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Bemis et al.

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[54] **INHIBITORS OF P38**

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WO 97/19065 5/1997 WIPO .
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[73] Assignee: **Vertex Pharmaceuticals Incorporated**, Cambridge, Mass.

Timothy F. Gallagher, et al., "Regulation of Stress-Induced Cytokine Production by Pyridinylimidazoles; Inhibition of CSBP Kinase," *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry*, 5(1), pp. 49-64, (1997).

[21] Appl. No.: **08/862,925**

Alison M. Badger, et al., "Pharmacological Profile of SB 203580, a Selective Inhibitor of Cytokine Suppressive Binding Protein/p38 Kinase, in Animal Models of Arthritis, Bone Resorption, Endotoxin Shock and Immune Function," *Journal of Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics*, 279(3), pp. 1453-1461, (1996).

[22] Filed: **Jun. 10, 1997**

Timothy F. Gallagher, et al., "2,4,5-Triarylimidazole inhibitors of IL-1 Biosynthesis," *Bioorganic & Medicinal Chemistry Letters*, 5 (11), pp. 1171-1176, (1995).

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation-in-part of application No. 08/822,373, Mar. 20, 1997, Pat. No. 5,945,418.

[60] Provisional application No. 60/034,288, Dec. 18, 1996.

[51] **Int. Cl.**⁷ **A61K 31/519**; C07D 471/04

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **514/258**; 514/247; 514/248; 514/267; 514/351; 514/357; 514/243; 544/234; 544/236; 544/239; 544/252; 544/282; 544/184; 546/300; 546/333

[58] **Field of Search** 544/234, 236, 544/282; 514/248, 258

Primary Examiner—Emily Bernhardt

Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Fish & Neave; James F. Haley, Jr.; N. Govindaswamy

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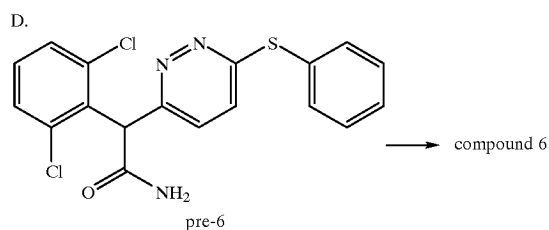
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[57] ABSTRACT

The present invention relates to inhibitors of p38, a mammalian protein kinase involved cell proliferation, cell death and response to extracellular stimuli. The compounds are of the class of pyrido [1,2-c] pyrimidin-3-one or 1,2-dihydro-pyrido [1,2-c] pyrimidin-3-one derivatives, useful as inhibitors of p38. The invention also relates to methods for producing these inhibitors. The invention also provides pharmaceutical compositions comprising the inhibitors of the invention and methods of utilizing those compositions in the treatment and prevention of various disorders.

18 Claims, No Drawings

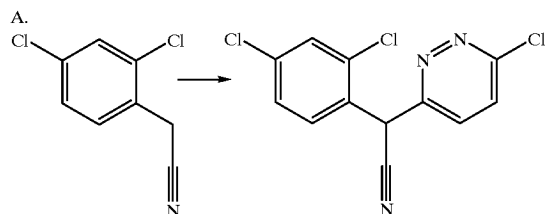
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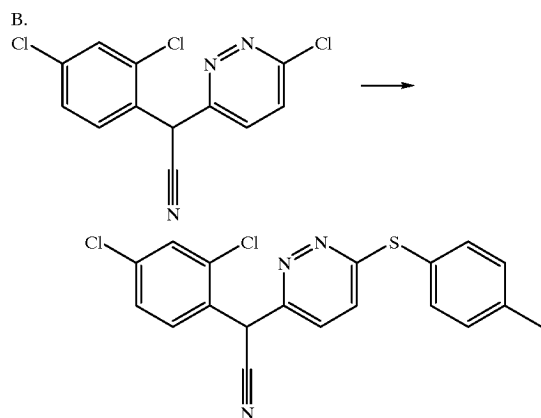
The final step in the synthesis of compound 6 (which is depicted in Table 1) was carried out as described in Example 1D. This afforded 0.06 g of product. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.69 (s), 7.65–7.59 (d), 7.58–7.36 (m), 7.32–7.22 (m), 6.79 (d), 6.53 (d).

EXAMPLE 4

Preparation of p38 Inhibitor Compound 5

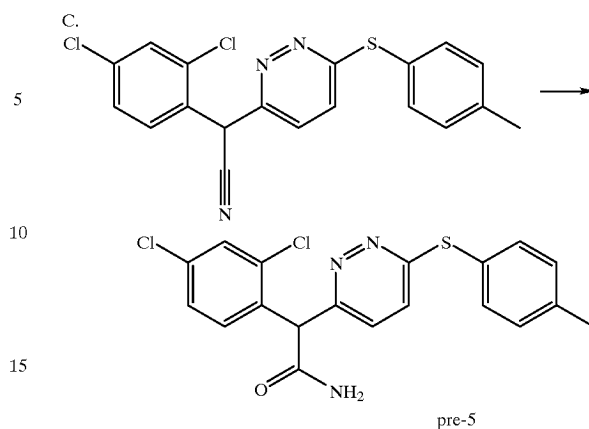


The first intermediate in the synthesis of compound 5 was prepared in a similar manner as described in Example 1A, using 2,4-dichlorophenylacetonitrile, to afford 3.67 g (12.36 mmol, 49%) of product.

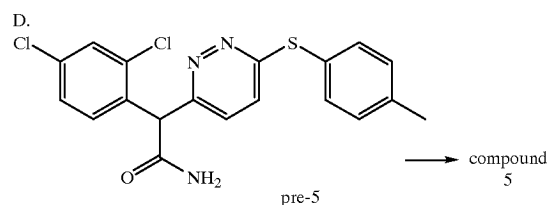


The second intermediate was prepared in a similar manner as described in Example 1B. This afforded 3.82 g (9.92 mmol, 92%) of product.

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The final intermediate, pre-5, was prepared in a similar manner as described in Example 1C. This afforded 0.10 g (0.24 mmol, 92%) of product. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 7.9 (d), 7.7 (d), 7.6–7.5 (dd), 7.4–7.3 (m), 2.4 (s).



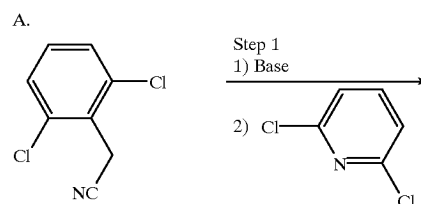
The final step in the preparation of compound 5 (which is depicted in Table 1) was carried out in a similar manner as described in Example 1D. This afforded 0.06 g of product. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.64 (s), 7.51–7.42 (m), 7.32–7.21 (m), 6.85 (d), 6.51 (d), 2.42 (s).

Other compounds of formula Ia of this invention may be synthesized in a similar manner using the appropriate starting materials.

EXAMPLE 5

Preparation of A p38 Inhibitor Compound of Formula Ib

An example of the synthesis of a p38 inhibitor of this invention of the formula Ib is presented below.



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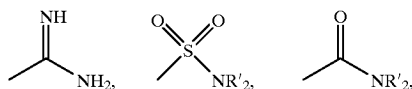
Y is N or C;

A, if present, is N or CR';

n is 0 or 1;

R₁ is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl, OH, or O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl.

W is selected from

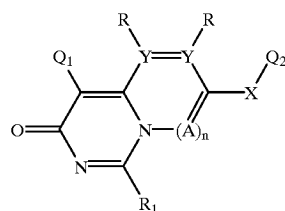


—N(R')₂, —OR', —SR', —S(O)R', —S(O₂)R', C(O)OR' or any 5 to 7-membered heterocyclic ring comprising up to 3 heteroatoms independently selected from N, O or S, wherein said heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with up to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, C₁-C₃ alkyl, O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl, NR'₂, OCF₃, CF₃, NO₂, CO₂R', CONR' or CN.

