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Emerging trends in tuberculosis therapy—A review

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Tuberculosis is one of the most devastating bacterial disease having high rates of morbidity and mortality. *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* invades the host immune system and persists in pulmonary granulomas. Review presents bacterial cell wall or envelope structure, drug targets against *M. tuberculosis* and novel therapeutics agents like quinolone, pyrimidine, nitroimidazopyran and oxazolidinone derivatives. This review also focuses on the newer untouched targets like immunomodulators and isocitrate lyase inhibitors, which can be further exploited.

Keywords: Antimycobacterial agents, Cell envelope, Drugs, MIC, Mycobacterium tuberculosis, Therapeutic agents, Targets

Introduction

Tuberculosis (TB) is characterized as a chronic bacterial infection caused by Mycobacterium tuberculosis, an aerobic acid-fast bacillus (AFB). Tuberculosis killed about 2 million people every year and the epidemic, which is spreading globally, is assuming alarming proportions. Around 8 million people become infected with TB every year. The WHO 'Fact Sheet' on TB estimates that between 2000 and 2020, nearly one billion people will get sick and 35 million will die from TB. In India alone, one person dies because of TB every minute. Indian population (approx 50%) reports positive tuberculin test. Every year, about 0.4 million deaths and millions of new cases of TB are reported. Due to demographic factor, socio-economic trends, neglected TB control in many countries and HIV (Human-immuno deficiency virus) infection, this epidemic has been able to adopt such proportion. Efforts to stop these frightening trends are hampered by the lack of financial resources in developing countries, the appearance of the multi-drug resistant strains of *M. tuberculosis* and bad therapy compliance¹⁻³. The various pathogenic mycobacterium species are M. tuberculosis, M. scrofulaceium, M. Arcanum, M. leprae, M. kanasasii and M. avium-intracellulare $complex (MAC)^4$.

The review updates on newer molecules, which are synthesized as anti TB agents with their mode of action.

Targets for Antimycobacterial Agents

A key target for antimycobacterial chemotherapy is cell wall biosynthesis. Complex lipoglycan calyx on the mycobacterial cell surface provides a significant physical barrier to intracellular acting drugs. Due to lack of penetration, many antibiotics show no activity against *M. tuberculosis*. Inhibition of synthesis is lethal to bacterium as evidenced by the action of isoniazid and ethambutol. Recent deconvolution of biochemical events leading to cell wall formation has exposed a rich supply of targets⁵⁻¹⁰. The cell envelope of *M. tuberculosis*, which is unusually thick and waxy (Fig. 1), comprises four classes of polymer (peptidoglycan, arabinogalactan, mycolic acids and lipoarabinomannan)¹¹.

Tuberculosis Therapy

Chemotherapeutic agents^{3,4,12-14} for TB may be divided into two main classes, first line agents (isoniazid, rifampicin, streptomycin, pyrazinamide and ethambutol) and second line agents (ehionamide, *p*-amino salicylic acid, cycloserine, rifapentine, clarythromycin, kanamycin, amikacin, ofloxacin, ciprofloxacin, viomycin and capreomycin). Some of

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the patented targets for antitubercular drugs (Fig. 2) are known to control various cellular processes required for survival or virulence of *M. tuberculosis*. Arrows (Fig. 2) show site of action of first line drugs¹⁵. To decreases possibility of the emergence of resistant organisms, compounded drug therapy is employed, involving the following: 1) A first phase (about 2 months) consisting of three drugs [isoniazid, rifampicin, pyrazinamide (plus ethambutol, if the organism is suspected resistant)] used to concomitantly; and 2) A second, continuation phase of 4 months, consisting of two drugs (isoniazid, rifampicin). Longer treatment needed in meningitis, bone or joint involvement, drug resistant case, etc.

The recommended treatment regimen is highly effective and rates of severe adverse reactions are low. However, unpleasant side effects and relatively long course of treatment are the drawbacks. Drug resistance and development of MDR-TB is also important. The second line drug used for MDR-TB is more expensive, less effective and more toxic than the four standard regimens. The goal, to develop bactericidal drugs, is a cost-effective manner, which effectively treats the infection of MDR strains of *M. tuberculosis* and latent infection. It is also important that they should have shortened treatment period or reduced frequency of doses.

