

Strained Azetidinium Ylides: New Reagents for Epoxidation The peculiar reactivity of 1-(aminoethyl)-1-cyano epoxides

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Page 2-4: procedures and characterization of compounds 4-19

Page 5: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **4a**

Page 6: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **4b**

Page 7: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **4e**

Page 8: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **4f**

Page 9: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **4g**

Page 10: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **8**

Page 11: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **10**

Page 12: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **13a**

Page 13: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **13b**

Page 14: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **13c**

Page 15: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **13d**

Page 16: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **13e**

Page 17: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **18a**

Page 18: ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra of compound **19**

Page 19: ORTEP diagram of compound **19**

General comments

^1H and ^{13}C spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance 300 spectrometer at 300 and 75 MHz respectively; chemical shifts are reported in ppm from TMS. Optical rotations were determined with a Perkin Elmer 141 instrument. All the reactions were carried out under argon. Column chromatography was performed on a silica gel 230-400 mesh. The TLCs were run on Merck Kieselgel 60F254 plates. The melting points are uncorrected. THF and ether were distilled from sodium/benzophenone ketyl. Dichloromethane was distilled from calcium hydride.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3-phenyl-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, **4a**

A 50 mL flask was charged with 148 mg of azetidinium salt **3** (0.41 mmol, $M = 358.47$), 25 mL of dry THF were added. After complete dissolution, the mixture was cool to -78°C with acetone/dry ice. At this temperature benzaldehyde (42 μL , 1 equiv., 0.41 mmol, $M = 106.12$, $d = 1.044$) was added immediately followed by LiHMDS in THF (620 μL , 1.5 equiv., 0.62 mmol, $c = 1 \text{ mol.L}^{-1}$). The reaction was completed after a period of 15 min, at which point 20 mL of a saturated solution of ammonium chloride were added (the temperature was still of -78°C). The mixture was partitioned between water and dichloromethane, the organic phases were dried over MgSO_4 and the solvent evaporated under vacuum. The brown residue was rapidly purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O/PE}$: 1/1, $R_f 0.3$) to give epoxide **4a** as a colourless oil (119 mg, 98 %, $M = 292.37$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3405, 3352, 2238. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 2.11-2.24 (2H, m), 2.29 (3H, s), 2.73-2.90 (2H, m), 3.55-3.66 (2H, m), 4.12 (1H, s), 7.31-7.35 (6H, m), 7.39-7.47 (4H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 32.59, 41.82, 52.80, 56.50, 62.66, 63.59, 116.54, 126.40, 127.22, 127.88, 128.30, 129.06, 129.45, 132.26, 138.50.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3-(3-nitro-phenyl)-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, **4b**

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using 3-nitrobenzaldehyde with azetidinium salt **3**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O/PE}$: 1/1, $R_f 0.1$) to give epoxide **4b** as a colourless oil (177 mg, 77 %, $M = 337.37$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3411, 3348, 2242. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 2.00-2.07 (1H, m), 2.12-2.20 (1H, m), 2.17 (3H, s), 2.61-2.73 (2H, m), 3.43 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 3.52 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 4.10 (1H, s), 7.17-7.20 (5H, m), 7.50-7.63 (2H, m), 8.17-8.20 (2H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 32.22, 41.85, 52.66, 56.74, 62.23, 62.71, 115.97, 121.90, 124.35, 127.34, 128.40, 129.05, 129.84, 132.10, 134.73, 138.38, 148.34.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3-ethyl-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, **4c**

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using propanal with azetidinium salt **3**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O/PE}$: 1/1, $R_f 0.2$) to give epoxide **4c** as a colourless oil (115 mg, 94 %, $M = 244.3$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3405, 3345, 2239. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 1.02 (3H, t, J 7.5 Hz), 1.65-1.72 (2H, m), 1.74-1.98 (2H, m), 2.10 (3H, s), 2.53-2.65 (2H, m), 2.86 (1H, t, J 6.1 Hz), 3.38 (1H, d, J 13.1 Hz), 3.49 (1H, d, J 13.1 Hz), 7.16-7.24 (5H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 9.84, 23.59, 32.10, 41.84, 52.86, 53.04, 62.55, 64.38, 117.48, 127.19, 128.33, 129.01, 138.59.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3-methyl-3-phenyl-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, **4d**

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using acetophenone with azetidinium salt **3**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O/PE}$: 1/1, $R_f 0.4$) to give epoxide **4d** as a colourless oil (179 mg, 99 %, $M = 306.40$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3419, 3355, 2245. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 1.40-1.59 (2H, m), 1.80 (3H, s), 1.92, (3H, s), 2.35-2.52 (2H, m), 3.22 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 3.36 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 7.07-7.25 (10H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 22.69, 28.77, 41.89, 52.55, 58.13, 62.40, 67.33, 118.06, 126.39, 127.16, 128.34, 128.52, 128.54, 129.07, 136.61, 138.86.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3,3-dimethyl-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, **4e**

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using acetone with azetidinium salt **3**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O/PE}$: 1/1, $R_f 0.4$) to give epoxide

4g as a colourless oil (120 mg, 99 %, $M = 244.33$). δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 1.32 (3H, s), 1.58 (3H, s), 1.89-2.07 (2H, m), 2.25 (3H, s), 2.72 (2H, t, J 7.2 Hz), 3.51 (1H, d, J 12.9 Hz), 3.60 (1H, d, J 12.9 Hz), 7.22-7.33 (5H, m). δ_C (75 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 19.19, 22.82, 29.26, 42.13, 52.98, 57.02, 62.53, 63.71, 118.35, 127.21, 128.36, 129.03, 138.68. MS (ESI) $[MNa]^+$ $C_{15}H_{20}N_2NaO$ requires 267.15, found 267.20.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-1-phenyl-ethyl]-3-methyl-3-phenyl-oxirane-2-carbonitrile, 8

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using acetophenone with azetidinium salt **7**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent Et_2O/PE : 3/7, R_f 0.3) to give epoxide **8** as a colourless oil (83 mg, 61 %, $M = 382.49$). $[\alpha]_D^{25} +37.8$ (c 0.85 in $CHCl_3$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3420, 3353, 2242. δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 1.56 (3H, s), 1.92 (3H, s), 2.47 (1H, dd, J 6.7 and 9.2 Hz), 2.55-2.61 (1H, m), 2.91 (1H, dd, J 9.2 and 12.7 Hz), 3.14 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 3.40 (1H, d, J 13 Hz), 7.13-7.29 (15H, m). δ_C (75 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 22.56, 41.99, 42.79, 59.77, 63.01, 69.33, 117.48, 127.11, 127.24, 127.80, 128.34, 128.37, 128.45, 128.77, 128.82, 129.04, 136.61, 137.48, 138.90.

2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-1-phenyl-ethyl]-3-phenyl-oxirane-2-carboxylic acid ethyl ester, 10

The procedure employed for compound **4a** was reproduced using benzaldehyde with azetidinium salt **9**. The residue was purified by chromatography over silica gel (eluent Et_2O/PE : 3/7, R_f 0.3) to give epoxide **10** as a colourless oil (125 mg, 85%, $M = 415.52$). $[\alpha]_D^{25} +26.3$ (c 1.35 in $CHCl_3$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3425, 3356, 1745. δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 1.06 (3H, t, J 7.1 Hz), 1.37 (3H, s), 2.33 (1H, dd, J 4 and 12.5 Hz), 2.74 (1H, dd, J 4 and 10.5 Hz), 2.91 (1H, d, J 13.1 Hz), 3.09 (1H, d, J 13.1 Hz), 3.35 (1H, dd, J 10.5 and 12.5 Hz), 4.31 (1H, s), 6.96-7.21 (15H, m). δ_C (75 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 13.94, 41.30, 42.02, 57.04, 61.53, 62.45, 62.88, 65.45, 126.82, 127.04, 128.02, 128.14, 128.41, 128.56, 128.58, 128.94, 129.00, 133.61, 137.96, 138.63, 169.19.

2-Benzyl-1-methyl-2-phenyl-pyrrolidin-3-one 13a

The crude epoxide **4a**, prepared as describe above is heated without solvent under reduced pressure for a period of 4 hours (Precautions should be taken due to the formation of hydrogen cyanide!) The yellow oil was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluent Et_2O/PE : 1/1, R_f 0.6) to give pyrrolidinone **13a** as a colourless oil (89 mg, 81%, $M = 265.35$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3057, 2924, 1746. δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 1.81-1.92 (1H, m), 2.23-2.26 (1H, m), 2.31 (3H, s), 2.69-2.82 (2H, m), 3.22 (1H, d, J 11.6 Hz), 3.30 (1H, d, J 11.6 Hz), 7.12-7.29 (10H, m). δ_C (75 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 35.49, 37.88, 39.11, 48.36, 73.81, 126.43, 127.42, 127.51, 127.90, 128.32, 131.18, 137.34, 139.45, 217.89. HRMS (TOF MS ES+) $[MH^+]$ $C_{18}H_{20}NO$ requires 266.1545, found 266.1551.

2-Benzyl-1-methyl-2-(3-nitro-phenyl)-pyrrolidin-3-one, 13b

The crude epoxide **4b**, prepared as describe above is heated without solvent under reduced pressure for a period of 12 hours (Precautions should be taken due to the formation of hydrogen cyanide!) The yellow oil was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluent Et_2O/PE : 1/1, R_f 0.4) to give pyrrolidinone **13b** as a colourless oil (76 mg, 71%, $M = 310.34$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3083, 2919, 1746. δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 2.02 (1H, ddd, J 4.6 and 7.7 and 18.7 Hz), 2.38 (1H, ddd, J 6.5 and 8.3 and 18.7 Hz), 2.49 (3H, s), 2.54-2.61 (1H, m), 2.93-3.00 (1H, m), 3.20 (1H, d, J 13.6 Hz), 3.47 (1H, d, J 13.6 Hz), 7.15-7.19 (5H, m), 7.47 (1H, t, J 8.1 Hz), 7.67-7.70 (1H, m), 8.05-8.09 (1H, m), 8.24 (1H, br s). δ_C (75 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 35.29, 37.44, 39.73, 48.35, 73.52, 122.47, 122.53, 127.07, 128.37, 129.40, 130.97, 133.80, 136.44, 143.08, 148.07, 216.30. HRMS (TOF MS ES+) $[MH^+]$ $C_{18}H_{19}N_2O_3$ requires 311.1396, found 311.1402

2-Benzyl-2-(4-methoxy-phenyl)-1-methyl-pyrrolidin-3-one, 13c

The crude epoxide **4c**, prepared as describe above is heated without solvent under reduced pressure for a period of 2 hours (Precautions should be taken due to the formation of hydrogen cyanide!) The yellow oil was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluent Et_2O/PE : 1/1, R_f 0.5) to give pyrrolidinone **13c** as a colourless oil (117 mg, 58%, $M = 295.37$). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3073, 2960, 1751. δ_H (300 MHz; $CDCl_3$) 1.82-1.93 (1H, m), 2.23-2.33 (1H, m), 2.32 (3H, s), 2.71-2.79 (2H, m), 3.20

(1H, d, *J* 9 Hz), 3.29 (1H, d, *J* 9 Hz), 3.72 (3H, s), 6.81 (2H, d, *J* 6 Hz), 7.11-7.14 (7H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 35.42, 37.79, 39.24, 48.29, 55.29, 73.34, 113.63, 126.37, 127.86, 128.63, 131.12, 131.61, 137.42, 158.73, 218.15. HRMS (TOF MS ES+) $[\text{MH}^+]$ $\text{C}_{19}\text{H}_{22}\text{NO}_2$ requires 296.1651, found 296.1657

2-Benzyl-2-ethyl-1-methyl-pyrrolidin-3-one, **13d**

The crude epoxide **4d**, prepared as describe above is heated without solvent under reduced pressure for a period of 8 hours (Precautions should be taken due to the formation of hydrogen cyanide!) The yellow oil was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O}/\text{PE}$: 1/1, *R_f* 0.5) to give pyrrolidinone **13c** as a colourless oil (17 mg, 20%, *M* = 217.30). ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3057, 3027, 2924, 1746. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 0.72 (3H, t, *J* 7.3 Hz), 1.48-1.68 (2H, m), 1.89-1.97 (1H, m), 2.10-2.19 (1H, m), 2.46 (3H, s), 2.62-2.75 (3H, m), 2.82-2.90 (1H, m), 6.99-7.02 (2H, m), 7.08-7.18 (3H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 9.08, 26.12, 34.19, 37.29, 39.01, 48.26, 71.05, 126.19, 127.84, 130.59, 137.62, 218.41. HRMS (TOF MS ES+) $[\text{MH}^+]$ $\text{C}_{14}\text{H}_{20}\text{NO}$ requires 218.1545, found 218.1555

2-Benzyl-1-methyl-2-((E)-styryl)-pyrrolidin-3-one, **13e**

The crude epoxide **4e**, prepared as describe above is heated without solvent under reduced pressure for a period of 8 hours (Precautions should be taken due to the formation of hydrogen cyanide!) The yellow oil was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O}/\text{PE}$: 1/1, *R_f* 0.5) to give pyrrolidinone **13e** as a colourless oil (38 mg, 20%, *M* = 277.36). δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 2.02-2.15 (1H, m), 2.30-2.44 (1H, m), 2.57 (3H, s), 2.77-2.90 (1H, m), 2.95-3.06 (1H, m), 3.04 and 3.23 (2 x 1H, AB system, *J* 13.8 Hz), 6.26 (1H, d, *J* 16.2), 6.57 (1H, d, *J* 16.2), 7.21-7.39 (10H, m). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 35.28, 36.82, 39.30, 48.34, 72.30, 125.38, 126.24, 126.40, 127.78, 128.53, 130.71, 132.60, 136.50, 136.88, 215.39. MS (ESI) $[\text{MNa}^+]$ $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{21}\text{NNaO}$ requires 314.15, found 314.20

Aziridination of phenyl-N-tosylimine.

