

# Supporting Information

## Molybdenum-Catalyzed Deoxygenative Heterocyclization of 2-Nitroazobenzenes: A Novel Strategy for Catalytic Synthesis of 2-Aryl-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazoles

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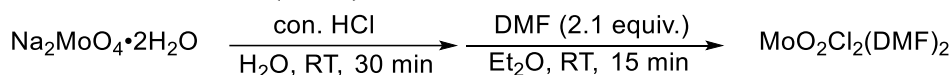
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## 1. General information

All reactions were carried out under an atmosphere of nitrogen in flame-dried sealed tube with magnetic stirring, and monitored by thin layer chromatography (TLC) using silica gel plates. Toluene was freshly distilled from CaH<sub>2</sub>. Flash column chromatography was performed on silica gel 60 (particle size 300-400 mesh ASTM) and eluted with petroleum ether/ethyl acetate. <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker 400 MHz spectrometer in CDCl<sub>3</sub> and <sup>19</sup>F NMR spectra were recorded on a Bruker 300 MHz spectrometer in CDCl<sub>3</sub>. All signals are reported in  $\delta$  units, parts per million (ppm), and were referenced to CDCl<sub>3</sub> ( $\delta$  7.26 ppm for <sup>1</sup>H NMR and 77.0 ppm for <sup>13</sup>C NMR). The data are reported as follows: chemical shift (ppm; br = broad, s = singlet, d = doublet, t = triplet, q = quartet, m = multiplet, dd = doublet of doublets, dt = doublet of triplets, td = triplet of doublets), coupling constant (Hz), and integration.

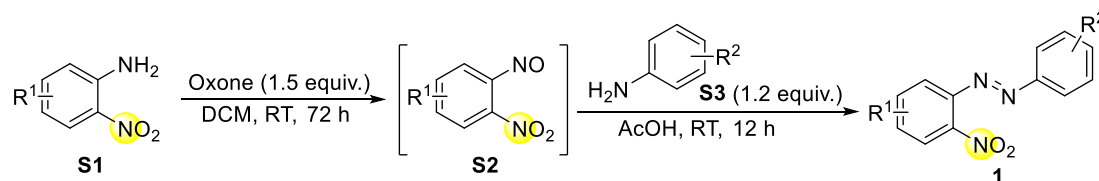
## 2. Synthesis of the catalyst and starting materials

### 2.1 Synthesis of MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub><sup>[1]</sup>



Concentrated HCl (8.3 mL, ca. 100 mmol) was added to a solution of Na<sub>2</sub>MoO<sub>4</sub>·2H<sub>2</sub>O (2.42 g, 10 mmol) in distilled water (5 mL). The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 min resulting in a colorless solution with precipitated NaCl. Et<sub>2</sub>O (15 mL) was added and the mixture vigorously stirred for 5 min. The upper Et<sub>2</sub>O layer was separated and dried over MgSO<sub>4</sub>. The solution was collected by filtration and the MgSO<sub>4</sub> solid was washed with Et<sub>2</sub>O (3 × 3 mL). The resulting solution was treated with a solution of DMF (1.54 g, 21 mmol) in Et<sub>2</sub>O (10 mL) to result a suspension. The mixture was stirred for 5 min and the white solid filtered, washed with Et<sub>2</sub>O (3 × 3 mL) and dried under vacuum to give the desired complex MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub> (3.15 g, 91% yield).

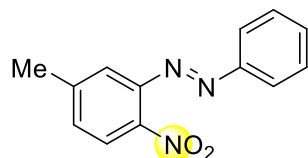
### 2.2 Synthesis of the starting materials 2-nitroazobenzenes (**1**)<sup>[2]</sup>



Oxone (7.5 mmol in 12 mL H<sub>2</sub>O) was added dropwise to a solution of 2-nitroaniline (**S1**, 5 mmol) in DCM (35 mL), and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 72 h. After completion of the reaction (TLC monitoring), the organic layer was separated and washed twice by distilled water to remove the residual inorganic salts. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure to give the crude nitroso intermediate **S2** without further purification. The freshly-prepared crude **S2** was all dissolved by AcOH (15 mL) followed by the addition of aniline (**S3**, 6 mmol). The solution was stirred at room temperature for 12 h, and neutralized to pH  $\approx$  7 by aqueous

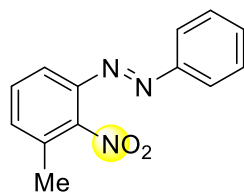
solution of NaHCO<sub>3</sub> dropped carefully. After extracted with ethyl acetate, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The product was purified by column chromatography to give substituted 2-nitroazobenzene **1** as an orange or red solid.