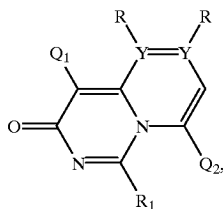
In another embodiment, the invention provides pharmaceutical compositions comprising the p38 inhibitors of this invention. These compositions may be utilized in methods for treating or preventing a variety of disorders, such as cancer, inflammatory diseases, autoimmune diseases, destructive bone disorders, proliferative disorders, infectious diseases, viral diseases and neurodegenerative diseases. These compositions are also useful in methods for preventing cell death and hyperplasia and therefore may be used to treat or prevent reperfusion/ischemia in stroke, heart attacks, organ hypoxia. The compositions are also useful in methods for preventing thrombin-induced platelet aggregation. Each of these above-described methods is also part of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

The present invention provides inhibitors of p38 having the general formula:



or



wherein each of Q₁ and Q₂ are independently selected from 5-6 membered aromatic carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring systems, or 8-10 membered bicyclic ring systems comprising aromatic carbocyclic rings, aromatic heterocyclic rings or a combination of an aromatic carbocyclic ring and an aromatic heterocyclic ring.

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The rings that make up Q₁ are substituted with 1 to 4 substituents, each of which is independently selected from halo; C₁-C₃ alkyl; C₁-C₃ alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; NR'₂; OCF₃; CF₃; NO₂; CO₂R'; CONR'; SR'; S(O₂)N(R')₂; SCF₃; or CN. The rings that make up Q₂ are optionally substituted with up to 4 substituents, each of which is independently selected from halo; C₁-C₃ straight or branched alkyl; C₁-C₃ straight or branched alkyl substituted with NR', OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; NR'₂; OCF₃; CF₃; NO₂; CO₂R'; CONR'; R³; OR³; NR³; SR³; C(O)R³; C(O)N(R')R³; C(O)OR³; SR'; S(O₂)N(R')₂; SCF₃; or CN.

R' is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl or (C₂-C₃)-alkenyl or alkynyl.

R³ is selected from 5-6 membered aromatic carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring systems, —(CH₂)_m—W and W, wherein m is 1, 2 or 3.

X is selected from —S—, —O—, —S(O₂)—, —S(O)—, —S(O₂)—N(R)—, —N(R)—S(O₂)—, —N(R)—C(O)O—, —O—C(O)—N(R)—, —C(O)—, —C(O)O—, —O—C(O)—, —C(O)—N(R)—, —N(R)—C(O)—, —N(R)—, or —C(R₂)—.

Each R is independently selected from hydrogen, —R², —NR², —OR², SR², —C(O)—NR² or —C(O)—OR² wherein two adjacent R are optionally bound to one another and, together with each Y to which they are respectively bound, form a 4-8 membered carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring;

When the two R components form a ring together with the Y components to which they are respectively bound, it will be obvious to those skilled in the art that a terminal hydrogen from each unfused R component will be lost. For example, if a ring structure is formed by binding those two R components together, one being —NH—CH₃ and the other being —CH₂—CH₃, one terminal hydrogen on each R component (indicated in bold) will be lost. Therefore, the resulting portion of the ring structure will have the formula —NH—CH₂—CH₂—CH₂—.

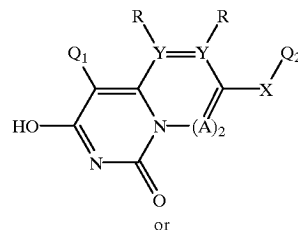
R² is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl, O-(C₂-C₃)-alkyl, (C₁-C₃)-alkenyl or O-(C₂-C₃)-alkenyl each optionally substituted with W.

Y is N or C;

A, if present, is N or CR';

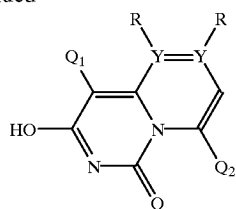
n is 0 or 1;

R₁ is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl, OH, or O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl. It will be apparent to those of skill in the art that if R₁ is OH, the resulting inhibitor may tautomerize resulting in a compound of the formula:



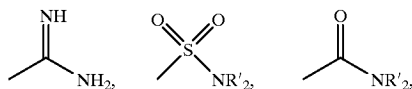
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which are also p38 inhibitors of this invention.

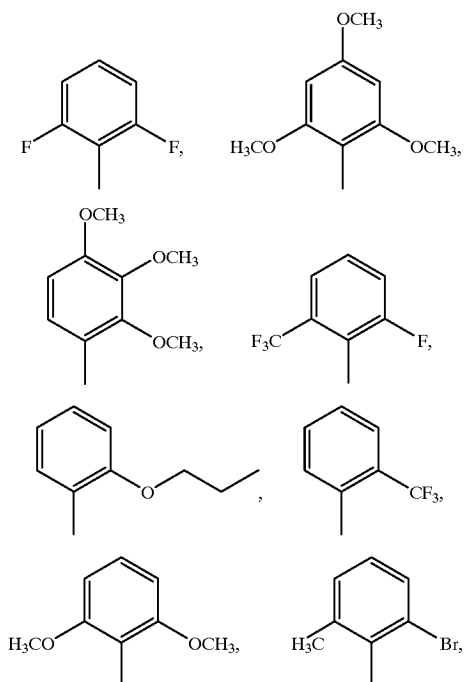
W is selected from



—N(R')₂, —OR', —SR', —S(O)R', —S(O₂)R', C(O)OR' or any 5 to 7-membered heterocyclic ring comprising up to 3 heteroatoms independently selected from N, O or S, wherein said heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with up to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, C₁–C₃ alkyl, O—(C₁–C₃)-alkyl, NR'₂, OCF₃, CF₃, NO₂, CO₂R', CONR' or CN.

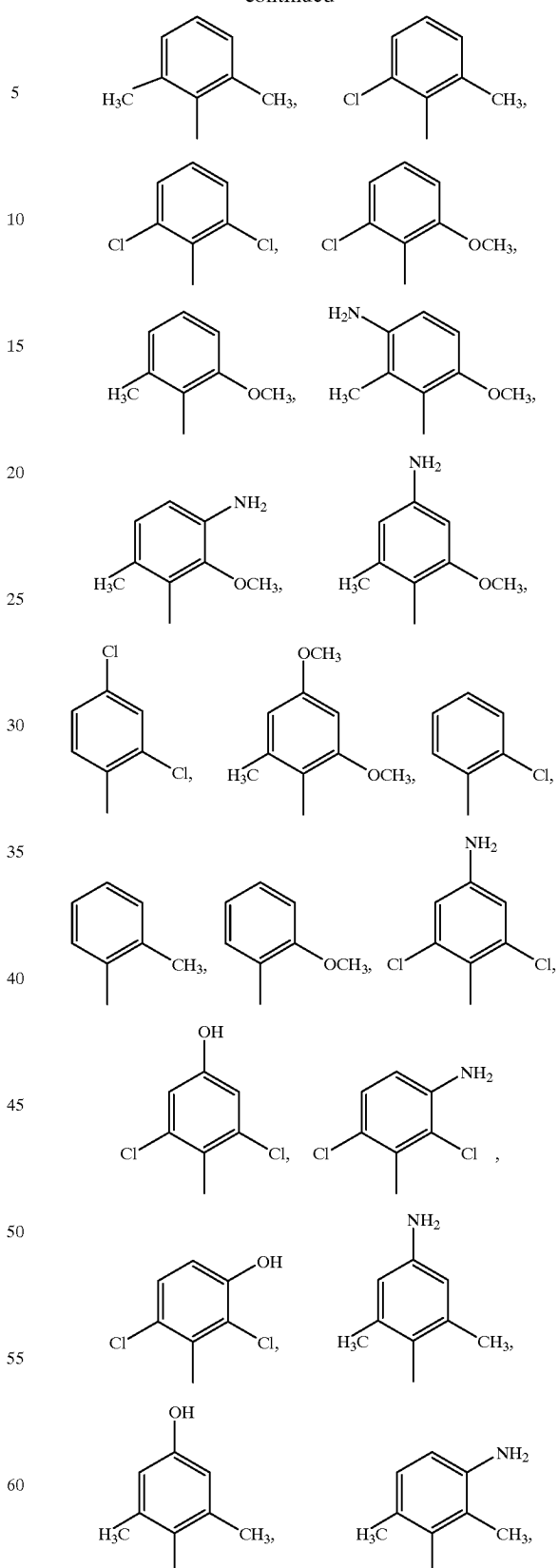
According to another preferred embodiment, Q₁ is selected from phenyl or pyridyl containing 1 to 3 substituents, wherein at least one of said substituents is in the ortho position and said substituents are independently selected from chloro, fluoro, bromo, —CH₃, —OCH₃, —OH, —CF₃, —OCF₃, —O(CH₂)₂CH₃ or NH₂. Even more preferred are phenyl or pyridyl containing at least 2 of the above-indicated substituents both being in the ortho position.