Antitubercular Activity of Some Novel Drugs Quinolones

Moxifloxacin (BAY 12-8039) (1), an 8-methoxyquinolone drug (MIC, 0.25 µg/ml), is reported active against *M. Tuberculosis*^{16,17}. The elimination half-life of the drug in man (12 h) supports possibility of once treatment¹⁸. $(2)^{19}$ CS-940 dav shows antimycobacterial activity (IC50, 0.25-0.5 µg/ml) and is more potent than ofloxacin, ciprofloxacin and balofloxacin. PD 161148 $(3)^{20}$ is a third generation fluoroquinolone having potent antimycobacterial activity. Sitofloxacin (DU-6859a) (4) has outstanding activity against broad range of bacteria. The potency is believed to reside with its ability to equally inhibit both DNA gyrase and topoisomerase IV with lowest IC50 amongst quinolones²¹. Gemifloxacin (SB-265805) (5) is also found to be active²². 1-Substitutedaryl-6-fluoroquinolones (6), at 6.25 µg/ml inhibits complete growth of M. tuberculosis with selective index²³ SI > 40. Mefloquine (4-aminoquinolinemethanol) (7) and its several analogues are active against a variety of bacteria

including *Mycobacteria*²⁴. WR-3016 (8) at 1 µg/ml and WR-3017 (9) at 2 µg/ml show potent inhibitory activity *in vitro* in *M. avium* complex (MAC) compared to 16 µg/ml for mefloquine²⁵.

Pyrimidines

3-N-[(substitutedaryl/heteroaryl) -methylene]-imino-2-methyl-5-thienyl-thieno-[2, 3-d]pyrimidin-4-(3H)one (**10**)²⁶ at 2 - 40 µg/ml, 4-(4-chlorophenyl)-6-(4methylphenyl)-2-aminopyrimidin (**11**)²⁷ at 6.25 µg/ml and 3-[4-(4-chlorophenyl)-6-(4-methylphenyl)pyrimidin-2yl]iminoisatin (**12**)²⁷ at 6.20 µg/ml give potent antitubercular activity against *M. tuberculosis* H₃₇Rv. 3'-C-branched-chain substituted nucleosides and nucleotides (**13**) are reported as potent inhibitors of *M. tuberculosis* thymidine monophosphate kinase²⁸. Some thio analogue of purine (**14**) at 0.78-6.25 µg/ml proved as potent antimycobacterial agents against *M. tuberculosis* H₃₇Rv²⁹.

Nitroimidazopyrans

The 3-substituted nitroimidazopyrans (NAPs) have been screened for antimycobacterial activity^{30,31}. In contrast to conventional anti-tubercular drugs, NAPs exhibit bactericidal activity against both replicating and stationary *M. tuberculosis* cells. PA-824 (**15**) at 0.015-0.25 µg/ml and PA-1343 (**16**) at 0.015 µg/ml are potent under clinical trial³². A novel lipophilic and orally active agent CGI 17341 (2-ethyl-5-nitro-2,3dihydro[2-lb]imidazo-oxazole) (**17**), whose MIC is not altered at pH 5.6 and since the combination of CGI 17341 and RIF is synergistic at a low pH, CGI 17341 may play a significant role in improving the overall sterilizing activity of drug regimens against *M. tuberculosis*³³.

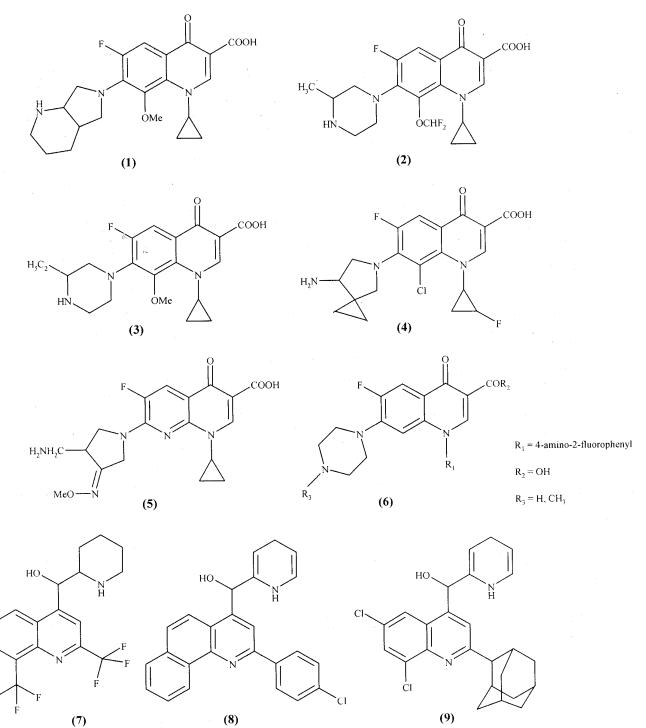
Novel Antimycobacterial Agents with Known Mode of Action