#### 5-Methyl-2-nitroazobenzene (**1b'**)



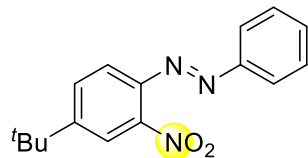
<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.96-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.89-7.86 (m, 1H), 7.54-7.52 (m, 3H), 7.37-7.33 (m, 2H), 2.47 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 152.4, 145.9, 144.8, 144.6, 132.1, 130.7, 129.2, 124.3, 123.5, 118.5, 21.5.

#### 3-Methyl-2-nitroazobenzene (**1c'**)



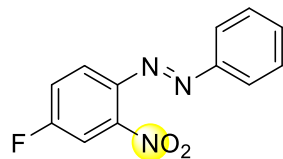
<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.92-7.87 (m, 2H), 7.69 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.52-7.44 (m, 4H), 7.38 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 1H), 2.44 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 152.2, 150.6, 142.8, 133.3, 132.2, 130.2, 129.1, 123.5, 114.5, 16.7.

#### 4-*tert*-Butyl-2-nitroazobenzene (**1e**)



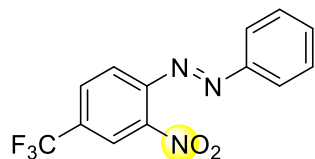
<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.94-7.90 (m, 3H), 7.69-7.62 (m, 2H), 7.53-7.49 (m, 3H), 1.39 (s, 9H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 154.9, 152.3, 147.6, 142.9, 132.0, 130.0, 129.1, 123.4, 120.7, 117.9, 35.2, 30.9.

#### 4-Fluoro-2-nitroazobenzene (**1h**)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.92-7.90 (m, 2H), 7.78-7.75 (m, 1H), 7.62-7.61 (m, 1H), 7.53-7.52 (m, 3H), 7.39-7.35 (m, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 162.5 (d, *J* = 254.0 Hz), 152.1, 148.3 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz), 141.5, 132.4, 129.2, 123.6, 120.2 (d, *J* = 3.0 Hz), 120.1 (d, *J* = 12.0 Hz), 111.5 (d, *J* = 27.0 Hz); <sup>19</sup>F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ -106.5.

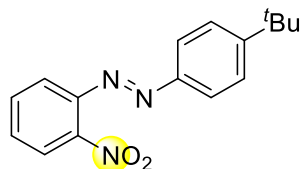
#### 4-Trifluoromethyl-2-nitroazobenzene (**1i**)



<sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.22 (s, 1H), 7.96-7.92 (m, 3H), 7.76 (d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, 1H),

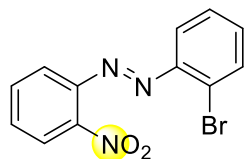
7.59-7.52 (m, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  152.3, 147.5, 146.8, 133.1, 132.1 (q,  $J = 34.0$  Hz), 129.9 (q,  $J = 3.0$  Hz), 129.3, 123.9, 121.7 (q,  $J = 4.0$  Hz), 119.6;  $^{19}\text{F}$  NMR (282 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  -62.7.

**4'-*tert*-Butyl-2-nitroazobenzene (1p)**



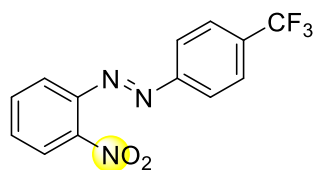
$^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  7.92-7.86 (m, 3H), 7.67-7.63 (m, 2H), 7.55-7.51 (m, 3H), 1.36 (s, 9H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  156.1, 150.4, 147.3, 145.6, 133.0, 130.1, 126.2, 124.0, 123.4, 118.4, 35.1, 31.1.

**2'-Bromo-2-nitroazobenzene (1r)**



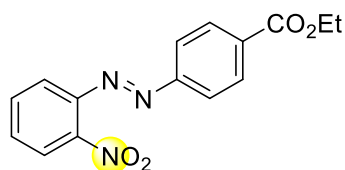
$^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  7.96-7.94 (m, 1H), 7.80-7.67 (m, 4H), 7.62-7.58 (m, 1H), 7.42-7.35 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  157.2, 149.4, 145.3, 133.9, 133.3, 133.2, 131.0, 128.2, 126.6, 124.1, 119.0, 118.5.

