Electronic Supplementary Information (ESI)

Photoactivatable dihydroalkaloids for cancer cell imaging and

chemotherapy with high spatiotemporal resolution

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Materials and Chemicals

DHCHE and DHSAN were prepared according to a modified literature method.¹ Chelerythrine and sanguinarine were purchased from Chengdu Herbpurify Co., Ltd; D₂O, CDCl₃ and DMSO-*d*₆ were purchased from Sigma-Aldrich; Cucurbit[7]uril was purchased from ShangHai SuperLan Chemical Tech Centre; H₂O₂ (30 wt.%), MeOH and other solvents were purchased from Guangzhou Chemical Reagent Factory without further purification. NaN₃ was purchased from Tianjin Fuchen Chemical Reagents Factory. THF was distilled from sodium under dry nitrogen prior to use.

Dulbecco's Modified Essential Medium (DMEM) was purchased from Gibco (Life Technologies). Ultra pure water was supplied by Milli-Q Plus System (Millipore Corporation, United States). Hoechst 33342 was purchased from Sigma. Phosphate buffered saline (PBS), fetal bovine serum (FBS), Nile Red, penicillin and streptomycin were purchased from Thermo Fisher Scientific. ER-Tracker Red was purchased from Beyotime Biotechnology.

Equipment and Methods

The UV-Vis absorption spectra were measured on a Shimadzu UV-2600 spectrophotometer, medium scanning rate, and quartz cuvettes of 1 cm path length. The photoluminescence spectra were recorded on a Horiba Fluoromax-4 spectrofluorometer. The absolute fluorescence quantum yield was measured using a Hamamatsu quantum yield spectrometer C11347 Quantaurus_QY. The fluorescence lifetime was measured using a Hamamatsu Compact Fluorescence Lifetime Spectrometer C11367. The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were measured on a Bruker AV 400 NMR spectrometer. The high resolution mass spectra (HRMS) were recorded on a Bruker maxis impact mass

spectrometer operated in ESI model. The single crystal of CHE was grown from hexane/MeOH via solute solution diffusion method, the single crystals of DHCHE, DHSAN were grown from hexane/dichloromethane via solute solution diffusion method. Single crystal X-ray diffraction intensity data were collected on a Bruker– Nonices Smart Apex CCD diffractometer with graphite monochromated MoK α radiation. Processing of the intensity data was carried out using the SAINT and SADABS routines, and the structure and refinement were conducted using the SHELTL suite of X-ray programs (version 6.10). Confocal lasing scanning microscopic (CLSM) images were obtained on the confocal microscope (Zeiss Laser Scanning Confocal Microscope; LSM710). Automated cell counter (Countess II) was employed for cell counting. The cell viability assay was conducted on a microplate reader (Tecan Infinite M200 PRO).

NMR and HRMS data of CHE

¹H NMR (D₂O, 400 MHz): δ 9.32 (s, 1H), 7.79 (dd, *J*₁ = 25.2 Hz, *J*₂ = 9.2 Hz, 2H), 7.55 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.41 (s, 1H), 7.35 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.72 (s, 1H), 6.16 (s, 2H), 4.50 (s, 3H), 4.14 (s, 3H), 4.03 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (D₂O, 100 MHz): δ 148.6, 148.2, 147.9, 147.2, 145.8, 131.2, 130.9, 129.3, 125.7, 124.1, 119.7, 118.6, 117.1, 116.1, 108.1, 105.5, 105.2, 103.2, 102.9, 52.0. HRMS (ESI): m/z [M]⁺ calcd for C₂₁H₁₈NO₄, 348.1236; found, 348.1240.

NMR and HRMS data of SAN

¹H NMR (D₂O, 400 MHz): δ 9.28 (s, 1H), 7.66 (dd, *J*₁ = 14.0 Hz, *J*₂ = 5.6 Hz, 2H), 7.61 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.47 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.38 (s, 1H), 6.90 (s, 1H), 6.44 (s, 2H),

6.21 (s, 2H), 4.46 (s, 3H), 3.79 (s, 1H); ¹³C NMR (D₂O, 100 MHz) δ 148.6, 148.2, 147.9, 147.2, 145.8, 131.2, 130.9, 129.3, 125.7, 124.1, 119.7, 118.6, 117.1, 116.1, 108.2, 105.5, 105.2, 103.2, 102.9, 52.0. HRMS (ESI): m/z [M]⁺ calcd for C₂₀H₁₄NO₄, 332.0923; found, 332.0923.