Rhodamine derivative 5372 (18), whose structural motif is similar to that used in 4-thiazolidinones, biosynthesis affects sugar nucleotide during peptidoglycan formation^{34,35}. The series of alkylsulfonyl amides, which inhibit ß-ketoacyl synthase (KAS), are also the series of target-based drug design $(19)^{36}$. Sulfonyl amides mimic putative tetrahedral transition state formed during KAS catalysis. KAS is one of the accessory fatty acid synthases peculiar to mycobacteria. Proteins of antigen 85 complex, which exhibit mycolyl transferase activity, are prime targets in mycolic acid biosynthesis³⁷. These proteins J SCI IND RES VOL 66 MARCH 2007



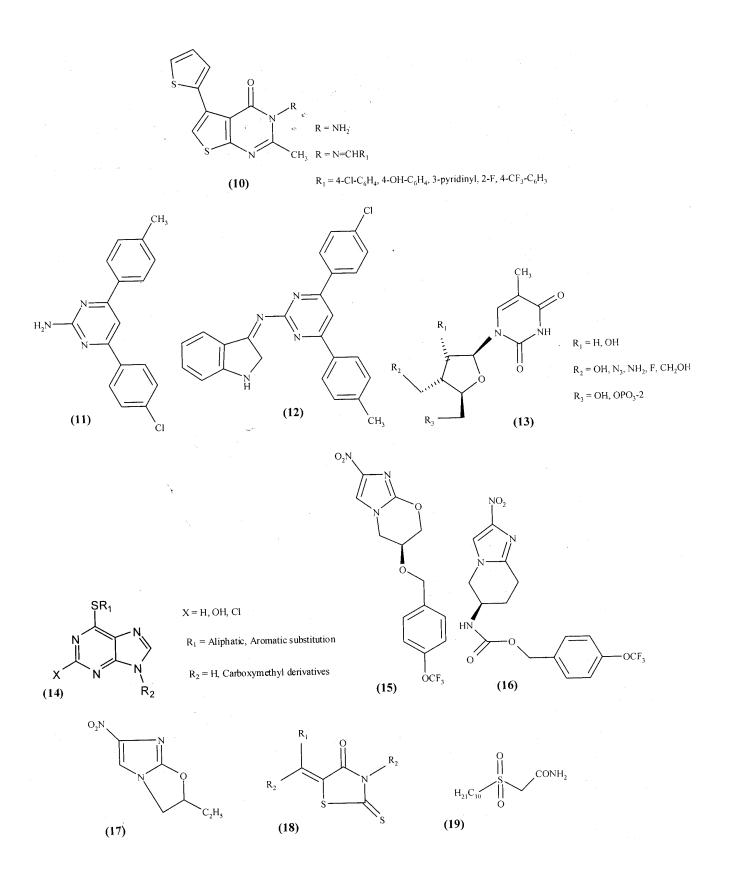
Fig. 2—Patent protected drug targets for Mycobacterium tuberculosis¹⁵

recognize and transfer mycolate from trehalose monoand dimycolates. A family of 6,6'-diamino-6,6'dideoxytrehalose-based derivatives with different alkylamines or alkysulfonamide functionality have been synthesized and found active against *M. tuberculosis* $H_{37}R_a^{38}$ A potent new antimycobacterial activity with an MIC of 1.3 µg/ml is found in compound (**20**).



(7)

(9)



A drug based on the inhibition of arabinofuranosyl transferases does not produce mechanism-based toxicity as these units are not present in humans, hence they are proposed as potential targets for drug development³⁹. Decaprenylphosphoarabinose is the probable donor molecule for the arabinose unit⁴⁰. One of the *C*-phosphonate analogs (**21**) is active at MIC 3.13 μ g/ml⁴¹. The enoyl acyl carrier protein reductase enzyme InhA is a good antimycobacterial target⁴². Indole-5-amides, 4-aryl-substituted piperazines, and various pyrazole derivatives provide useful core templates for good InhA inhibition⁴³. Genz-8575 (**22**) at 2.5 μ g/ml is a potent InhA inhibitor (91% inhibition at 40 μ M) against H₃₇R.

