

Methanol as C₁ Source: Redox Coupling of Nitrobenzenes and Alcohols for the Synthesis of Benzimidazoles

Hengzhao Li,^{a, b, ‡} Yuntong Zhang,^{a, ‡} Zihan Yan,^a Zemin Lai,^a Ruoyan Yang,^a Mengqi Peng,^{a, b} Yanhao Sun^a and Jie An^{a, *}

^aDepartment of Nutrition and Health, China Agricultural University, Beijing 100193, China.

^bDepartment of Chemistry and Innovation Center of Pesticide Research, China Agricultural University, Beijing 100193, China.

[‡] These authors contributed equally to this work.

Supplementary Information

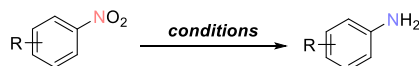
Table of Contents

1. Table of Contents	SI-1
2. Summary of Traditional Methods for Nitrobenzene Reduction	SI-2
3. Experimental Procedures and Characterization Data	SI-2
3.1 General Information	SI-2
3.2 Optimization Studies of the Synthesis of Benzimidazoles	SI-2
3.3 Synthesis of Benzimidazoles	SI-3
3.4 Synthesis of Antifungals-Chlormidazole	SI-16
4. References	SI-18
5. ¹H and ¹³C{¹H} NMR Spectra of Products	SI-19

2. Summary of Traditional Methods for Nitrobenzene Reduction

Traditionally, nitrobenzenes were reduced to anilines using excess iron in the presence of acid. Typically, 5-10 equiv iron powder has to be used to obtain satisfied yields.

Table S1. Classical methods of reductive nitrobenzene to aniline



entry	conditions	Ref.
1	Fe (5 equiv), AcOH (175 equiv)	<i>Angew. Chem.</i> 2017, 129 , 5980–5983
2	Fe (6 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (10 equiv)	<i>ACS Catal.</i> 2020, 10 , 13641–13649
3	Fe (5 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (4 equiv)	<i>J. Am. Chem. Soc.</i> 2020, 142 , 4456–4463
4	Fe (10 equiv), HCl (conc., 2 drops)	<i>Angew. Chem. Int. Ed.</i> 2012, 51 , 771–774
5	Fe (5.5 equiv), HCl (0.6M aq., 1.3 equiv)	<i>Org. Lett.</i> 2021, 23 , 4034–4039

3. Experimental Procedures and Characterization Data

3.1. General Information

Glassware was dried in an oven overnight before use. Thin layer chromatography was carried out on SIL G/UV254 silica-aluminum plates and plates were visualized using ultra-violet light (254 nm) and KMnO₄ solution. NMR data was collected at 300 or 500 MHz. Data was manipulated directly from the spectrometer or *via* a networked PC with appropriate software. All samples were analyzed in CDCl₃ unless otherwise stated. Reference values for residual solvent were taken as $\delta = 7.27$ (CDCl₃) for ¹H NMR; $\delta = 77.1$ (CDCl₃) for ¹³C{¹H} NMR. Multiplicities for coupled signals were designated using the following abbreviations: s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quartet, quin = quintet, br = broad signal, and are given in Hz.

All compounds used in this study have been described in the literature or are commercially available. All solvents and reagents were used as supplied. 2-nitroaniline were purchased from commercial suppliers or prepared by standard method.¹

3.2 Optimization Studies of the Synthesis of Benzimidazoles

Optimization studies of the synthesis of benzimidazoles (Table S2). To a Schlenk tube was added 5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (50.4 mg, 0.300 mmol, 1.00 equiv), iron powder (50.3 - 92.2 mg, 0.900 - 1.65 mmol, 3.00 - 5.50 equiv) and NH₄Cl (32.1 - 88.3 mg, 0.600 - 1.65 mmol, 2.00 - 5.50 equiv), followed by MeOH (5.0 mL). The resulted mixture was stirred vigorously under Ar at 70 °C for 48 h. Then the reaction was quenched by an aqueous solution of NaHCO₃ (5.0 mL, saturated), diluted with EtOAc

(10 mL) and brine (5.0 mL). The mixture was filtered through thin Kieselguhr to remove insoluble materials. The organic layer of the filtrate was separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (2 × 10 mL). The organic layer was combined, dried over Na₂SO₄, filtered and concentrated to give the pure product. Then the sample was analyzed by ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz) to obtain the yield using internal standard (1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane).