**4'-Trifluoromethyl-2-nitroazobenzene (1v)**



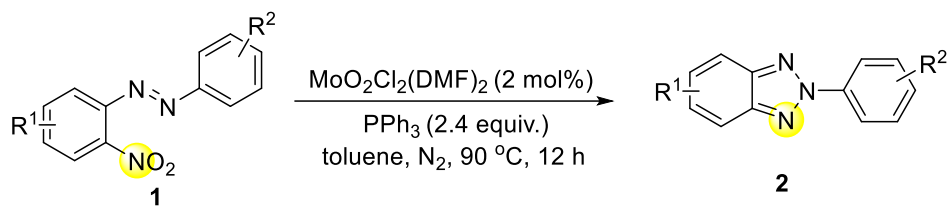
$^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  7.99 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 2H), 7.94 (d,  $J = 8.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.77 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 2H), 7.71-7.59 (m, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  153.9 (d,  $J = 1.0$  Hz), 147.6, 145.0, 133.3 (q,  $J = 33.0$  Hz), 133.2, 131.2, 126.4 (q,  $J = 4.0$  Hz), 124.1, 123.7, 123.6 (q,  $J = 271.0$  Hz), 118.1;  $^{19}\text{F}$  NMR (282 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  -62.7.

**4'-Ethoxycarbonyl-2-nitroazobenzene (1w)**



$^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.18 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 2H), 7.95-7.93 (m, 3H), 7.70-7.58 (m, 3H), 4.41 (q,  $J = 7.1$  Hz, 2H), 1.42 (t,  $J = 7.1$  Hz, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  165.6, 154.4, 147.6, 145.0, 133.1, 133.0, 131.0, 130.5, 124.0, 123.2, 118.1, 61.3, 14.2.

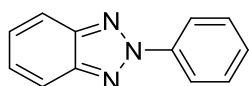
### 3. General procedure



Under nitrogen atmosphere, a sealed tube was charged with substituted 2-nitroazobenzene **1** (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub> (0.004 mmol, 2 mol%), PPh<sub>3</sub> (0.15 mmol, 1.5 equiv.) and 2.0 mL dry toluene were successively added. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 90 °C for 12 h under nitrogen atmosphere. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the mixture was concentrated in vacuum and the residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel with petroleum ether/ethyl acetate as eluent to give the desired product **2**.

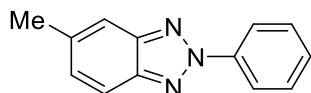
### 4. Characterization of products

#### 2-Phenyl-2*H*-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (**2a**)



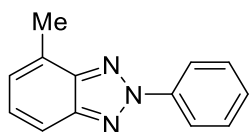
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 100-102 °C. Yield: 95% (37.0 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.36 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 2H), 7.96-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.56 (t, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 7.47-7.40 (m, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 144.9, 140.2, 129.4, 128.9, 127.1, 120.5, 118.3.

#### 5-Methyl-2-phenyl-2*H*-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (**2b**)



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 93-95 °C. Yield: 82% (34.2 mg, from **1b**), 80% (33.6 mg, from **1b'**). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.25 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 7.24 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.58 (s, 1H), 7.46 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.35 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 7.17 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 2.43 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 145.4, 143.6, 140.3, 137.3, 130.1, 129.3, 128.6, 120.3, 117.7, 116.4, 22.1.

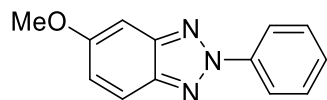
#### 4-Methyl-2-phenyl-2*H*-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (**2c**)



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 72-74 °C. Yield: 95% (39.7 mg, from **1c**), 82% (34.3 mg, from **1c'**). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.38 (d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.76 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 7.54 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H),

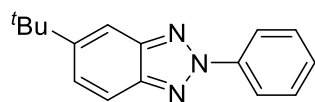
7.43 (t,  $J = 7.3$  Hz, 1H), 7.30 (t,  $J = 7.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.13 (d,  $J = 6.7$  Hz, 1H), 2.72 (s, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.4, 144.8, 140.3, 129.2, 129.0, 128.6, 127.3, 126.0, 120.4, 115.4, 17.1. HRMS-ESI<sup>+</sup> ( $m/z$ ): found  $[\text{M}+\text{H}]^+$  210.1028, calc'd  $[\text{C}_{13}\text{H}_{12}\text{N}_3]^+$  requires 210.1026.

**5-Methoxy-2-phenyl-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2d)**



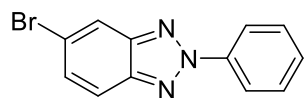
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 100/1. White solid. Mp: 66-67 °C. Yield: 90% (40.8 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.28 (d,  $J = 7.7$  Hz, 2H), 7.77 (d,  $J = 8.9$  Hz, 1H), 7.51 (t,  $J = 7.3$  Hz, 2H), 7.39 (t,  $J = 7.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.09-7.07 (m, 2H), 3.86 (s, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  159.2, 145.8, 141.1, 140.2, 129.2, 128.3, 122.4, 120.0, 119.0, 94.5, 55.4.