A tubulin polymerase inhibitor, SRI-3072 (23)^{44,45} at 0.15 µg/ml, is effective against the growth of *M. tuberculosis* and has good selectivity index⁴⁶ SI-42. It is also an inhibitor of FtsZ (a bacterial tubulin polymerase homologue). From a series of 2,4diamino-5-deazapteridine derivatives, SRI-20094 (24) at 0.13 µg/ml displays potent inhibition of MM6 cells infected with MAC strain NJ3440 and shows excellent inhibition of dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR) of MAC with IC50 of 1.0 nM. SRI-20094 is of potential value for the treatment of M. avium infections and in particular for persons co-infected with HIV⁴⁷. D-Alanine racemase is a cytoplasmic enzyme responsible for the conversion of L-alanine to D-alanine, which is a key building block in peptidoglycan biosynthesis. Inhibitors of this enzyme, such as D-cycloserine and fludalanine, possess potent antitubercular activity. 5-Amino-furanoside derivatives are potent inhibitors of this enzyme $(25)^{48}$. Most active compound (MIC 3.12 µg/ml) of this series possesses reasonable antimycobacterial activity.

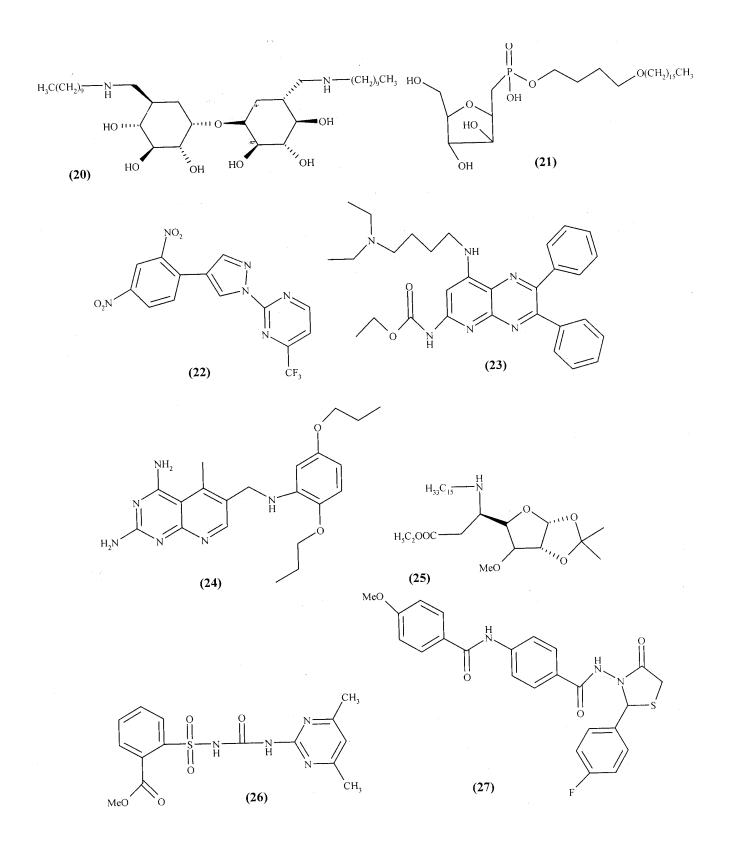
Sulfometuron methyl (26), a herbicide, has inhibitory activity against acetolactate synthase, which catalyses a key step in branched-chain amino acid biosynthesis⁴⁹. 4-Thiazolidinone derivative (27)⁵⁰ possesses moderate antimycobacterial activity and shows good inhibitory activity against bacterial MurB enzyme, which converts UDP-GlcNAc into UDP-MurNAc, an intermediate in the assembly of MurNAc-pentapeptide for cell wall peptidoglycan biosynthesis. Compound (28) at MIC of 1.42 µg/ml with micromolar levels of monoamine oxidase inhibition shows potent antitubercular activity⁵¹. Compound R207910 (29)⁵² at 0.03 to 0.12 µg/ml is extremely potent against a variety of mycobacterial species with no cross-resistance against a panel of different drug-resistant isolates. This is further supported by identification of the molecule's target as the proton pump for *M. tuberculosis* ATP synthase through genetic analysis of resistant mutants.