A 50 mL flask was charged with 359 mg of azetidinium salt **3** (1.0 mmol, *M* = 358.47), 25 mL of dry THF were added. After complete dissolution, the mixture was cool to -78°C with acetone/dry ice. At this temperature tosylimine (311 mg, 1.2 equiv., 1.2 mmol, *M* = 259.32) was added immediately followed by LiHMDS in THF (2.2 mL, 2.2 equiv., 2.2 mmol, *c* = 1 mol.L^{-1}) The reaction was completed after a period of 50 min, at which point 20 mL of a saturated solution of ammonium chloride were added (the temperature was still of -78°C). The mixture was partitioned between water and dichloromethane, the organic phases were dried over MgSO_4 and the solvent evaporated under vacuum. The TLC (eluent $\text{Et}_2\text{O}/\text{PE}$: 1/1) showed the presence of two products **18a** and **18b**, with *R_f*_{18a} 0.22 and *R_f*_{18b} 0.33. Heating at 50°C for 30 min performed the conversion of compound **18b** into product **19** with *R_f*₁₉ 0.46, while compound **18a** were still present as indicated by the spot with *R_f*_{18a} 0.22.

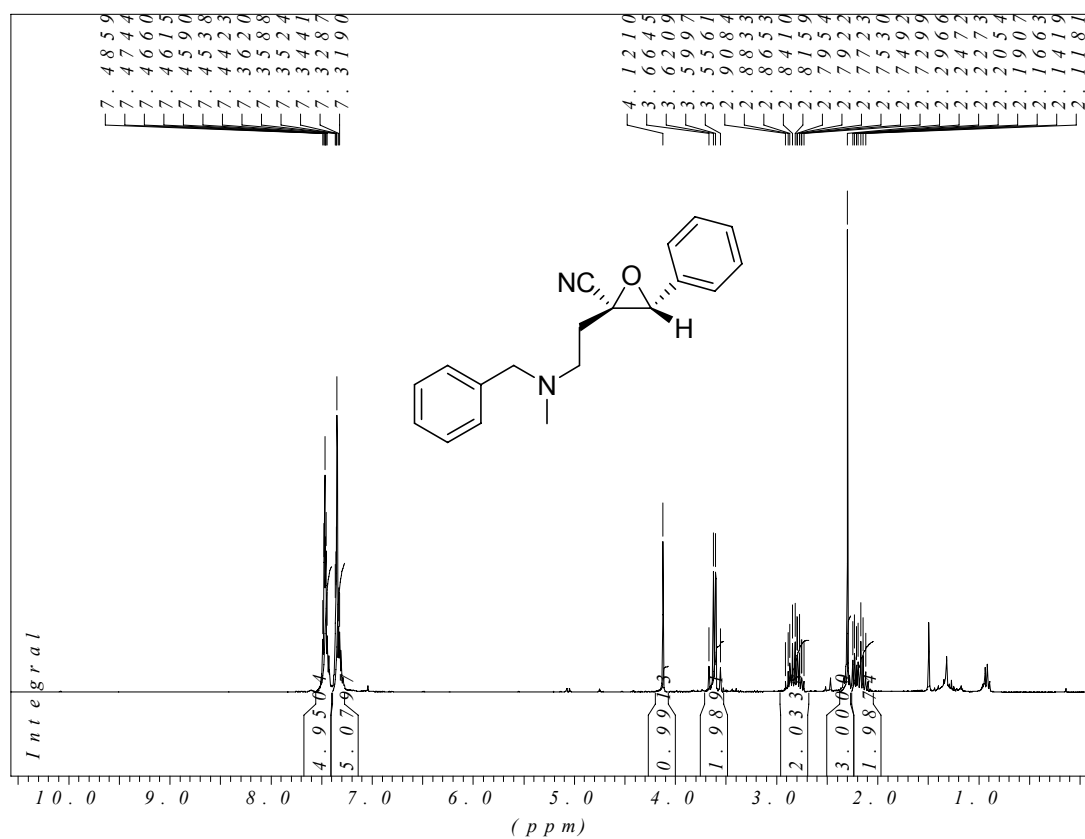
Chromatographic separation using silica gel allowed the isolation of **19** as a pale yellow solid (134 mg, 30 %, *M* = 418.55) followed by **18a** as a pale yellow oil (144 mg, 30 %, *M* = 445.57).

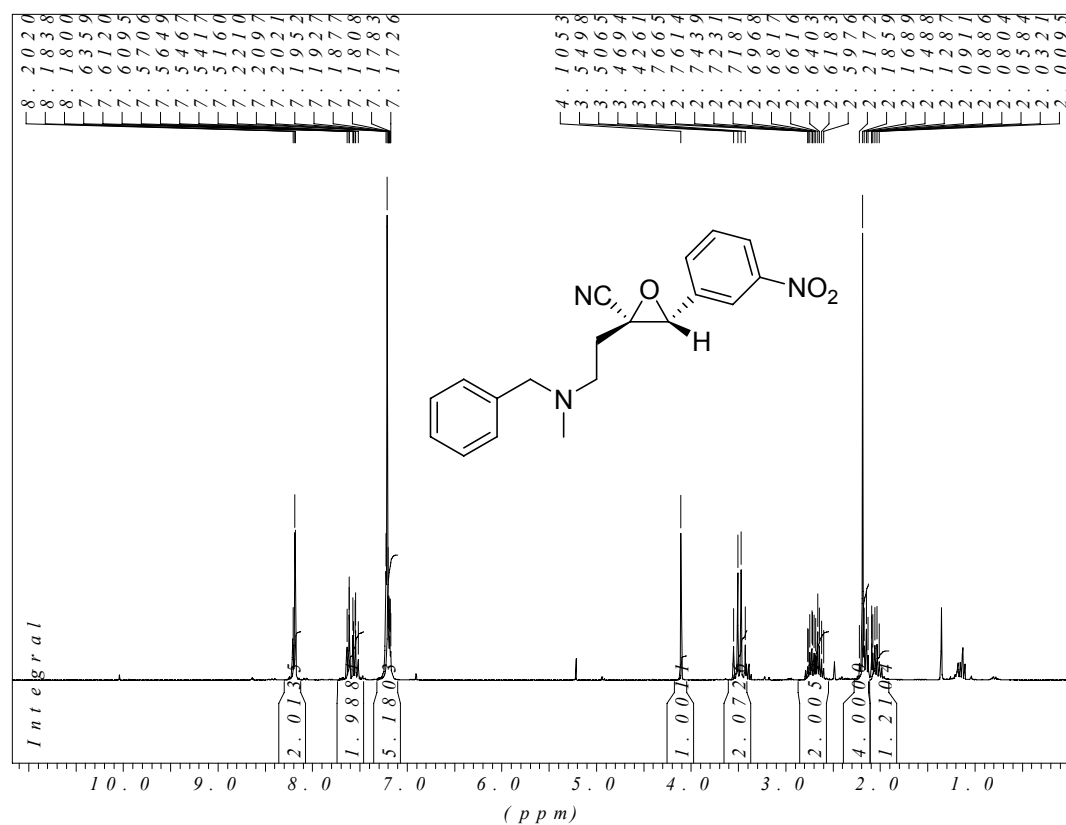
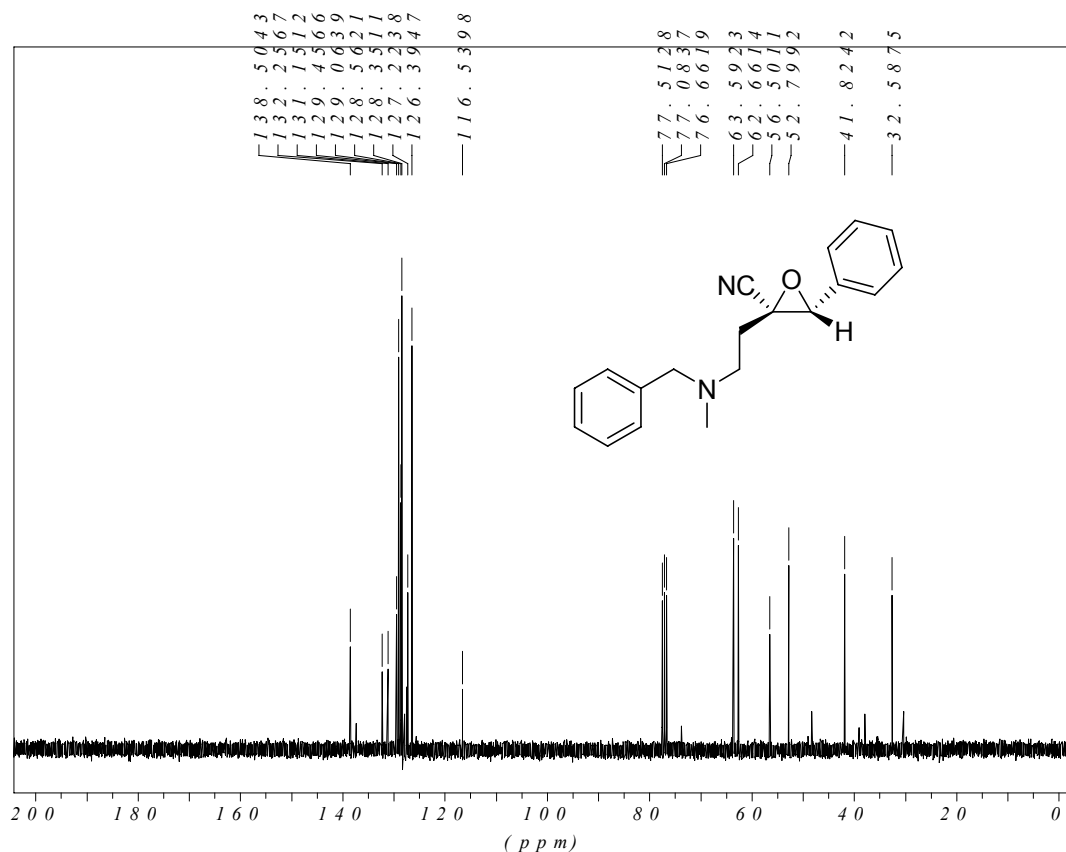
2-[2-(Benzyl-methyl-amino)-ethyl]-3-phenyl-1-(toluene-4-sulfonyl)-aziridine-2-carbonitrile, **18a**