Synthesis of DHCHE

Chelerythrine (120 mg, 0.31 mmol) was first dissovled in MeOH (20 mL) and then added with NaBH4 (100 mg, 2.7 mmol), the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min. After completion of the reaction, the precipitation was filtered, washed with MeOH and H₂O, and dried under vacuum to yield DHCHE as a white solid (102 mg, 94% yield). ¹H NMR (DMSO-*d*₆, 400 MHz): δ 7.78 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.61-7.53 (m, 3H), 7.31 (s, 1H), 7.06 (d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 6.14 (s, 2H), 4.18 (s, 2H), 3.87 (s, 3H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 2.51 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-*d*₆, 100 MHz): δ 152.1, 147.8, 147.2, 145.5, 142.0, 130.4, 125.6, 125.3, 125.2, 123.8, 123.7, 120.0, 118.7, 111.6, 104.2, 101.2, 99.7, 60.5, 55.6, 48.2, 41.0. HRMS (ESI): m/z [M]⁺ calcd for C₂₁H₁₉NO₄, 350.1348; found, 350.1396.

Synthesis of DHSAN

Sanguinarine (100 mg, 0.27 mmol) was first dissovled in MeOH (20 mL) and then added with NaBH₄ (40 mg, 1.1 mmol), the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min. After completion of the reaction, the precipitation was filtered, washed by MeOH and H₂O, and dried under vacuum to yield DHSAN as a white solid (50 mg, 55% yield). ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6 , 400 MHz): δ 7.77 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 7.55 (t, $J_1 =$ 18.0 Hz, $J_2 = 8.4$ Hz, 2H), 7.40 (d, J = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 7.31 (s, 1H), 6.94 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 6.12 (d, *J* = 13.2 Hz, 4H), 4.12 (s, 2H), 2.51 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-*d*₆, 100 MHz): δ 147.9, 147.3, 147.9, 144.3, 141.9, 130.4, 126.4, 125.7, 123.9, 123.8, 120.2, 116.3, 112.8, 107.2, 104.2, 101.3, 101.2, 99.7, 48.9, 41.3. HRMS (ESI): m/z [M]⁺ calcd for C₂₀H₁₅NO₄, 334.1035; found, 334.1080.

Photoactivatable fluorescence measurement in solution

The stock solution of DHCHE and DHSAN was prepared by dissolving in DMSO (10 mM). 30 μ L of their stock solution was respectively added into H₂O (2970 μ L), and the mixture was shaken on a vortex mixter for 1.0 min. The mixture were then irradiated at 365 nm for different time under portable UV lamp and the PL spectra were measured on a fluorescence spectrophotometer with $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm or 330 nm.

Singlet oxygen (¹O₂) quenching

The mixture of DHCHE (200 μ M)/DHSAN (100 μ M) and NaN₃ (0, 1.0, 10, 20 mM) in DMSO/PBS solution (v : v = 1 : 99) were irradiated under portable UV lamp at 365 nm for 0-20 min and the PL spectra were measured on a microplate reader with $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm.

Cell Culture

HeLa, A549 and NIH-3T3 cells were cultured in DMEM containing 1% penicillinstreptomycin and 10% FBS at 37 °C in a humidity atmosphere with 5% CO₂.

Cell Viability Measurement

The cells were seeded in a 96-well plate with a density of 1×10^5 cells/mL. After incubation for 24 h, different concentrations of DHCHE and DHSAN were added and further incubation for 30 min. The cells were then irradiated at 365 nm for 5 min and

further incubated for 24 h. After washing with PBS buffer for twice, freshly prepared MTT solution (0.5 mg/mL, 100 μ L) was added. After incubation at 37 °C for 4 h, the MTT solution was removed and washed twice with PBS buffer. DMSO (100 μ L) was then added into each well and the plate was gently shaken for 10 min at room temperature to dissolve all the precipitates. The absorbance of sample and control wells at 570 nm was then measured by a microplate reader. Cell viability was then calculated by the ratio of the absorbance of sample wells to control cells.

Photoactivatable cell imaging

The HeLa cells in culture media were first treated with DHCHE or DHSAN (100 μ M) for 30 min, and then the CLSM images were taken under confocal microscope through continuous irradiation at 405 nm. Green channel: 420-550 nm; Red channel: 580-697 nm. Laser power: 10% for DHCHE and 5% for DHSAN.

In situ monitoring of the cell morphology changes under photoactivation

The HeLa cells in culture media were first treated with DHCHE or DHSAN (100 μ M) for 30 min, and the CLSM images were taken after continuous irradiation at 405 nm for 3 min. The cells were then incubated under dark and the CLSM images were taken at 5 and 10 min to monitor the fluorescence imaging and cell morphology changes. Green channel: 420-550 nm; Red channel: 580-697 nm. Laser power: 10% for DHCHE and 5% for DHSAN.

