

A pH sensitive ratiometric fluorophore and its application for monitoring the intracellular and extracellular pHs simultaneously

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1. Synthesis and characterization

Synthesis of compound 1a N-hydroxyethyl-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide. 2.0 g (7.22 mmol) 4-bromine-1,8-naphthalic anhydride was dissolved in ethanol (160 mL) and heated to reflux. Then 440 μ L of ethanolamine (7.3 mmol) was added to the mixture slowly after the temperature cooling down to 50 °C. The resulted mixture was heated to reflux with stirring for 1 h. The reaction was over when the solution became clear. When the solution was cooled to room temperature, precipitate was emerged. The precipitate was collected by vacuum filtration, and then washed with water and ethanol for three times respectively, and finally dried by vacuum (yield 90%);

^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.65 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 8.57 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 8.40 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 8.03 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 1H), 4.44 (t, J = 6.0 Hz, 2H), 3.98 (t, J = 6.0 Hz, 2H), 2.09 (s, 1H); ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 162.9, 162.9, 132.5, 131.5, 131.3, 130.8, 129.7, 128.9, 128.7, 128.2, 122.8, 122.0, 57.7, 41.9; MS (ESI): m/z 320.1 ($\text{M}+\text{H}$) $^+$.

Synthesis of compound 2a (ENNA). 430 mg (1.3 mmol) compound 1a N-hydroxyethyl-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide, 200 mg (2.4 mmol) 3-amino-1,2,4-triazole and 120 mg (3 mmol) NaOH were dissolved in DMSO (8 mL). The resulting mixture was heated to 150 °C for 12 h with stirring under an atmosphere of nitrogen. After cooled to room temperature, the solution was evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was purified by column chromatography using silica-gel (100-200 mesh) and 8% methanol in dichloromethane as eluent to give a salmon pink solid compound (128 mg, 30.7%).

^1H NMR ($\text{DMSO}-d_6$, 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 13.28 (s, 1H), 8.54 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 8.43 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 8.31 (s, 1H), 7.62 (d, J = 6 Hz, 1H), 7.17 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 4.15 (t, J = 6 Hz, 2H), 3.59 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 2H); ^1H NMR ($\text{DMSO}-d_6+\text{NaOH}$ solid, 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.37 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 8.22 (s, 1H), 8.11 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 7.33 (d, J = 6 Hz, 1H), 6.89 (d, J = 9 Hz, 1H), 4.18 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 3.55 (t, J = 7.5 Hz, 2H); ^{13}C NMR ($\text{DMSO}-d_6+\text{NaOH}$ solid, 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 163.2, 162.7, 155.6, 154.62, 154.3, 139.7, 133.7, 132.7, 132.2, 113.7, 113.3, 111.3, 103.3, 101.5, 58.2, 41.4; MS (ESI): m/z 320.1 ($\text{M}-\text{H}$) $^-$; HRMS (ESI): m/z Calcd for $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{10}\text{N}_5\text{O}_3$ ($\text{M}-\text{H}$) $^-$ 320.078903, found, 320.078494.

Synthesis of compound 1b N-hexanoic acid-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide. 4.0 g (14.44 mmol) 4-bromine-1,8-naphthalic anhydride was dissolved in ethanol (300 mL), and heated to reflux. Then water-alcohol mix solution of 6-amino-hexanoic acid (2.1 g, 15.9 mmol) was added to the mixture slowly after the temperature cooling down to 50 °C. The resulted mixture was heated to reflux with stirring for 3 h. The reaction was over when the solution became clear. After the solution was cooled to room temperature, added much water to the mixture solution and precipitate was emerged. Primrose solid was obtained by vacuum filtration, and then washed with water and ethanol for three times respectively, and finally dried by vacuum (yield 95%);

^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.39 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 8.33 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.14 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 8.04 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (t, J = 8.0 Hz, 1H), 3.94 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 2.21 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 1.58 (m, 1.65~1.50, 4H), 1.32 (m, 1.38~1.29, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 174.4, 162.6, 162.5, 132.3, 131.4, 130.7, 129.5, 129.0, 128.5, 127.9, 122.4, 121.7, 33.5, 27.1, 26.0, 24.2; MS (ESI): m/z 390.2 ($\text{M}+\text{H}$) $^+$.

Synthesis of compound 2b ANNA. 663 mg (1.7 mmol) N- hexanoic acid -1,8-naphthalimide, 260mg (3.1 mmol) 3-amino-1,2,4-triazole and 140 mg (3.5 mmol) NaOH were dissolved in DMSO (10 mL). The resulting mixture was heated to 135 °C for 12 h with stirring under an atmosphere of nitrogen. After cooled to room temperature, the solution was evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was purified by column chromatography using silica-gel (100-200 mesh) and 15% methanol in dichloromethane (contained 0.1% TEA) as eluent to give a salmon pink solid compound (254 mg, 38.3%).

^1H NMR (DMSO- d_6 +NaOH solid, 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.35 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.22 (s, 1H), 8.10 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.32 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 6.88 (d, J = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.03 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 2.06 (t, J = 7.2 Hz, 2H), 1.55 (m, 1.63~1.47, 4H), 1.28 (m, 1.38~1.17, 2H); ^{13}C NMR (DMSO- d_6 +NaOH solid, 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 175.8, 163.0, 164.5, 155.6, 154.6, 154.2, 139.7, 133.6, 132.6, 132.1, 113.6, 113.3, 111.3, 103.4, 101.4, 35.7, 27.7, 26.6, 25.5, 25.3; MS (ESI): m/z 390.1 (M-H) $^-$; HRMS (ESI): m/z Calcd for $\text{C}_{20}\text{H}_{18}\text{N}_5\text{O}_4$ (M+H) $^+$ 392.13533, found, 392.13583.

Synthesis of compound 1c N-hexadecyl-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide. 3.1 g (11.2 mmol) 4-bromine-1,8-naphthalic anhydride was dissolved in ethanol (300 mL), and heated to reflux. Then alcohol solution of 1-Hexadecylamine (3.2 g, 13.2 mmol) was added to the mixture slowly after the temperature cooling down to 50 °C. The mixture solution turned to be clear after the temperature rised to 85 °C and then it turned back to turbid solution. The resulted mixture was heated to reflux with stirring for 5 h. Then the solution was cooled to room temperature, more precipitate was emerged. Gray solid was obtained by vacuum filtration, and then washed with water and ethanol for three times respectively, and finally dried by vacuum (yield 92%);

^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.65 (d, J = 7.2 Hz, 1H), 8.55 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 8.40 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 8.03 (d, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (t, J = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 4.15 (t, J = 7.7 Hz, 2H), 1.71 (dd, J = 10.8 Hz, 6.6 Hz, 2H), 1.3 (m, 1.36~1.24, 26H), 0.87 (t, J = 6.3 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (CDCl_3 , 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 163.7, 133.3, 132.1, 131.3, 130.3, 129.1, 128.2, 132.3, 123.3, 122.4, 40.7, 32.0, 29.8, 29.8, 29.7, 29.7, 29.5, 28.2, 27.2, 22.8, 14.2; MS (ESI): m/z 500.2 (M+H) $^+$.

Synthesis of compound 2c HNNA. 0.95 g (1.9 mmol) N- hexadecyl -1,8-naphthalimide, 227mg (2.7 mmol) 3-amino-1,2,4-triazole and 124 mg (3.1 mmol) NaOH were dissolved in DMSO (15 mL). The resulting mixture was heated to 135 °C for 12 h with stirring under an atmosphere of nitrogen. After cooled to room temperature, the solution was evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was purified by column chromatography using silica-gel (100-200 mesh) and 3% methanol in dichloromethane (contained 0.1% TEA) as eluent to give a salmon pink solid compound (401 mg, 42.1%).

^1H NMR (DMSO- d_6 +NaOH solid, 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.35 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H), 8.21 (s, 1H), 8.09 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 7.32 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H), 6.86 (d, J = 8.7 Hz, 1H), 4.04 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 1.58 (t, J = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 1.25 (m, 1.30~1.21, 26H), 0.83 (t, J = 6.9 Hz, 3H); ^{13}C NMR (DMSO- d_6 +NaOH solid, 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 163.0, 162.5, 155.7, 154.6, 154.2, 139.7, 133.6, 132.6, 132.1, 113.6, 113.3, 111.3, 103.3, 101.4, 31.3, 29.0, 28.9, 28.9, 18.8, 28.7, 27.7, 26.7, 22.1, 14.0; MS (ESI): m/z 500.4 (M-H) $^-$; HRMS (ESI): m/z Calcd for $\text{C}_{30}\text{H}_{40}\text{N}_5\text{O}_2$ (M+H) $^+$ 502.31765, found, 502.31797.

Synthesis of N-butyl-4-butylamine-1,8-naphthalimide (the standard for Φ_f measurement). 1.5 g (5.42 mmol) 4-bromine-1,8-naphthalic anhydride was dissolved in 120 mL ethanol, and heated to reflux.

Then 400 μL of butylamine (5.6 mmol) was added to the mixture slowly after the temperature cooling down to 50 $^{\circ}\text{C}$. The resulted mixture was heated to reflux with stirring for 1 h. The reaction was over when the solution became clear. After the solution was cooled to room temperature, added water to the solution and then precipitate was emerged. White solid was obtained by vacuum filtration, and then washed with water and ethanol for three times respectively and finally dried by vacuum. N-butyl-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide was obtained (yield 81.1%). Then 100 mg (0.302 mmol) N-butyl-4-bromine-1,8-naphthalimide was dissolved to 5 ml of ethylene glycol monomethyl ether, adding 130 μL (1.8 mmol) of butylamine slowly with magnetic force stirring. The resulted mixture was heated to reflux with stirring for 1 h. After the solution stay overnight at room temperature, precipitate was emerged and solid was obtained by vacuum filtration. The residue was purified by column chromatography using silica-gel (100-200 mesh) and 3% methanol in dichloromethane as eluent to give yellow solid compound (rate of purity 98%, yield 128 mg, 30.7%), further purified by HPLC, purity reached to 99.9%.