**5-tert-Butyl-2-phenyl-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2e)**



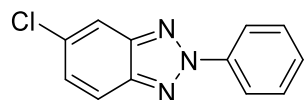
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 73-74 °C. Yield: 42% (21.3 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.34 (d,  $J = 8.0$  Hz, 2H), 7.86 (d,  $J = 8.2$  Hz, 2H), 7.54 (t,  $J = 7.3$  Hz, 3H), 7.43 (t,  $J = 7.3$  Hz, 1H), 1.41 (s, 9H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  150.5, 145.4, 143.5, 140.4, 129.4, 128.6, 127.0, 120.4, 117.6, 112.7, 35.3, 31.0.

**5-Bromo-2-phenyl-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2f)**



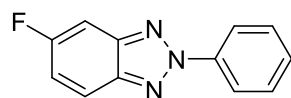
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 118-121 °C. Yield: 72% (39.1 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.29 (d,  $J = 6.7$  Hz, 2H), 8.08 (s, 1H), 7.77 (d,  $J = 8.4$  Hz, 1H), 7.52-7.44 (m, 4H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.7, 143.5, 139.9, 130.9, 129.4, 129.2, 120.8, 120.7, 120.5, 119.6.

**5-Chloro-2-phenyl-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2g)**



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 110-111 °C. Yield: 89% (41.2 mg, from **1g**), 54% (24.6 mg, from **1g'**).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.30 (d,  $J = 7.9$  Hz, 2H), 7.90 (s, 1H), 7.85 (d,  $J = 9.0$  Hz, 1H), 7.54 (t,  $J = 7.5$  Hz, 2H), 7.45 (t,  $J = 7.3$  Hz, 1H), 7.34 (d,  $J = 9.0$  Hz, 1H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.2, 143.4, 140.0, 132.9, 129.4, 129.2, 128.7, 120.5, 119.5, 117.3.

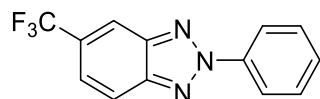
**5-Fluoro-2-phenyl-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2h)**



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp:

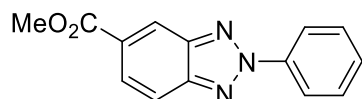
127-129 °C. Yield: 87% (36.9 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.30 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 7.90-7.87 (m, 1H), 7.55-7.49 (m, 3H), 7.44 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 1H), 7.20 (td, *J* = 9.2 Hz, *J* = 2.0 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 161.5 (d, *J* = 245 Hz), 144.8 (d, *J* = 14.0 Hz), 142.1, 140.1, 129.4, 129.0, 120.4, 120.1 (d, *J* = 11.0 Hz), 118.7 (d, *J* = 29.0 Hz), 101.6 (d, *J* = 25.0 Hz); <sup>19</sup>F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ -111.7.

**5-Trifluoromethyl-2-phenyl-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole (2i)**



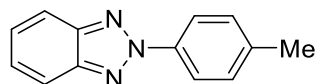
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 91-92 °C. Yield: 59% (31.3 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.37 (d, *J* = 7.9 Hz, 2H), 8.29 (s, 1H), 8.05 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.61-7.56 (m, 3H), 7.51 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 145.7, 143.7, 139.9, 129.6, 129.5, 129.2 (q, *J* = 32.0 Hz), 125.4 (d, *J* = 271 Hz), 123.1 (d, *J* = 3.0 Hz), 120.8, 119.6, 117.1 (q, *J* = 5.0 Hz); <sup>19</sup>F NMR (282 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ -62.5.

**Methyl 2-phenyl-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole-5-carboxylate (2j)**



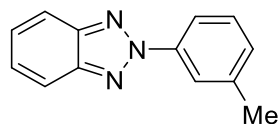
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 100/1. White solid. Mp: 124-126 °C. Yield: 49% (24.9 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.70 (s, 1H), 8.36 (d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 8.06-8.03 (m, 1H), 7.95-7.93 (m, 1H), 7.56 (t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 7.48 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 3.98 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 166.6, 146.7, 144.4, 140.0, 129.5, 129.5, 128.9, 127.0, 122.0, 120.7, 118.3, 52.4.