Novel Antimycobacterial Agents with Unknown Mode of Action

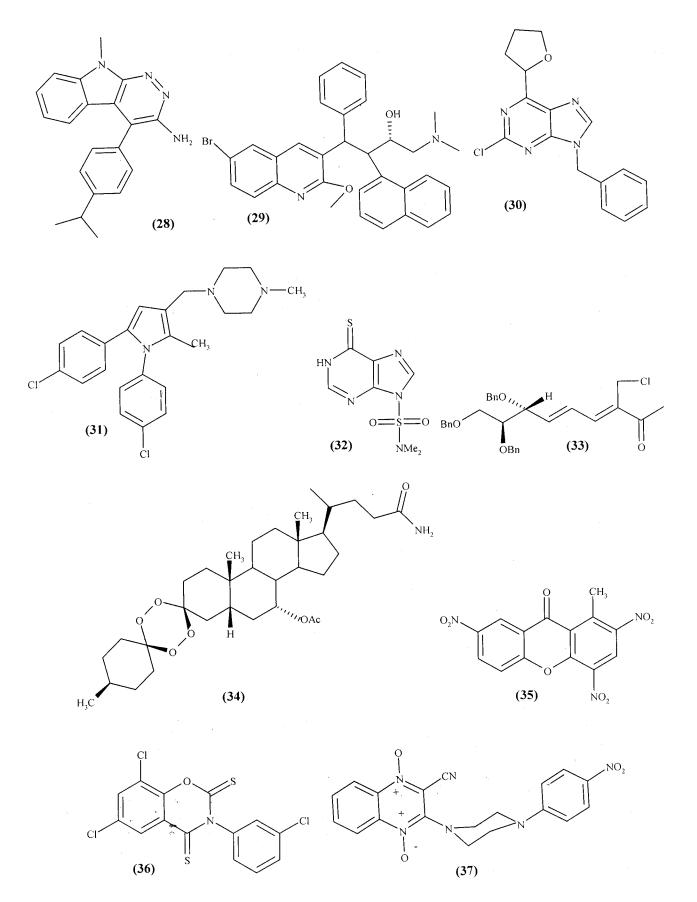
Compound (30) of the series 9-benzylpurines at 0.78 µg/ml has very good inhibitory activity against M. tuberculosis with moderate toxicity levels against Vero cell lines^{53,54} (SI = 10.6), besides a potent antimycobacterial activity against strains resistant to INH, RIF, and EMB. Experiments with infected bone marrow macrophages also suggest that the compound is capable of attacking M. tuberculosis inside these cells⁵⁵. A series of pyrrole derivatives show very good MIC of 0.4 μ g/ml and a selectivity index⁵⁶ of 20. BM 212 (31) of pyrrole series, which has very good MIC of 0.7 µg/ml and moderate toxicity levels against Vero cells⁵⁷ (SI = 5.6), shows no significant crossresistance with INH, RIF, EMB, and streptomycin with intracellular antimycobacterial activity in macrophage assays.

Oxidation state of sulfur atom has an impact on the MICs for resistant strains. 9-Sulfonylated or sulfenylated-6-mercaptopurines (32) show potent antimycobacterial activity at 0.39-3.39 µg/ml with very good selectivity index⁵⁸ (45-200). Compound (33), α. β-unsaturated acyclic sugar ketones, possesses good antimycobacterial activity at 3.1 ug/ml^{59,60}. Some of 1,2,4,5-tetraoxacycloalkanes (**34**) also possess notable antimycobacterial activity at 3.12 µg/ml⁶¹. Xanthone derivatives exhibit antitubercular activity⁶². Compound (**35**)⁶³ of this series shows antimycobacterial activity at 4 µg/ml. Compound (36) 3-phenyl-6,8-dichloro-2H-1,3-benzoxazineamong 2,4(3H)-dithiones showed antitubercular activity^{64, 65}. The best compound of the series showed moderate activity against mycobacteria with MIC of 4 µg/ml.

Widespread activity of quinoxaline-1-oxides is observed from enzymatic, single-electron reduction of quinoxaline 1,4-dioxides under hypoxic conditions leading to DNA damage⁶⁶. Of this series, compound (**37**) shows a very good antitubercular activity at 0.1 µg/ml and selectivity towards mycobacteria⁶⁷⁻⁶⁹ (SI > 125). A series of compounds containing an alkyl-mercaptan group attached to an electrondeficient carbon atom produce good antimycobacterial activity⁷⁰; compound (**38**) at 1.3 µg/ml is most active. Alkyl-mercaptan functionality is



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attached to a benzimidazole ring, a heterocycle that, along with structurally related benzothiazole, is often found in molecules with antimycobacterial activity^{71,72}. Structural hybrids of isoniazid and quinolones, 4-quinolylhydrazones, show marked antitubercular activity⁷³. Of this series, compound (**39**) at 0.78 µg/ml shows poor selectivity for mycobacteria (SI = 6.67). Compound (40), among 1,3-thiazine derivatives antimycobacterial display good activity^{74,75}. A derivative of 3-[4'-Y-(1,1'-biphenyl)-4yl]-N,N-dimethyl-3-(4-X-phenyl)-2-propen-1-amine

(41) represents new class of moderately potent antimycobacterial agents⁷⁶. These molecules possess good antitubercular activity against $H_{37}R_a$ and $H_{37}R_v$ isolates with MIC as low as 1.6 µg/ml.