^1H NMR ($\text{DMSO}-d_6$, 300 MHz) δ (ppm): 8.71 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 1H), 8.43 (d, $J = 6.0$ Hz, 1H), 8.26 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 1H), 7.74 (t, $J = 6.0$ Hz, -NH-, 1H), 7.67 (t, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 1H), 6.78 (d, $J = 9.0$ Hz, 1H), 4.01 (t, $J = 7.5$ Hz, 2H), 3.39 (t, $J = 6.0$ Hz, 2H), 1.74-1.67 (m, 2H), 1.65-1.54 (m, 2H), 1.50-1.42 (m, 2H), 1.40-1.30 (m, 2H), 0.98-0.89 (m, 6H); ^{13}C NMR ($\text{DMSO}-d_6$, 75 MHz) δ (ppm): 150.7, 150.7, 134.3, 130.6, 129.4, 128.6, 124.2, 121.9, 120.1, 107.5, 103.7, 42.6, 29.9, 29.8, 19.8, 13.8, 13.7; MS (ESI): m/z 325.0 ($\text{M}+\text{H}$) $^{+}$

2. Optical spectral behavior of ANNA at different pH

The absorbance and fluorescence spectra of ANNA at different pH were collected at the same condition as that of ENNA. These results show that ANNA has the same optical spectral behavior as ENNA, indicating that changing the substituent at 9-position (N-9) of naphthalimides do not affect their optical spectral behavior.

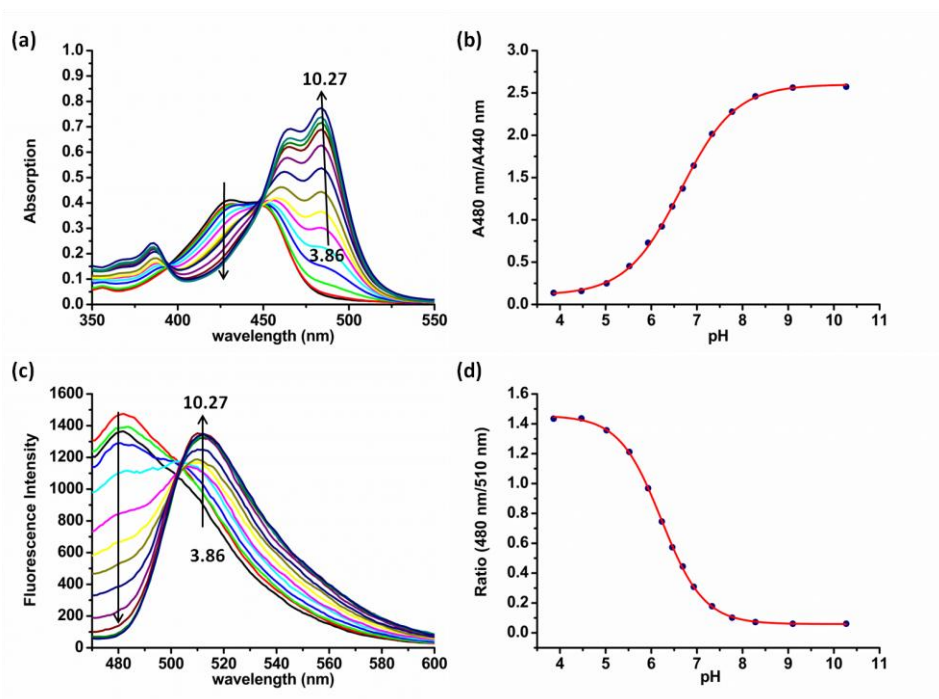


Figure S1. (a). Absorption spectra of 40 μM ANNA. All samples were measured in HEPES buffer at pH 3.86, 4.47, 5.02, 5.52, 5.93, 6.23, 6.46, 6.69, 6.93, 7.33, 7.77, 8.28, 9.10, 10.27. (b). Response curve of ratiometric absorbance

($A_{480\text{ nm}}/A_{440\text{ nm}}$) to pH. (c). Fluorescence spectra of 1.0 μM ANNA. All samples were measured in 20 mM HEPES buffer at pH 3.86, 4.47, 5.02, 5.52, 5.93, 6.23, 6.46, 6.69, 6.93, 7.33, 7.77, 8.28, 9.10, 10.27. (d) Response curve of ratiometric fluorescence intensity ($I_{480\text{ nm}}/I_{510\text{ nm}}$, $\lambda_{\text{ex}} = 455\text{ nm}$) to pH.

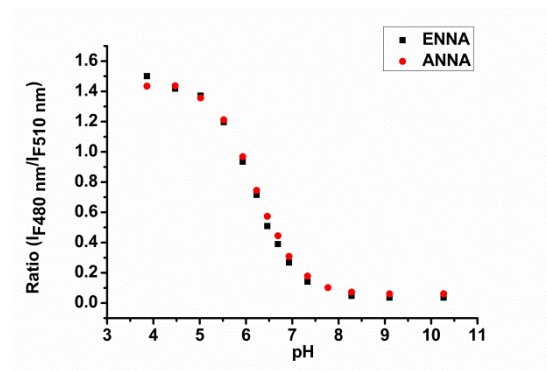


Figure S2. The comparison of fluorescence ratio curves of ANNA and ENNA against pH.

3. Reversibility of the fluorescence response to pH of ENNA and ANNA

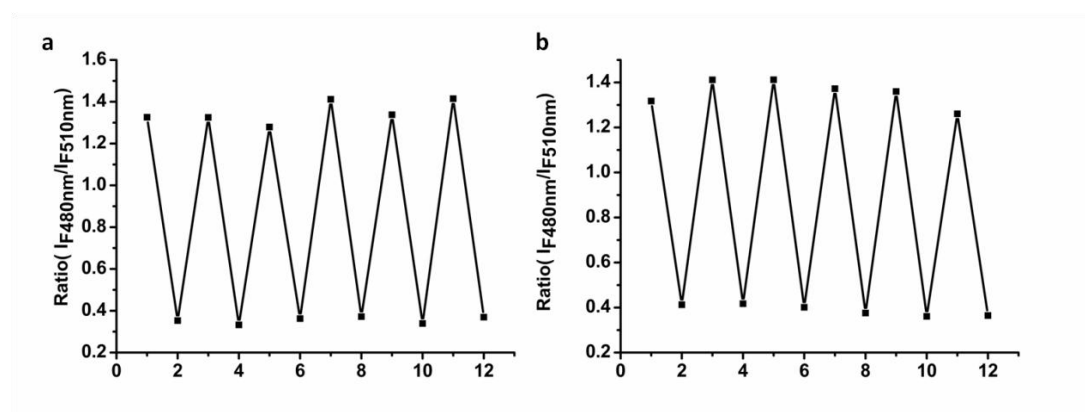


Figure S3. Fluorescence responses of ENNA and ANNA to acid/base cycles in HEPES (pH 5.52) solutions. The fluorescence intensities ratio at 480 nm to 510 nm was monitored by the alternate addition of NaOH (6 mM) and HCl (6 mM) under the excitation at 455 nm.

4. pH titrations in buffer solutions with different ionic strength

More pH dependence experiments in HEPES buffer solution at different ionic strengths were performed (NaCl: 0, 100, 150, 200 mM). The results indicated that there was no evident change in fluorescence emission intensity and wavelength, as well as the ratio of fluorescence intensity.

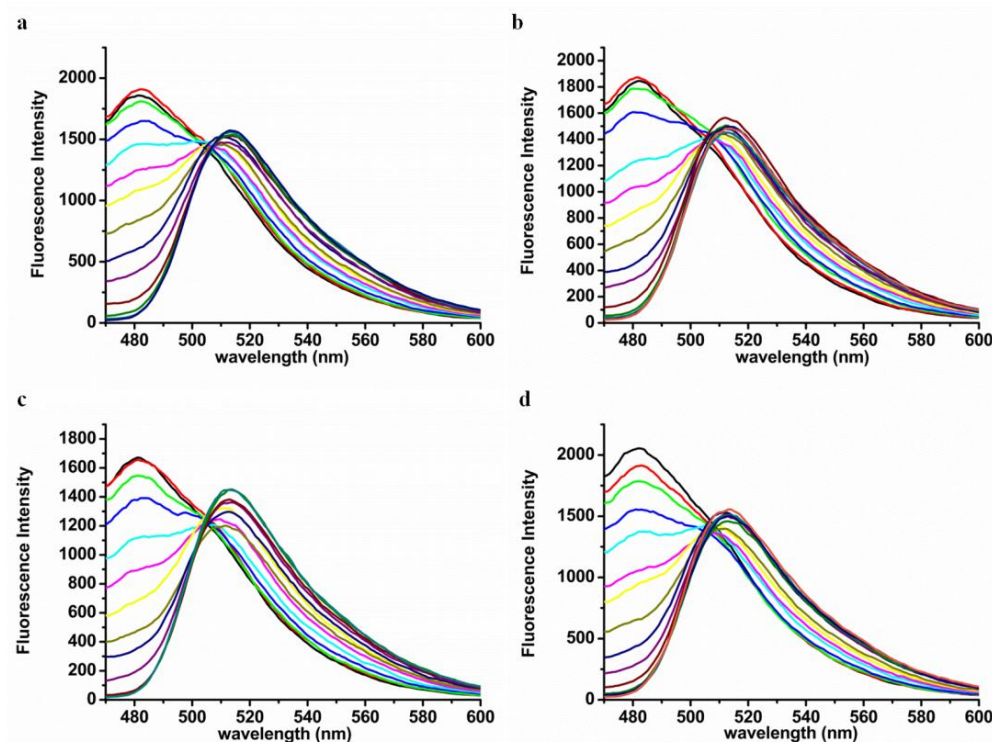


Figure S4. Fluorescence response dependence on different pH value of 1.0 μM ENNA in HEPES buffer with different ionic strength. a: 0 mM NaCl, pH 4, 4.46, 5.04, 5.52, 5.85, 6.07, 6.28, 6.49, 6.75, 6.98, 7.47, 8.02, 8.87, 9.92; b: 100 mM NaCl, pH 3.94, 4.51, 5.19, 5.55, 5.99, 6.19, 6.37, 6.57, 6.05, 7.48, 8.02, 8.49, 9.33, 10.1; c: 150 mM NaCl, pH 3.86, 4.47, 5.02, 5.52, 5.93, 6.23, 6.46, 6.69, 6.93, 7.33, 7.77, 8.28, 9.10, 10.27; d: 200 mM NaCl, pH 3.87, 4.57, 4.98, 5.49, 5.83, 6.13, 6.3, 6.56, 6.89, 7.15, 7.45, 8.02, 8.93, 9.96. Spectra were obtained with excitation at 455 nm in 20 mM HEPES buffered aqueous solution.