Some specific examples of preferred Q₁ are:



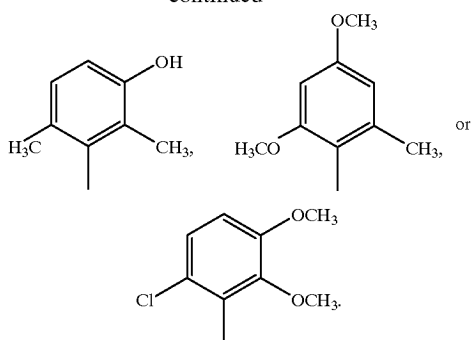
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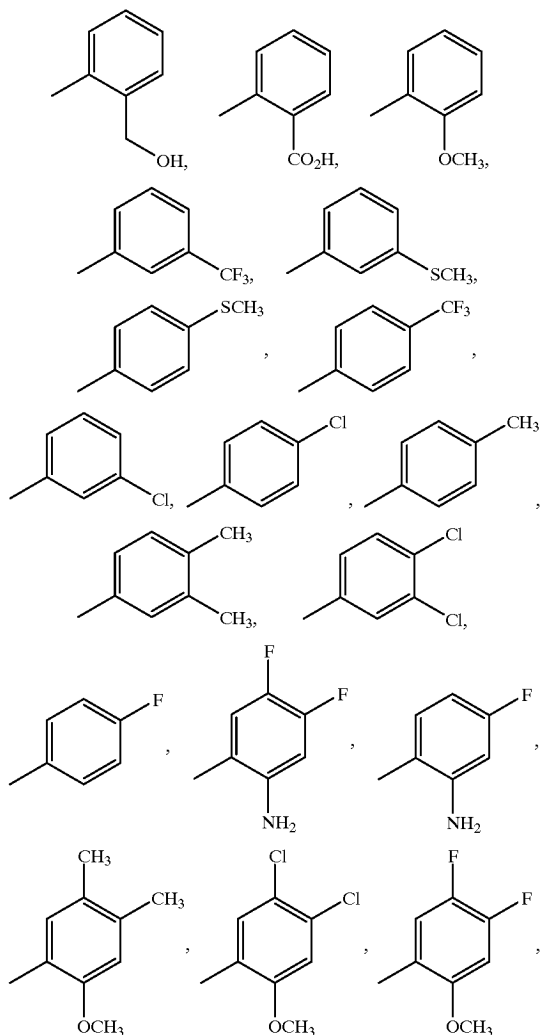
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Most preferably, Q_1 is selected from 2-fluoro-6-trifluoromethylphenyl, 2,6-difluorophenyl or 2,6-dichlorophenyl.

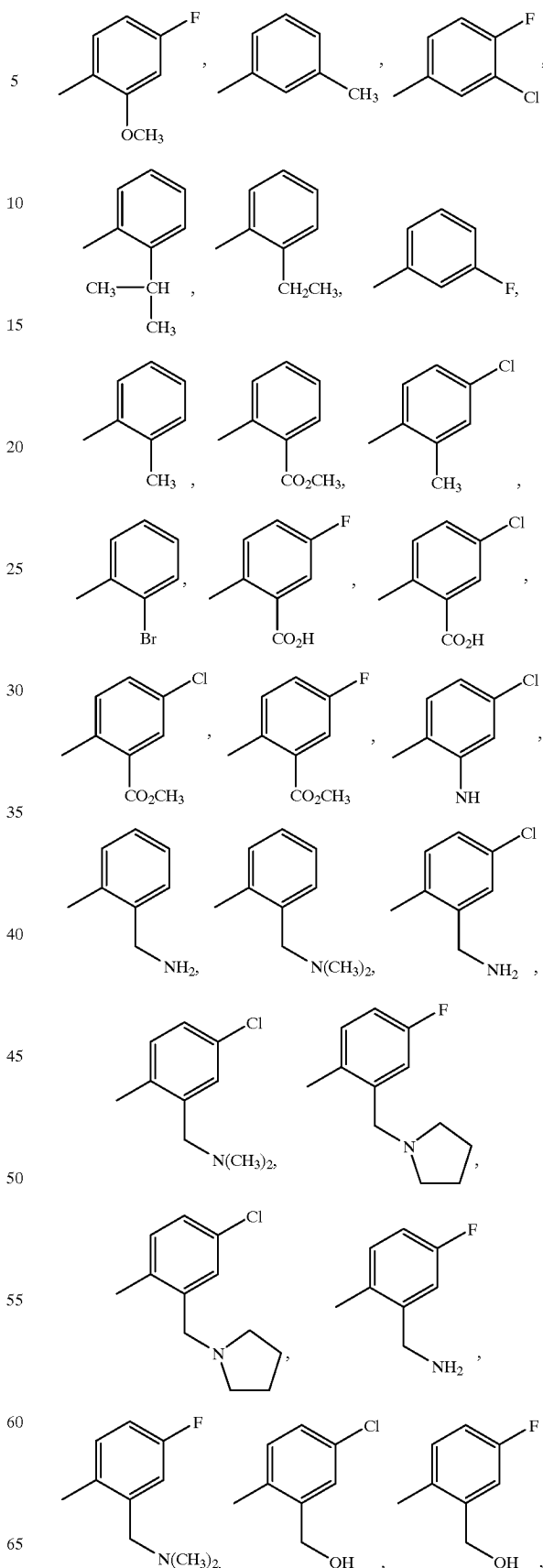
According to a preferred embodiment, Q_2 is phenyl or pyridyl containing 0 to 3 substituents, wherein each substituent is independently selected from chloro, fluoro, bromo, methyl, ethyl, isopropyl, $-OCH_3$, $-OH$, $-NH_2$, $-CF_3$, $-OCF_3$, $-SCH_3$, $-OCH_3$, $-C(O)OH$, $C(O)OCH_3$, $C(O)NH_2$ and $-CH_2OH$.