Compound (42) of fluorobenzyl derivatives represents successful use of an electron-withdrawing group attached to sulfur as a template for antimycobacterial activity⁷⁷. Compound (43) represents the series having alkylmercapto group with chloropyrimidine derivatives⁷⁸. Molecules, where heterocyclic ring is attached to a mercaptopropyl chain, exhibit good antimycobacterial activity at 0.78 µg/ml. Compound (44) of toluidine derivatives at 4 µg/ml show moderate to good antimycobacterial activity^{79,80} and is also moderately selective versus mammalian Vero cells (SI = 16).

Deazapteridine derivatives, compound (45)⁵⁵. exhibit moderate activity against *M. tuberculosis*⁸¹. Even though cytotoxic properties of the compounds have previously been correlated with their tubulin binding capacity, active antitubercular molecules do not inhibit polymerization of mycobacterial FtsZ. Naturally occurring antibiotic pyrrolnitrin, a topical antifungal agent, has moderate antimycobacterial activity at 8 µg/ml. Compound (46) represents the given series. Antifungal activity is due to inhibition of protein kinase III, which is involved in osmosensing signal transduction pathway. Best MIC observed for the series is 1 µg/ml, but this is accompanied across all derivatives by pronounced levels of cytotoxicity $(SI < 1)^{55}$. Oxazolidinone derivaties, a new class of synthetic antimicrobial agents, possess a unique mechanism of action in inhibiting protein synthesis⁸². Linezolid (47) inhibits multi-drug resistant isolates in vitro at 2 μ g/ml⁸³. PNU 100480 (48) is potential antimycobacterial agent. Several analogues of this series possess activity (MICs < $0.125 \mu g/ml$), which is also supported by good antitubercular activity against multiple strains of *M. tuberculosis*⁸⁴.

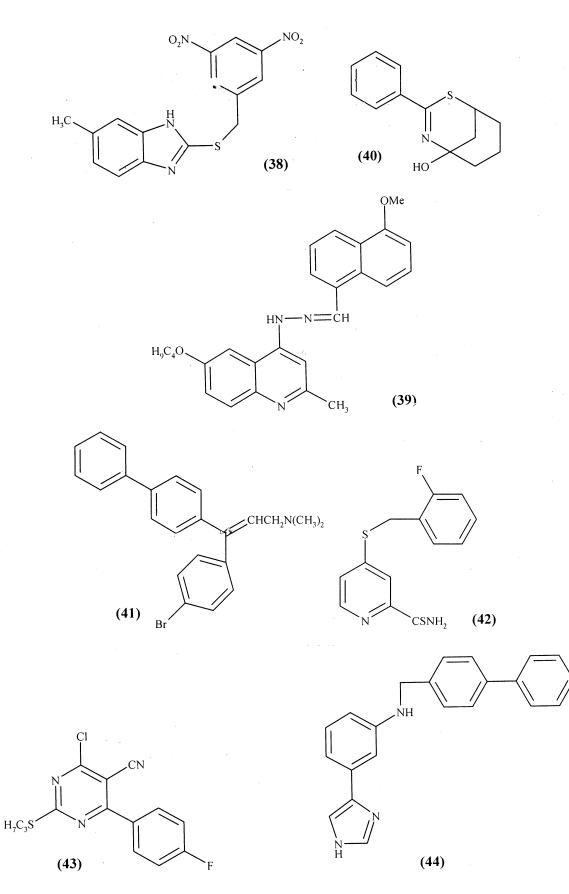
A class of putative monoxazolidinone analogues, compound (49), show notable activity against M. tuberculosis at 0.5 µg/ml and a moderate index⁸⁵ selectivity (SI=16). series А of galactopyranosyl amino alcohols, compound (50), a dimeric hybrid of a galactofuranosyl ethambutol analogue, display potent in vitro activity at 1.56 µg/ml against *M. tuberculosis*⁵⁵. Compound (51), based on the thiazoline template⁸⁶, shows good MICs of 0.3 µg/ml with low toxicity. SAR study shows that replacing thiazoline with а thiazolidinone substantially reduced activity.