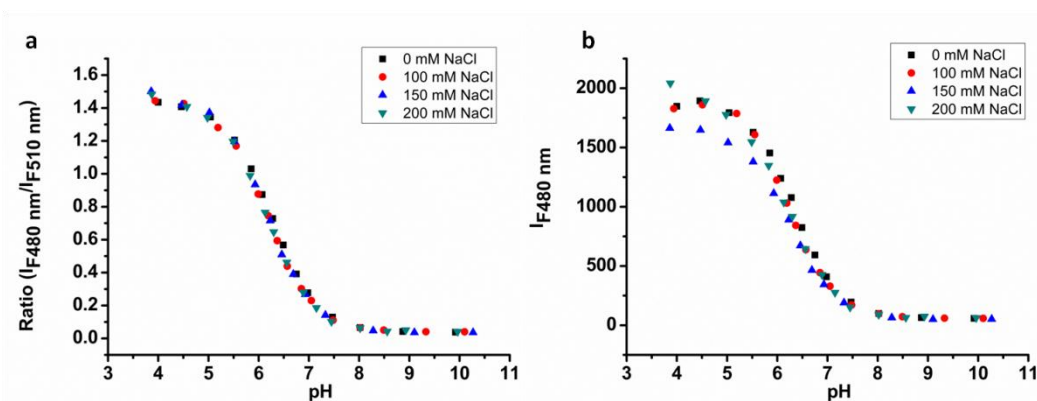


Figure S5. a. Response curve of fluorescence ratio ($I_{480\text{ nm}}/I_{510\text{ nm}}$) against different pH value in HEPES buffer with different ionic strengths (NaCl: 0, 100, 150, 200 mM) with excitation at 455 nm. b. Response curve of fluorescence intensity at 480 nm against different pH value at different ionic strengths (NaCl: 0, 100, 150, 200 mM).

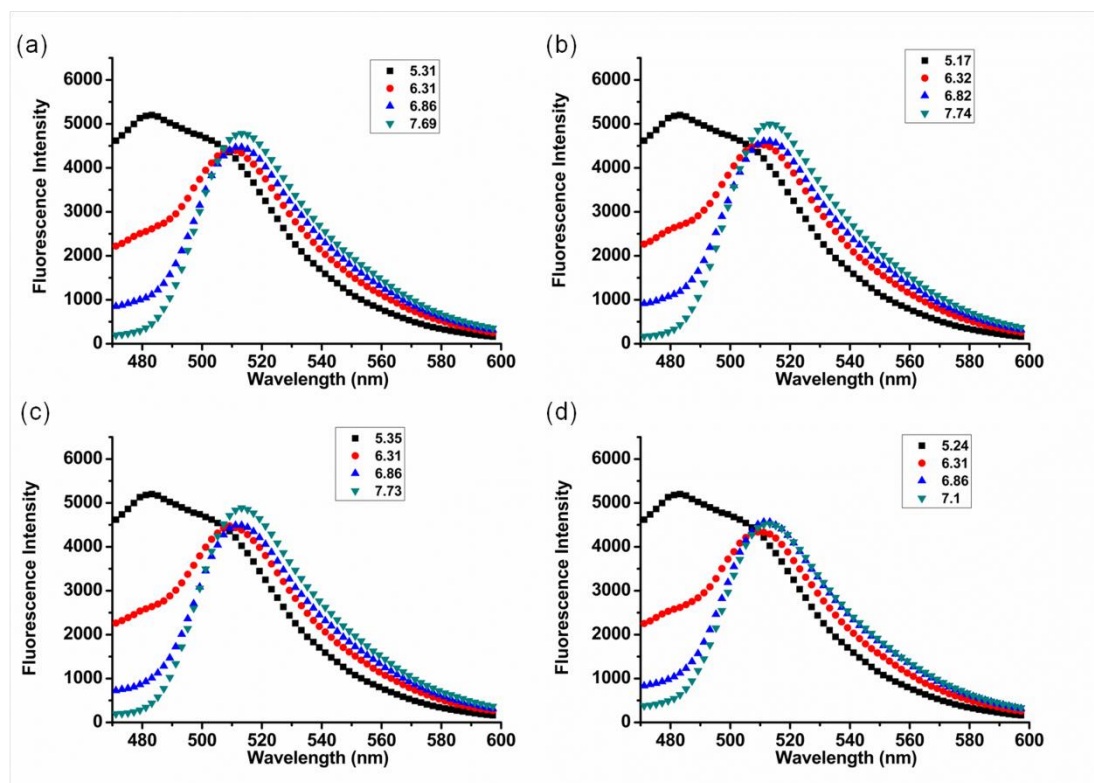


Figure S6. Fluorescence response dependence on different pH value of 5.0 μ M ENNA in PBS plus different concentration of NaCl. a: 0 mM NaCl, pH 5.31, 6.31, 6.86, 7.69; b: 100 mM NaCl, pH 5.17, 6.32, 6.86, 7.74; c: 150 mM NaCl, pH 5.35, 6.31, 6.86, 7.73; d: 200 mM NaCl, pH 5.32, 6.31, 6.86, 7.1. Spectra were obtained with excitation at 455 nm in 20 mM PBS.

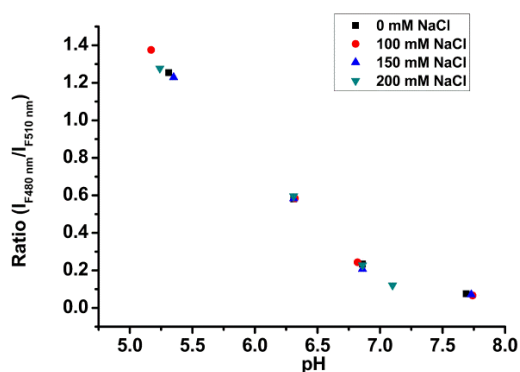


Figure S7. a. Response curve of fluorescence ratio ($I_{480 \text{ nm}}/I_{510 \text{ nm}}$) against different pH value in PBS plus different concentration of NaCl. (NaCl: 0, 100, 150, 200 mM) with excitation at 455 nm in 20 mM PBS.

5. pKa determination of ENNA and ANNA

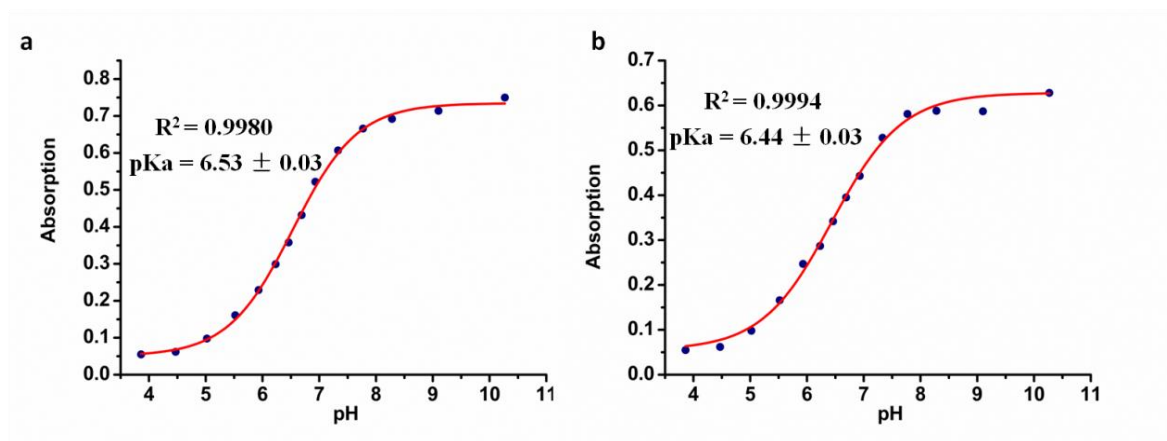


Figure S8. Response curve of absorbance of ENNA and ANNA to different pH. a: ENNA; b: ANNA. Absorption data (480 nm) were collected in HEPES buffer (containing 150 mM NaCl) at various pH.

6. ESI-MS spectrum of ENNA

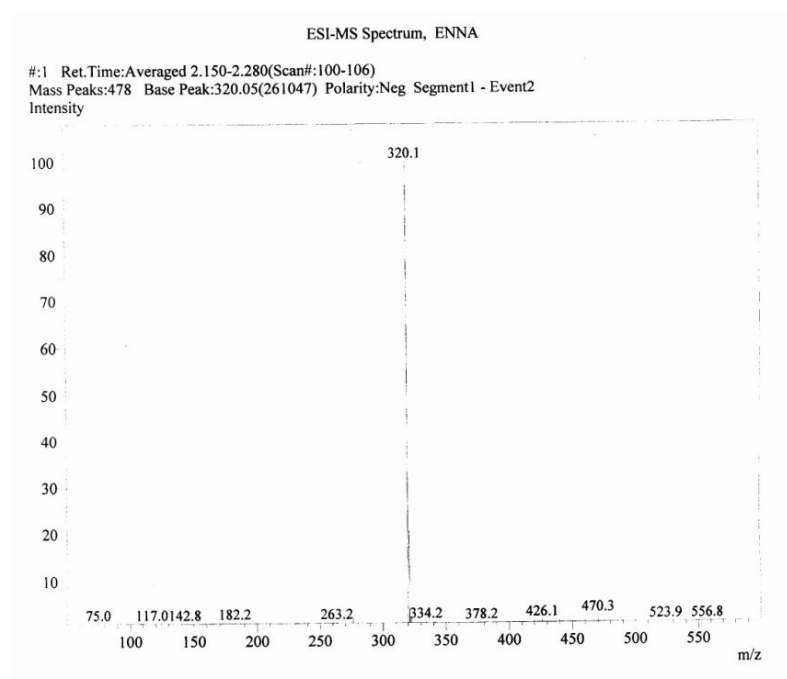


Figure S9. ESI-MS spectrum of ENNA, Exact Mass: 321.09

7. Stability of the ENNA

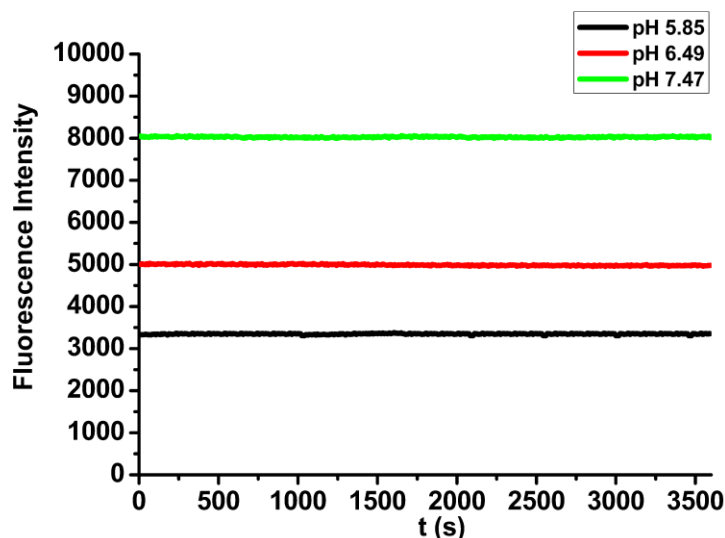


Figure S10. Time-dependent fluorescence intensities of the ENNA were measured by F-4600 (λ_{ex} : 480 nm and λ_{em} : 510 nm). The concentration was 5.0 μM in 20 mM HEPES.

