivity of bacteria to ROS or directly produce ROS. MPs mimic haem

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in their molecular structure and are actively accumulated by bacteria via high affinity haem-uptake systems. The same uptake systems can be used to deliver antibiotic-porphyrin and antibacterial peptide-porphyrin conjugates. Haemin (Everse and Hsia, 1997; Stojiljkovic and Hantke, 1994), the most well-known natural porphyrin, possesses a significant antibacterial activity that is augmented by the presence of physiological concentrations of hydrogen peroxide or a reducing agent.

The antibiotics must bind to the receptor located within the cell and must be taken up by the bacterial cells to exhibit the antibacterial activity. The binding capacity of porphyrins to eukaryotic cells is dependent on their hydrophobicity/hydrophilicity accountable to their side chains on the tetra-pyrrole ring, as well as to the structure of the cellular targets such as membranes and proteins (Moan *et al.*, 1989). The cell wall of bacterial cells creates a physical and chemical barrier that may prevent sensitizer binding to bacterial membrane or proteins. One widely postulated hypothesis is that the positively charged peptides interact with the negatively charged outer leaflet of the cytoplasmic membranes (of both gram-negative and gram-positive bacteria) and disrupt the membranes via either a “barrel-stave” or a “carpet” mechanism (Bechinger, 1999; Oren and Shai, 1998; Shai, 1999). Over the years, cationic lipids (Felgner *et al.*, 1994; Gao and Hui 2001; Ghosh *et al.*, 2002; Jeremy *et al.*, 2009; Mahidhar *et al.*, 2004) have been developed to facilitate transport through membranes. The cationic lipids formulated as cationic liposomes have found applications as drug delivery systems against diseases (Banerjee *et al.*, 1999; Sri-lakshmi *et al.*, 2002; Sen and Chaudhuri, 2005) and gene transfection (Kumar *et al.*, 2003; Rajesh *et al.*, 2009). In addition, cationic lipids, including dodine (Cebral, 1992), benzalkonium chlorides (Jono *et al.*, 1986), sphingosine (Drake *et al.*, 2008 and fatty amines (Kitahara *et al.*, 2004), chlorohexidine (Cookson *et al.*, 1991), cationic polymers (Kügler *et al.*, 2005) and other cationic amphiphiles (Lambert and Smith, 1977; Tomlinson *et al.*, 1977) are known to exhibit broad spectrum antibacterial activities. Several mechanisms have been proposed (Davis, 1987; Hancock, 1981; Mingeot-Leclercq *et al.*, 1999; Moazed *et al.*, 1987; Shaw *et al.*, 1993), including disruption of the bacterial envelope induced by removal of divalent positively charged counter ions by ammonium ions (Kügler *et al.*, 2005). Moreover, coadministration of antibiotics with lipid bilayer permeabilizing agents including ionic lipids has been shown to induce synergistic effects resulting in enhanced antimicrobial activity (Shelburne *et al.*, 2004). To this end, we developed and synthesized a series of porphyrin-based lipids which are having antibiotic activity and tend to enhance the uptake into the bacterial cells.

Materials and methods

Experimental section

General procedures and materials

Mass spectral data were acquired by using a commercial LCQ ion trap mass spectrometer (ThermoFinnigan, San Jose, CA, USA) equipped with an ESI source. ^1H NMR spectra were recorded on a Varian FT 300 MHz NMR Spectrometer. All the starting materials were obtained from Aldrich or Fluka and used as received. The progress of the reaction was monitored by thin-layer chromatography using 0.25-mm silica gel plates. Column chromatography was performed with silica gel (Acme Synthetic Chemicals, India; finer than 200 and 60–120 mesh).