Co-localization with Hoechst 33342

The HeLa cells in cell culture medium were first treated with DHCHE or DHSAN (100 μ M) for 30 min and then irradiated under 405 nm for 3 min. The cells were then treated

with Hoechst 33342 (5 µg/mL) for 1 min and 3 min, respectively. The fluorescence images for DHCHE and DHSAN after photoactivation were taken with $\lambda_{ex} = 488$ nm and $\lambda_{em} = 580-700$ nm. For Hoechst 33342, $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm and $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm. Laser power: 5%.

Co-localization of DHSAN with ER-Tracker Red

The HeLa cells were first incubated with DHSAN (100 μ M) and ER-Tracker Red (1 μ M) for 30 min at 37 °C, and then the CLSM images were taken under confocal microscope. For DHSAN, $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm and $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm, Laser power: 10.0%. For ER-Tracker Red, $\lambda_{ex} = 543$ nm and $\lambda_{em} = 580-700$ nm, Laser power: 4.0%.

Co-localization of DHCHE with Nile Red

The HeLa cells were first incubated with DHCHE (100 μ M) and Nile Red (5 μ M) for 30 min at 37 °C, and then the CLSM images were taken under confocal microscope. For DHCHE, $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm, $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm, Laser power: 5.0%. For Nile Red, $\lambda_{ex} = 543$ nm and $\lambda_{em} = 580-650$ nm, Laser power: 10.0%.

Selective imaging and killing of HeLa cells in the presence of NIH-3T3 cells

HeLa cancer cells and NIH-3T3 normal cells were co-cultured in a 35 mm Petri dish with a coverslip. The cells were then treated with DHCHE or DHSAN (100 μ M) for 30 min. The selected HeLa cells were then continuously irradiated with a bleaching model (405 nm, 2% laser power) to activate fluorescence. Then, the whole observation window of multi-cells was imaged. This process was repeated to activate all the selected HeLa cells. The emission filter was 580-697 nm for both DHCHE and DHSAN.

		$\lambda [nm]^{d)}$	$\lambda [nm]^{e)}$	${\varPhi_{_{\mathrm{f}}}}[\%]^{^{\mathrm{f})}}$	$\tau(\mathrm{ns})^{\mathrm{g})}$	$k_{\rm r} \begin{bmatrix} 10^7 { m s}^{-1} { m h} \end{bmatrix}$	$k_{nr} [10^{8} \text{ s}^{-1}]^{i)}$
CHE	soln ^{a)}	402	589	1.1	0.97	1.13	10.20
	Solid	330	584	18.2	11.81	1.54	0.69
	Soln with CB[7] ^{c)}	427	540	35.6	15.95	2.23	0.40
SAN	Soln ^{a)}	471	606	5.4	2.47	2.19	3.83
	Solid	330	603	5.0	3.55	1.41	2.68
	Soln with CB[7] ^{c)}	392	555	39.6	16.98	2.33	3.56

Table S1. The photophysical properties of compounds CHE and SAN.

a) CHE and SAN in water with a concentration of 10 μ M; b) Thin solid film; c) CHE and SAN in water with cucurbit[7]uril (CB[7]), [CB[7]] = 20 μ M, [CHE] = [SAN] = 10 μ M; d) Maximum absorption wavelength; e) Maximum emission wavelength; f) Absolute quantum yield; g) Average fluorescence lifetime; h) Radiative relaxation rate $k_r = \Phi/\tau$; i) Non-radiative relaxation rate $k_{nr} = (1-\Phi)/\tau$.

		$\lambda [nm]^{c)}$	$\lambda [nm]^{d)}$	$\Phi_{f}[\%]^{e)}$	$\tau (\mathrm{ns})^{\mathrm{f})}$	$k_{\rm r} [10^7 {\rm s}^{-1}]^{\rm g)}$	$k_{_{mr}} [10^{8} \mathrm{s}^{^{-1}}]^{\mathrm{h})}$
DHCHE	soln ^{a)}	350	445	18.1	2.87	6.30	2.85
	Solid	330	427	24.5	2.90	8.45	2.60
DHSAN	soln ^{a)}	335	450	16.3	2.58	6.32	3.24
	Solid ^{b)}	330	435	12.8	2.64	4.85	3.30

Table S2. The photophysical properties of compounds DHSAN and DHCHE.

a) DHCHE and DHSAN in THF solution with a concentration of 10 μ M; b) Thin solid film; c) Maximum absorption wavelength; d) Maximum emission wavelength; e) Absolute quantum yield; f) Average fluorescence lifetime; g) Radiative relaxation rate $k_r = \Phi/\tau$; h) Non-radiative relaxation rate $k_{nr} = (1-\Phi)/\tau$.