Some specific examples of preferred Q_2 are:



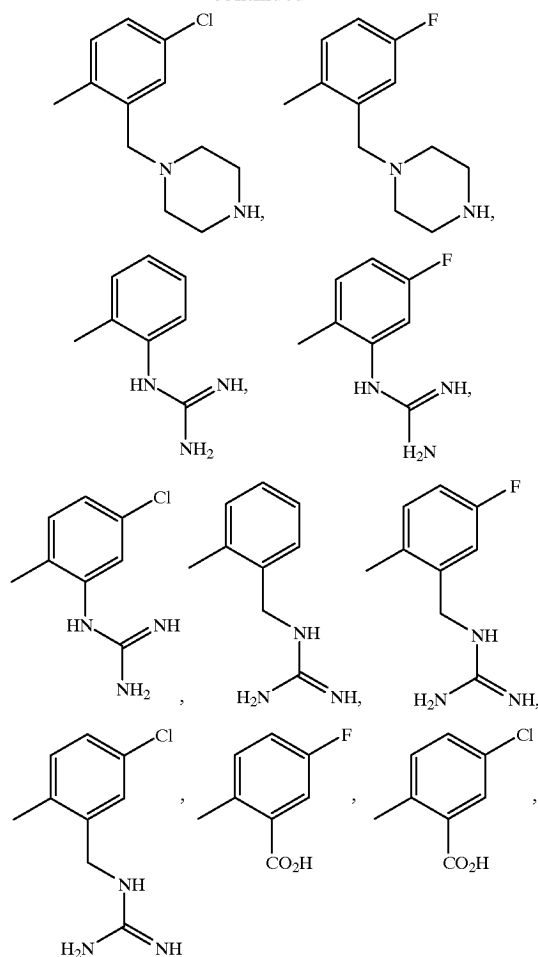
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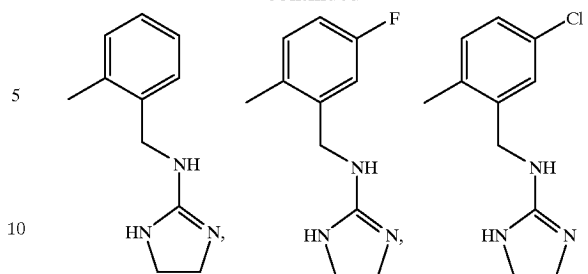
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15 unsubstituted 2-pyridyl or unsubstituted phenyl.

Most preferred are compounds wherein Q_2 is selected from phenyl, 2-isopropylphenyl, 3,4-dimethylphenyl, 2-ethylphenyl, 3-fluorophenyl, 2-methylphenyl, 3-chloro-4-fluorophenyl, 3-chlorophenyl, 2-carbomethoxyphenyl, 2-carboxyphenyl, 2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl, 2-bromophenyl, 2-pyridyl, 2-methylenehydroxyphenyl and 4-fluorophenyl.

25 According to yet another preferred embodiment, X is $-S-$, $-O-$, $-S(O_2)-$, $-S(O)-$, $-NR-$, $-C(R_2)-$ or $-C(O)-$. Most preferably, X is S.

30 According to another preferred embodiment, n is 1 and A is N.

According to another preferred embodiment, each Y is C.

35 According to an even more preferred embodiment, each Y is C and the R attached to those Y components is selected from hydrogen or methyl.

Some specific inhibitors of this invention are set forth in the table below.

TABLE 1

Cmpd #	Q_1	Q_2	R_a	R_b
2	4-fluorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
3	2,4-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
5	2,4-dichlorophenyl	4-methylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
6	2,6-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
7	2-chlorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
8	2-methylphenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
9	3,4-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
10	4-methoxyphenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
11	2-methoxyphenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
12	2,6-dichlorophenyl	4-fluorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
13	2,6-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	methyl	methyl
14	2,6-dichlorophenyl	4-methylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
15	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3-methylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
16	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3,4-dichlorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
17	2,6-difluorophenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
18	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-isopropylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
19	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3,4-dimethylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
20	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-ethylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
21	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3-fluorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
22	2-fluoro-6-trifluoromethylphenyl	phenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen

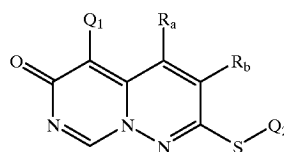
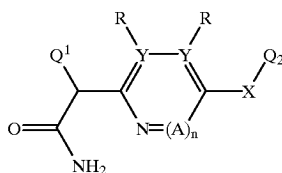


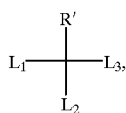
TABLE 1-continued

Cmpd #	Q ₁	Q ₂	R _a	R _b
23	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
24	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3-chloro-4-fluorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
25	2,6-dichlorophenyl	3-chlorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
26	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carbomethoxyphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
27	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carboxyphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
28	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
29	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-bromophenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
30	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-pyridyl	hydrogen	hydrogen
31	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylenehydroxyphenyl	hydrogen	hydrogen

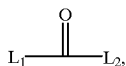
According to another embodiment, the present invention provides methods of producing inhibitors of p38 of the formula (Ia) depicted above. These methods involve reacting a compound of formula II:



wherein each of the variables in the above formula are the same as defined above for the inhibitors of this invention, with a leaving group reagent of formula IIa:



wherein R' is as defined above, or a leaving group reagent of formula IIb:



wherein each of L₁, L₂, and L₃ independently represents a leaving group.

The leaving group reagent used in this reaction is added in excess, either neat or with a co-solvent, such as toluene. The reaction is carried out at a temperature of between 25° C. and 150° C.

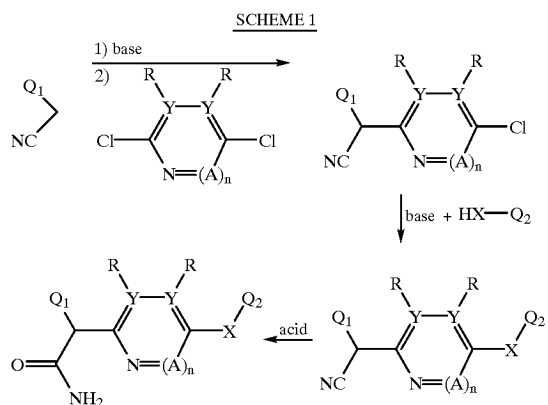
Leaving group reagents of formula IIa that are useful in producing the p38 inhibitors of this invention include dimethylformamide dimethylacetal, dimethylacetamide dimethylacetal, trimethyl orthoformate, dimethylformamide diethylacetal and other related reagents. Preferably the leaving group reagents of formula IIa used to produce the inhibitors of this invention is dimethylformamide dimethylacetal.

Leaving group reagents of formula IIb that are useful in producing the p38 inhibitors of this invention include phosgene, carbonyldiimidazole and triphosgene.

25 More preferred methods of producing the compounds of this invention utilize compounds of formula II wherein each of the variables are defined in terms of the more preferred and most preferred choices as set forth above for the compounds of this invention.

30 Because the source of R₁ is the leaving group reagent (C—R' or C=O), its identity is, of course, dependent on the structure of that reagent. Therefore, in compounds where R₁ is OH, the reagent used must be IIb. Similarly, when R₁ is H or (C₁—C₃)-alkyl, the reagent used must be IIa. In order to generate inhibitors wherein R₁ is O—(C₁—C₃)-alkyl, a compound wherein R₁ is OH is first generated, followed by alkylation of that hydroxy by standard techniques, such as treatment with Na hydride in DMF, methyl iodide and ethyl iodide.