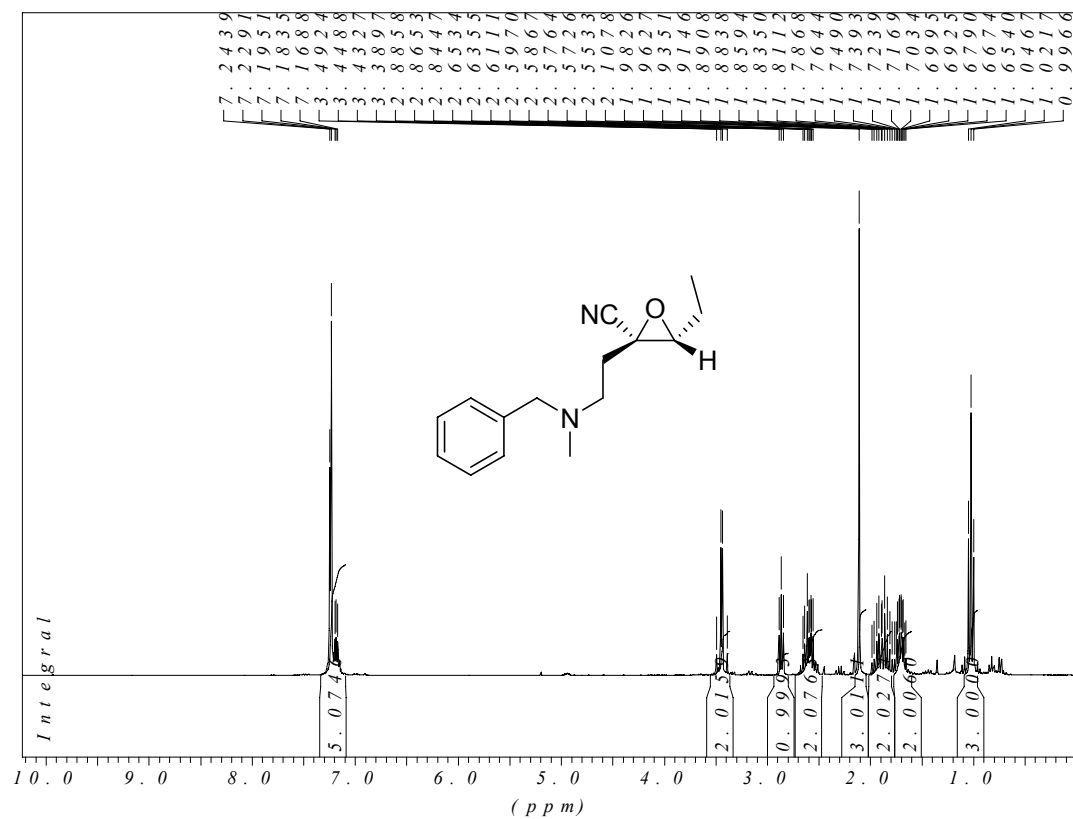
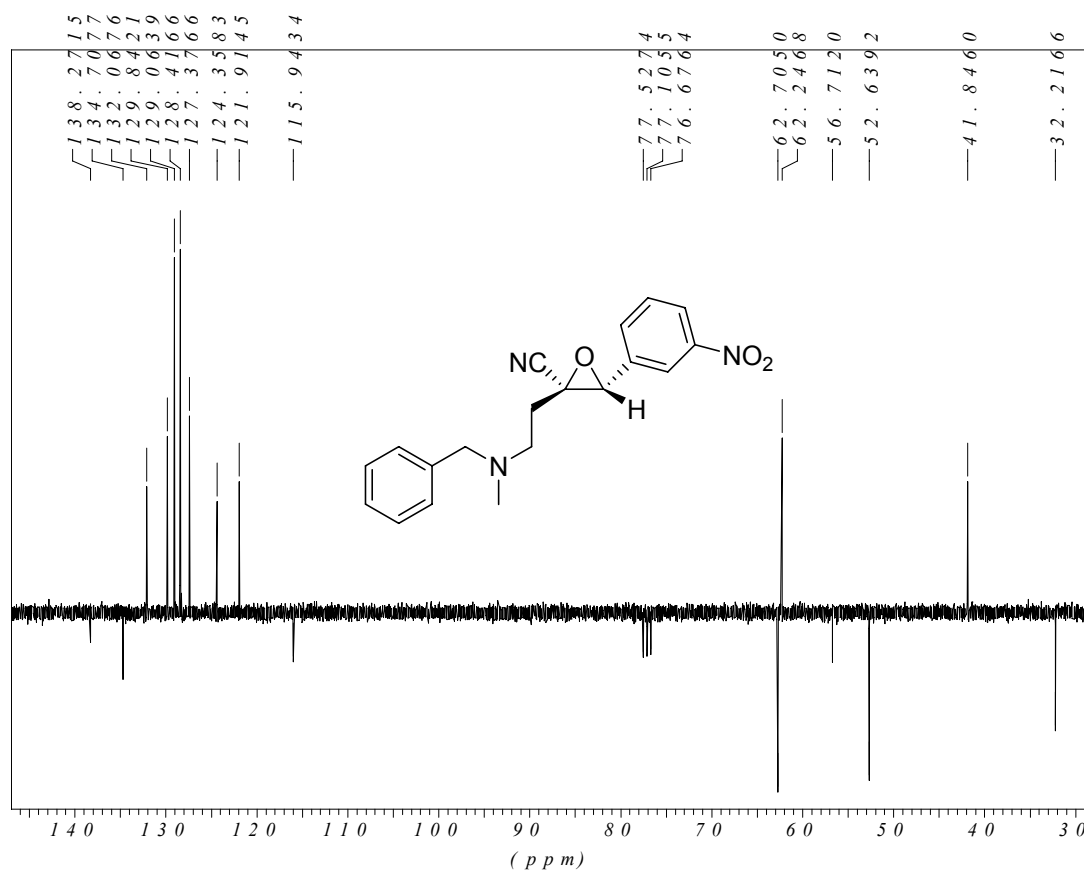
ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3078, 3027, 1634, 1593. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 1.33-1.44 (1H, m), 1.54-1.64 (1H, m), 1.79 (3H, s), 2.24-2.38 (2H, m), 2.33 (3H, s), 3.15 (1H, d, *J* 13.8 Hz), 3.22 (1H, d, *J* 13.8 Hz), 4.43 (1H, s), 7.05-7.24 (12H, m), 7.83 (2H, d, *J* 8.28 Hz). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 21.81, 28.32, 40.37, 41.55, 51.01, 53.14, 62.26, 116.21, 127.13, 127.60, 128.29, 128.54, 128.80, 128.97, 129.28, 128.84, 130.04, 134.32, 138.45, 145.72.

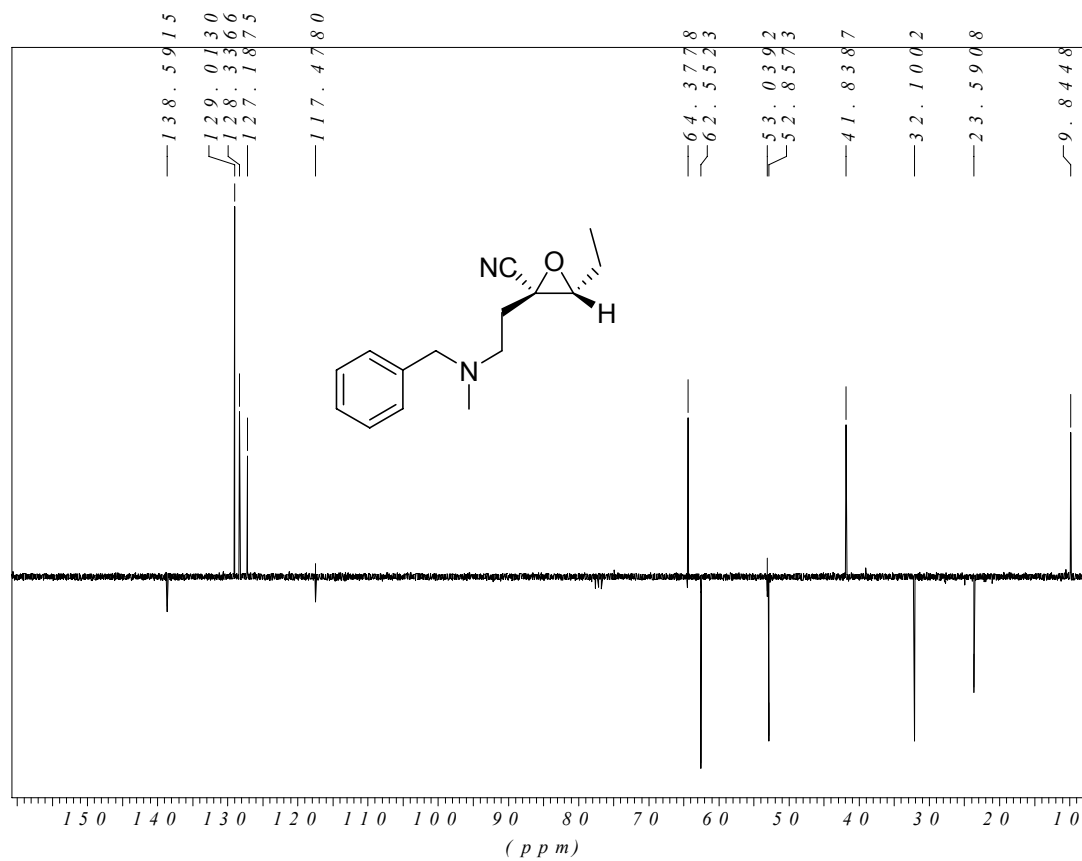
N-[2-Benzyl-1-methyl-2-phenyl-pyrrolidin-(3E)-ylidene]-4-methyl-benzenesulfonamide, **19**

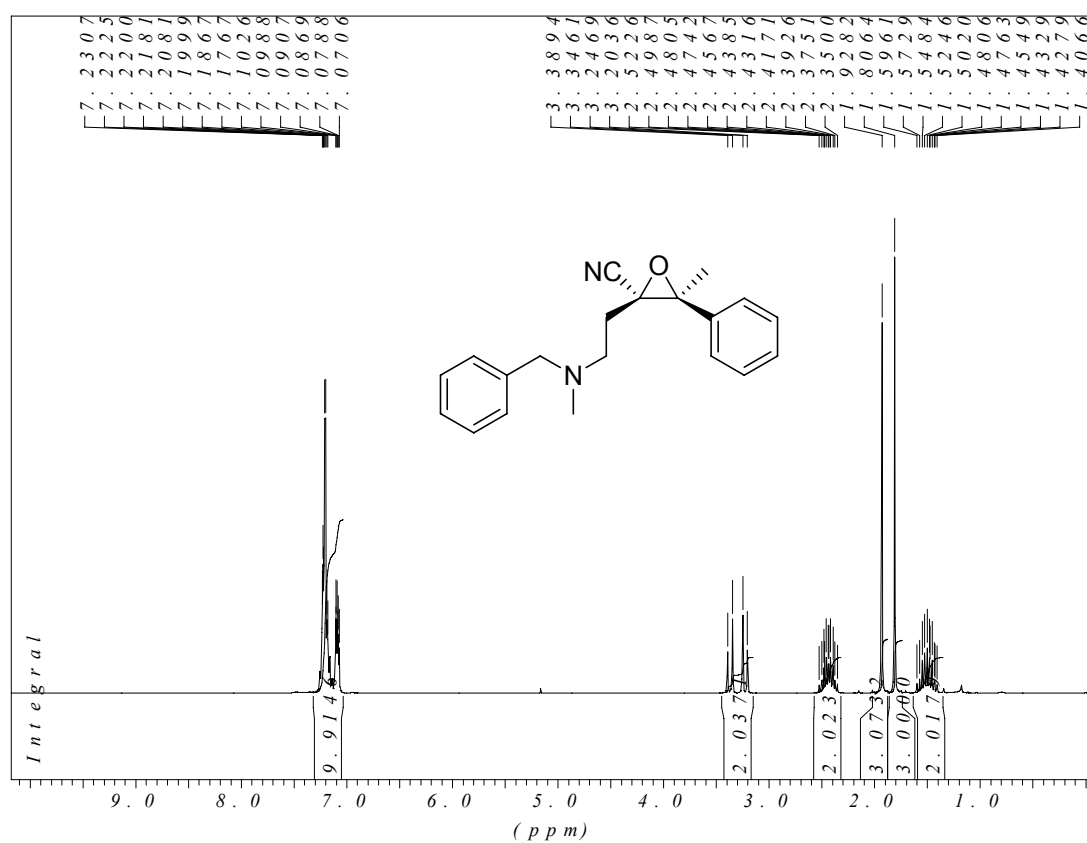
ν_{max} (KBr)/ cm^{-1} 3283, 3062, 2238. δ_{H} (300 MHz; CDCl_3) 2.19 (3H, s), 2.35 (3H, s), 2.39-2.51 (1H, m), 2.60-2.68 (1H, m), 2.83-2.89 (1H, m), 3.06-3.18 (1H, m), 3.16 (1H, d, *J* 13.7 Hz), 3.40 (1H, d, *J* 13.7 Hz), 6.98-7.08 (7H, m), 7.17-7.28 (5H, m), 7.66 (2H, d, *J* 8.3 Hz). δ_{C} (75 MHz; CDCl_3) 21.67, 34.72, 34.96, 39.62, 50.39, 75.01, 126.31, 127.46, 127.50, 127.58, 127.65, 128.44, 129.47, 131.32, 136.92, 137.23, 139.27, 143.97, 198.70.