8. Fluorescence spectra of HNNA

In Figure S11, we can see that HNNA do not exhibit fluorescence in pure water and buffer salt, but exhibit strong fluorescence in hydrophobic environment and organic solvent. SDS, CTAB and Triton X-100 (1mM for each) were dissolved in 50 mM HEPES, the pH of the surfactant solutions were adjusted by adding NaOH to the solution. 1 μL of HNNA stock solution (5mM) was added to 1mL of surfactant solutions at different pH conditions, After standing for 0.5 h, the fluorescence spectra were collected.

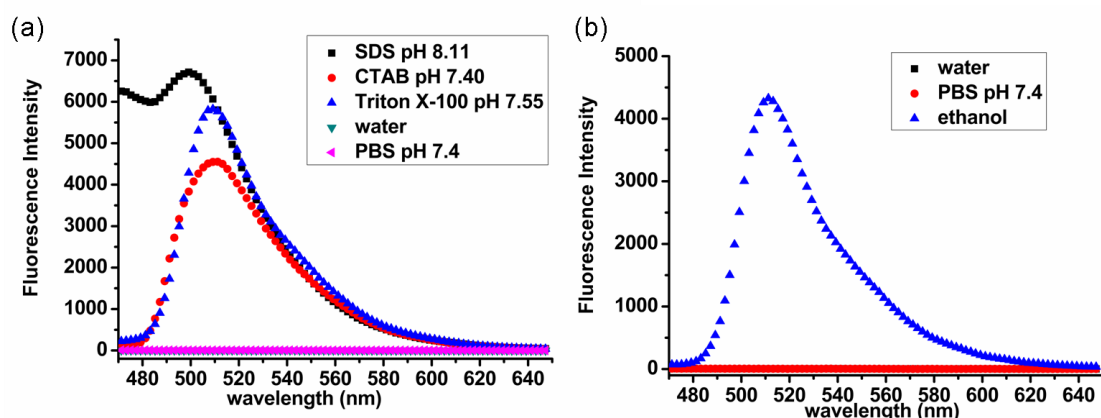


Figure S11. (a) Fluorescence spectra of HNNA in water (HNNA: 5 μM), pH 7.4 PBS (HNNA: 5 μM), SDS pH 7.40 (HNNA: 5 μM), CTAB pH 8.11 (HNNA: 3 μM), Triton X-100 pH 7.55 (HNNA: 3 μM); (b) Fluorescence spectra of HNNA in water (HNNA: 2 μM), PBS pH 7.4 (HNNA: 1 μM) and ethanol (HNNA: 2 μM), with excitation at 455 nm.

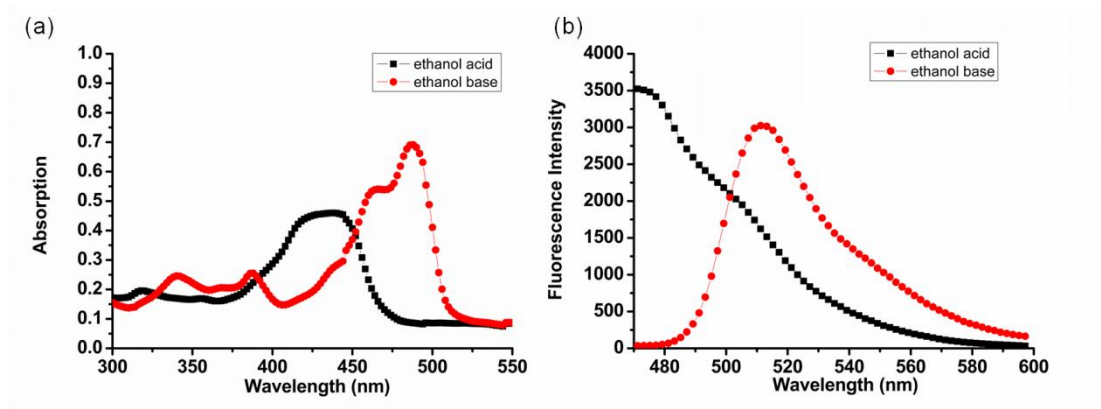


Figure 12. (a) Absorption spectra of 30 μM ENNA in acidic ethanol (Black line, plus HCl) and basic ethanol (red line, plus NaOH). (b) Fluorescence spectra of 1.0 μM HNNA in acidic ethanol (Black line, plus HCl) and basic ethanol (red line, plus NaOH). Spectra were collected with excitation at 455 nm.

9. Confocal imaging of Hela cells in low pH high K^+ buffer

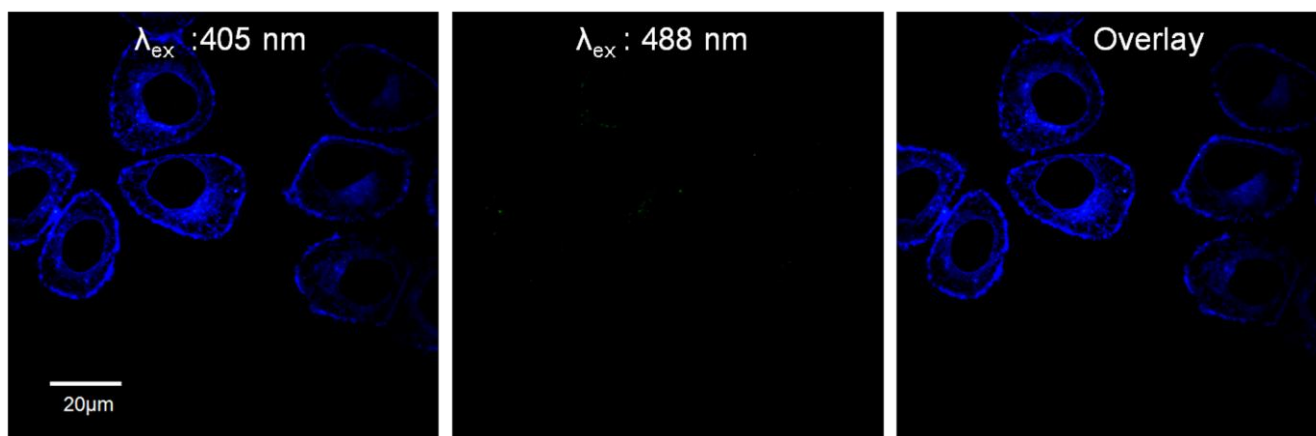


Figure S13 The confocal images of Hela cells. Images were collected at 5 min after changing buffer from PBS to high K^+ HEPES buffer (pH 5.5). Scale bar: 20 μm .

10. Confocal imaging of Hela cells treated with nigericin at different pH

The fluorescence imaging of living Hela cells treated with nigericin (5 $\mu\text{g/mL}$) in high K^+ HEPES-buffered solution at different pH values was also performed under the same condition as that of MCF-7. As shown in Figure S14a, HNNA localized inside the cytoplasm and cell membrane. As the pH increasing, the green channel become brighter and blue channel become darker. The ratiometric fluorescence images was obtained by green channel/blue channel. The curve of fluorescence ratio ($F_{\text{green}}/F_{\text{blue}}$) versus pH were obtained in the pH range of 6.4-8.1 (Figure S14b). The average pH of untreated Hela cells was determined to be 7.4 ± 0.02 base on the curve.

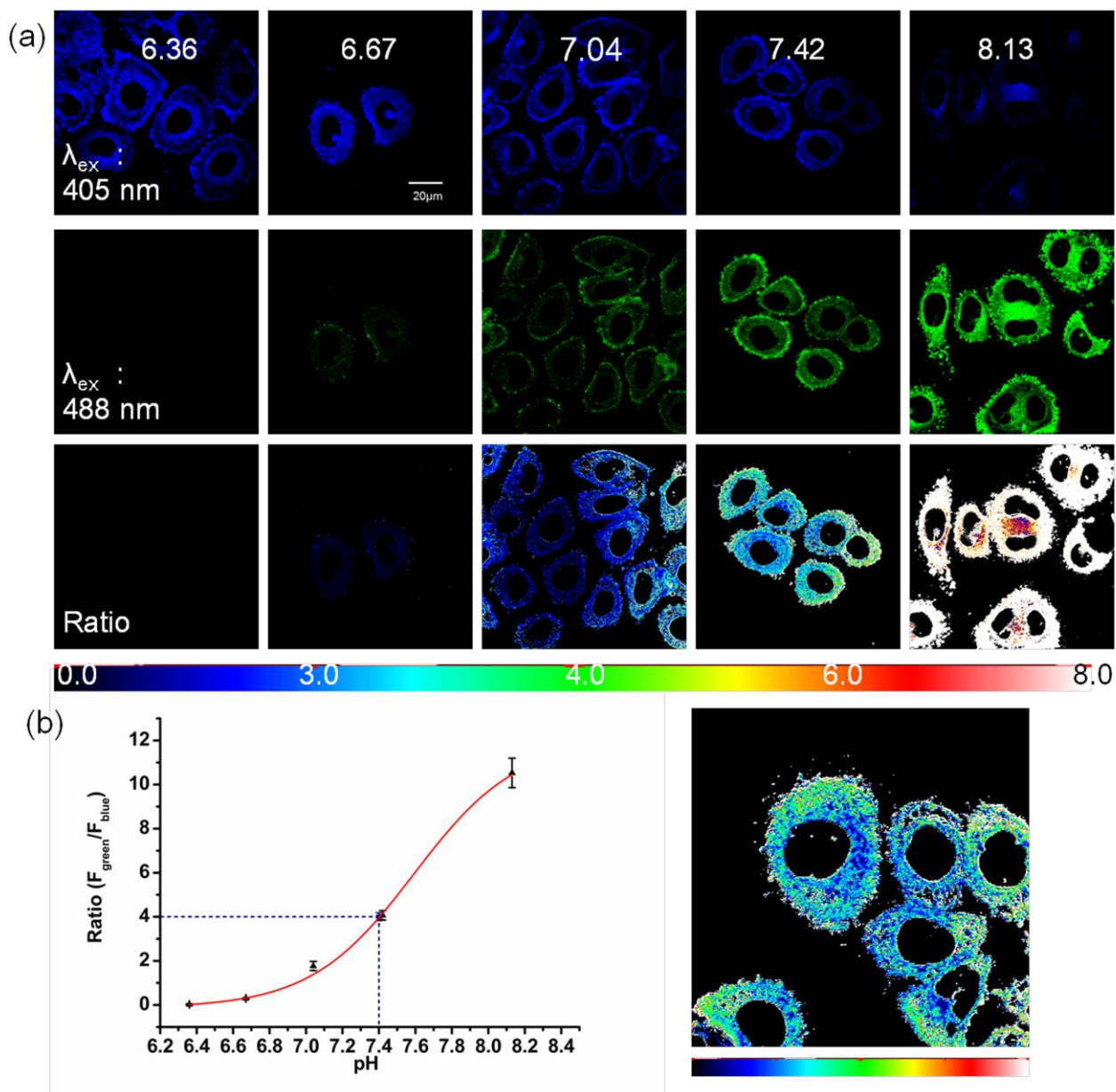
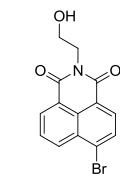
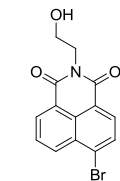