40 The immediate precursors to the inhibitors of this invention of formula Ia (i.e., compounds of Formula II) may themselves be synthesized by either of the synthesis schemes depicted below:



55 In Scheme 1, the order of steps 1) and 2) can be reversed. Also, the starting nitrile may be replaced by a corresponding acid or by an ester. Alternatively, other well-known latent carboxyl or carboxamide moieties may be used in place of the nitrile (see scheme 2). Variations such as carboxylic acids, carboxylic esters, oxazolines or oxizolidinones may

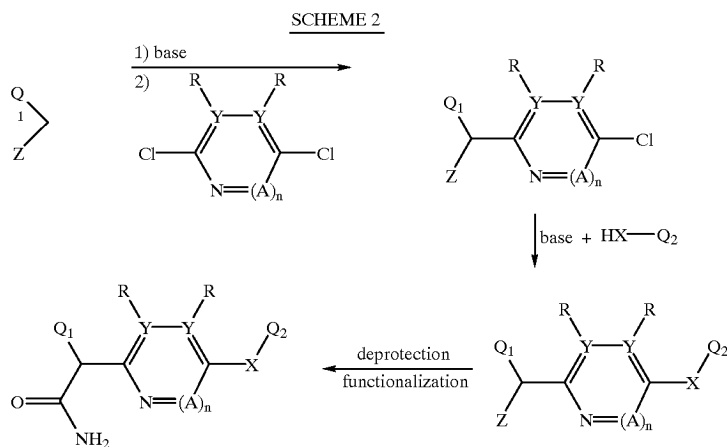
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be incorporated into this scheme by utilizing subsequent deprotection and functionalization methods which are well known in the art

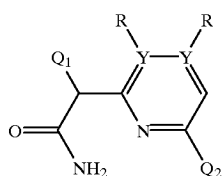
The base used in the first step of Scheme 1 (and in Scheme 2, below) is selected from sodium hydride, sodium amide, 5 LDA, lithium hexamethyldisilazide, sodium hexamethyldisilazide or any number of other non-nucleophilic bases that will deprotonate the position alpha to the nitrile.

Also, the addition of $HX-Q_2$ in the single step depicted above may be substituted by two steps—the addition of a 10 protected or unprotected X derivative followed by the addition of a Q_2 derivative in a subsequent step.



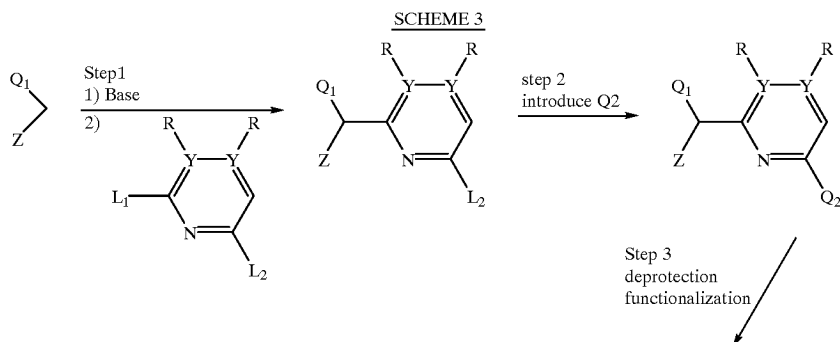
In Scheme 2, Z is selected from COOH, COOR, CON (R_2), oxazoline, oxazolidinone or CN. R is as defined 20 above.

According to another embodiment, the present invention provides methods of producing inhibitors of p38 of the formula (Ib) depicted above. These methods involve reacting a compound of formula III: 40



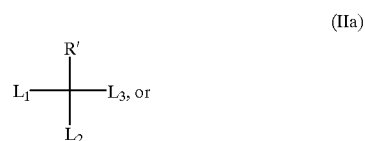
45 as described above.

Two full synthesis schemes for the p38 inhibitors of formula (Ib) of this invention are depicted below.



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wherein each of the variables in the above formula are the same as defined above for the inhibitors of this invention, with a leaving group reagent of formula:



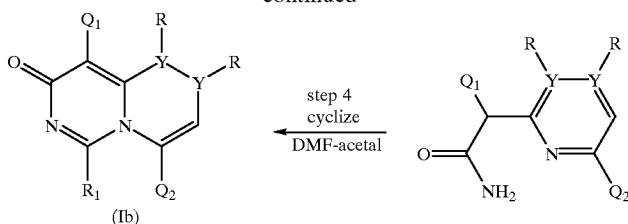
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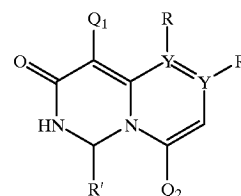
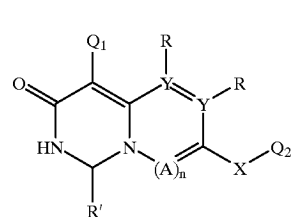


In scheme 3, a Q_1 substituted derivative may be treated with a base such as sodium hydride, sodium amide, LDA, lithium hexamethyldisilazide, sodium hexamethyldisilazide or any number of other non-nucleophilic bases to deprotonate the position alpha to the Z group, which represents a masked amide moiety. Alternatively, Z is a carboxylic acid, carboxylic ester, oxazoline or oxizolidinone. The anion resulting from deprotonation is then contacted with a nitrogen bearing heterocyclic compound which contains two leaving groups, or latent leaving groups. One example of such compound may be 2,6-dichloropyridine.

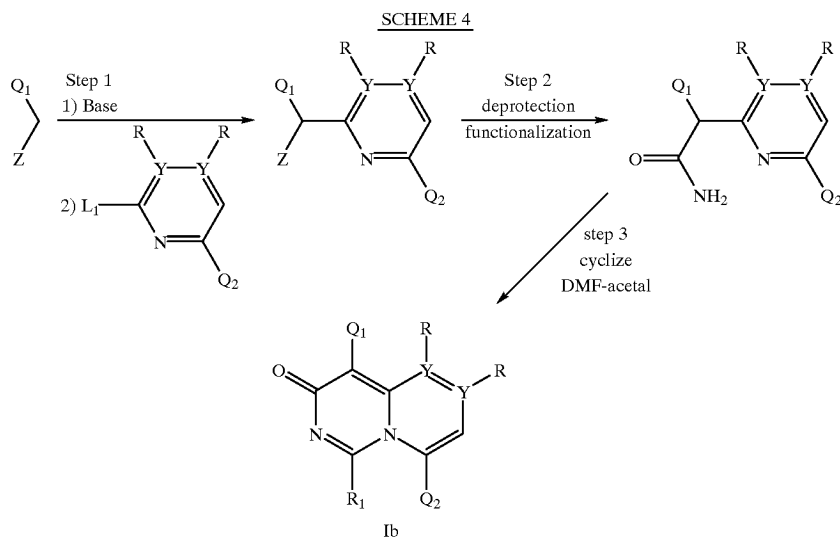
In step two, the Q_2 ring moiety is introduced. This may be performed utilizing many reactions well known in the art which result in the production of biaryl compounds. One example may be the reaction of an aryl lithium compound with the pyridine intermediate produced in step 1. Alternatively, an arylmetallic compound such as an aryl stannane may be reacted with the aryl halide portion of the pyridine intermediate in the presence of a Pd^0 catalyst.

In step 3 the Z group is deprotected and/or functionalized to form the amide compound. When Z is a carboxylic acid, carboxylic ester, oxazoline or oxizolidinone, variations in deprotection and functionalization methods which are well known in the art are employed to produce the amide. Finally in step 4, the amide compound is cyclized to the final product utilizing reagents such as DMF acetal or similar reagents either neat or in an organic solvent.

According to another embodiment, the invention provides inhibitors of p38 similar to those of formulae Ia and Ib above, but wherein the $C=N$ in the ring bearing the Q_1 substituent is reduced. These inhibitors have the formula:



wherein A, Q_1 , Q_2 , R, R', X, Y and n are defined in the same manner as set forth for compounds of formulae Ia and Ib.