Antibacterial activity

The antibacterial cell susceptibility testing was performed by agar disc-diffusion technique according to Bauer *et al.* (1966) against two gram-positive bacteria, *Staphylococcus aureus*, S.A (MTCC-96) and *Bacillus subtilis*, B.S (MTCC-619) and three gram-negative bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, E.C (MTCC-722), *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, K.P (MTCC-109) and *Proteus vulgaris*, P.V (MTCC-1771). Pure cultures of the organisms were obtained from Department of Biotechnology, Kakatiya University, India. A standard inoculum, $1-2 \times 10^7$ cfu/ml 0.5 Mc Farland standards (Stemper and Matsen, 1970) was introduced onto the surface of sterile Nutrient agar plate and evenly distributed by using a sterile glass spreader. Sterilized antibiotic discs (6 mm in diameter, prepared using Whatmann No. 1 paper) were placed over the medium. To find out antibacterial activity 75 μg of the compounds (initially dissolved in chloroform) were transferred to each disc with the help of a micropipette, simultaneously maintaining chloramphenicol (30 μg) disc as a standard. After overnight incubation at 37°C the diameters of zones of growth inhibition in mm were measured with a ruler and compared with standard antibiotic. Control measurements were carried out with chloroform. All the experiments were performed in triplicates and the average zones of inhibition was recorded.

Synthesis of Lipid 1 and 2

Synthesis of 2-N,N'-dihexadecylamino-ethanol To a solution of 2-aminoethanol (0.5 g, 8.1 mmol) in 50 ml of ethylacetate, 1-bromohexadecane (7.5 g, 24.5 mmol) and potassium carbonate (1.38 g, 8.1 mmol) were added and refluxed it for 48 h. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was taken in chloroform and washed with water 2×50 ml. The organic layer was

separated and dried over anhydrous sodium sulphate, filtered and evaporated under reduced pressure to obtain 7.2 g (yield 57.55% $R_f = 0.4$, 50:50 ethylacetate:hexane (v/v)) of 2-dihexadecylamino-ethanol.

Synthesis of 2-*N,N'*-dihexadecylamino-acetaldehyde To a solution of pyridinium chloro chromate (3.9 g, 18.2 mmol) dissolved in 50 ml of anhydrous DCM added in portions a solution of 2-dihexadecylamino-ethanol (6.2 g, 12 mmol) in 10 ml of anhydrous DCM and stirred for one and half hour. To the reaction mixture 50 ml of dry ether was added and the supernatant solution decanted from black gum. The residue was extracted thoroughly with 3×50 ml of anhydrous ether and the combined organic solvents were dried over anhydrous sodium sulphate and the solvent removed by evaporation under reduced pressure to obtain 4 g (yield 64.8% $R_f = 0.5$, 50% ethylacetate in hexane) of dihexadecylamino-acetaldehyde.

Synthesis of *N,N'*-dihexadecyl-porphyrin-5''-ylmethyl-amine (Lipid 1) A solution of pyrrole (1.05 g, 15.7 mmol), formaldehyde (0.35 g, 11.8 mmol) and dihexadecylamino-acetaldehyde (2.1 g, 3.94 mmol) in anhydrous DCM was purged with nitrogen gas for 15 min and to this anhydride zinc chloride is added. The reaction mixture was stirred for 1 h at room temperature followed by filtration to separate the catalyst. To the filtrate DDQ (0.895 g, 3.94 mmol) was added and the mixture was refluxed for an additional 1 h. Solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The product obtained was recrystallized from chloroform/methanol (85:15) followed by flash chromatography using ethyl acetate:hexane as eluent to obtain 0.26 g (yield 8% $R_f = 0.5$, 50% ethylacetate in hexane) of dihexadecyl-porphyrin-5-ylmethyl-amine. ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 0.96 (t, terminal- $\text{CH}_3 \times 2$, 6H, 16 and 16'), 1.33 (m, $(-\text{CH}_2-)_{14} \times 2$, 56H, 2–15 and 2'–15'), 2.1 (t, $(-\text{CH}_2-\text{N}-\text{CH}_2-)$, 4H, 1 and 1'), 3.3 (s, $=\text{C}-\text{CH}_2-\text{N}$, 2H, 21''), 4.3 (s, $=\text{CH}- \times 3$, 3H, 10'', 15'' and 20''), 5.0 (s, pyrrole- $\text{NH}- \times 2$, 2H), 7.3 (s, pyrrole $-\text{CH}=\text{CH}- \times 4$, 8H, 2'', 3'', 7'', 8'', 12'', 13'', 17'', 18''). ESI-MS: m/z $\text{M}^+[\text{C}_{53}\text{H}_{81}\text{N}_5]^+$, calcd 787.65, found 789. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{53}\text{H}_{81}\text{N}_5$: C, 80.76; H, 10.36; N, 8.88. Found: C, 80.66; H, 10.48; N, 8.86.