**2-(*p*-Tolyl)-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole (2k)**



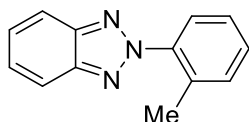
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 106-108 °C. Yield: 73% (30.4 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.23 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.94-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.42-7.40 (m, 2H), 7.35 (d, *J* = 8.1 Hz, 2H), 2.44 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 144.8, 139.1, 138.1, 130.0, 127.0, 120.4, 118.2, 21.2.

**2-(*m*-Tolyl)-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole (2l)**



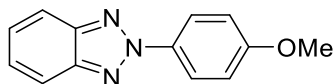
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 96-97 °C. Yield: 92% (38.4 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.10-8.06 (m, 2H), 7.86-7.84 (m, 2H), 7.37-7.32 (m, 3H), 7.18 (d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 1H), 2.40 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 144.8, 140.1, 139.5, 129.7, 129.1, 127.0, 121.0, 118.2, 117.7, 21.4.

**2-(*o*-Tolyl)-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole (2m)**



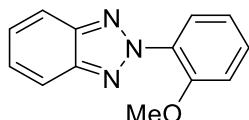
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 93-94 °C. Yield: 98% (41.1 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  7.99-7.96 (m, 2H), 7.71 (d,  $J$  = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 7.46-7.37 (m, 5H), 2.42 (s, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  144.6, 140.1, 133.2, 131.6, 129.4, 126.8, 126.5, 125.9, 118.3, 18.8.

**2-(4-Methoxyphenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2n)**



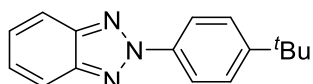
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 120/1. White solid. Mp: 104-106 °C. Yield: 79% (35.8 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.27 (d,  $J$  = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 7.93-7.91 (m, 2H), 7.42-7.39 (m, 2H), 7.05 (d,  $J$  = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 3.88 (s, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  160.1, 144.8, 133.9, 126.8, 121.9, 118.1, 114.4, 55.6.

**2-(2-Methoxyphenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2o)**



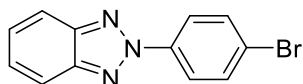
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 150/1. White solid. Mp: 92-94 °C. Yield: 83% (37.4 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.00-7.95 (m, 2H), 7.66 (dd,  $J$  = 7.7 Hz, 1.6 Hz, 1H), 7.52-7.47 (m, 1H), 7.44-7.41 (m, 2H), 7.14-7.09 (m, 2H), 3.86 (s, 3H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  153.3, 144.5, 130.9, 129.9, 127.4, 126.6, 120.4, 118.2, 112.4, 56.0.

**2-(4-tert-Butylphenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2p)**



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 109-111 °C. Yield: 62% (31.3 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.27 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.95-7.93 (m, 2H), 7.56 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.42-7.40 (m, 2H), 1.39 (s, 9H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  152.3, 144.9, 138.0, 127.0, 126.3, 120.2, 118.3, 34.8, 31.3.

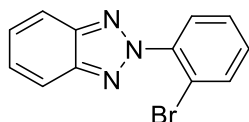
**2-(4-Bromophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2q)**



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 165-167 °C. Yield: 65% (35.4 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.24 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.92-7.90 (m, 2H), 7.67 (d,  $J$  = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 7.44-7.41 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.0, 139.2, 132.5, 127.4, 122.8, 121.9, 118.3.

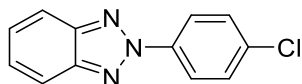
**2-(2-Bromophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2r)**





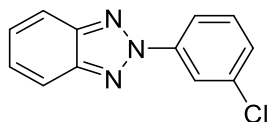
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 100-103 °C. Yield: 94% (51.3 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.00-7.98 (m, 2H), 7.81 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.68 (d,  $J$  = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.53-7.40 (m, 4H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  144.7, 140.2, 134.0, 131.1, 128.3, 128.0, 127.2, 118.7, 118.4.

**2-(4-Chlorophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2s)**



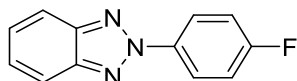
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 159-160 °C. Yield: 76% (35.5 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.29 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.92-7.90 (m, 2H), 7.51 (d,  $J$  = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.43-7.40 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.0, 138.7, 134.7, 129.5, 127.4, 121.6, 118.3.

**2-(3-Chlorophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2t)**



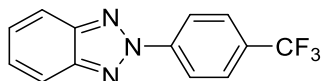
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. White solid. Mp: 139-140 °C. Yield: 70% (32.1 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.40 (s, 1H), 8.26 (d,  $J$  = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 7.93-7.91 (m, 2H), 7.50-7.42 (m, 4H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.0, 141.0, 135.2, 130.4, 128.8, 127.5, 120.7, 118.4, 118.3.