Scheme 4 is similar except that the a biaryl intermediate is first generated prior to reaction with the Q_1 starting material.

65 These definitions hold for all embodiments of each of these variables (i.e., basic, preferred, more preferred and most preferred).

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According to other preferred embodiments, in compounds of formula Ic, A is preferably nitrogen, n is preferably 1, and X is preferably sulfur. In compounds of formula Ic or Id, Q₁ is preferably 2,6-dichlorophenyl and Q₂ is preferably selected from 2-carbomethoxyphenyl, 2-methylphenyl, 4-fluorophenyl, 2-carboxyphenyl, 2-carboxamidophenyl, 2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl, 2-bromophenyl, 2-methylenehydroxyphenyl and 2-pyridyl.

Compounds of formulae Ic and Id may be prepared directly from compounds of formulae Ia or Ib which contain a hydrogen, C₁-C₃ alkyl or C₂-C₃ alkenyl or alkynyl at the R₁ position (e.g, where R₁=R'). The synthesis schemes for these compounds is depicted in Schemes 5 and 6, below.

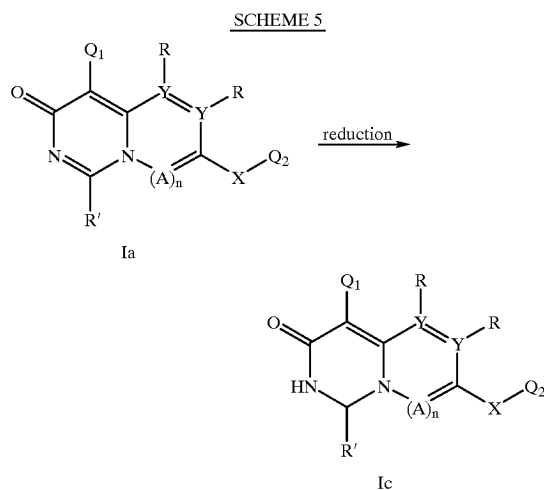


TABLE 1A

Compound # Q ₁	Q ₂	A	n	
101	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carbomethoxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
102	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylphenyl	nitrogen	1
103	2,6-dichlorophenyl	4-fluorophenyl	nitrogen	1
104	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carboxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
105	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carboxamidophenyl	nitrogen	1
106	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl	nitrogen	1
107	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-pyridyl	nitrogen	1
108	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylenehydroxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
109	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-bromophenyl	nitrogen	1
110	2,6-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	carbon	1

In these schemes, compounds of formula Ia or Ib are reduced by reaction with an excess of diisobutylaluminum hydride, or equivalent reagent to yield the ring reduced compounds of formula Ic or Id, respectively.

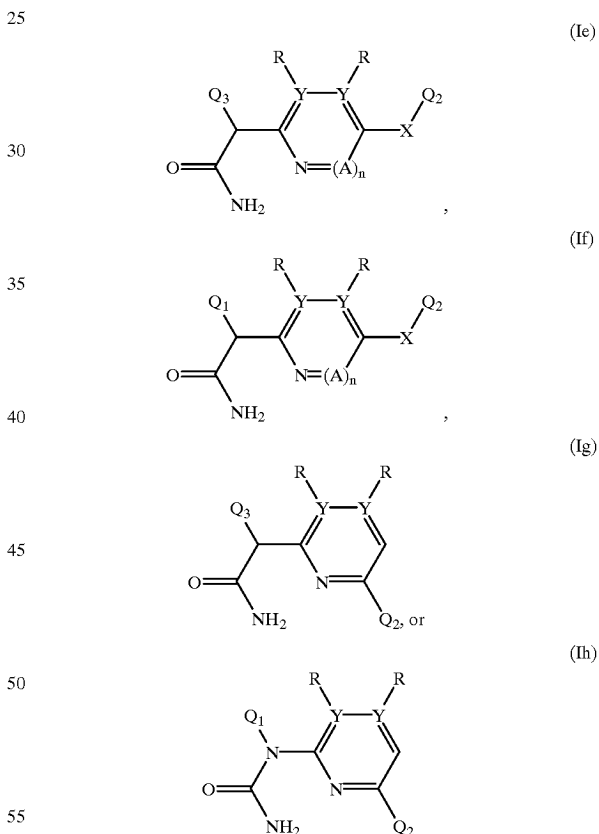
Some specific inhibitors of this invention of formula Ic are set forth in the table below.

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TABLE 1A

Compound # Q ₁	Q ₂	A	n	
101	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carbomethoxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
102	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylphenyl	nitrogen	1
103	2,6-dichlorophenyl	4-fluorophenyl	nitrogen	1
104	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carboxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
105	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-carboxamidophenyl	nitrogen	1
106	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl	nitrogen	1
107	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-pyridyl	nitrogen	1
108	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-methylenehydroxyphenyl	nitrogen	1
109	2,6-dichlorophenyl	2-bromophenyl	nitrogen	1
110	2,6-dichlorophenyl	phenyl	carbon	1

According to yet another embodiment, the invention provides p38 inhibitors of the formulae:



wherein A, Q₁, Q₂, R, X, Y and n are defined in the same manner as set forth for compounds of formulae Ia and Ib. These definitions hold for all embodiments of each of these variables (i.e., basic, preferred, more preferred and most preferred). More preferably, in compounds of formula Ie, Q₂ is unsubstituted phenyl.

Q₃ is a 5-6 membered aromatic carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring system, or an 8-10 membered bicyclic ring system comprising aromatic carbocyclic rings, aromatic heterocyclic rings or a combination of an aromatic carbocyclic ring

effective to treat or prevent a p38-mediated condition and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, are another embodiment of the present invention.

The term "p38-mediated condition", as used herein means any disease or other deleterious condition in which p38 is known to play a role. This includes, conditions which are known to be caused by IL-1, TNF, IL-6 or IL-8 overproduction. Such conditions include, without limitation, inflammatory diseases, autoimmune diseases, destructive bone disorders, proliferative disorders, infectious diseases, viral disease, and neurodegenerative diseases.

Inflammatory diseases which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to acute pancreatitis, chronic pancreatitis, asthma, allergies, and adult respiratory distress syndrome.

Autoimmune diseases which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to, glomerulonephritis, rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, scleroderma, chronic thyroiditis, Graves' disease, autoimmune gastritis, insulin-dependent diabetes mellitus (Type I), autoimmune hemolytic anemia, autoimmune neutropenia, thrombocytopenia, atopic dermatitis, chronic active hepatitis, myasthenia gravis, multiple sclerosis, inflammatory bowel disease, ulcerative colitis, Crohn's disease, psoriasis, or graft vs. host disease.

Destructive bone disorders which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis and multiple myeloma-related bone disorder.

Proliferative diseases which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to, acute myelogenous leukemia, chronic myelogenous leukemia, metastatic melanoma, Kaposi's sarcoma, and multiple myeloma.

Infectious diseases which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to, sepsis, septic shock, and Shigellosis.

Viral diseases which may be treated or prevented include, but are not limited to, acute hepatitis infection (including hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C), HIV infection and CMV retinitis.

Degenerative or diseases which may be treated or prevented by the compounds of this invention include, but are not limited to, Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, cerebral ischemia, and other neurodegenerative diseases.

"p38-mediated conditions" also include ischemia/reperfusion in stroke, heart attacks, myocardial ischemia, organ hypoxia, vascular hyperplasia, cardiac hypertrophy, and thrombin-induced platelet aggregation.