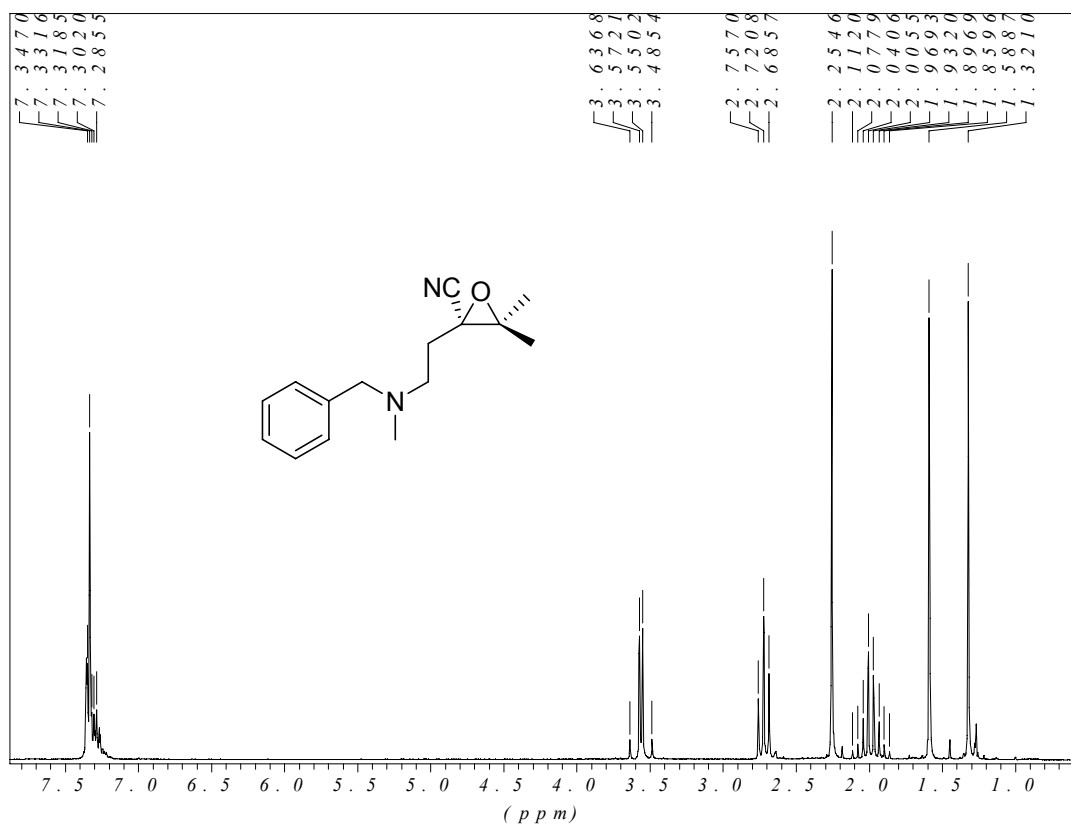
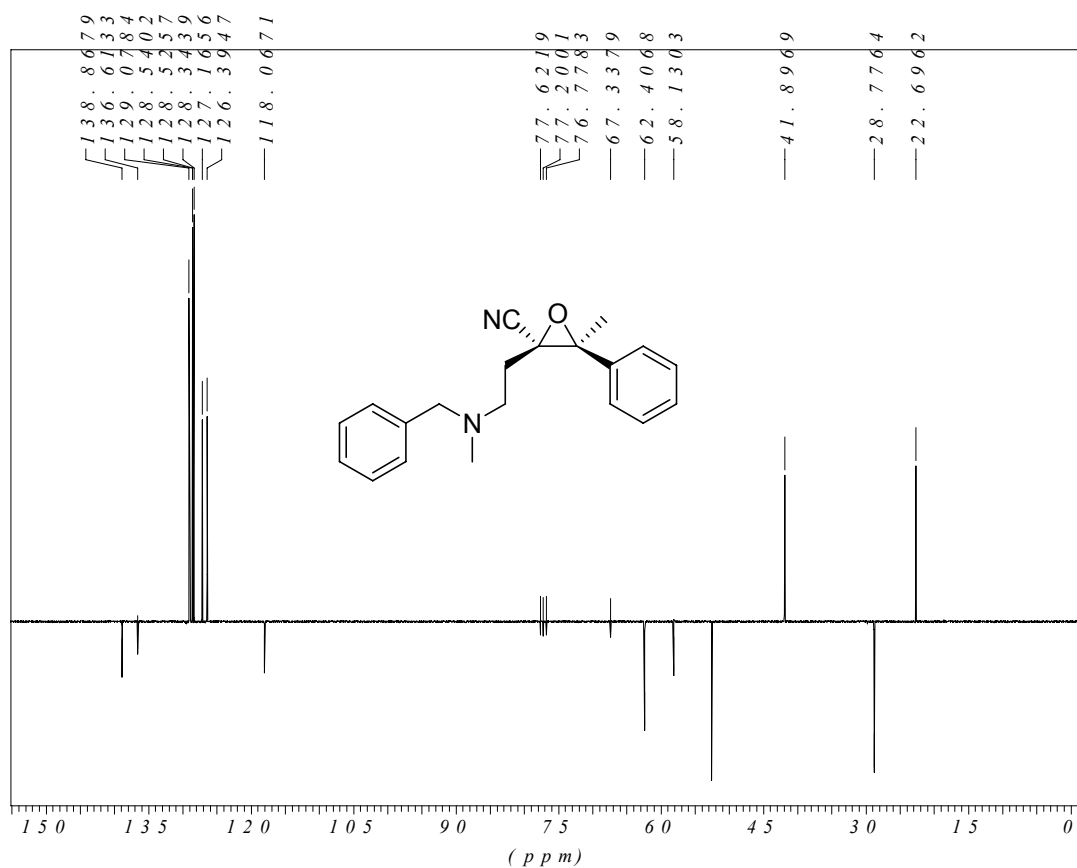


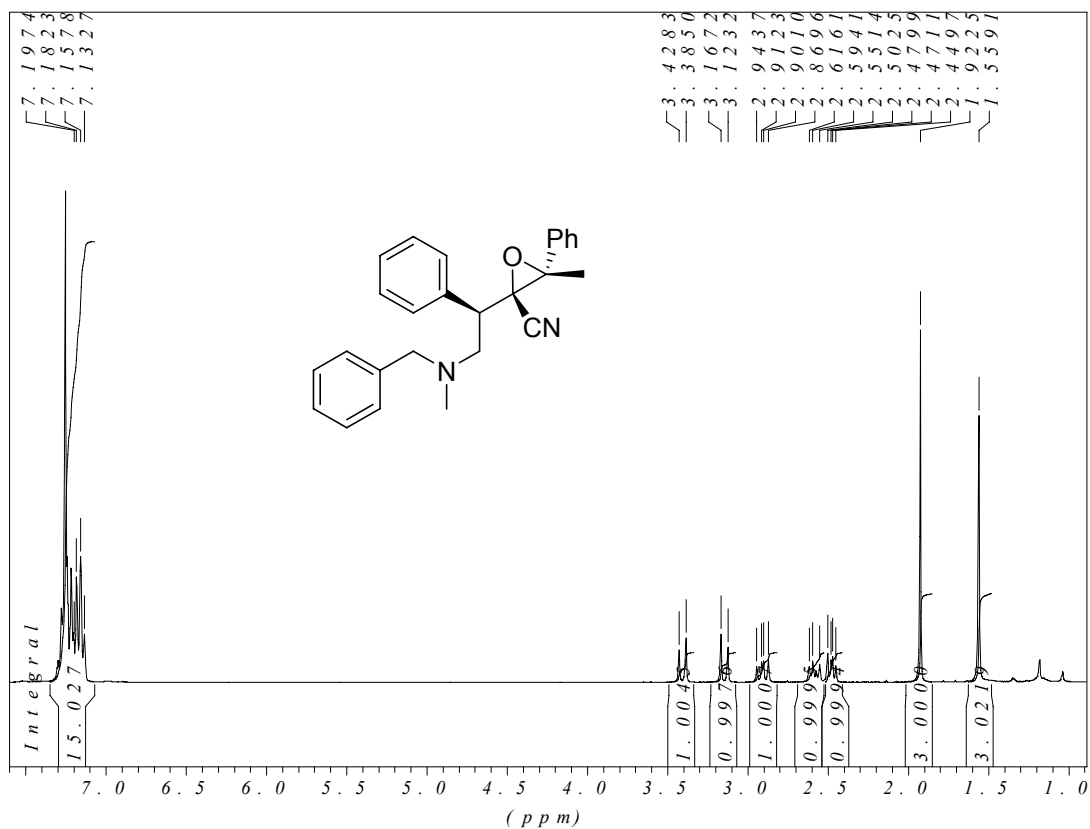
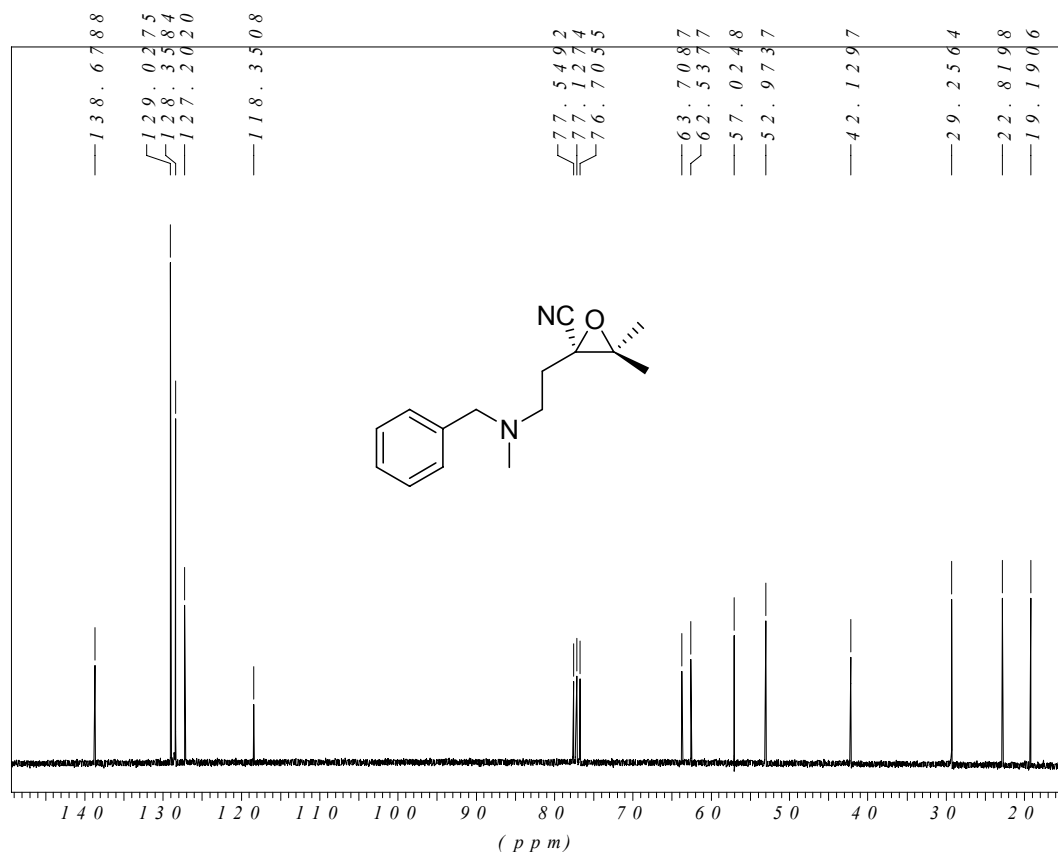