Scheme S1 The equilibrium between quaternary cation and pseudobase forms of CHE and SAN at excited state.¹



 $R^{1} = R^{-} = -OCH_{3}$, CHE $R^{1} + R^{2} = -OCH_{2}O_{-}$, SAN

Scheme S2 The proposed reaction mechanism for photo-triggered transformation from DHCHE/DHSAN to CHE/SAN. ISC, intersystem crossing; EnT, engery transfer.²



Fig. S1 (A) The ORTEP drawing of compound CHE with Cl⁻ as the counter anion. (B-D) The view along with a-axis, b-axis, and c-axis, respectively.



Fig. S2 (A) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of CHE in water treated with different concentrations of cucurbit[7]uril ($C_{CB[7]}$); (B) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of (B) CHE in water/glycerol mixture with different glycerol fractions (f_{gly}); [CHE] = 10 μ M.



Fig. S3 (A) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of SAN in water. (B) The PL spectra of SAN in water (blue line) and in the film state (red line). (C) The PL spectra of SAN in water in the presence of different concentrations of CB[7]. (D) The plots of relative maximum emission intensity (I/I_0) (red line) and wavelength of maximum emission (black line) of SAN in water in the presence of different concentrations of CB[7]. (E) The PL spectra of SAN in water/glycerol mixture with different glycerol fractions. (F) The plots of relative emission intensity (I/I_0) of SAN at 418 nm (black line) and 606 nm (red line) in water/glycerol mixture with different glycerol fractions. [SAN] =10 μ M; λ_{ex} = 330 nm.



Fig. S4 (A) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of SAN in water treated with different concentrations of cucurbit[7]uril ($C_{CB[7]}$); (B) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of SAN in water/glycerol mixture with different glycerol fractions (f_{gly}); [SAN] = 10 μ M.



Fig. S5 The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of DHCHE in DMSO-*d*₆.



Fig. S6 The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra of DHSAN in DMSO-*d*₆.



Fig. S7 (A, C) The ORTEP drawing of DHCHE and DHSAN. (B, D) The crystal packing structure of DHCHE and DHSAN.



Fig. S8 (A) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of DHCHE in THF (dashed line) and PL spectra of DHCHE (solid line) in THF/water mixture with different water fractions (f_w). (B) Plots of relative maximum emission intensity (red, I/I_0) and maximum emission wavelength (black) of DHCHE in THF/water mixture with different water fractions (f_w). (C) The PL spectra of DHCHE in THF solution and in the film state. [DHCHE] = 10 μ M; λ_{ex} = 330 nm.



Fig. S9 (A) The UV-Vis absorption spectra of DHSAN in THF (dashed line) and PL spectra of DHSAN (solid line) in THF/water with different water fractions (f_w). (B) Plots of relative maximum emission intensity (red, I/I_0) and maximum emission wavelength (black) of DHSAN in THF/water mixture with different water fractions (f_w). (C) The PL spectra of DHSAN in THF solution and in the film state. [DHSAN] = 10 μ M; λ_{ex} = 330 nm.



Fig. S10 The PL spectra and plots of maximum emission intensity changes (I/I_0) of DHSAN in co-solvent of DMSO/water (v : v = 1 : 99) under irradiation at 365 nm for 0-90 min. [DHSAN] = 100 μ M; (A, B) λ_{ex} = 330 nm and (C, D) 450 nm.



Fig. S11 The ¹H NMR stacking spectra of DHCHE in "CDCl₃ + CF₃CO₂D" under light irradiation at 365 nm.



Fig. S12 The ¹H NMR stacking spectra of DHSAN in "CDCl₃ + CF₃CO₂D" under light irradiation at 365 nm.



Fig. S13 The 1 H and 13 C NMR spectra of CHE in D₂O.



Fig. S14 The 1 H and 13 C NMR spectra of SAN in D₂O.



Fig. S15 Plots of relative maximum emission intensity (I/I_0) of (A) DHCHE and (B) DHSAN under irradiation at 365 nm for 0-30 min in co-solvent of DMSO/water (v : v = 1 : 99) at different pH. [DHCHE] = [DHSAN] = 100 μ M; $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm. For DHCHE, $\lambda_{em} = 580$ nm; For DHSAN, $\lambda_{em} = 570$ nm.