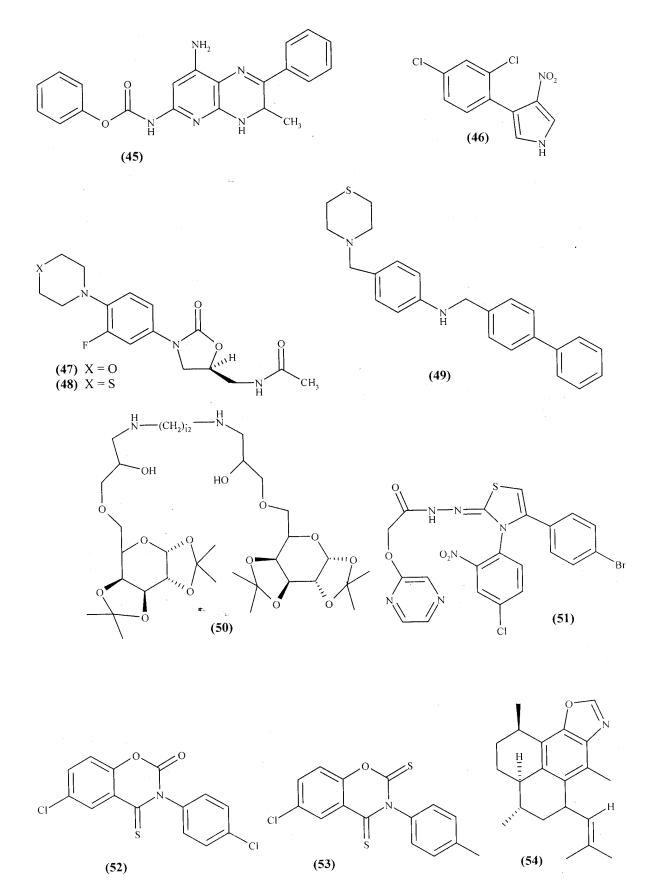
Novel Natural and Synthetic Antitubercular Agents

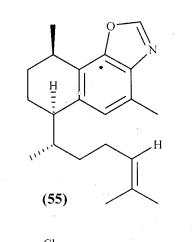
Evaluation of a series of 6-chloro-3-phenyl-4thioxo-2H-1,3-benzoxazine-2(3H)-ones (52) and 6-chloro-3-phenyl-2H-1, 3-benzoxazine-2, 4(3H)dithiones (53) revealed compounds having potent antimycobacterial activity against M. tuberculosis⁸⁷. Pseudopteroxazole (54) and seco-pseudopteroxazole (55), active diterpenoid alkaloids containing the uncommon benzoxazole moietv⁸⁸ isolated from *Pseudopterogorgia* elisabethae, possess anti tuberculosis activity.

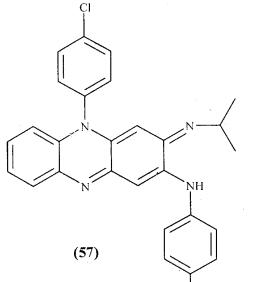
Tryptanthrin (**56**) is a novel indoloquinazolinone alkaloid, which at 0.5-1 μ g /ml showed potency against various strains of *M. tuberculosis*⁸⁹. Intra and extra-cellular activities of phenazine derivatives are compared to clofazimine (**57**) and rifampicin against *M. tuberculosis* H₃₇Rv (ATCC 27294)⁹⁰. One of the phenazine derivatives, B4169 (**58**), potently inhibits bacterium at 0.015 μ g/ml, while corresponding value for clofazimine is 0.06 μ g/ml. Several other derivatives of phenazines, like B4128 (**59**), also show significant intracellular activity against *M. tuberculosis* infected monocyte-derived macrophages at 0.001 μ g/ml and are superior to both clofazimine and rifampicin. The compounds are also more active than clofazimine against multi drug resistant strains.