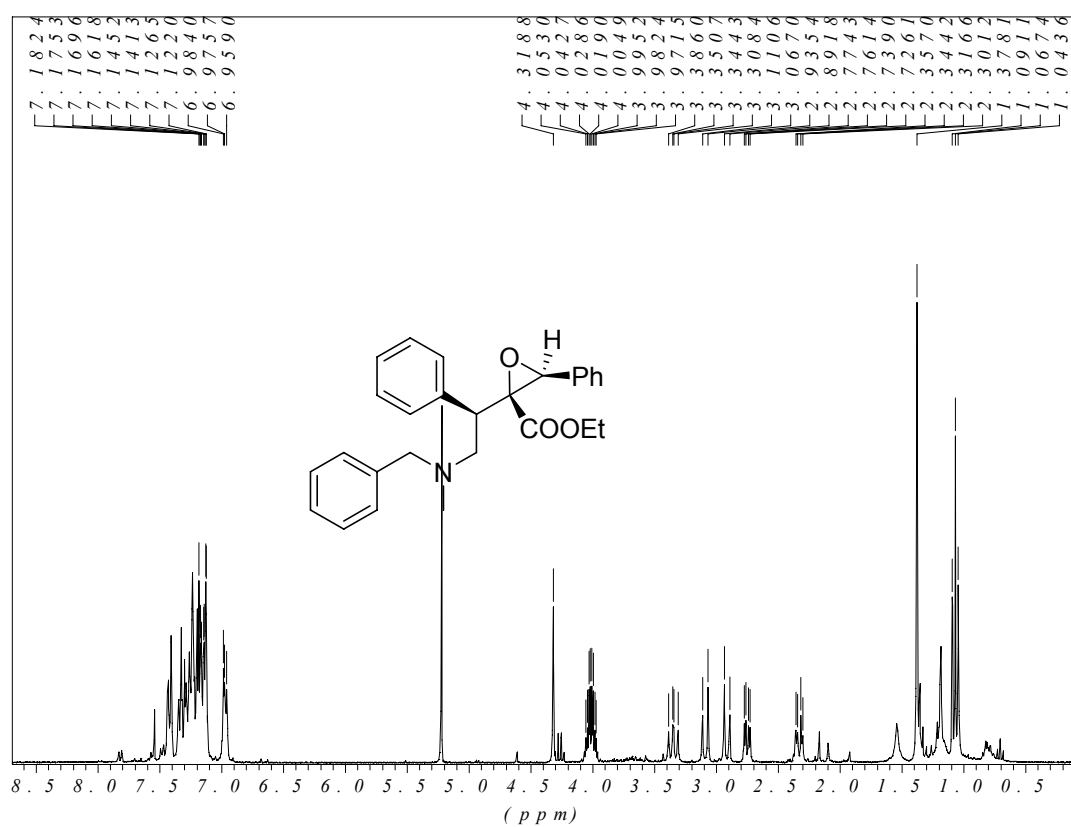
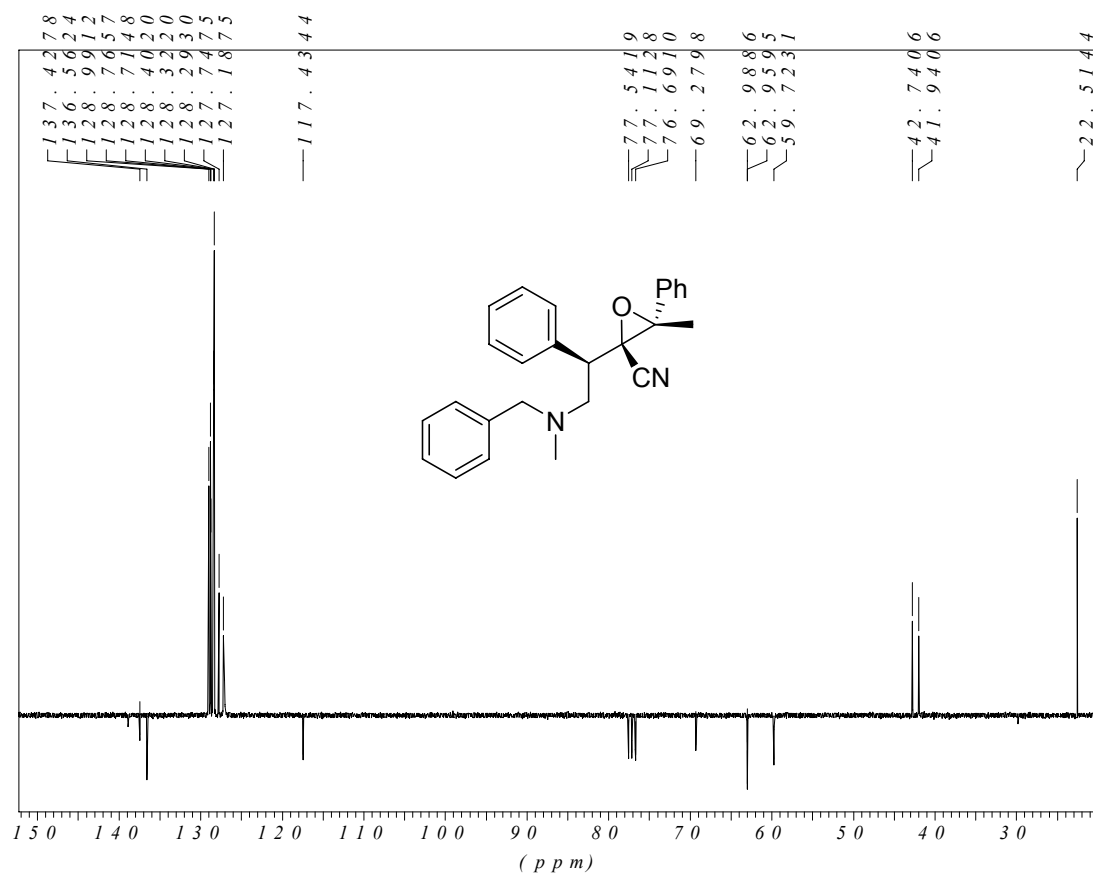


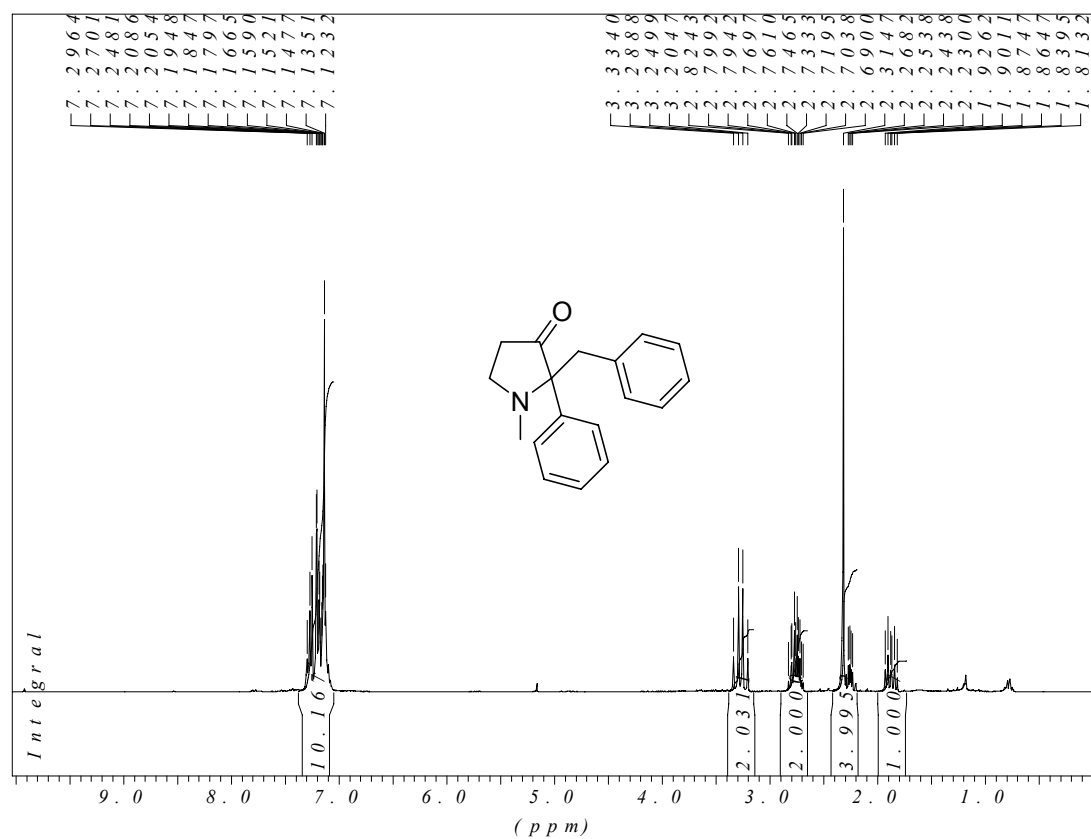
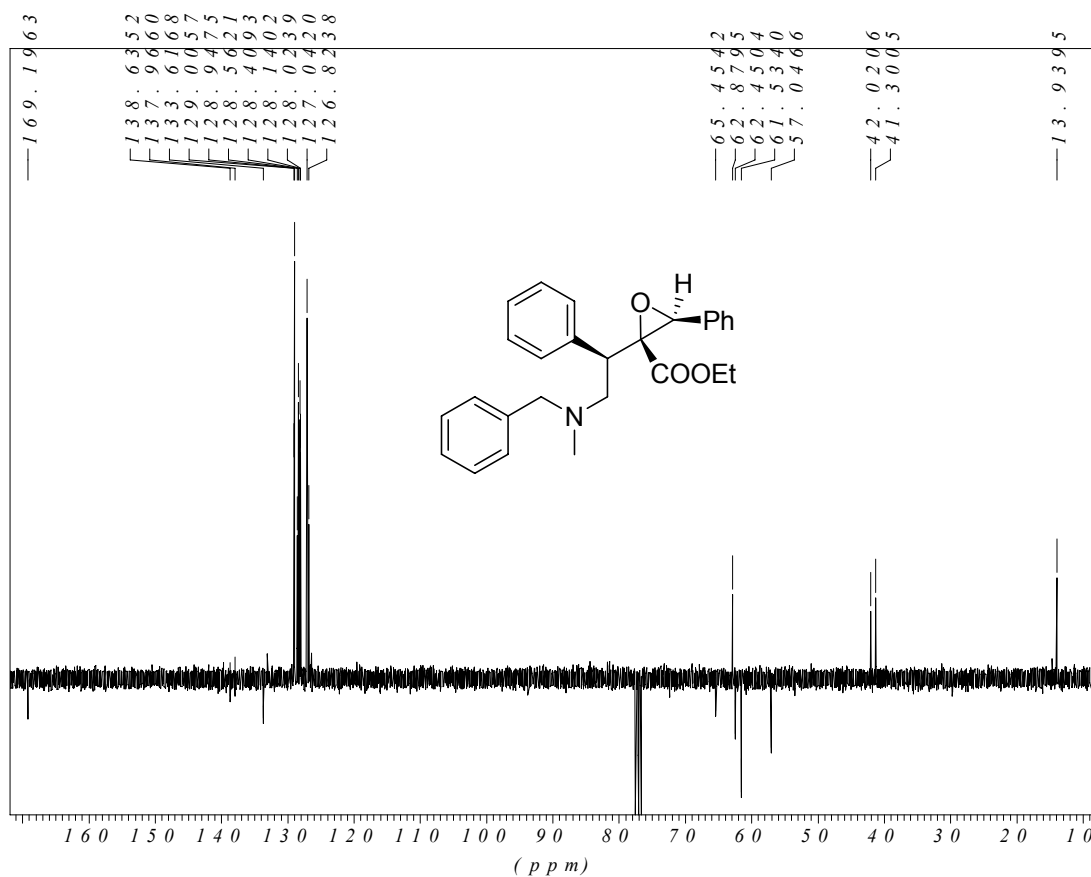