**2-(4-Fluorophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2u)**



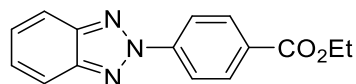
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 120/1. White solid. Mp: 111-113 °C. Yield: 82% (35.0 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.28-8.24 (m, 2H), 7.85-7.83 (m, 2H), 7.35-7.33 (m, 2H), 7.16 (t,  $J$  = 8.2 Hz, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  162.6 (d,  $J$  = 248 Hz), 144.8, 136.4, 127.1, 122.2 (d,  $J$  = 9.0 Hz), 118.2, 116.1 (d,  $J$  = 23.0 Hz);  $^{19}\text{F}$  NMR (282 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  -112.2.

**2-(4-Trifluoromethylphenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2v)**



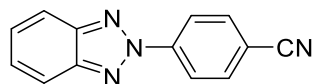
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 150/1. White solid. Mp: 151-154 °C. Yield: 58% (30.4 mg).  $^1\text{H}$  NMR (400 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  8.50 (d,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz, 2H), 7.94-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.82 (d,  $J$  = 8.5 Hz, 2H), 7.46-7.44 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR (101 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  145.2, 142.5, 130.6 (d,  $J$  = 33.0 Hz), 127.8, 126.7 (q,  $J$  = 4.0 Hz), 126.4 (q,  $J$  = 271 Hz), 120.6, 118.5;  $^{19}\text{F}$  NMR (282 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ )  $\delta$  -62.4.

**Ethyl 4-(2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazol-2-yl)benzoate (2w)**



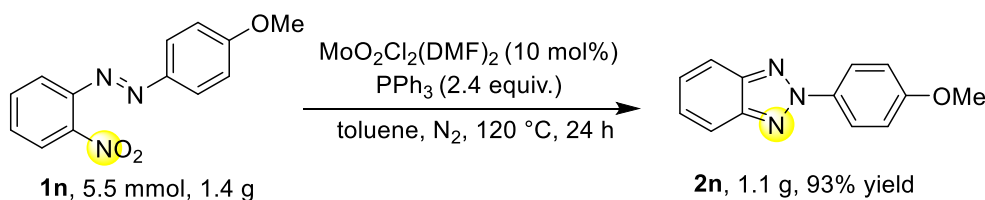
Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 20/1. White solid. Mp: 155-156 °C. Yield: 69% (36.7 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.43 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 8.22 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.94-7.91 (m, 2H), 7.44-7.42 (m, 2H), 4.42 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 2H), 1.43 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 165.5, 145.1, 143.0, 130.8, 130.4, 127.6, 120.0, 118.4, 61.2, 14.2.

## 2-(4-Cyanophenyl)-2H-benzo[d][1,2,3]triazole (2x)

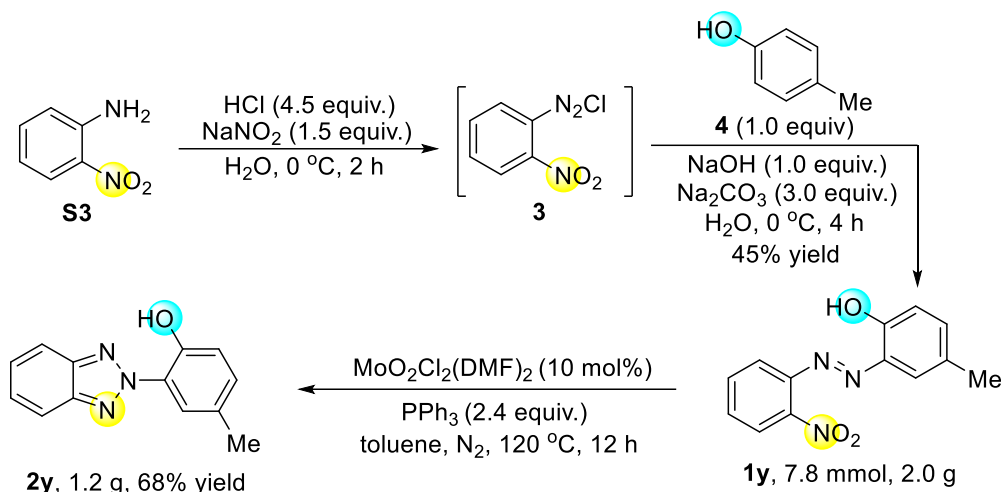


Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 20/1. White solid. Mp: 216-218 °C. Yield: 76% (33.3 mg). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.49 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 2H), 7.93-7.89 (m, 2H), 7.84 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 2H), 7.47-7.44 (m, 2H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 145.4, 142.9, 133.5, 128.1, 120.8, 118.5, 118.0, 112.3.