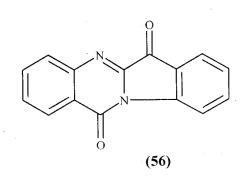
Calanolide A (60), a naturally occurring pyranocoumarin⁹¹ with dual activity against TB and HIV infections^{55,92}, is an inhibitor of HIV-1 reverse transcriptase⁹³ and also displays good *in vitro* activity towards *M. tuberculosis*. In a preliminary assessment of its activity, calanolide A is comparable with the positive control isoniazid and remains effective against rifampin and streptomycin resistant TB strains⁵⁵. In addition, calanolide B (61) is readily available in substantial quantities from renewable

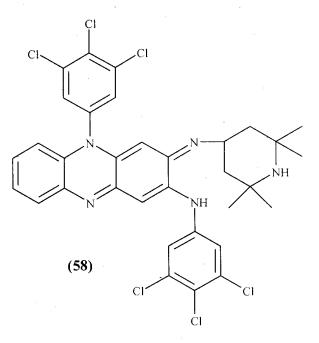


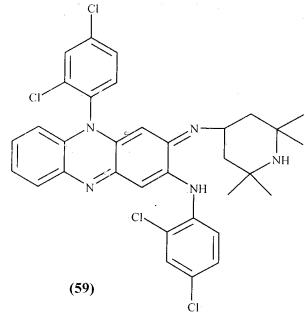




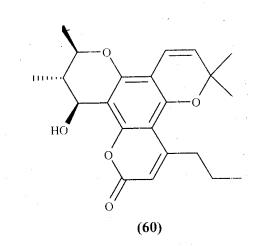


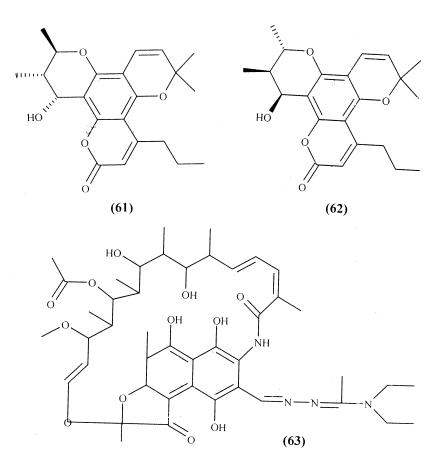






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natural sources like *Calophyllum* seed oil⁹⁴ having a similar spectrum of activity to calanolide A against *mycobacteria*. Other analogues are obtained either from plant extracts or by synthesis and compound (**62**) has been patented for its antimycobacterial properties⁹⁵. Rifametane (SPA-S-565) (**63**), a new semi-synthetic rifamycin, has a bactericidal spectrum and potency similar to that of rifampicin, but with better pharmacokinetic properties⁹⁶. This is reflected in the fact that although the MIC90 values of the 2 compounds are the same against 20 strains of *M. tuberculosis*, in TB-infected mice, rifametane proves to be the more effective orally⁹⁷.

Newer Untouched Targets for Antitubercular Therapy

Immunomodulators

Immunomodulators might be useful in TB treatment. Gamma interferon has been administered by aerosol to MDR TB patients and shown to have some bacteriological effects⁹⁸. Thalidomide, which block TNF α production, has beneficial effects on weight gain in both HIV positive and negative TB patients⁹⁹.

Isocitrate lyase Inhibitors

The persistence of *M. tuberculosis* in mice is facilitated by isocitrate lyase, an obligate enzyme for metabolism of fatty acids^{100,101}. Biochemical studies suggest that in chronically infected lung tissues, fatty acids may be a major source of carbon and energy in M. tuberculosis metabolism. The data shows that whilst isocitrate lyase is important for survival of *M. tuberculosis* in the lung during the persistent phase of infection, it is not essential for growth in the acute stage¹⁰¹. Combination therapy of existing TB drugs with an isocitrate lyase inhibitor might be expected to expedite eradication of TB infections since conventional anti-microbials target cell-wall biosynthesis and chromosome replication.

Conclusions

One of the main lines of enquiry for recent research is the *M. tuberculosis* cell wall or envelope. From all the reported molecules, certain molecules exhibit potent activity against *M. tuberculosis*. Novel quinolones like CS-940 shows IC50 of 0.25-0.5 μ g/ml and some thio analogue of purines exhibit low MIC. PA-824 and PA-1343 are the novel nitroimidazopyran derivatives, the most advanced tubercular specific agents, at 0.015 - 0.25 µg/ml. Another significant development in the field of novel antimicrobial is oxazolidinones derivatives with unique mechanism of action of inhibiting protein synthesis. Some phenazine derivatives like B-4169 and B-4128 also show activity with MIC around 0.015 µg/ml. Immunomodulators and isocitrate lyase inhibitors can be further exploited to improve the treatment regimen. Mode of action of certain lead should be defined to greatly increase its chances for the development as a drug. SAR studies can be improved to assess the true potential of each series. Efforts must be made to identify compounds acting upon the key targets. Further, work should be carried out on reported molecules and the other emerging ones from the focused studies, which should lead to newer therapeutic agents in upcoming years.

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