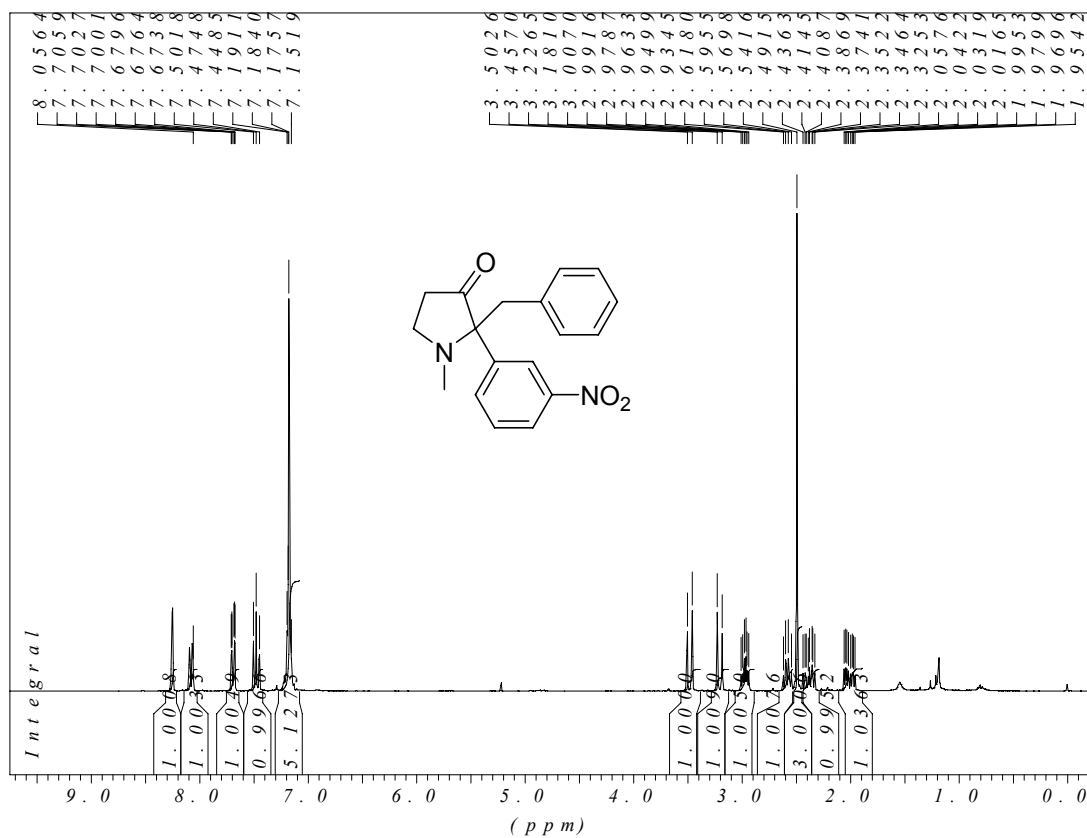
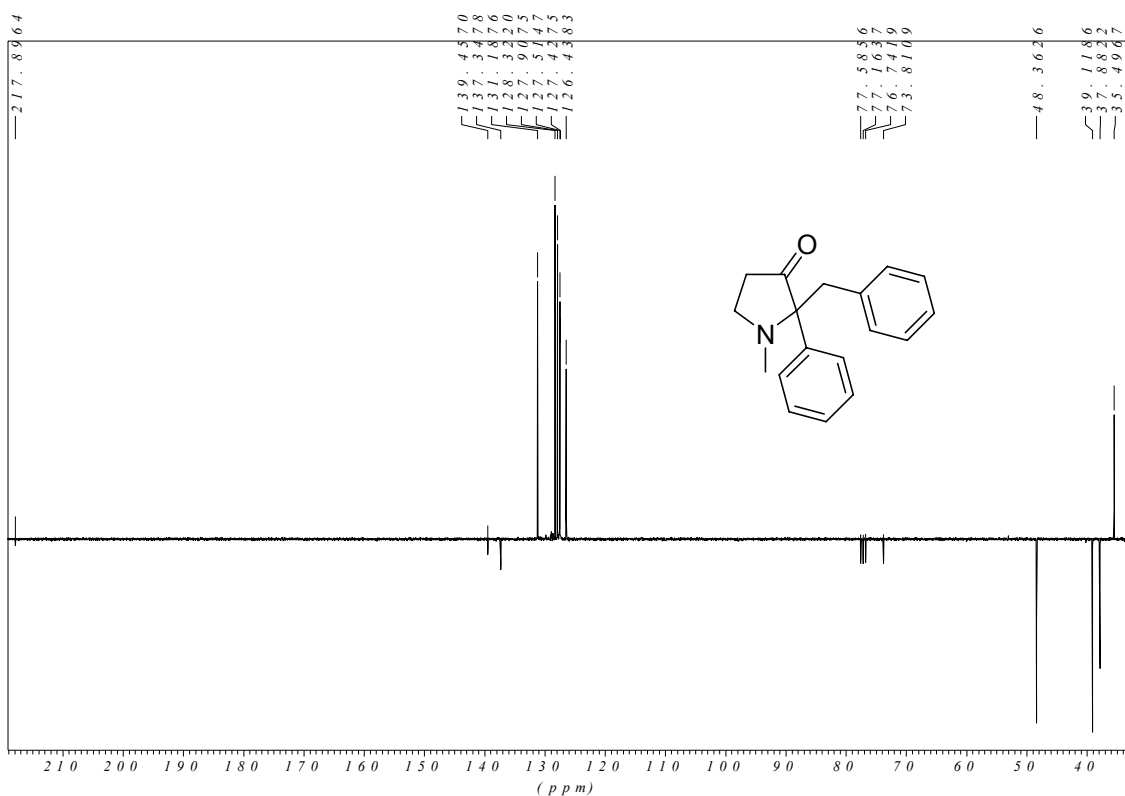


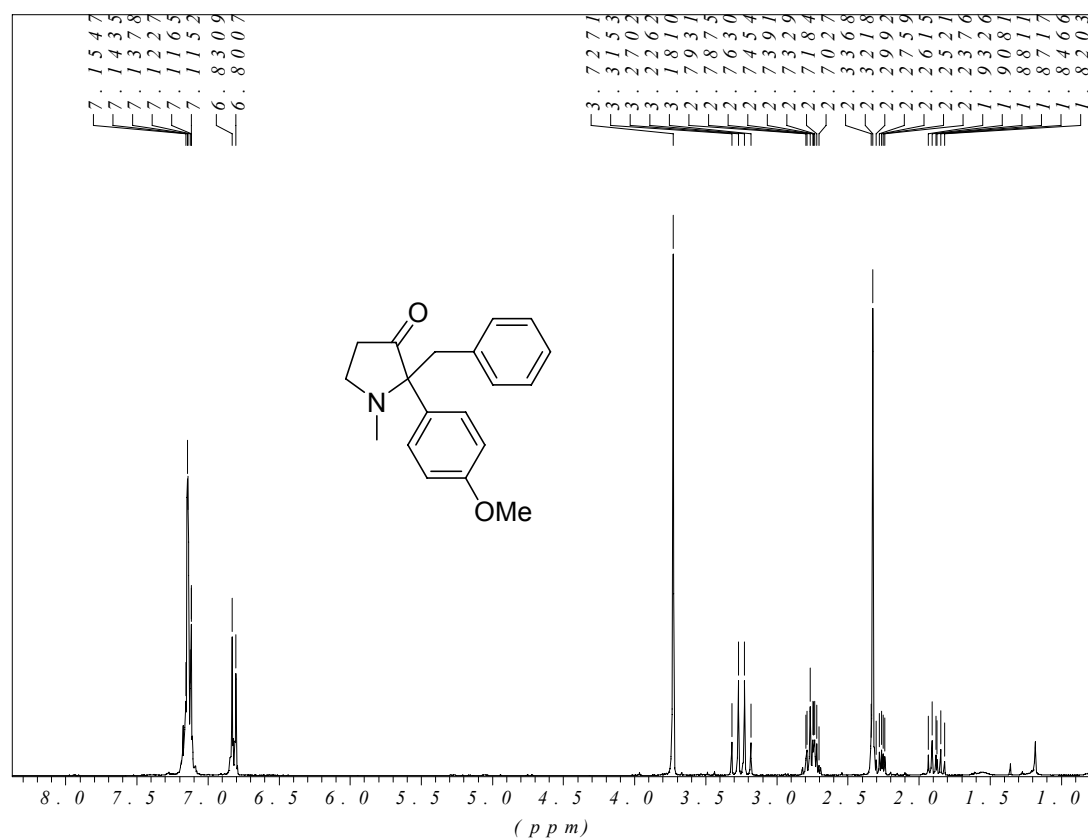
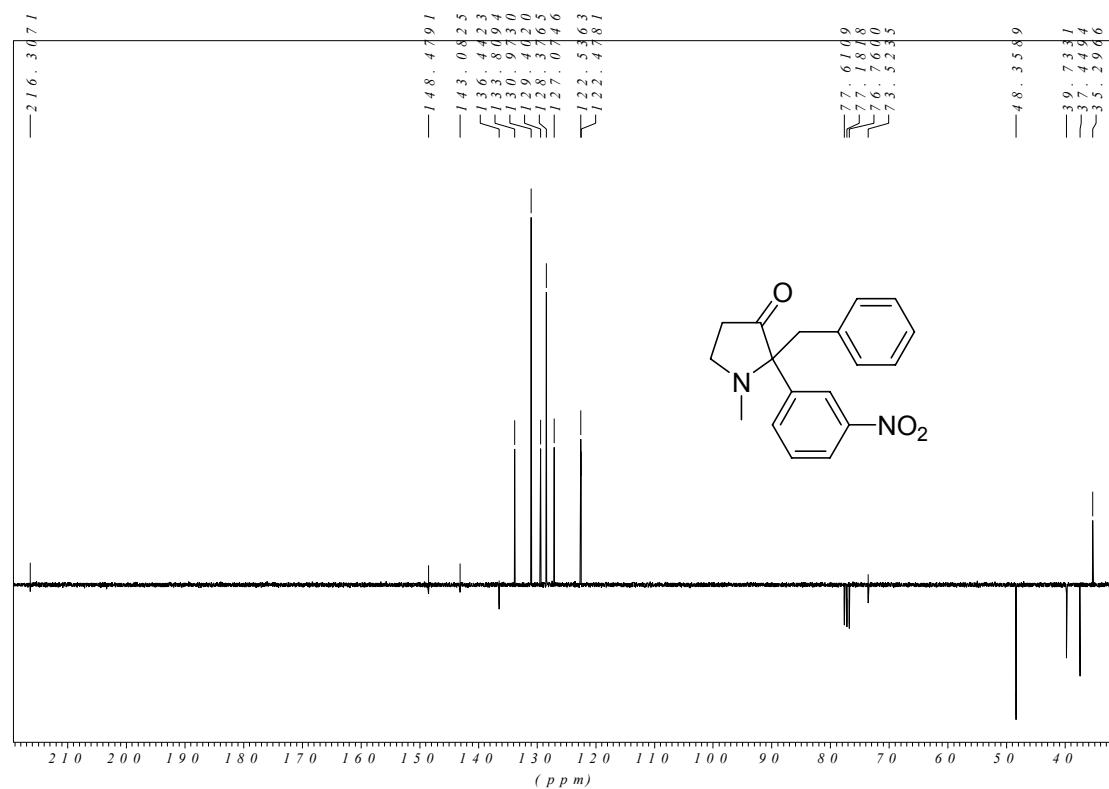