Synthesis of octadecylaldehyde To a solution of pyridinium chloro chromate (4.7 g, 2.1 mmol) dissolved in 200 ml of anhydrous DCM, a solution of steryl alcohol (4 g, 1.4 mmol) in 20 ml of anhydrous DCM is added in one portion and stirred the mixture for one and half an hour. To this mixture 200 ml of dry ether is added and the supernatant solution decanted from block gum. The residue was extracted thoroughly with 3×50 ml of anhydrous ether and the combined organic solvents were dried over

anhydrous sodium sulphate and the solvent removed by evaporation under reduced pressure to obtain 4.22 g (yield 72% $R_f = 0.5$, 50% ethylacetate in hexane) of octadecylaldehyde.

Synthesis of 5'',20''-diheptadecyl-porphyrin (Lipid 2) The preparation is same as described in the “[Synthesis of *N,N'*-dihexadecyl-porphyrin-5''-ylmethyl-amine \(Lipid 1\)](#)” section, except that instead of dihexadecylamino-acetaldehyde, octadecylaldehyde is used here. The product obtained was recrystallized from chloroform/methanol (85:15) followed by flash chromatography using ethyl acetate:hexane as eluent, distillation to obtain 0.86 g (yield 7% $R_f = 0.5$, 50% ethylacetate in hexane) of 5,20-diheptadecyl-porphyrin. ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3): δ 0.96 (t, terminal- $\text{CH}_3 \times 2$, 6H, 17 and 17'), 1.33 (m, $(-\text{CH}_2-)_{15} \times 2$, 60H, 2–16 and 2'–16'), 1.9 (t, $=\text{C}-\text{CH}_2 \times 2$, 4H, 1 and 1'), 4.3 (s, $=\text{CH}- \times 2$, 2H, 10'' and 15''), 5.0 (s, pyrrole- $\text{NH}- \times 2$, 2H), 7.3 (s, pyrrole $\text{CH}=\text{CH} \times 4$, 8H, 2'', 3'', 7'', 8'', 12'', 13'', 17'' and 18''). ESI-MS: m/z $\text{M}^+[\text{C}_{53}\text{H}_{81}\text{N}_5]^+$, calcd 786.65, found 786. Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{54}\text{H}_{82}\text{N}_4$: C, 82.38; H, 10.50; N, 7.12. Found: C, 82.35; H, 10.40; N, 7.25.

Results and discussion

Synthesis of lipids

The key structural elements common to the porphyrin-based lipids **1** and **2** described herein include (a) the presence of hydrophobic chains as anchoring groups (i) linked to the positively charged nitrogen atom directly which in turn attached to the porphyrin group through a spacer or (ii) linked directly to the porphyrin group (b) the presence of porphyrin group which is having positively charged nitrogen atom. The details of the synthetic procedures for the novel porphyrin-based lipids **1** and **2** shown in Chart 1 are described in the “[Experimental section](#)”. As outlined in Schemes 1 and 2, the chemistry involved in preparing these new lipids are straightforward. However, given their antibacterial activity, the overall yields of these lipids need to be improved in future. Scheme 1 outlines the general synthetic strategies adopted for preparing lipid **1**. The steps involved were (a) reacting hexadecyl bromide with ethanol amine to produce an intermediate tertiary amine alcohol. (b) Oxidizing the intermediate tertiary amine alcohol to aldehyde of tertiary amine using pyridinium chloro chromate. (c) The tertiary amine aldehyde intermediate is treated with formaldehyde and pyrrole in presence of acid catalyst to get the lipid **1**. Synthesis of lipid **2** essentially consists of similar steps as in synthesis of lipid **1** except that instead of reacting with tertiary amine

aldehyde directly taken the aliphatic aldehyde and treated with formaldehyde and pyrrole in presence of acid catalyst as in Scheme 2 to get lipid 2.