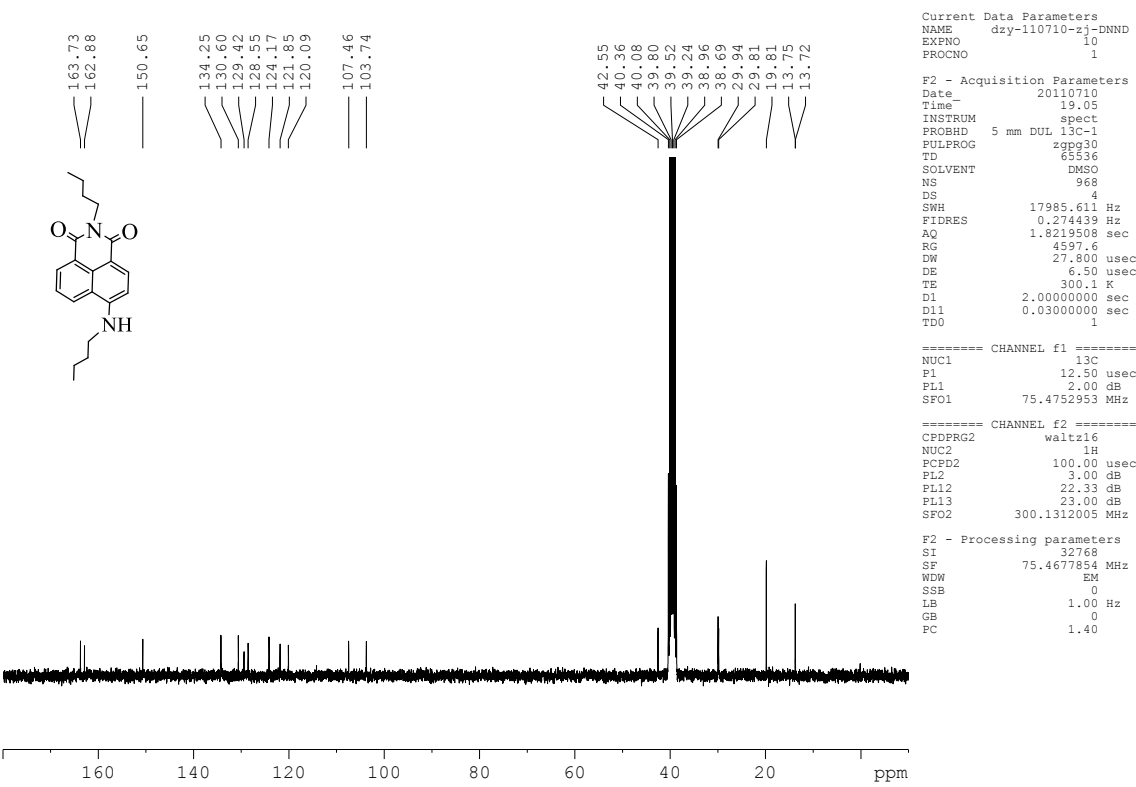
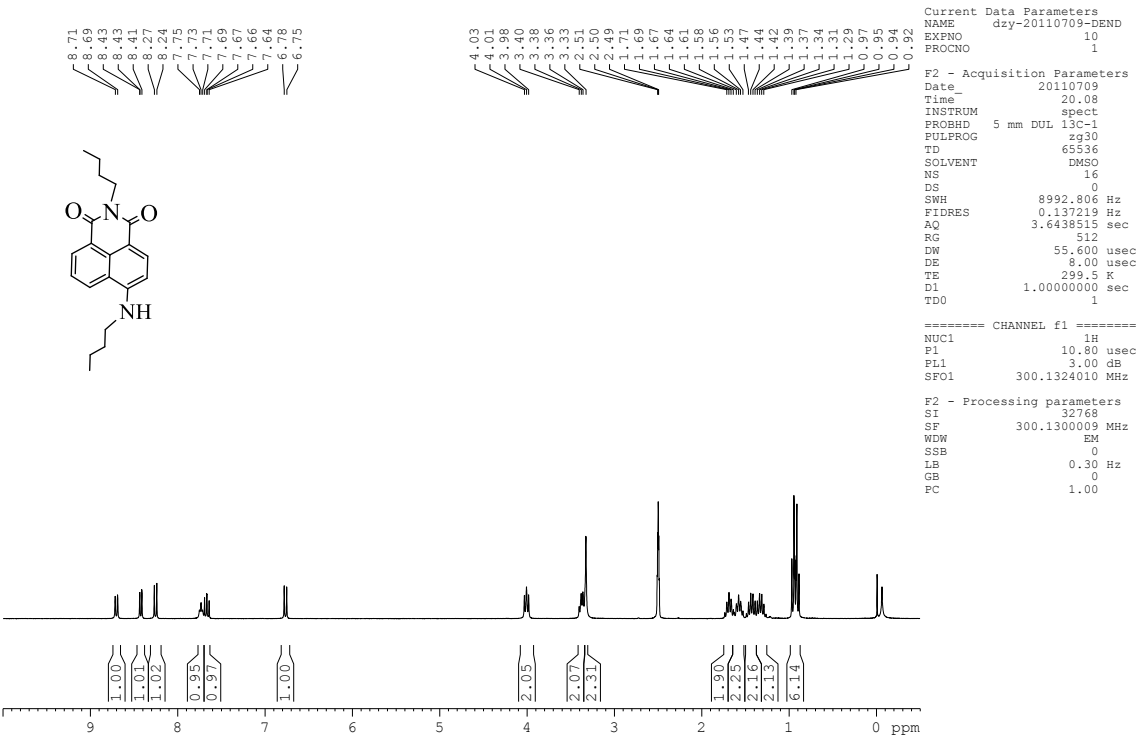
Figure S14. (a) Confocal fluorescence images of HeLa cells incubated in high K^+ HEPES-buffered solution containing ionophores at different pH (b) pH map (right) calculation for untreated HeLa cells based on the calibration curve (left) obtained using ionophores. Scale bar, 20 μm .

11. NMR spectra

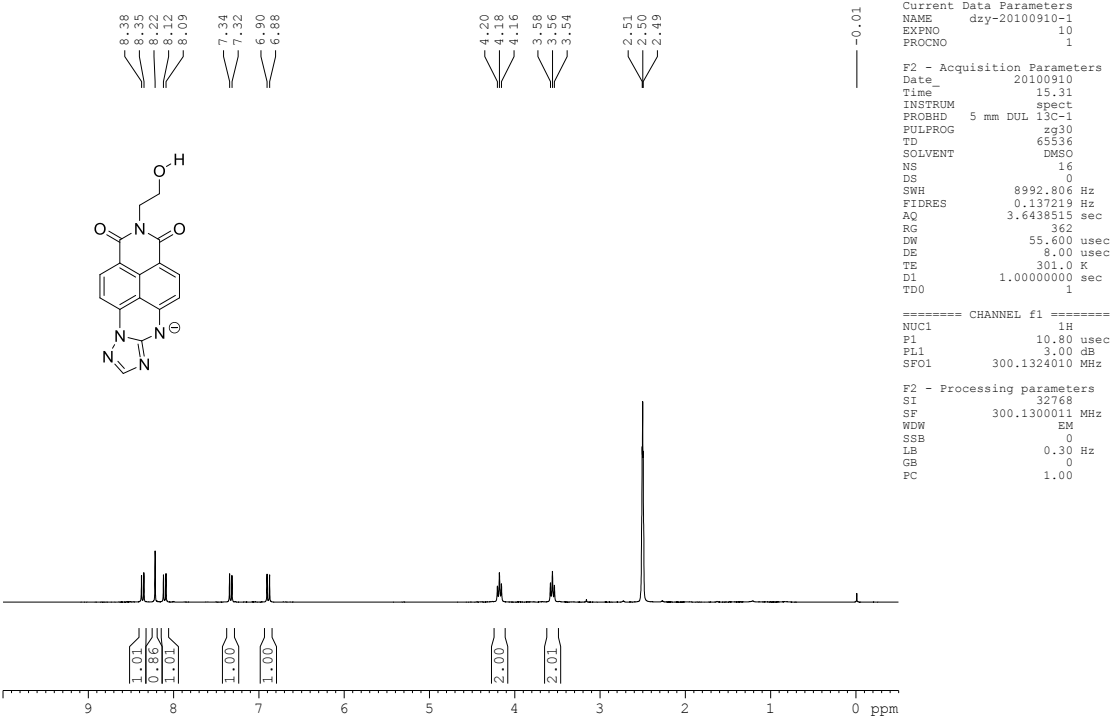
Compound 1a N-hydroxyethyl-4-bromine-1, 8-naphthalimide