Table S2. Further Optimization Studies of the Synthesis of Benzimidazoles ^a

entry	variation from the “standard conditions”	yield (%) ^a
1	none	95
2	Fe (4 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (5.5 equiv)	50
2	Fe (4 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (4 equiv)	46
3	Fe (3 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (3 equiv)	15
4	Fe (5.5 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (4 equiv)	93
5	Fe (5.5 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (3 equiv)	90
6	Fe (5.5 equiv), NH ₄ Cl (2 equiv)	63

^a Determined by ¹H NMR.

3.3 Synthesis of Benzimidazole

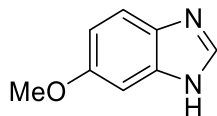
General Procedure:

To a Schlenk tube was added 2-nitroaniline (0.300 mmol, 1.00 equiv), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol, 5.50 equiv) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol, 5.50 equiv), followed by ROH (5.0 mL). The resulted mixture was stirred vigorously under Ar at 70 °C for 48 h. Then the reaction was quenched by an aqueous solution of NaHCO₃ (5.0 mL, saturated), diluted with EtOAc (10 mL) and brine (5.0 mL). The mixture was filtered through thin Kieselguhr to remove insoluble materials. The organic layer of the filtrate was separated and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc (2 × 10 mL). The organic layer was combined, dried over Na₂SO₄, filtered and concentrated to give the pure product.

Note:

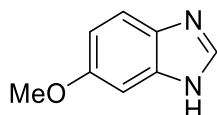
1. After 24 h, a solution of NH₄Cl (0.200 mmol) in MeOH (1.3 mL) was added to the reaction mixture, if significant amount of the solvent was evaporated.
2. For compounds soluble in water, the aqueous layer should be extracted by organic solvent multiple times to achieve good yield.
3. If any by-product was formed, the crude products need to be purified by flash chromatography (silica, EtOAc).

6-Methoxy-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2a²** (Scheme 2)



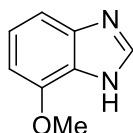
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (50.4 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2a** (44.0 mg, >98%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.94 (br, 1H), 8.08 (s, 1H), 7.56 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.11 (d, *J* = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 6.94 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 3.82 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.8, 140.4, 137.6, 132.9, 116.5, 112.8, 97.6, 55.9.

6-Methoxy-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2a²** (Scheme 2)



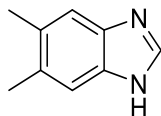
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (252 mg, 1.50 mmol), iron powder (460 mg, 8.25 mmol) and NH₄Cl (441 mg, 8.25 mmol) in MeOH (25 mL) afforded **2a** (200 mg, 90%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.94 (br, 1H), 8.08 (s, 1H), 7.56 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.11 (d, *J* = 2.0 Hz, 1H), 6.94 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.0 Hz, 1H), 3.82 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.8, 140.4, 137.6, 132.9, 116.5, 112.8, 97.6, 55.9.

7-Methoxy-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2b³** (Scheme 2).



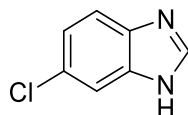
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-methoxy-6-nitroaniline (50.4 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2b** (42.7 mg, 96%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.06 (s, 1H), 7.28 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.20 (dd, *J* = 8.1, 7.7 Hz, 1H), 6.73 (d, *J* = 7.7 Hz, 1H), 3.99 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 149.6, 140.2, 138.6, 129.4, 123.3, 107.7, 102.9, 55.6.

5,6-Dimethyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2c**⁴ (Scheme 2).



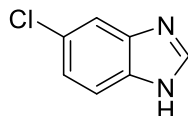
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 4,5-dimethyl-2-nitroaniline (49.9 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2c** (43.4 mg, >98%) as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 8.05 (s, 1H), 7.35 (s, 2H), 2.30 (s, 6H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 141.2, 130.5, 115.5, 20.1.

6-Chloro-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2d**⁴ (Scheme 2).



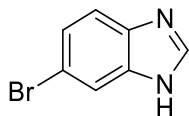
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-chloro-2-nitroaniline (51.8 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL), after chromatography (silica, EtOAc), afforded **2d** (37.1 mg, 81%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.14 (s, 1H), 7.66 (d, *J* = 1.8 Hz, 1H), 7.59 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 1.8 Hz, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 141.6, 138.4, 136.4, 128.8, 123.7, 116.5, 115.5.

5-Chloro-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2e**⁴ (Scheme 2).