## 5. Gram-scale synthesis of 2n and 2y



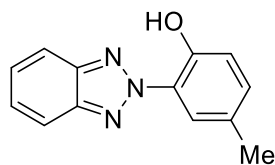
Under nitrogen atmosphere, a sealed tube was charged with substituted 2-nitroazobenzene **1n** (1.4 g, 5.5 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub> (0.55 mmol, 10 mol%), PPh<sub>3</sub> (13.2 mmol, 2.4 equiv.) and 55 mL dry toluene were successively added. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 120 °C for 12 h under nitrogen atmosphere. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the mixture was washed with aq. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> to oxidize the residual PPh<sub>3</sub>, and concentrated in vacuum and the residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel with petroleum ether/ethyl acetate as eluent to give the desired product **2n** in 93% yield. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.27 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 7.93-7.91 (m, 2H), 7.42-7.39 (m, 2H), 7.05 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 2H), 3.88 (s, 3H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 160.1, 144.8, 133.9, 126.8, 121.9, 118.1, 114.4, 55.6.



2-Nitroaniline (**S3**, 5.5 g, 40 mmol) and concentrated hydrochloric acid (15 mL) was mixed to in a 500 mL beaker and the mixture was stirred and heated at 70 °C to form a suspension. The beaker was cooled to 0 °C for 15 min, and a solution of NaNO<sub>2</sub> (4.1 g, 60 mmol) in 8 mL of distilled water was added dropwise to the suspension with vigorous stirring. The reaction was kept at 0 °C for 2 h to give 2-nitrophenyldiazonium chloride (**3**). A small amount of urea was added to eliminate the redundant HNO<sub>2</sub>. The mixture was then added slowly to a solution of *p*-cresol (**4**, 4.3 g, 40 mmol), NaOH (1.6 g, 40 mmol) and Na<sub>2</sub>CO<sub>3</sub> (12.7 g, 120 mmol) in 120 mL of distilled water, and the solution began to turn red and a red solid precipitated. With stirred for 4 h, the suspension was filtered and the red solid was washed with water and dried. The crude product was recrystallized from *i*PrOH and washed with Et<sub>2</sub>O twice to afford 4.6 g of pure **1y** in 45% yield.<sup>[3]</sup>

Under nitrogen atmosphere, a sealed tube was charged with **1y** (7.8 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub> (0.78 mmol, 10 mol%), PPh<sub>3</sub> (18.7 mmol, 2.4 equiv.) and 78 mL dry toluene were successively added. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 120 °C for 12 h under nitrogen atmosphere. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the mixture was concentrated in vacuum and the residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel with petroleum ether-dichloromethane as eluent to give 1.2 g of **2y** in 68% yield.

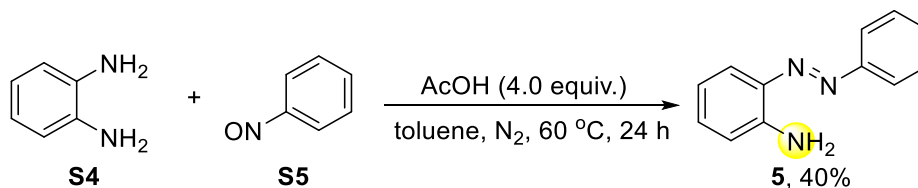
#### 2-(2*H*-Benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazol-2-yl)-4-methylphenol (Tinuvin-P, **2y**)<sup>[4]</sup>



Eluent for column chromatographic purification: petroleum ether. Yellow solid. Mp: 122-124 °C. Yield: 73% (1.3 g). <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 11.12 (s, 1H), 8.20 (s, 1H), 7.94-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.49-7.46 (m, 2H), 7.16-7.08 (m, 2H), 2.40 (s, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 147.4, 142.6, 131.1, 129.5, 127.5, 124.6, 120.9, 118.6, 117.5, 20.4.