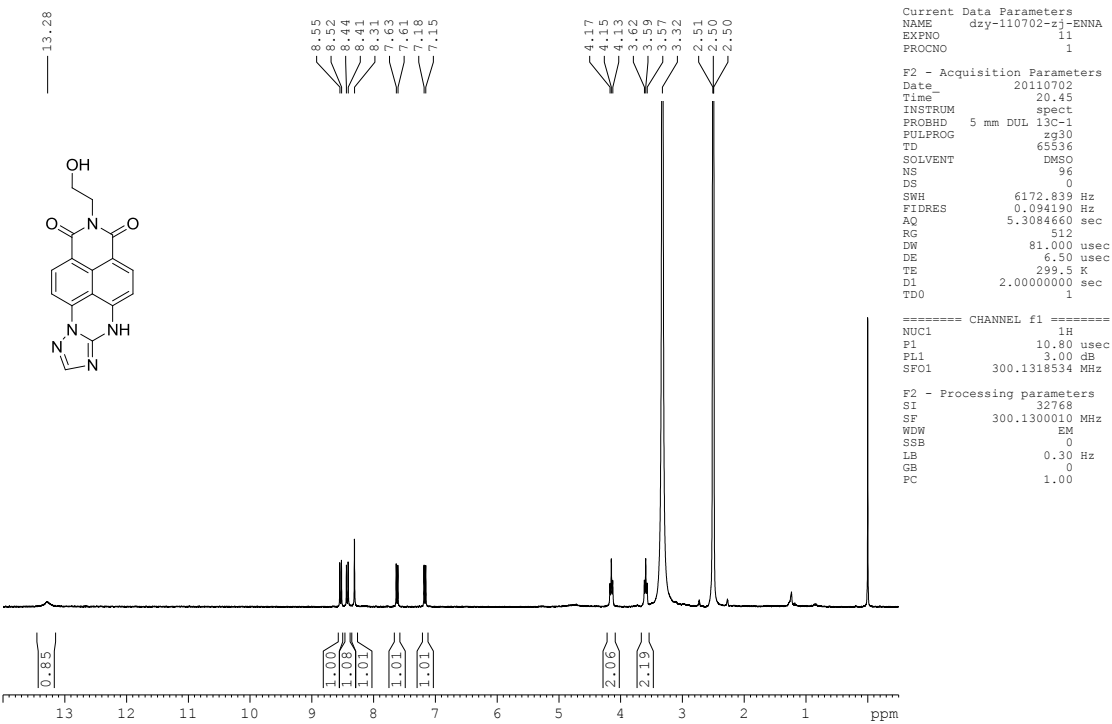
N-butyl-4-butylamine-1, 8-naphthalimide



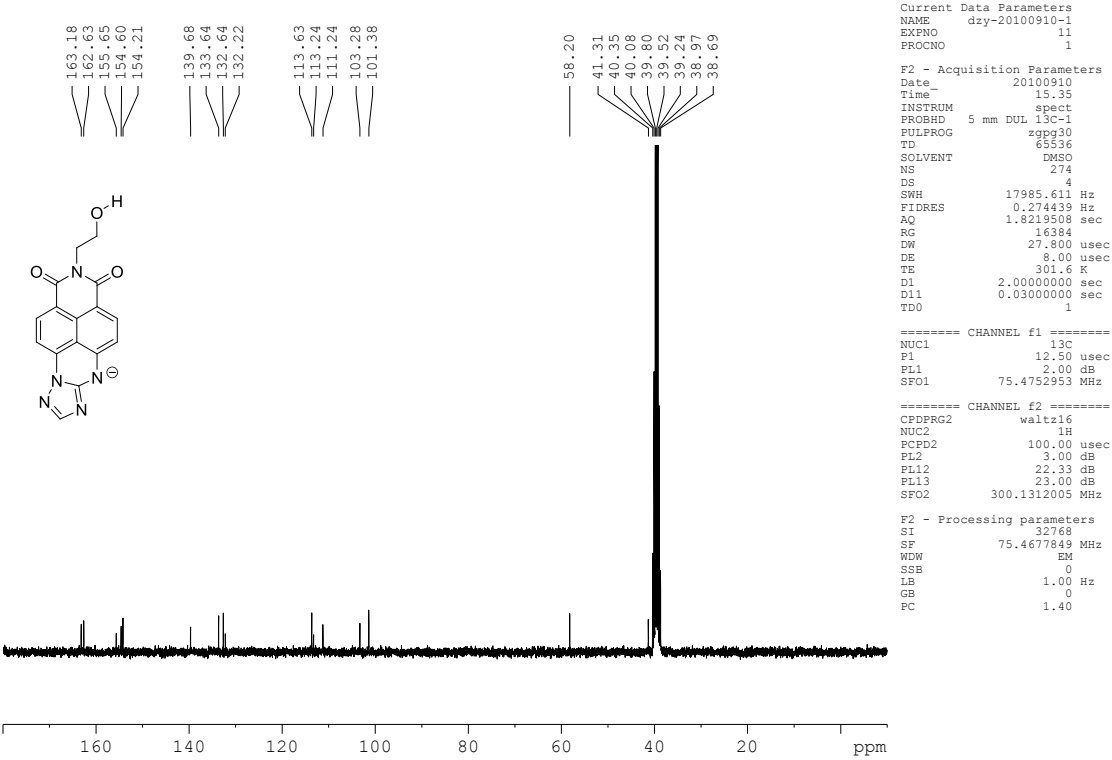
compound 2a ENNA L⁻



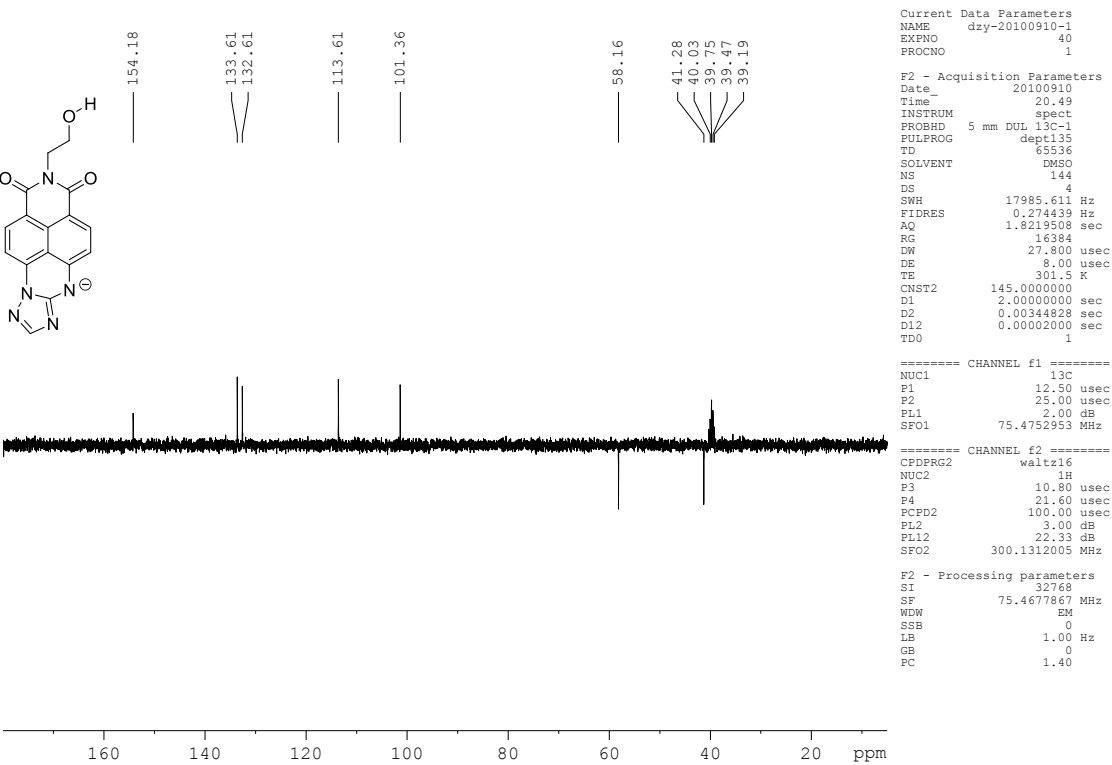
ENNA LH



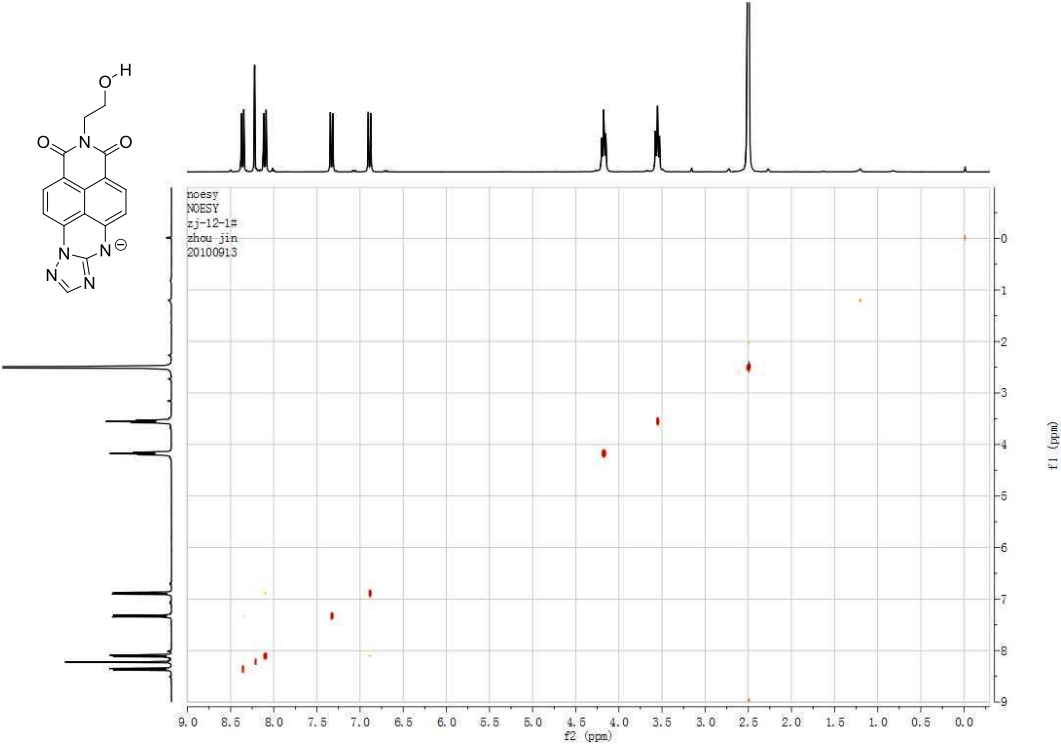