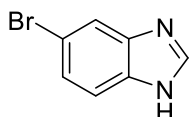
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 4-chloro-2-nitroaniline (51.8 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL), after chromatography (silica, EtOAc), afforded **2e** (37.8 mg, 83%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.13 (s, 1H), 7.66 (d, *J* = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.59 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 1.6 Hz, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 141.6, 138.3, 136.4, 128.8, 123.7, 116.5, 115.5.

6-Bromo-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2f**⁵ (Scheme 2).



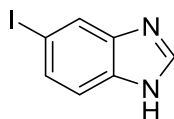
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-bromo-2-nitroaniline (65.1 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL), after chromatography (silica, EtOAc), afforded **2f** (48.2 mg, 82%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.11 (s, 1H), 7.83 (d, *J* = 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.54 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.42 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 1.6 Hz, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 141.4, 138.9, 136.6, 126.4, 118.6, 116.9, 116.3.

5-Bromo-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2g**⁵ (Scheme 2).



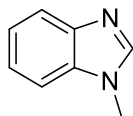
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 4-bromo-2-nitroaniline (65.1 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL), after chromatography (silica, EtOAc), afforded **2g** (47.3 mg, 80%) yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.14 (s, 1H), 7.83 (d, *J* = 1.7 Hz, 1H), 7.54 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.41 (dd, *J* = 8.6, 1.7 Hz, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 141.6, 139.0, 136.7, 126.3, 118.5, 116.8, 116.2.

5-Iodo-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2h**² (Scheme 2).



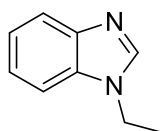
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 4-iodo-2-nitroaniline (79.2 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL), after chromatography (silica, EtOAc), afforded **2h** (56.6 mg, 77%) yield as a pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.08 (s, 1H), 8.03 (d, *J* = 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.58 (dd, *J* = 8.5, 1.5 Hz, 1H), 7.43 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 141.2, 139.6, 137.3, 131.9, 124.6, 117.3, 86.4.

1-Methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2i**⁶ (Scheme 2).



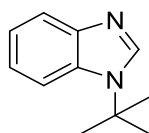
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-methyl-2-nitroaniline (45.6 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2i** (33.7 mg, 85%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.86 (s, 1H), 7.81 (m, 1H), 7.40 (m, 1H), 7.36 – 7.28 (m, 2H), 3.84 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 143.7, 143.6, 134.6, 123.0, 122.2, 120.3, 109.4, 31.1.

1-Ethyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2j**² (Scheme 2).



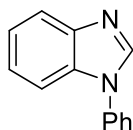
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-ethyl-2-nitroaniline (49.9 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2j** (36.4 mg, 83%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.90 (s, 1H), 7.81 (m, 1H), 7.40 (m, 1H), 7.31 – 7.26 (m, 2H), 4.21 (q, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 1.52 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 144.0, 142.3, 133.7, 122.8, 122.0, 120.4, 109.6, 39.8, 15.2.

1-(*tert*-Butyl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2k**⁷ (Scheme 2).



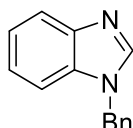
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(*tert*-butyl)-2-nitroaniline (58.3 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2k** (51.7 mg, >98%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.07 (s, 1H), 7.84 (m, 1H), 7.64 (m, 1H), 7.31-7.22 (m, 2H), 1.75 (s, 9H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 144.8, 140.7, 132.8, 122.4, 121.9, 120.5, 113.2, 56.3, 29.4.

1-Phenyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2l**⁸ (Scheme 2).



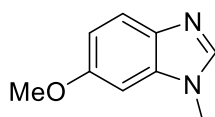
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-nitro-*N*-phenylaniline (64.3 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2l** (53.0 mg, 91%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.14 (s, 1H), 7.89 (m, 1H), 7.59 – 7.45 (m, 6H), 7.38 – 7.30 (m, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 143.9, 142.3, 136.3, 133.7, 130.1, 128.1, 124.1, 123.8, 122.9, 120.5, 110.5.

1-Benzyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2m**⁹ (Scheme 2).



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-benzyl-2-nitroaniline (68.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2m** (56.2 mg, 90%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.91 (s, 1H), 7.82 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 7.36 – 7.20 (m, 6H), 7.18 – 7.09 (m, 2H), 5.29 (s, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 144.0, 143.2, 135.5, 134.0, 129.0, 128.2, 127.1, 123.1, 122.3, 120.4, 110.0, 48.8.