In addition, p38 inhibitors in this invention are also capable of inhibiting the expression of inducible pro-inflammatory proteins such as prostaglandin endoperoxide synthase-2 (PGHS-2), also referred to as cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2). Therefore, other "p38-mediated conditions" are edema, analgesia, fever and pain, such as neuromuscular pain, headache, cancer pain, dental pain and arthritis pain.

The diseases that may be treated or prevented by the p38 inhibitors of this invention may also be conveniently grouped by the cytokine (IL-1, TNF, IL-6, IL-8) that is believed to be responsible for the disease.

Thus, an IL-1-mediated disease or condition includes rheumatoid arthritis, osteoarthritis, stroke, endotoxemia and/or toxic shock syndrome, inflammatory reaction induced by endotoxin, inflammatory bowel disease, tuberculosis, atherosclerosis, muscle degeneration, cachexia, psoriatic arthritis, Reiter's syndrome, gout, traumatic arthritis, rubella arthritis, acute synovitis, diabetes, pancreatic β -cell disease and Alzheimer's disease.

TNF-mediated disease or condition includes, rheumatoid arthritis, rheumatoid spndylitis, osteoarthritis, gouty arthritis

and other arthritic conditions, sepsis, septic shock, endotoxic shock, gram negative sepsis, toxic shock syndrome, adult respiratory distress syndrome, cerebral malaria, chronic pulmonary inflammatory disease, silicosis, pulmonary sarcoidosis, bone resorption diseases, reperfusion injury, graft vs. host reaction, allograft rejections, fever and myalgias due to infection, cachexia secondary to infection, AIDS, ARC or malignancy, keloid formation, scar tissue formation, Crohn's disease, ulcerative colitis or pyresis. TNF-mediated diseases also include viral infections, such as HIV, CMV, influenza and herpes; and veterinary viral infections, such as lentivirus infections, including, but not limited to equine infectious anaemia virus, caprine arthritis virus, visna virus or maedi virus; or retrovirus infections, including feline immunodeficiency virus, bovine immunodeficiency virus, or canine immunodeficiency virus.

IL-8 mediated disease or condition includes diseases characterized by massive neutrophil infiltration, such as psoriasis, inflammatory bowel disease, asthma, cardiac and renal reperfusion injury, adult respiratory distress syndrome, thrombosis and glomerulonephritis.

In addition, the compounds of this invention may be used topically to treat or prevent conditions caused or exacerbated by IL-1 or TNF. Such conditions include inflamed joints, eczema, psoriasis, inflammatory skin conditions such as sunburn, inflammatory eye conditions such as conjunctivitis, pyresis, pain and other conditions associated with inflammation.

Pharmaceutically acceptable carriers that may be used in these pharmaceutical compositions include, but are not limited to, ion exchangers, alumina, aluminum stearate, lecithin, serum proteins, such as human serum albumin, buffer substances such as phosphates, glycine, sorbic acid, potassium sorbate, partial glyceride mixtures of saturated vegetable fatty acids, water, salts or electrolytes, such as protamine sulfate, disodium hydrogen phosphate, potassium hydrogen phosphate, sodium chloride, zinc salts, colloidal silica, magnesium trisilicate, polyvinyl pyrrolidone, cellulose-based substances, polyethylene glycol, sodium carboxymethylcellulose, polyacrylates, waxes, polyethylene-polyoxypropylene-block polymers, polyethylene glycol and wool fat.

The compositions of the present invention may be administered orally, parenterally, by inhalation spray, topically, rectally, nasally, buccally, vaginally or via an implanted reservoir. The term "parenteral" as used herein includes subcutaneous, intravenous, intramuscular, intra-articular, intra-synovial, intrasternal, intrathecal, intrahepatic, intralesional and intracranial injection or infusion techniques. Preferably, the compositions are administered orally, intraperitoneally or intravenously.

Sterile injectable forms of the compositions of this invention may be aqueous or oleaginous suspension. These suspensions may be formulated according to techniques known in the art using suitable dispersing or wetting agents and suspending agents. The sterile injectable preparation may also be a sterile injectable solution or suspension in a non-toxic parenterally-acceptable diluent or solvent, for example as a solution in 1,3-butanediol. Among the acceptable vehicles and solvents that may be employed are water, Ringer's solution and isotonic sodium chloride solution. In addition, sterile, fixed oils are conventionally employed as a solvent or suspending medium. For this purpose, any bland fixed oil may be employed including synthetic mono- or di-glycerides. Fatty acids, such as oleic acid and its glyceride derivatives are useful in the preparation of injectables, as are natural pharmaceutically-acceptable oils, such as olive

oil or castor oil, especially in their polyoxyethylated versions. These oil solutions or suspensions may also contain a long-chain alcohol diluent or dispersant, such as carboxymethyl cellulose or similar dispersing agents which are commonly used in the formulation of pharmaceutically acceptable dosage forms including emulsions and suspensions. Other commonly used surfactants, such as Tweens, Spans and other emulsifying agents or bioavailability enhancers which are commonly used in the manufacture of pharmaceutically acceptable solid, liquid, or other dosage forms may also be used for the purposes of formulation.

The pharmaceutical compositions of this invention may be orally administered in any orally acceptable dosage form including, but not limited to, capsules, tablets, aqueous suspensions or solutions. In the case of tablets for oral use, carriers which are commonly used include lactose and corn starch. Lubricating agents, such as magnesium stearate, are also typically added. For oral administration in a capsule form, useful diluents include lactose and dried corn starch. When aqueous suspensions are required for oral use, the active ingredient is combined with emulsifying and suspending agents. If desired, certain sweetening, flavoring or coloring agents may also be added.

Alternatively, the pharmaceutical compositions of this invention may be administered in the form of suppositories for rectal administration. These can be prepared by mixing the agent with a suitable non-irritating excipient which is solid at room temperature but liquid at rectal temperature and therefore will melt in the rectum to release the drug. Such materials include cocoa butter, beeswax and polyethylene glycols.

The pharmaceutical compositions of this invention may also be administered topically, especially when the target of treatment includes areas or organs readily accessible by topical application, including diseases of the eye, the skin, or the lower intestinal tract. Suitable topical formulations are readily prepared for each of these areas or organs.

Topical application for the lower intestinal tract can be effected in a rectal suppository formulation (see above) or in a suitable enema formulation. Topically-transdermal patches may also be used.

For topical applications, the pharmaceutical compositions may be formulated in a suitable ointment containing the active component suspended or dissolved in one or more carriers. Carriers for topical administration of the compounds of this invention include, but are not limited to, mineral oil, liquid petrolatum, white petrolatum, propylene glycol, polyoxyethylene, polyoxypropylene compound, emulsifying wax and water. Alternatively, the pharmaceutical compositions can be formulated in a suitable lotion or cream containing the active components suspended or dissolved in one or more pharmaceutically acceptable carriers. Suitable carriers include, but are not limited to, mineral oil, sorbitan monostearate, polysorbate 60, cetyl esters wax, cetearyl alcohol, 2-octyldodecanol, benzyl alcohol and water.

For ophthalmic use, the pharmaceutical compositions may be formulated as micronized suspensions in isotonic, pH adjusted sterile saline, or, preferably, as solutions in isotonic, pH adjusted sterile saline, either with or without a preservative such as benzylalkonium chloride. Alternatively, for ophthalmic uses, the pharmaceutical compositions may be formulated in an ointment such as petrolatum.

The pharmaceutical compositions of this invention may also be administered by nasal aerosol or inhalation. Such compositions are prepared according to techniques well-known in the art of pharmaceutical formulation and may be

prepared as solutions in saline, employing benzyl alcohol or other suitable preservatives, absorption promoters to enhance bioavailability, fluorocarbons, and/or other conventional solubilizing or dispersing agents.