Antibacterial activity

It is well known that porphyrins possess significant antibacterial activity. Cationic lipids are very well known as

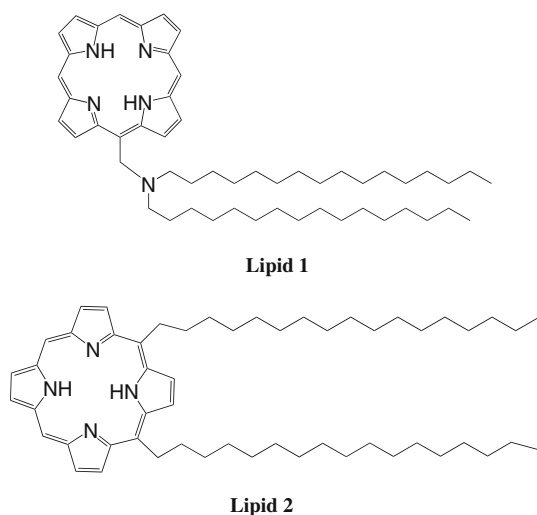
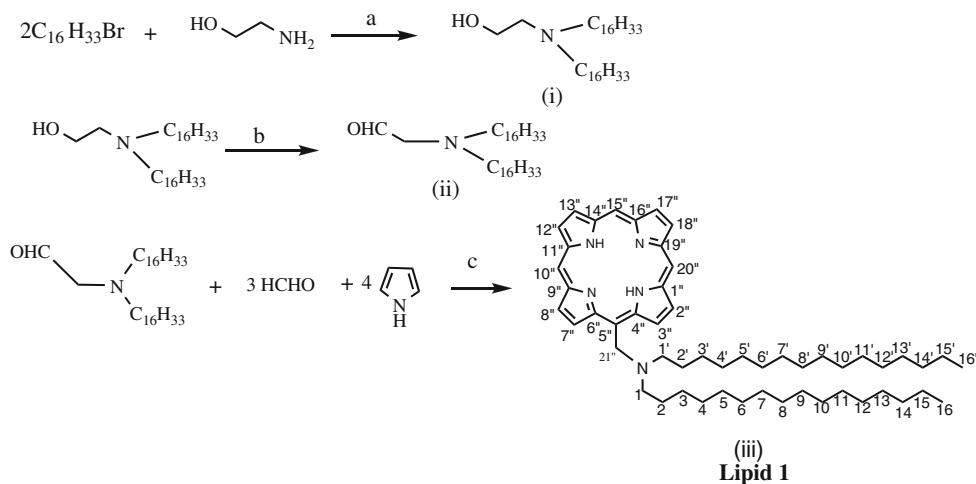


Chart 1 Structures of new antibiotics

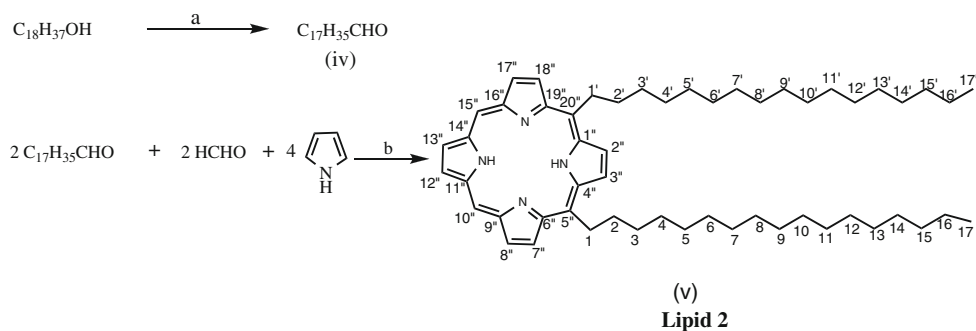
Scheme 1 Synthesis of lipid 1.