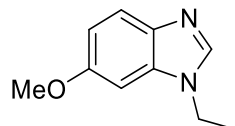
6-Methoxy-1-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2n**¹⁰ (Scheme 2).



According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-methoxy-*N*-methyl-2-nitroaniline (54.6 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2n** (47.7 mg, 98%) as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.73 (s, 1H), 7.66 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.91 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 6.78 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 3.85 (s, 3H), 3.73 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.8, 142.7, 138.1, 135.1, 120.5,

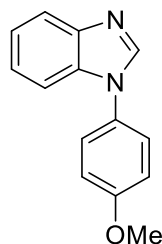
111.4, 92.7, 55.8, 30.8.

1-Ethyl-6-methoxy-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2o¹¹ (Scheme 2).



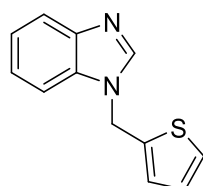
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-ethyl-5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (58.9 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2o** (44.9 mg, 85%) as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.82 (s, 1H), 7.67 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 6.91 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 6.82 (d, *J* = 2.3 Hz, 1H), 4.15 (q, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 2H), 3.86 (s, 3H), 1.50 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.7, 141.5, 138.2, 134.2, 120.7, 111.4, 93.1, 55.9, 39.8, 15.1.

1-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2p¹² (Scheme 2).



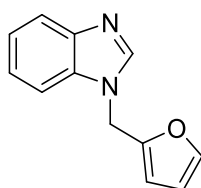
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(4-methoxyphenyl)-2-nitroaniline (73.3 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2p** (57.2 mg, 85%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.05 (s, 1H), 7.87 (m, 1H), 7.47-7.36 (m 3H), 7.35 – 7.26 (m, 2H), 7.06 (m, 2H), 3.88 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 159.4, 143.8, 142.6, 134.3, 129.2, 125.7, 123.5, 122.6, 120.5, 115.2, 110.4, 55.6.

1-(Thiophen-2-ylmethyl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2q¹³ (Scheme 2).



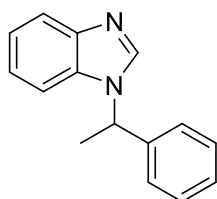
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-nitro-*N*-(thiophen-2-ylmethyl)aniline (70.3 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2q** (63.6 mg, >98%) as a brown oil. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.92 (s, 1H), 7.81 (m, 1H), 7.38 (m, 1H), 7.31-7.24 (m, 2H), 7.22 (m, 1H), 6.97 (m, 1H), 6.93 (m, 1H), 5.44 (s, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 143.9, 142.6, 137.8, 133.6, 127.2, 126.8, 126.1, 123.1, 122.4, 120.4, 109.8, 43.6.

1-(Furan-2-ylmethyl)-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole 2r¹⁴ (Scheme 2).



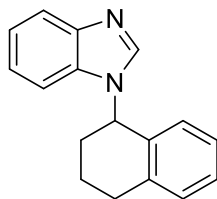
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(furan-2-ylmethyl)-2-nitroaniline (65.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2r** (53.5 mg, 90%) as a brown oil. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.93 (s, 1H), 7.80 (m, 1H), 7.43 (m, 1H), 7.35 (m, 1H), 7.32 – 7.25 (m, 2H), 6.35-6.29 (m, 2H), 5.26 (s, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 148.5, 143.7, 143.2, 142.8, 133.7, 123.2, 122.4, 120.4, 110.7, 109.8, 109.2, 41.8.

1-(1-Phenylethyl)-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole 2s⁹ (Scheme 2).



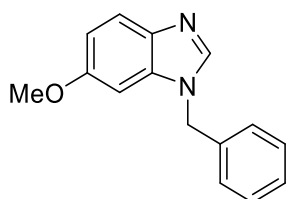
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-nitro-*N*-(1-phenylethyl) aniline (72.7 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2s** (60.0 mg, 90%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.07 (s, 1H), 7.81 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 1H), 7.36 – 7.12 (m, 8H), 5.58 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1H), 1.96 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 144.1, 141.0, 140.7, 133.7, 129.0, 128.1, 126.0, 122.8, 122.2, 120.4, 110.6, 55.2, 21.5.

1-(1,2,3,4-Tetrahydronaphthalen-1-yl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2t⁹ (Scheme 2).