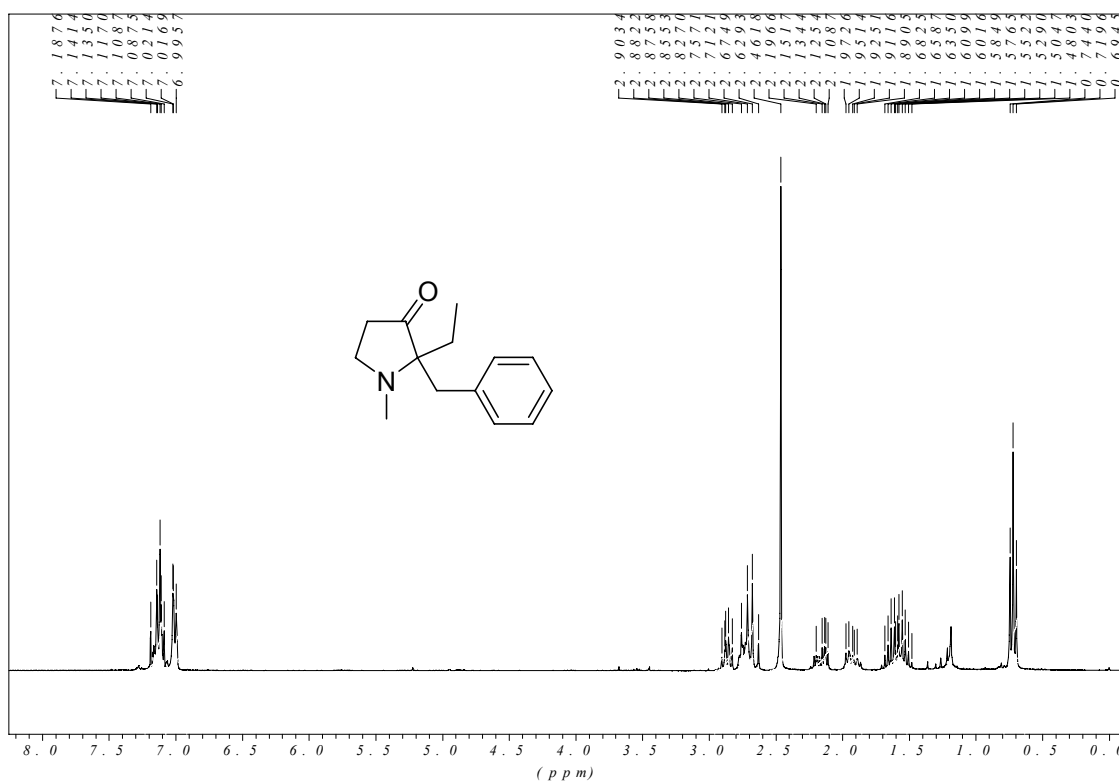
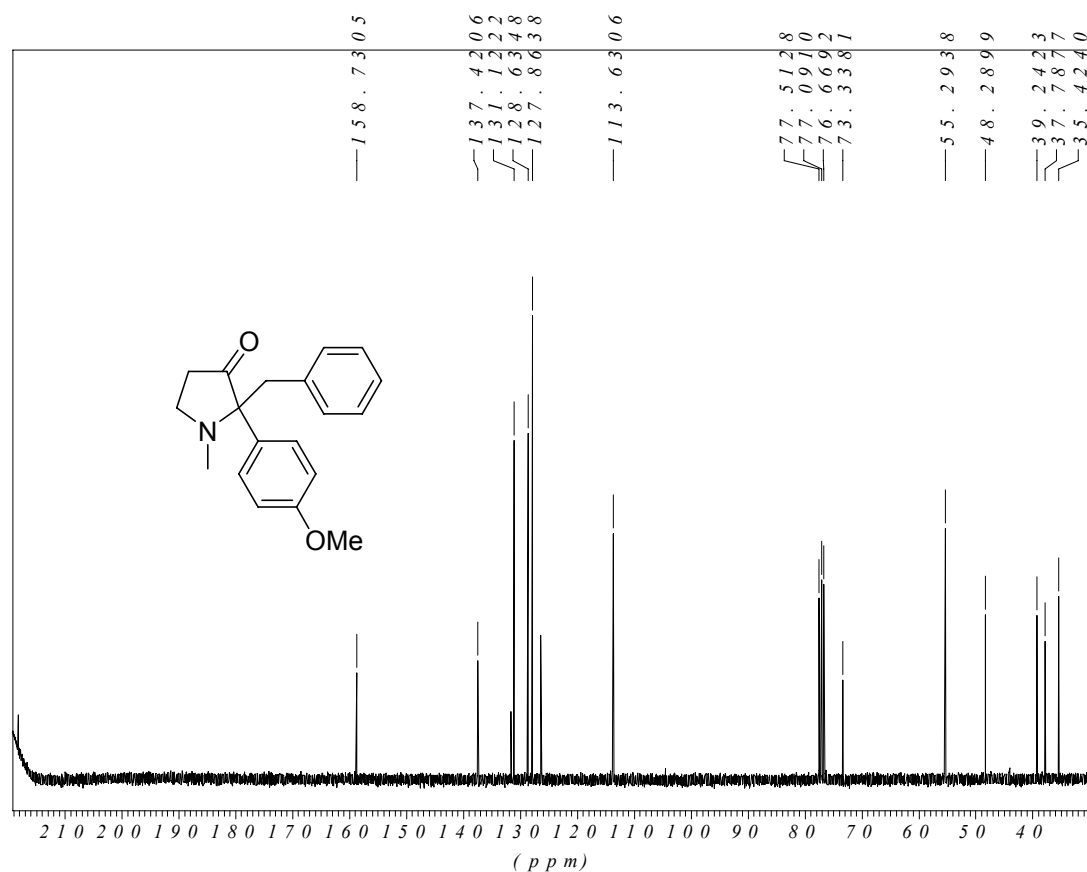


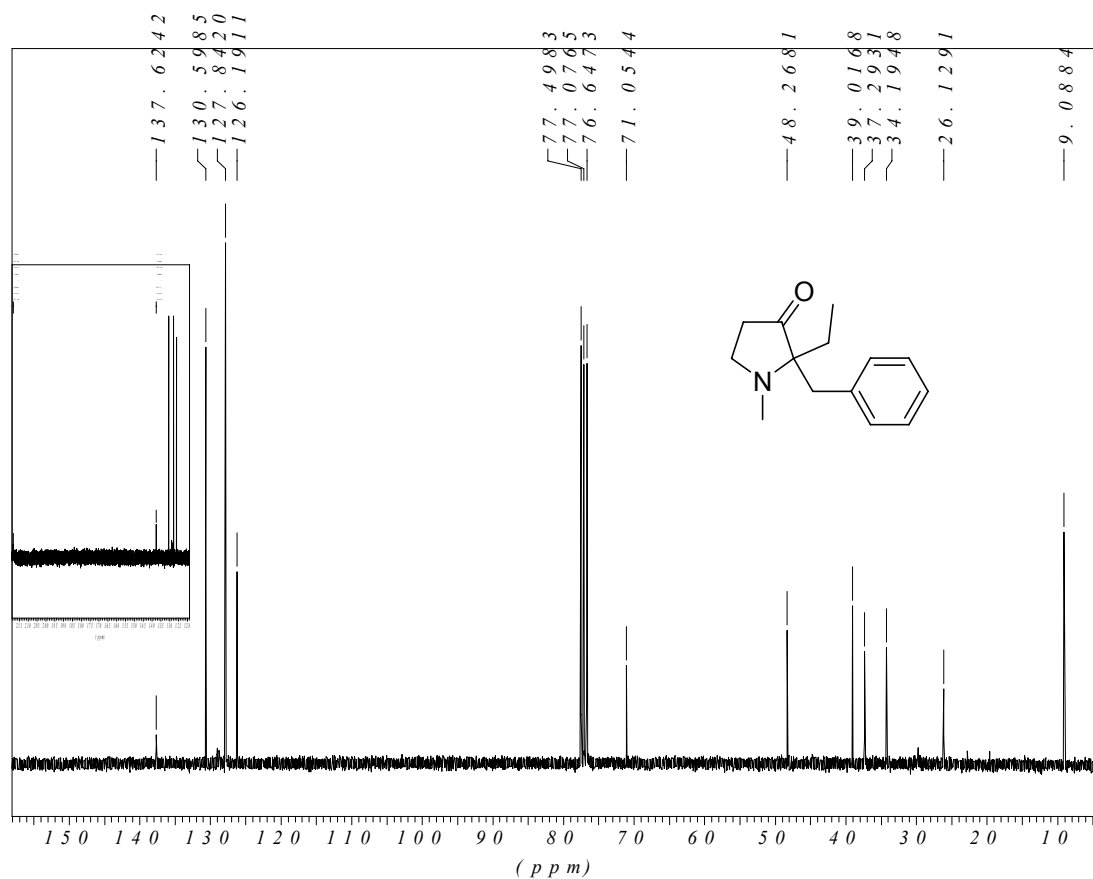


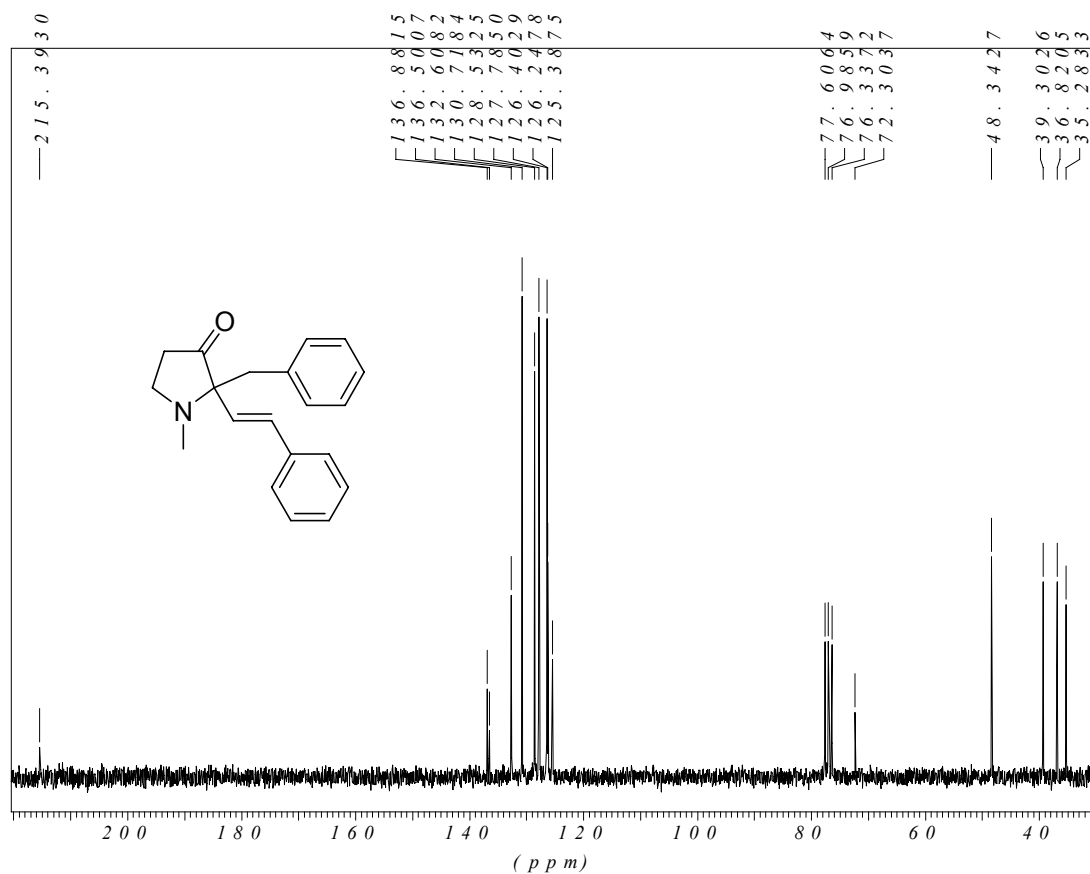
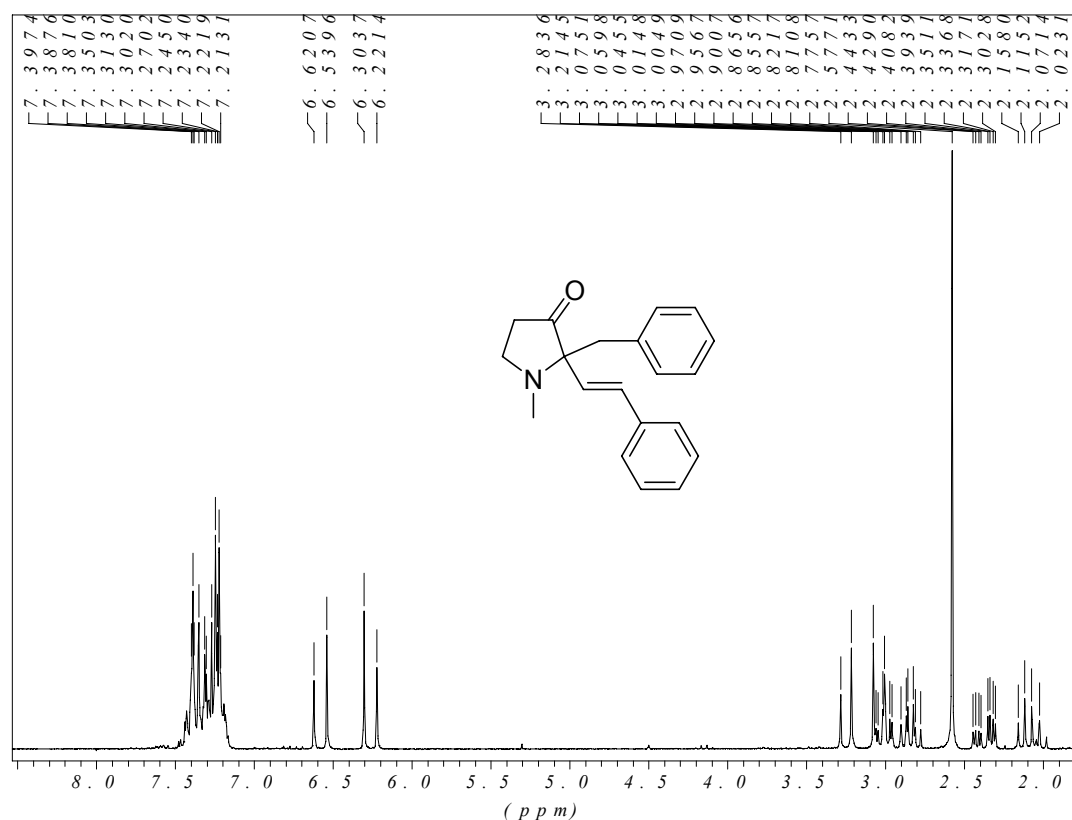