Fig. S16 (A) The UV-Vis absorption and (B) PL spectra of CHE in Britton-Robinson buffer solution at different pH, $\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm. (C) The plots of emission intensity changes of CHE at 414 nm (black) and 597 nm (red) in Britton-Robinson buffer solution at different pH. [CHE] = 10 μ M.



Fig. S17 (A) The UV-Vis absorption and (B) PL spectra of SAN in Britton-Robinson buffer solution at different pH, $\lambda_{ex} = 330$ nm. (C) The plots of emission intensity changes of SAN at 419 nm (black) and 602 nm (red) in Britton-Robinson buffer solution at different pH. [SAN] = 10 μ M.



Fig. S18 The plots of relative maximum emission intensity (*I*/*I*₀) of DHCHE (A) and DHSAN (B) in co-solvent of DMSO/water (v : v = 1 : 99) with or without H₂O₂ (3 wt%) under dark or light irradiation at 365 nm for 0-60 min. For DHCHE, $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm, $\lambda_{em} = 585$ nm. For DHSAN, $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm, $\lambda_{em} = 595$ nm. [DHCHE] = [DHSAN] = 100 \muM.



Fig. S19 The PL spectra (A-D) and plots of maximum emission intensity changes (E) of DHSAN in co-solvent of DMSO and PBS (v : v = 1:99) with different concentrations of NaN₃ under 365 nm irradiation for 0-20 min. [DHSAN] = 100 μ M, [NaN₃] = 0 (A), 1.0 (B), 10 (C), and 20 mM (D), $\lambda_{ex} = 450$ nm.



Fig. S20 (A-D) Fluorescence and bright field images of HeLa cells treated with DHCHE or DHSAN in the absence or presence of NaN₃. [DHCHE] = [DHSAN] = 100 μ M; [NaN₃] = 50 mM. Green channel: $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm; $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm, Red channel: $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm; $\lambda_{em} = 580-697$ nm.



Fig. S21 (A) Fluorescence and bright field images of HeLa cells treated with DHSAN and ER-Tracker Red for 30 min. [DHSAN] = 100 μ M; [ER-Tracker Red] = 1.0 μ M. Green channel: $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm; $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm. Red channel: $\lambda_{ex} = 543$ nm; $\lambda_{em} = 580-700$ nm. (B) Fluorescence and bright field images of HeLa cells treated with DHCHE and Nile Red for 30 min. [DHCHE] = 100 μ M; [Nile Red] = 5 μ M. Green channel: λ_{ex} = 405 nm; $\lambda_{em} = 420-550$ nm. Red channel: $\lambda_{ex} = 543$ nm; $\lambda_{em} = 580-650$ nm.



Fig. S22 The fluorescence spectra of (A) CHE and (B) SAN with different concentrations of calf thymus DNA (ctDNA) in PBS buffer solution, dashed line: the buffered solution of ctDNA, [ctDNA] = 50 μ M. [CHE] = [SAN] = 10 μ M, λ_{ex} = 450 nm.



Fig. S23 The cell viabilities of A549 cancer cells treated with different concentrations of (A) DHCHE, (B) DHSAN, (C) CHE, and (D) SAN under dark or light irradiation (365 nm, 5 mW/cm², 5 min).

Green channel	Red channel	Bright field	Merge
0 min 2 <u>0 µ</u> m		520	ester Second
3 min + Light		S.S.O.	
10 min + Dark			

Fig. S24 CLSM images of live HeLa cells under control. $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm. Green channel: 420-550 nm; Red channel: 580-697 nm. Laser power: 10%.



Fig. S25 (A) CLSM images of fixed HeLa cells stained with CHE under prolonged light irradiation at 405 nm for 20 min. Laser power: 10%. (B) CLSM images of fixed HeLa cells stained with SAN under prolonged light irradiation at 405 nm for 20 min. Laser power: 5%. (C) Plots of relative fluorescence intensity (I/I_0) changes of fixed HeLa cells treated with CHE under prolonged light irradiation at 405 nm for different time. (D) Plots of relative fluorescence intensity (I/I_0) changes of fixed HeLa cells treated with SAN under prolonged light irradiation at 405 nm for different time. (D) Plots of relative fluorescence intensity (I/I_0) changes of fixed HeLa cells treated with SAN under prolonged light irradiation at 405 nm for different time. (CHE] = [SAN] = 20 muM. $\lambda_{ex} = 405$ nm. Green channel: 420-550 nm; Red channel: 580-697 nm.



Fig. S26 The membrane blisters were indicated by blue arrows in the magnified merged images of Fig. 5A-B from the main text.

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