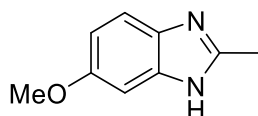
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(2-nitrophenyl)-1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphthalen-1-amine (80.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2t** (68.6 mg, 92%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.75 (m, 1H), 7.60 (s, 1H), 7.26 – 7.08 (m, 5H), 7.02 (m, 1H), 6.83 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 5.59 (t, *J* = 6.1 Hz, 1H), 2.92 (m, 1H), 2.82 (m, 1H), 2.26 – 2.13 (m, 2H), 1.88 – 1.63 (m, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (126 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 143.8, 142.9, 137.9, 133.4, 133.2, 129.6, 128.8, 128.4, 126.8, 122.9, 122.3, 120.4, 110.5, 54.7, 30.2, 29.0, 20.0.

1-Benzyl-6-methoxy-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2u¹⁵ (Scheme 2).



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-benzyl-5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (77.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2u** (69.3 mg, 97%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.82 (s, 1H), 7.69 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.37-7.24 (m, 3H), 7.19-7.12 (m, 2H), 6.90 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.2 Hz, 1H), 6.70 (d, *J* = 2.2 Hz, 1H), 5.26 (s, 2H), 3.77 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.8, 142.5, 138.4, 135.5, 134.6, 129.0, 128.2, 127.0, 120.8, 111.5, 93.6, 55.8, 48.7.

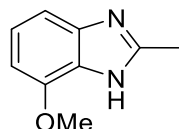
6-Methoxy-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2v¹⁶ (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (50.4

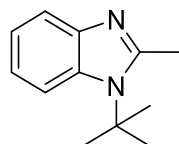
mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2v** (42.3 mg, 87%) as a pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.42 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 7.01 (d, *J* = 2.4 Hz, 1H), 6.85 (dd, *J* = 8.7, 2.4 Hz, 1H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.60 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.4, 150.9, 138.5, 133.1, 115.2, 111.7, 97.6, 55.9, 14.8.

7-Methoxy-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2w**¹⁷ (Scheme 2)



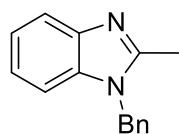
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-methoxy-6-nitroaniline (50.4 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2w** (41.4 mg, 85%) as a pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.07 (br, 1H), 7.37 – 7.29 (m, 2H), 6.65 (dd, *J* = 6.9, 1.9 Hz, 1H), 3.89 (s, 3H), 2.61 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 150.5, 148.8, 139.2, 129.7, 122.6, 106.9, 102.6, 55.5, 14.7.

1-(*tert*-Butyl)-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2x**¹⁸ (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(*tert*-butyl)-2-nitroaniline (58.3 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2x** (55.9 mg, >98%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.70 – 7.58 (m, 2H), 7.22 – 7.09 (m, 2H), 2.79 (s, 3H), 1.82 (s, 9H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 151.5, 143.0, 135.4, 121.5, 121.3, 119.2, 114.1, 58.6, 30.9, 20.2.

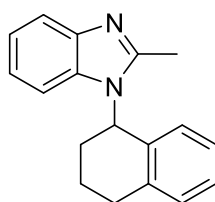
1-Benzyl-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2y**¹⁹ (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-benzyl-2-nitroaniline (68.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2y** (56.7 mg, 85%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.72 (m, 1H), 7.33 – 7.16 (m, 6H), 7.06 – 6.99 (m, 2H), 5.27 (s, 2H), 2.54 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 151.9, 142.6, 135.9, 135.5, 129.0, 127.9, 126.2, 122.3, 122.0, 119.1, 109.4, 47.1, 14.0.

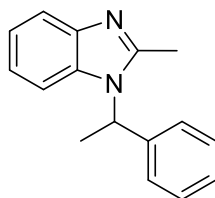
2-Methyl-1-(1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphthalen-1-yl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2z**

(Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(2-nitrophenyl)-1,2,3,4-tetrahydronaphthalen-1-amine (80.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2z** (74.8 mg, 95%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.69 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.25 – 7.12 (m, 3H), 7.06 – 6.96 (m, 2H), 6.83 – 6.64 (m, 2H), 5.67 (m, 1H), 3.12 – 2.89 (m, 2H), 2.60 (s, 3H), 2.38 – 2.09 (m, 3H), 1.96 (m, 1H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 151.8, 142.8, 137.4, 134.1, 133.8, 129.4, 127.7, 127.2, 126.7, 121.8, 121.7, 119.1, 111.3, 55.0, 29.9, 29.5, 22.3, 14.8; HRMS (FTMS-ESI) *m/z*: [M + H]⁺ calc for C₁₈H₁₉N₂ 263.1543, found 263.1538.