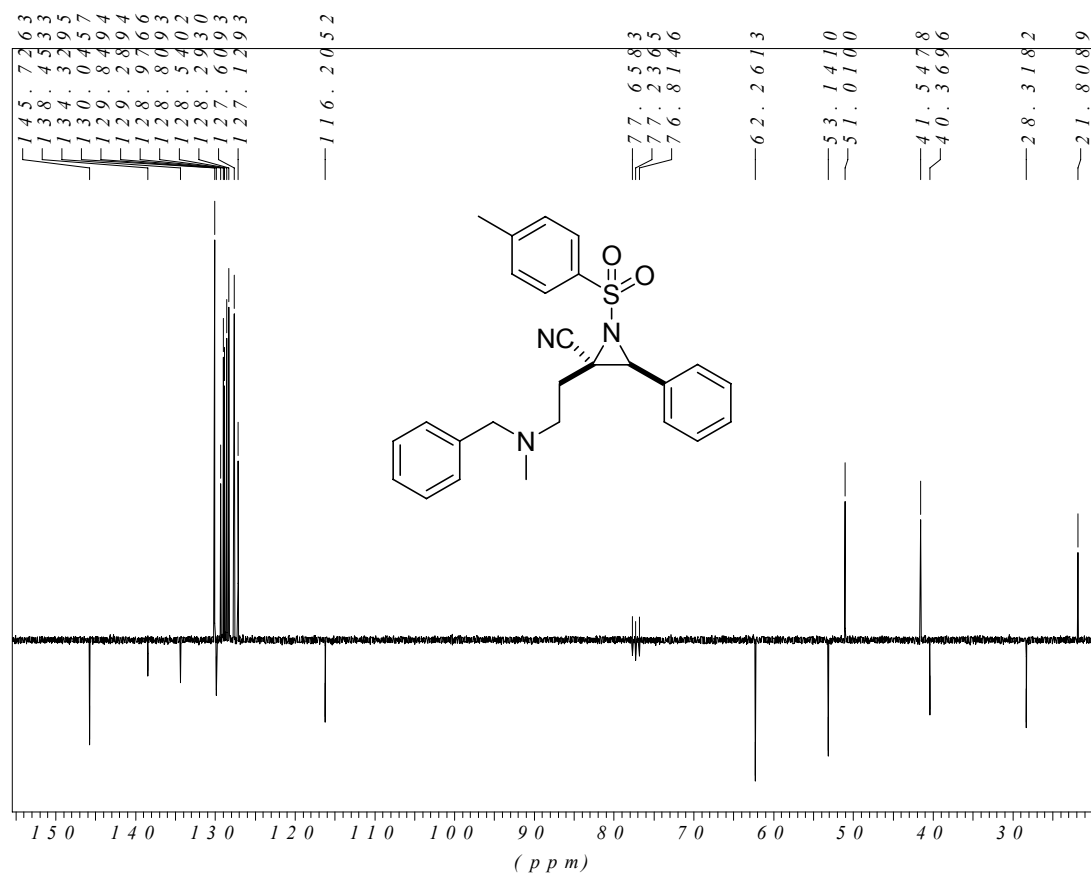
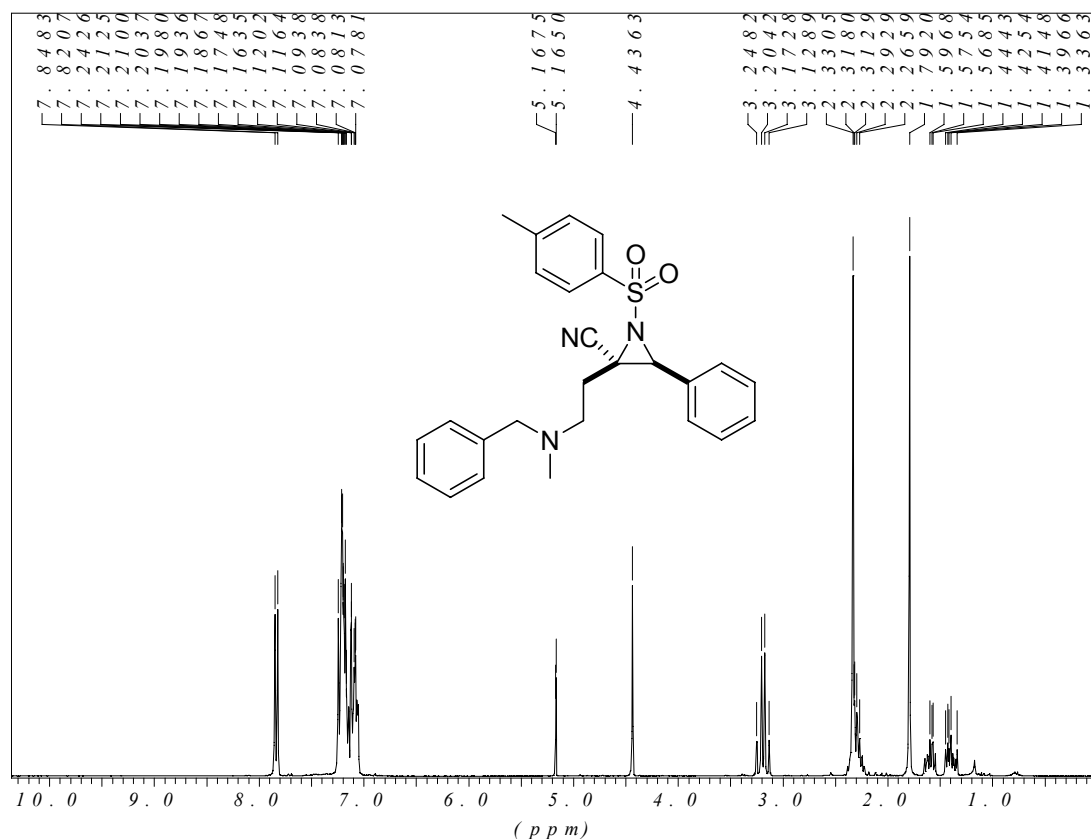


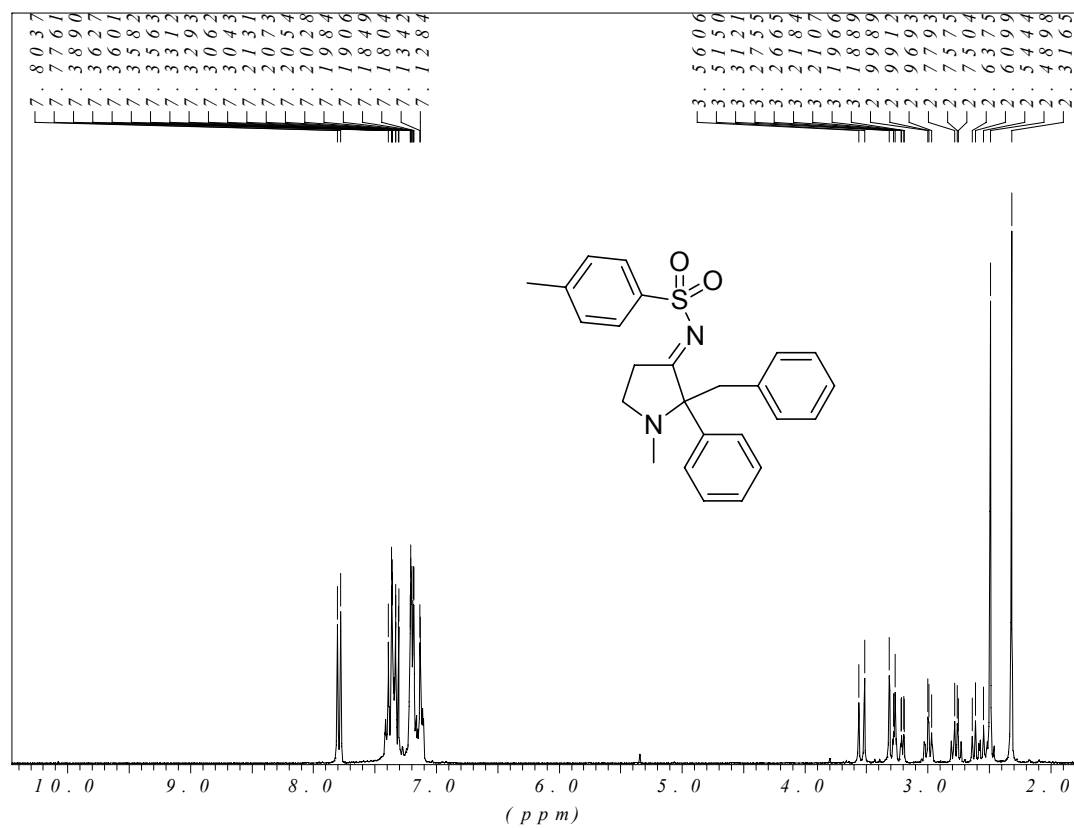


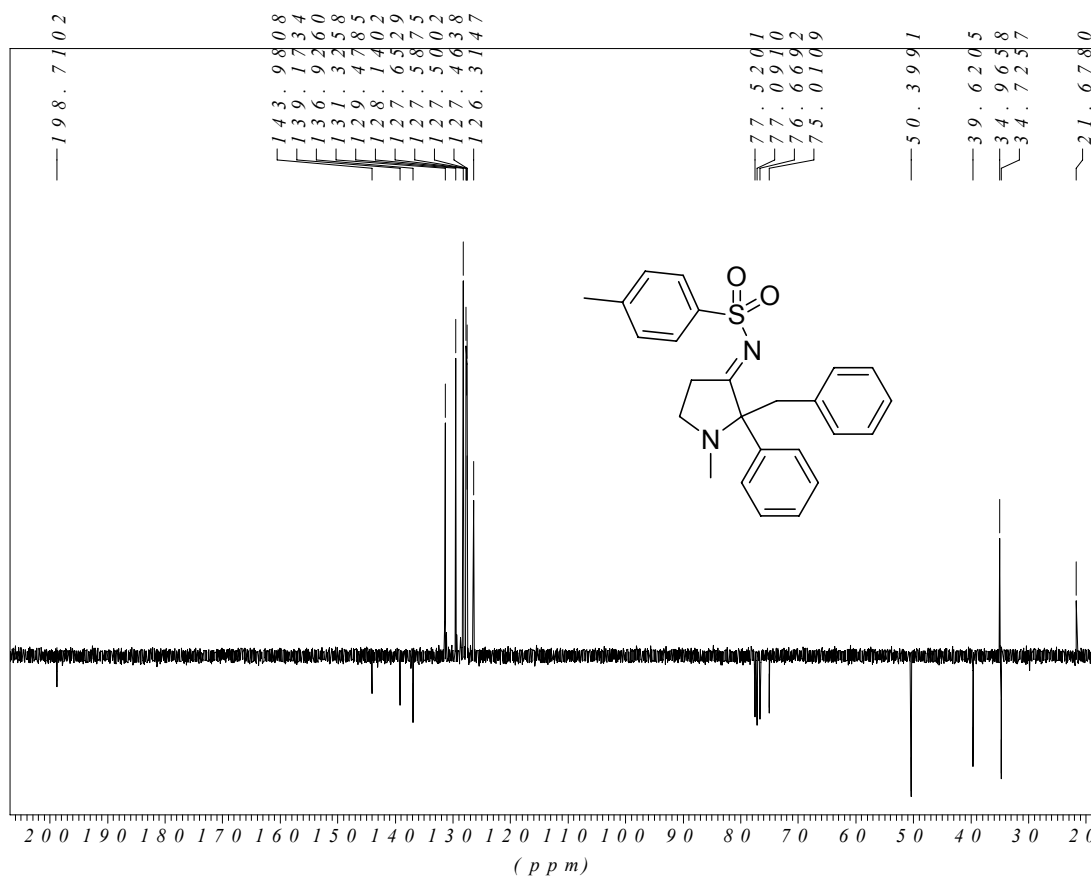












ORTEP diagram of compound 19