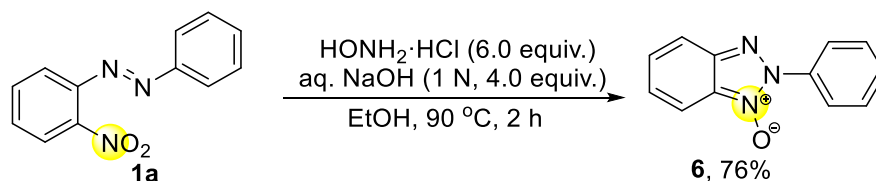
## 6. Mechanistic study

### Synthesis of 2-aminoazobenzene (**5**)<sup>[5]</sup>



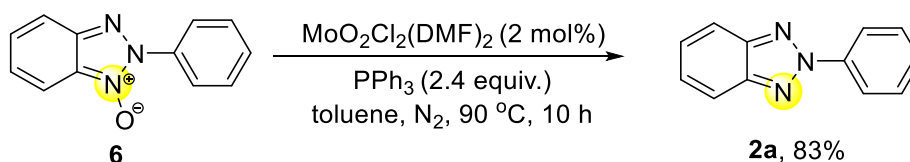
The solution of 1,2-phenylenediamine (**S4**, 1.6 g, 15.0 mmol) in dry toluene (100 mL) was degassed under a stream of N<sub>2</sub> for 15 min. Nitrosobenzene (**S5**, 1.6 g, 15.0 mmol) and acetic acid (3.4 mL, 60 mmol) were added and the mixture was stirred at 60 °C for 24 h. The solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure, and the concentrated solution was diluted with water and CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>. The separated organic phase was dried with MgSO<sub>4</sub> and concentrated. The residue purified through column chromatography (petroleum ether/ethyl acetate = 20/1) to give 1.2 g of **5** in 40% yield. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 7.87-7.85 (m, 3H), 7.53-7.49 (m, 2H), 7.43 (t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 7.25-7.21 (m, 1H), 6.86-6.82 (m, 1H), 6.77 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 5.91 (br, 2H).

### Synthesis of 2-phenyl-2*H*-benzo[*d*][1,2,3]triazole-1-oxide (**6**)<sup>[6]</sup>



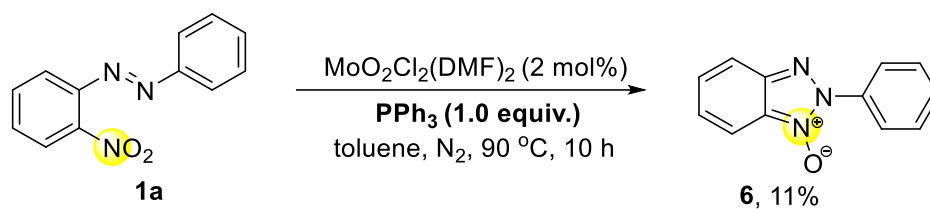
A mixture of 2-nitroazobenzene (**1a**, 681 mg, 3 mmol), EtOH (10 mL) and NaOH solution (1 N, 12 mL) heated at 90 °C was treated with powdered HONH<sub>2</sub>·HCl (625 mg, 9 mmol). After 15 min, another HONH<sub>2</sub>·HCl (625 mg, 9 mmol) was added, and then the reaction was maintained at 90 °C for 2 h. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the mixture was concentrated in vacuum and diluted with DCM and water. The organic phase was separated and concentrated followed by column chromatography to give 477 mg of **6** (76% yield) as a yellow solid. <sup>1</sup>H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 8.18-8.15 (m, 2H), 7.82-7.75 (m, 2H), 7.61-7.57 (m, 2H), 7.54-7.51 (m, 1H), 7.47-7.43 (m, 1H), 7.37-7.33 (m, 1H); <sup>13</sup>C NMR (101 MHz, CDCl<sub>3</sub>) δ 141.0, 135.1, 129.8, 129.1, 129.0, 126.4, 126.3, 123.4, 119.0, 113.9.

### Controlled experiments



Under nitrogen atmosphere, a sealed tube was charged with **6** (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv.), MoO<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>(DMF)<sub>2</sub> (0.004 mmol, 2 mol%), PPh<sub>3</sub> (0.48 mmol, 2.4 equiv.) and 2 mL dry toluene were successively added. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 90 °C for 12 h. After completion of the reaction (monitored by TLC), the mixture was washed with aq. H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub> to oxidize the residual PPh<sub>3</sub>, and concentrated in vacuum and the

residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel with petroleum ether-dichloromethane as eluent to give the product **2a** in 83% yield.



Under nitrogen atmosphere, a sealed tube was charged with **1a** (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv.),  $\text{MoO}_2\text{Cl}_2(\text{DMF})_2$  (0.004 mmol, 2 mol%),  $\text{PPh}_3$  (0.2 mmol, 1.0 equiv.) and 2 mL dry toluene were successively added. The reaction mixture was kept stirring at 90 °C for 10 h. A small amount of **6** could be detected by TLC. Then, the mixture was concentrated in vacuum and the residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel with petroleum ether/ethyl acetate as eluent to give 4.6 mg of **6** in 11% yield.

## 7. References

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## 8. NMR spectra of products