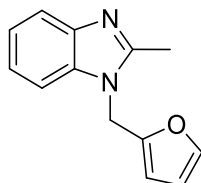
2-Methyl-1-(1-phenylethyl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole **2aa** ²⁰ (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-nitro-*N*-(1-phenylethyl) aniline (72.7 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2aa** (62.4 mg, 88%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.70 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.35 – 7.25 (m, 3H), 7.20 – 7.14 (m, 3H), 7.09 – 7.01 (m, 2H), 5.74 (q, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 2.57 (s, 3H), 1.95 (d, *J* = 7.2 Hz,

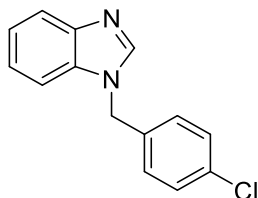
3H); $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 151.5, 142.9, 139.5, 134.1, 128.8, 127.8, 126.2, 121.9, 121.7, 119.1, 111.1, 53.4, 18.7, 14.9.

1-(Furan-2-ylmethyl)-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole **2ab**²¹ (Scheme 2)



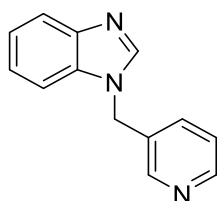
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(furan-2-ylmethyl)-2-nitroaniline (65.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH_4Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2ab** (57.3 mg, 90%) as a brown oil. ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.68 (m, 1H), 7.37 – 7.29 (m, 2H), 7.26 – 7.16 (m, 2H), 6.27 (m, 1H), 6.21 (m, 1H), 5.16 (s, 2H), 2.65 (s, 3H); $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 151.5, 149.0, 142.9, 142.5, 135.0, 122.2, 122.0, 119.0, 110.5, 109.2, 108.3, 40.5, 13.9.

1-(4-Chlorobenzyl)-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole **2ac**⁹ (Scheme 2).



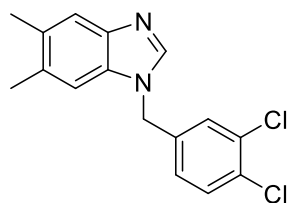
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(4-chlorobenzyl)-2-nitroaniline (78.8 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH_4Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2ac** (55.3 mg, 76%) as a brown oil. ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 7.94 (s, 1H), 7.82 (m, 1H), 7.32-7.21 (m 5H), 7.08 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 5.29 (s, 2H); $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR (75 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 143.9, 143.1, 134.2, 134.0, 133.7, 129.2, 128.4, 123.3, 122.5, 120.5, 109.9, 48.2.

1-(Pyridin-3-ylmethyl)-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole **2ad**²² (Scheme 2).



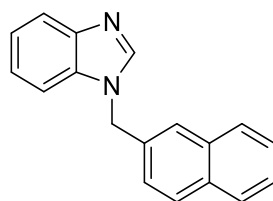
According to the general procedure, the reaction of 2-nitro-*N*-(pyridin-3-ylmethyl) aniline (68.8 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2ad** (62.1 mg, >98%) as a pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.63 – 8.52 (m, 2H), 7.97 (s, 1H), 7.83 (m, 1H), 7.40 (m, 1H), 7.33 – 7.20 (m, 4H), 5.36 (s, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 149.8, 148.5, 143.9, 142.9, 134.7, 133.6, 131.2, 123.9, 123.4, 122.6, 120.6, 109.8, 46.3.

1-(3,4-Dichlorobenzyl)-5,6-dimethyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2ae²³ (Scheme 2).



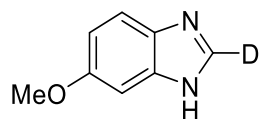
According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(3,4-dichlorobenzyl)-4,5-dimethyl-2-nitroaniline (97.6 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2ae** (82.4 mg, 90%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.87 (s, 1H), 7.60 (s, 1H), 7.38 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 1H), 7.25 (d, *J* = 1.7 Hz, 1H), 7.04 – 6.91 (m, 2H), 5.26 (s, 2H), 2.36 (s, 3H), 2.33 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 136.1, 133.3, 132.8, 132.5, 131.6, 131.1, 128.8, 126.1, 120.7, 110.0, 29.8, 20.6, 20.3.

1-(Naphthalen-2-ylmethyl)-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2af²⁴ (Scheme 2).