ENNA L⁻



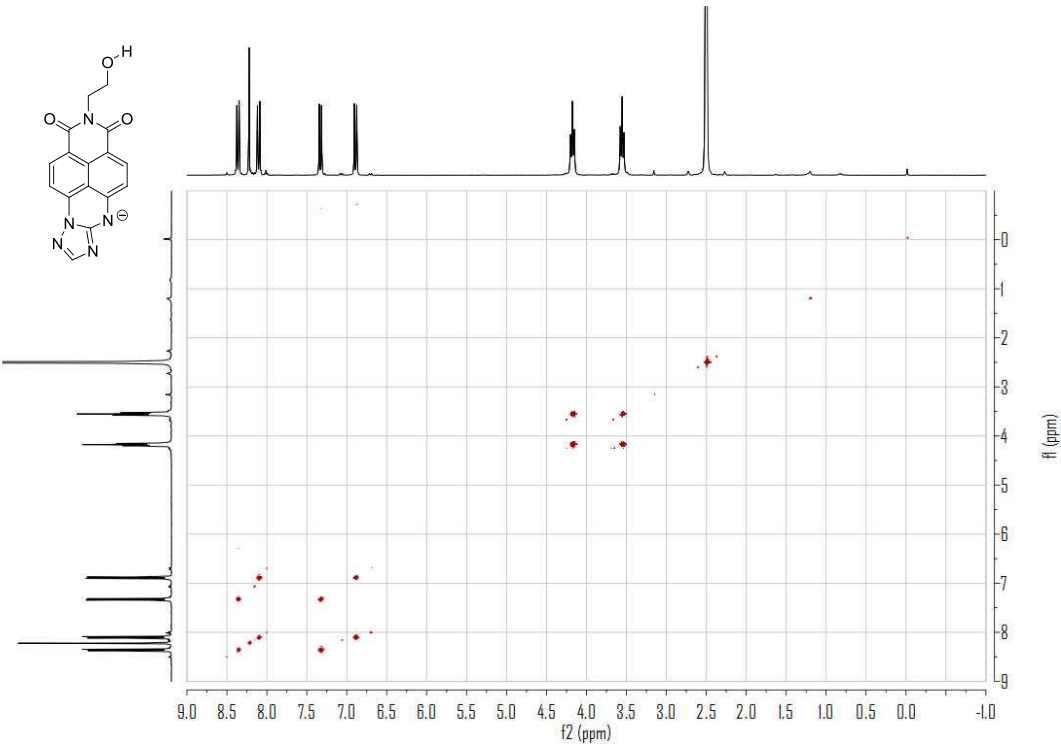
DEPT 135 (ENNA)



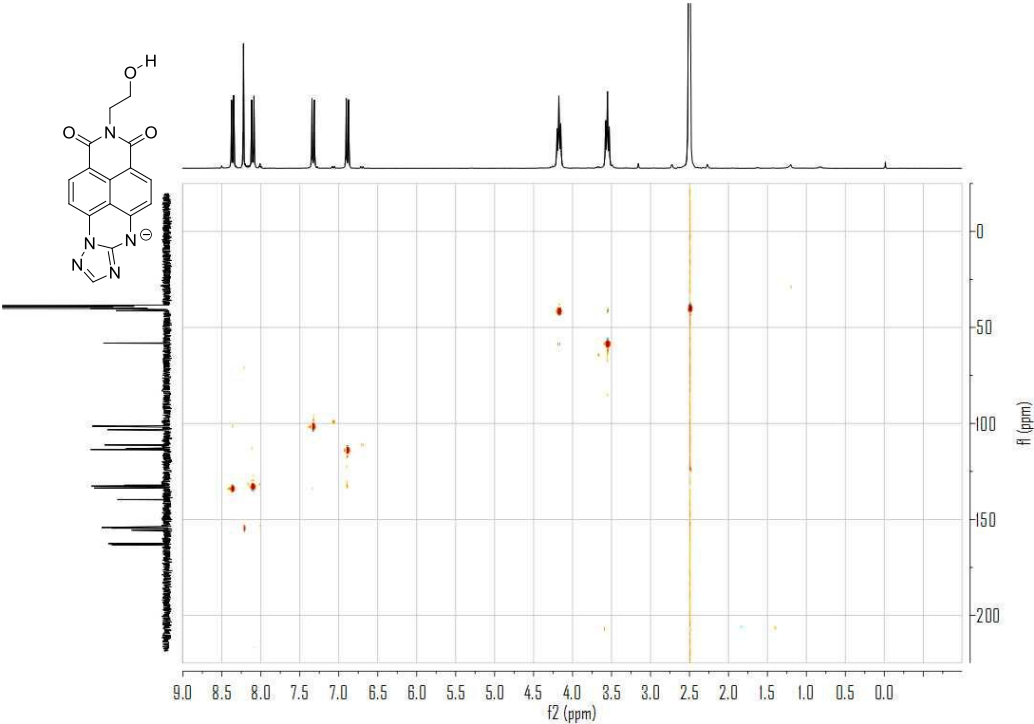
NOESY (ENNA)



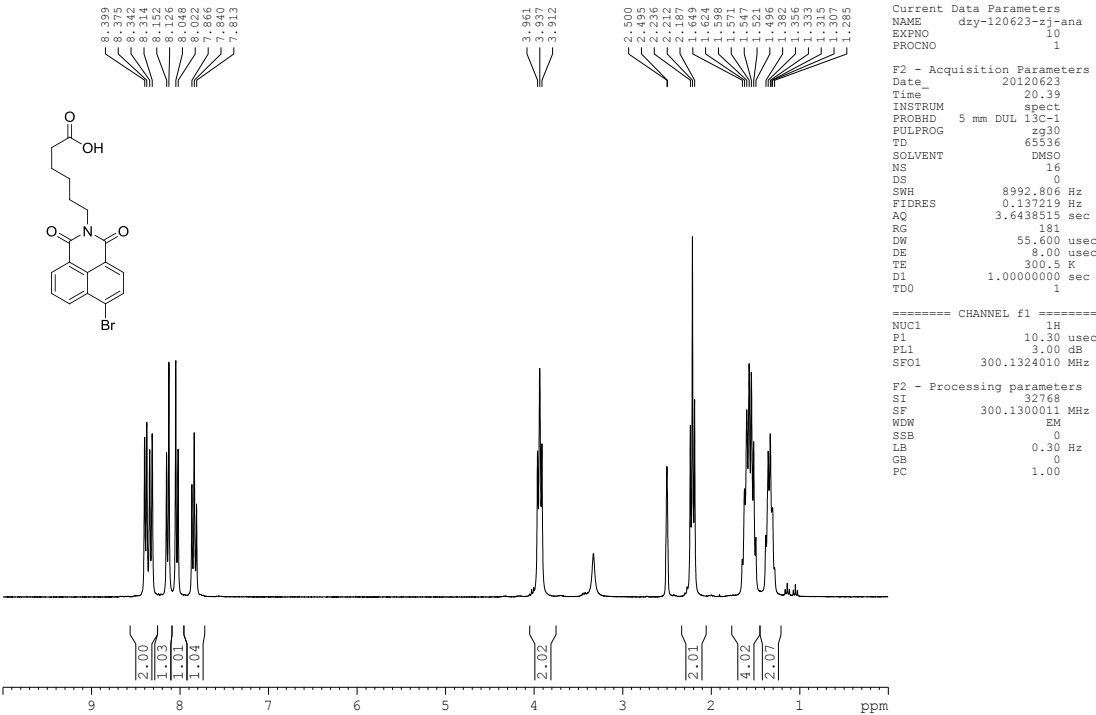
¹H, ¹H-COSY (ENNA)

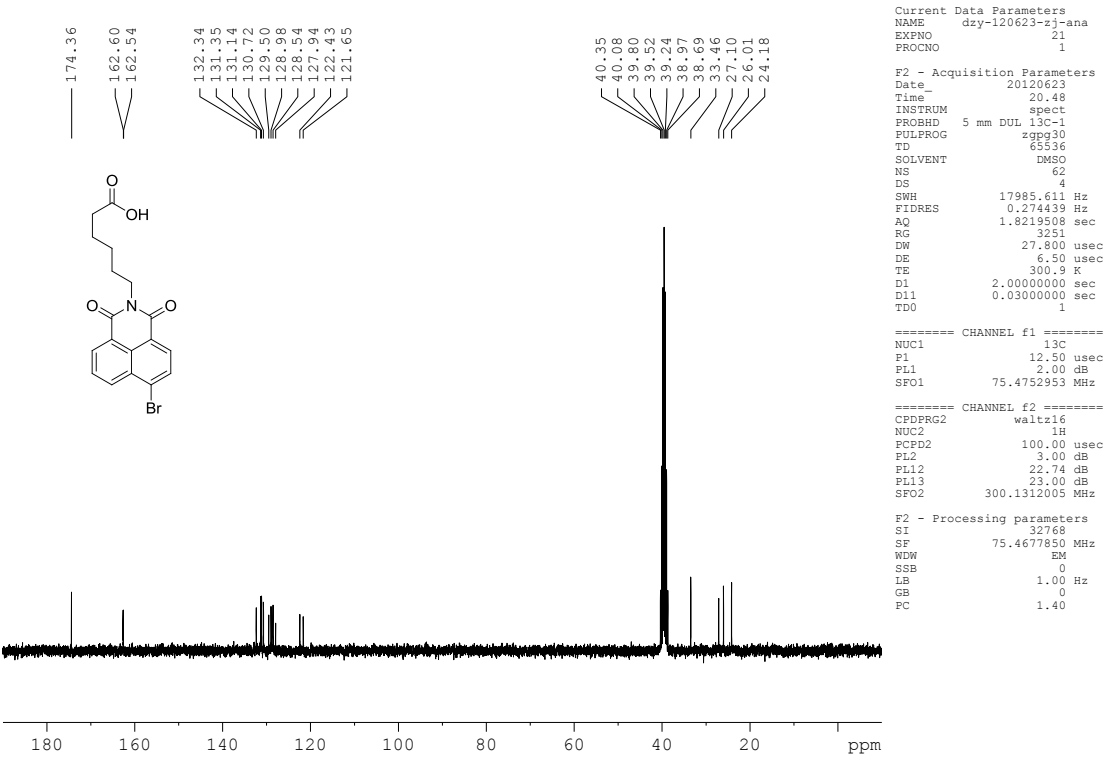


HSQC (ENNA)