Reagents: (a) K_2CO_3 , ethyl acetate, 48 h, reflux; (b) pyridinium chloro chromate, anhydrous DCM, 1.5 h, r.t.; (c) $ZnCl_2$, 2,3-dichloro-5,6-dicyano-1,4-benzoquinone, anhydrous DCM, 2.5 h, reflux



Scheme 2 Synthesis of lipid 2.

Reagents: (a) pyridinium chloro chromate, anhydrous DCM, 1.5 h, r.t.; (b) $ZnCl_2$, 2,3-dichloro-5,6-dicyano-1,4-benzoquinone, anhydrous DCM, 2.5 h, reflux



delivery systems and also they increase the uptake of the antibiotic into the bacterial cell. The essential attributes for an antibiotic to have efficient antibacterial activity are (i) possess significant antibacterial activity and (ii) uptake by the bacterial cell. To incorporate these attributes in a single molecule we developed a series of porphyrin-based cationic lipids containing two units (i) porphyrin as the head group which is responsible for the antibacterial activity and (ii) anchoring groups impart lipid like structure to the molecule, (iii) the cationic charge to enhance the uptake by the bacterial cell.

Here, we are reporting the antibacterial activities of porphyrin-based lipids **1** and **2** (shown in Chart 1) compared with those of chloramphenicol against gram-positive bacteria *Staphylococcus aureus*, Sa (MTCC-96) and *Bacillus subtilis*, BS (MTCC-619) and gram-negative bacteria, *Escherichia coli*, E.C (MTCC-722), *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, K.P (MTCC-109) and *Proteus vulgaris*, P.V (MTCC-1771). The results are shown in Table 1. Both the lipids **1** and **2** showed antibacterial behaviour against *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Bacillus subtilis* and *Escherichia coli*, whereas these lipids showed less antibacterial activity against *Klebsiella pneumoniae*. The results indicated that the Lipid **1** is inhibiting the growth of bacteria slightly better than Lipid **2**. The better activity of lipid **1** may be due to the additional positively charged nitrogen linked to

Table 1 Antibiotic susceptibility

S. no.	Antibiotics	E.C	SA	P.V	K.P	B.S
1	Lipid 1	14	15	14	12	16
2	Lipid 2	13	13	12	10	14
3	Chloramphenicol	31	23	14	24	23

For abbreviations used see “[Experimental section](#)”. The concentration of lipids is 75 µg/ml and the concentration of chloramphenicol is 30 µg/ml. The resistance pattern was determined with the disc-diffusion method (numbers present the diameters of zones of growth inhibition in mm)

the porphyrin group through a methylene spacer in its structure. Based on the above evidences we can conclude that the cationic lipids containing porphyrin as head group and long chain hydrophobic chains as anchoring groups seems to be useful as antibacterial drugs. Though the activity of these lipids is little lower than the antibacterial activity of standard chloramphenicol, these lipids can be used as antibacterial drugs as lower dosage drugs. There is still a need of further structure activity relation studies on these porphyrin-based lipids.

Conclusions

In summary, we have developed and synthesized an efficient and novel series of porphyrin-based cationic lipids for use in antibacterial activity. The present synthetic protocols should, in principle, be applicable in synthesizing various porphyrin-based structural analogues of lipids **1** and **2** for use in antibacterial activity. The antibacterial activity of these new lipids were studied and found that these lipids are active against both gram-positive bacteria and gram-negative bacteria; however, these lipids are less active against bacteria *Klebsiella pneumoniae*.

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