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(naphthalen-2-ylmethyl)-2-nitroaniline (83.5 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2af** (62.0 mg, 80%) as a pale-yellow solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.93 – 7.76 (m, 5H), 7.55 – 7.47 (m, 2H), 7.38 – 7.22 (m, 4H), 7.02 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1H), 5.69 (s, 2H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 143.9, 143.3, 134.2, 133.8, 130.8, 130.5, 129.2, 129.1, 127.1, 126.3, 125.7, 125.5, 123.2, 122.4, 122.3, 120.5, 110.0, 46.6.

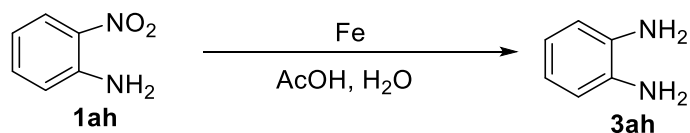
6-Methoxy-1*H*-benzo[d]imidazole-2-*d* 2ai ² (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of 5-methoxy-2-nitroaniline (50.4 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in MeOD-*d*₄ (5.0 mL) afforded **2ai** (42.1 mg, 94%) as a white solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.55 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.10 (d, *J* = 2.3 Hz, 1H), 6.94 (dd, *J* = 8.8, 2.3 Hz, 1H), 3.83 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 156.8, 140.4 (m), 137.8, 133.0, 116.6, 112.8, 97.8, 55.9.

3.4. Synthesis of Antifungals-Chlormidazole

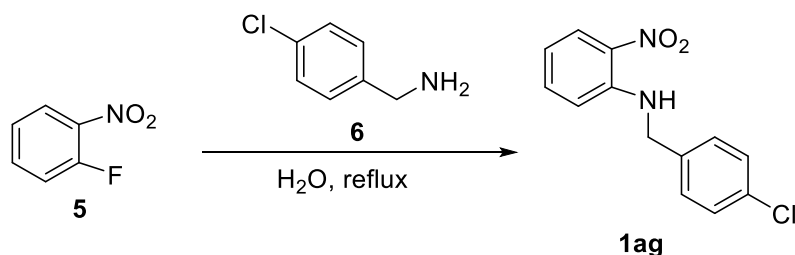
Classical synthetic route



To a solution of **1ah** (41.4 mg, 0.300 mmol) in AcOH (3 mL) and deionized water (0.30 mL) was added iron powder (83.8 mg, 1.50 mmol) in one portion under argon atmosphere. Then the resulting mixture was vigorously stirred at room temperature for ca. 11 h. The mixture was poured into a saturated K₂CO₃ aqueous solution slowly. Upon completion, the mixture was separated, and the aqueous layer was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic layer was dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄, filtered and concentrated to give the pure product. Then the sample was analyzed by ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 500 MHz) to obtain the yield (88%) using internal standard (1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane).

This work: a greener synthetic route

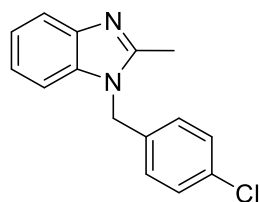
N-(4-chlorobenzyl)-2-nitroaniline **1ag** ¹ (Scheme 2)



The mixture of 1-fluoro-2-nitrobenzene (141 mg, 1.00 mmol, 1.00 equiv) and (4-chlorophenyl)methanamine (142 mg, 1.00 mmol, 1.00 equiv.) in water (2.0 mL)

was stirred magnetically at 100 °C (oil-bath) for 2.5 h (TLC). The reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and treated with NaHCO₃ (170 mg) and extracted with EtOAc (2 × 10 mL). The organic layer was combined, dried over Na₂SO₄, filtered and concentrated to give the pure product **1ag** (246 mg, 94%) as an orange solid.

1-(4-Chlorobenzyl)-2-methyl-1*H*-benzo[*d*]imidazole 2ag²⁵ (Scheme 2)



According to the general procedure, the reaction of *N*-(4-chlorobenzyl)-2-nitroaniline **1ag** (78.8 mg, 0.300 mmol), iron powder (92.2 mg, 1.65 mmol) and NH₄Cl (88.3 mg, 1.65 mmol) in EtOH (5.0 mL) afforded **2ag** (73.2 mg, 96%) as a brown solid. ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.72 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 1H), 7.29 – 7.15 (m, 5H), 6.96 (m, 2H), 5.24 (s, 2H), 2.53 (s, 3H); ¹³C{¹H} NMR (75 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 151.7, 142.6, 135.3, 134.4, 133.8, 129.2, 127.6, 122.5, 122.2, 119.2, 109.2, 46.5, 13.9.