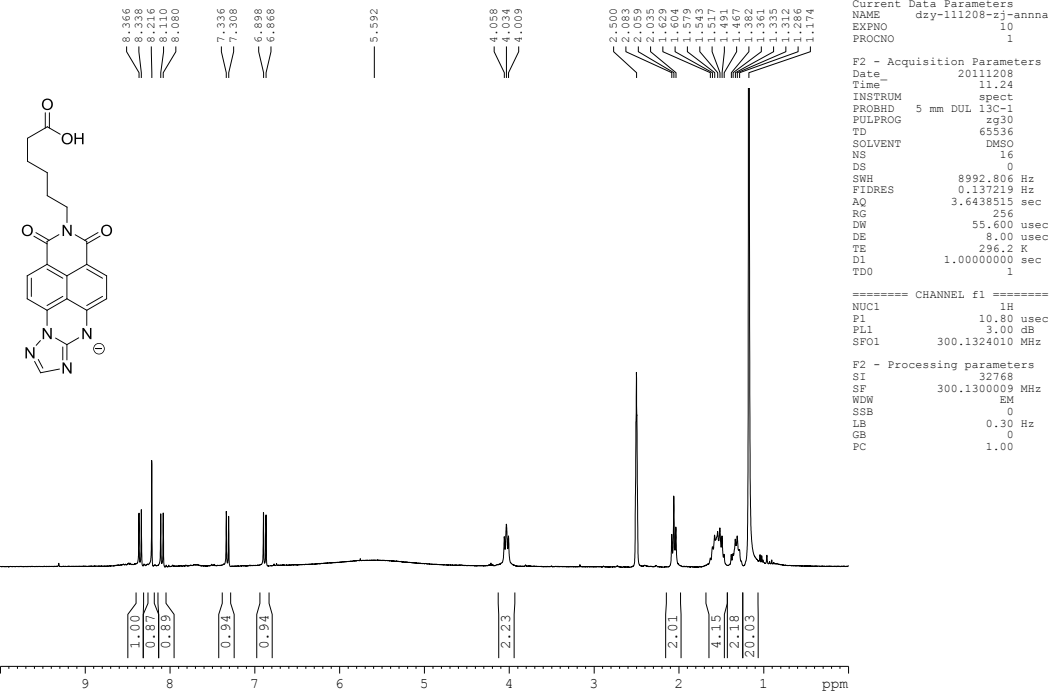


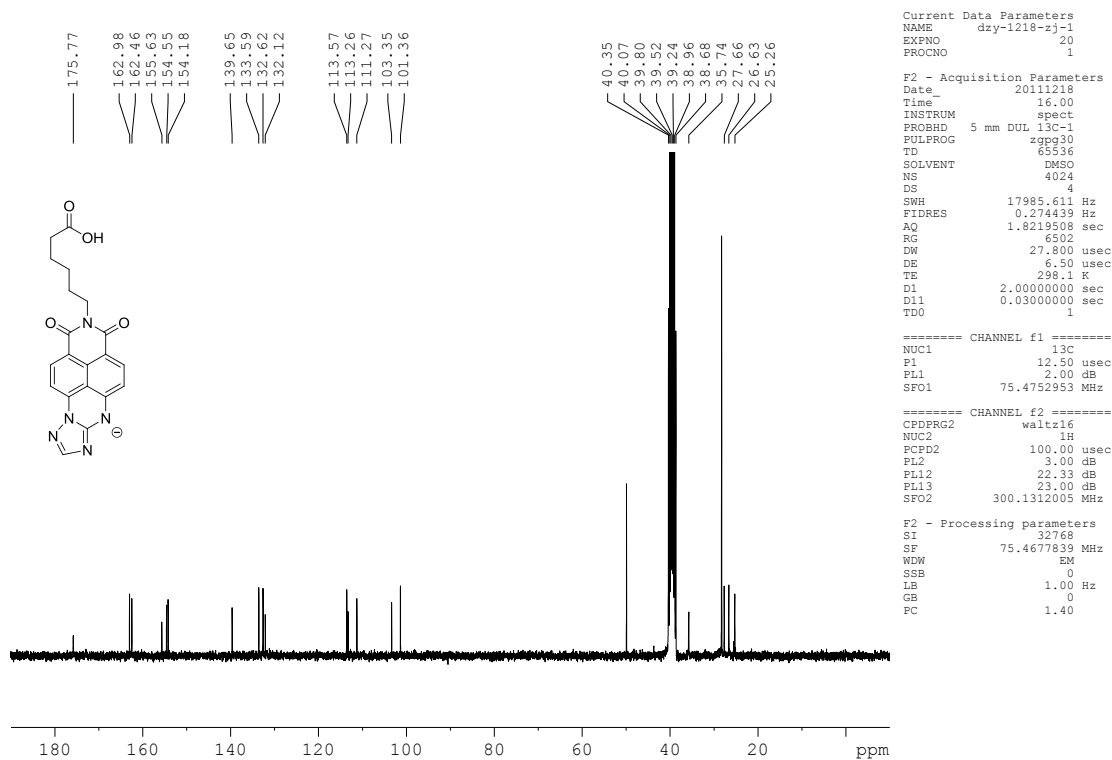
Compound 1b N-hexanoic acid-4-bromine-1, 8-naphthalimide



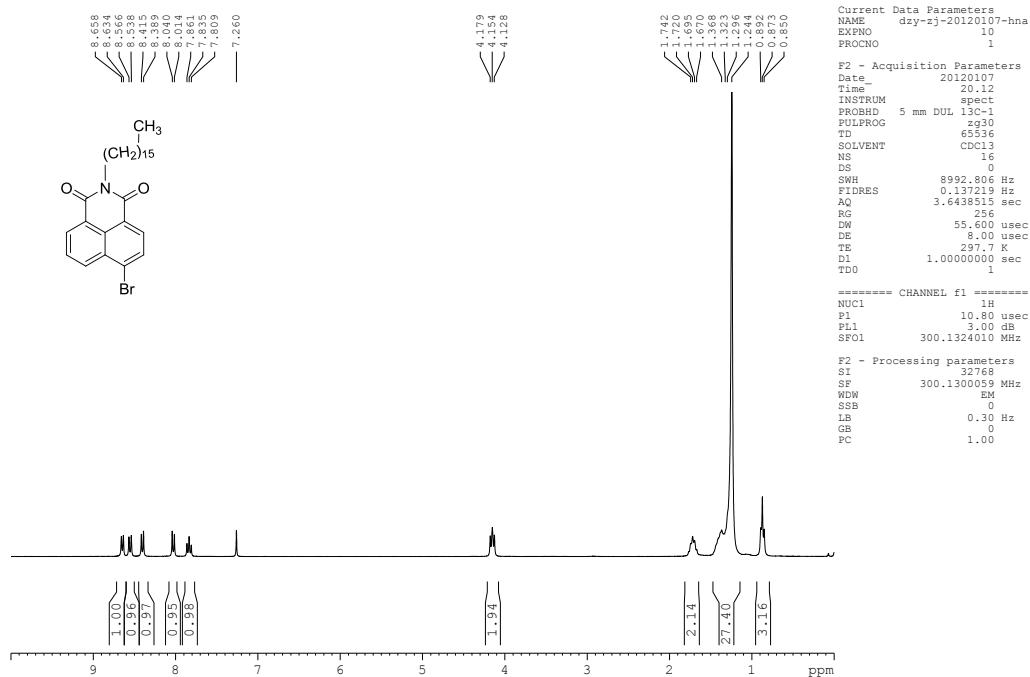


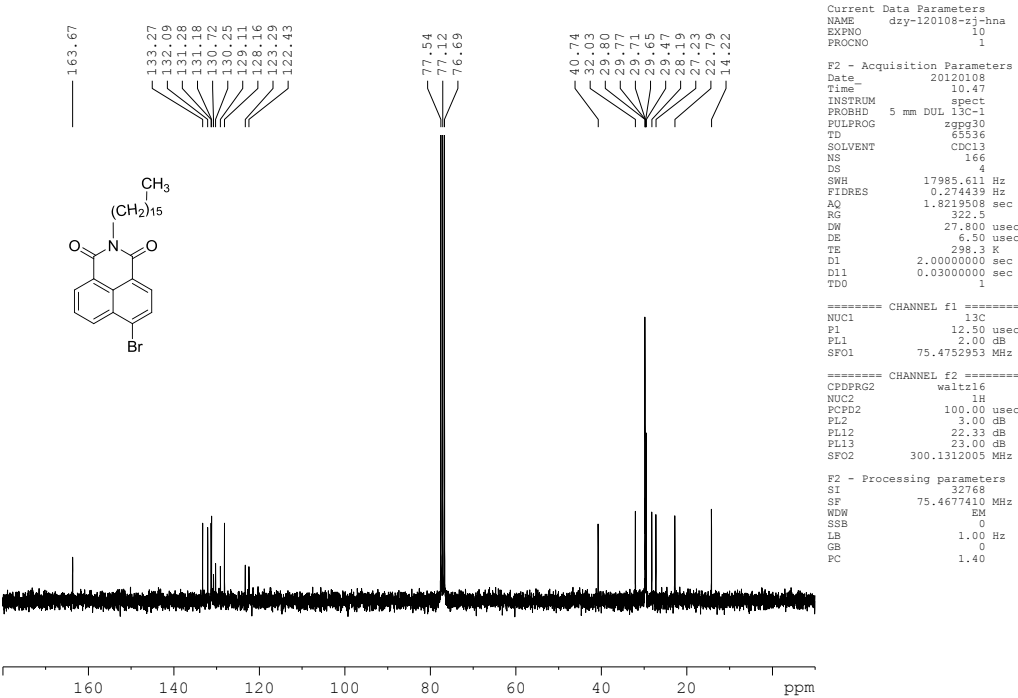
Compound 2b ANNA





Compound 1c N- hexadecyl-4-bromine-1, 8-naphthalimide





Compound 2c HNNA