4. References

- 1 D. N. Kommi, P. S. Jadhavar, D. Kumar, A. K. Chakraborti, *Green Chem.* 2013, **15**, 798–810.
- 2 E. J. Hanan, B. K. Chan, A. A. Estrada, D. G. Shore and J. P. Lyssikatos, *Synlett*, 2010, 2759–2764.
- 3 J. Zhou, Y. Zhang, Y. Cui, Z.-M. Li, H.-R. Song, J.-H. Dong, X.-G. Chen and B.-L. Xu, *J. Asian Nat. Prod. Res.*, 2011, **13**, 330–340.
- 4 Z. H. Zhang, J. J. Li, Y. Z. Gao and Y. H. Liu, *J. Heterocycl. Chem.*, 2007, **44**, 1509–1512.
- 5 M. Treu, T. Karner, R. Kousek, H. Berger, M. Mayer, D. B. McConnell and A. Stadler, *J. Comb. Chem.*, 2008, **10**, 863–868.
- 6 T. H. Graham, W. Liu and D. M. Shen, *Org. Lett.*, 2011, **13**, 6232–6235.
- 7 Y. Li, L. Yang, Q. Chen, C. Cao, P. Guan, G. Pang and Y. Shi, *Zeitschrift für Anorg. und Allg. Chemie*, 2013, **639**, 575–581.
- 8 Z. Zhang, J. Mao, D. Zhu, F. Wu, H. Chen and B. Wan, *Tetrahedron*, 2006, **62**, 4435–4443.
- 9 Q. Xia, W. Chen and H. Qiu, *J. Org. Chem.*, 2011, **76**, 7577–7582.
- 10 J. J. Newsome, M. A. Colucci, M. Hassani, H. D. Beall and C. J. Moody, *Org. Biomol. Chem.*, 2007, **5**, 3665–3673.
- 11 K. TANAKA, M. INO and Y. MURAKAMI, *Chem. Informationsd.*, 1982, **13**, 2091.
- 12 S. Jammi, S. Sakthivel, L. Rout, T. Mukherjee, S. Mandai, R. Mitra, P. Saha and T. Punniyamurthy, *J. Org. Chem.*, 2009, **74**, 1971–1976.
- 13 Commercially available from Chemieliva Pharmaceutical.
- 14 A. V. Lygin and A. De Meijere, *European J. Org. Chem.*, 2009, 5138–5141.
- 15 W. Huang and R. M. Scarborough, *Tetrahedron Lett.*, 1999, **40**, 2665–2668.
- 16 J. Kim, J. Kim, H. Lee, B. M. Lee and B. H. Kim, *Tetrahedron*, 2011, **67**, 8027–8033.
- 17 J. Y. Kato, Y. Ito, R. Ijuin, H. Aoyama and T. Yokomatsu, *Org. Lett.*, 2013, **15**, 3794–3797.
- 18 S. Caron, B. Jones and L. Wei, *Synthesis (stuttg)*. 2012, **44**, 3049–3054.
- 19 H. Yamamoto and K. Maruoka, *J. Am. Chem. Soc.*, 1981, **103**, 4186–4194.
- 20 S. A. Burova, R. Davis, R. N. Fitzgerald, B. S. Johnson and R. T. Matsuoka, *Synth. Commun.*, 2007, **37**, 3029–3039.
- 21 Commercially available from Aldlab Chemicals.
- 22 C. B. Aakeröy, J. Desper and J. F. Urbina, *Chem. Commun.*, 2005, **6081**, 2820–2822.
- 23 K. E. Hevener, S. Mehboob, P. Su, K. Truong, T. Boci, J. Deng, M. Ghassemi, J. L. Cook and M. E. Johnson, *J. Med. Chem.*, 2012, **55**, 268–279.
- 24 M. O. Karatas, B. Alici, E. Çetinkaya, Ç. Bilen, N. Gençer and O. Arslan, *Russ. J. Bioorganic Chem.*, 2014, **40**, 461–466.
- 25 X. Zhang, R. Huang, J. Marrot, V. Coeffard and Y. Xiong, *Tetrahedron*, 2015, **71**, 700–708.

5. ^1H and $^{13}\text{C}\{^1\text{H}\}$ NMR Spectra of Products