The amount of p38 inhibitor that may be combined with the carrier materials to produce a single dosage form will vary depending upon the host treated, the particular mode of administration. Preferably, the compositions should be formulated so that a dosage of between 0.01–100 mg/kg body weight/day of the inhibitor can be administered to a patient receiving these compositions.

It should also be understood that a specific dosage and treatment regimen for any particular patient will depend upon a variety of factors, including the activity of the specific compound employed, the age, body weight, general health, sex, diet, time of administration, rate of excretion, drug combination, and the judgment of the treating physician and the severity of the particular disease being treated. The amount of inhibitor will also depend upon the particular compound in the composition.

According to another embodiment, the invention provides methods for treating or preventing a p38-mediated condition comprising the step of administering to a patient one of the above-described pharmaceutical compositions. The term “patient”, as used herein, means an animal, preferably a human.

Preferably, that method is used to treat or prevent a condition selected from inflammatory diseases, autoimmune diseases, destructive bone disorders, proliferative disorders, infectious diseases, degenerative diseases, allergies, reperfusion/ischemia in stroke, heart attacks, organ hypoxia, vascular hyperplasia, cardiac hypertrophy, and thrombin-induced platelet aggregation.

According to another embodiment, the inhibitors of this invention are used to treat or prevent an IL-1, IL-6, IL-8 or TNF-mediated disease or condition. Such conditions are described above.

Depending upon the particular p38-mediated condition to be treated or prevented, additional drugs, which are normally administered to treat or prevent that condition may be administered together with the inhibitors of this invention. Those additional agents may be administered separately, as part of a multiple dosage regimen, from the p38 inhibitor-containing composition. Alternatively, those agents may be part of a single dosage form, mixed together with the p38 inhibitor in a single composition.

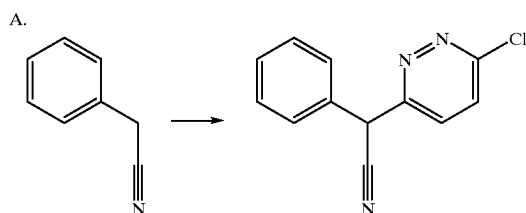
In order that the invention described herein may be more fully understood, the following examples are set forth. It should be understood that these examples are for illustrative purposes only and are not to be construed as limiting this invention in any manner.

EXAMPLE 1

Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 1

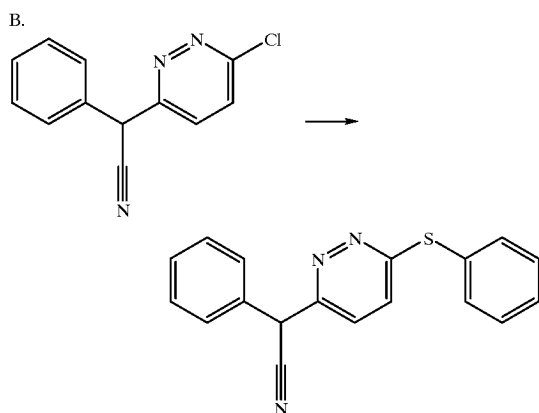
Examples of the synthesis of several compounds of formula Ia are set forth in the following 4 examples.

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To a slurry of sodium amide, 90% (1.17 g., 30 mmol) in dry tetrahydrofuran (20 ml) we added a solution of benzyl cyanide (2.92 g., 25.0 mmol) in dry tetrahydrofuran (10 ml) at room temperature. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. To the reaction mixture we added a solution of 3,6-dichloropyridazine (3.70 g., 25.0 mmol) in dry tetrahydrofuran (10 ml). After stirring for 30 minutes, the reaction mixture was diluted with an aqueous saturated sodium bicarbonate solution. The reaction mixture was then extracted with ethyl acetate. The layers were separated and the organic was washed with water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate, filtered and concentrated in vacuo.

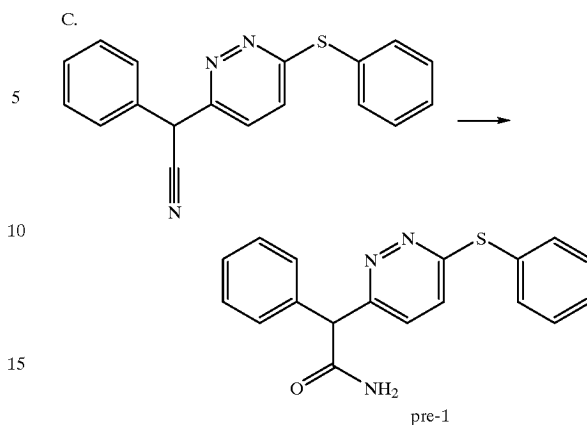
The residue was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluant: 30% ethyl acetate in n-hexane) to give 3.71 g. (16.20 mmol~54%) of product as a white solid.



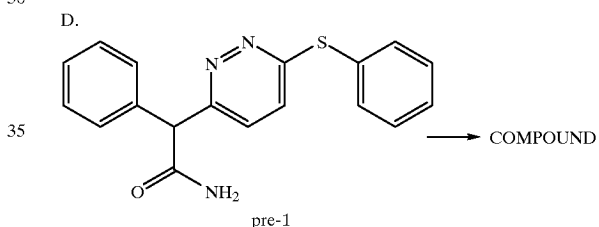
To a slurry of sodium hydride, 95% (0.14 g., 6.0 mmol) in dry tetrahydrofuran (10 ml) we added thiophenol (0.66 g, 6.0 ml.) at room temperature. The reaction mixture was then stirred for 10 minutes. To the reaction mixture we added a solution of the product from step A., above (1.31 g., 5.72 mmol) in absolute ethanol (20 ml.). The reaction mixture was then brought to reflux and stirred there for one hour. The cool reaction mixture was concentrated in vacuo. The residue was diluted with a 1N sodium hydroxide solution (10 ml), then extracted with methylene chloride. The organic phase was washed with water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate and concentrated in vacuo.

The residue was purified by chromatography on silica gel (eluant: 20% ethyl acetate in n-hexane) to give 0.66 g. (2.19 mmol~40%) of product as a white solid.

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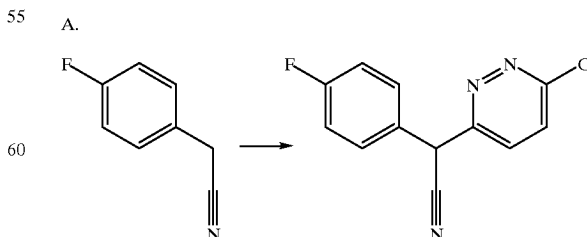
A mixture of the product from step B. (0.17 g., 0.69 mmol) and concentrated sulfuric acid (5 ml) was heated to 100° C. for one hour. The solution was cooled and adjusted to pH 8 with a saturated sodium bicarbonate solution. The reaction mixture was extracted with methylene chloride. The organic layer was washed with water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate and concentrated in vacuo to give 0.22 g. (0.69 mmol~100%) of compound pre-1 as an orange oil. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 7.7 (d), 7.5 (d), 7.4 (m), 7.3–7.2 (m).



A solution of pre-1 from step C. (0.22 g., 0.69 mmol) and N,N-dimethylformamide dimethylacetal (0.18 g., 1.5 mmol) in toluene (5 ml) was heated at 100° C. for one hour. Upon cooling, the resulting solid was filtered and dissolved in warm ethyl acetate. The product was precipitated with the dropwise addition of diethyl ether. The product was then filtered and washed with diethyl ether to give 0.038 g. of compound 1 (which is depicted in Table 1) as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.63 (s), 7.63–7.21 (m), 6.44 (d).

EXAMPLE 2

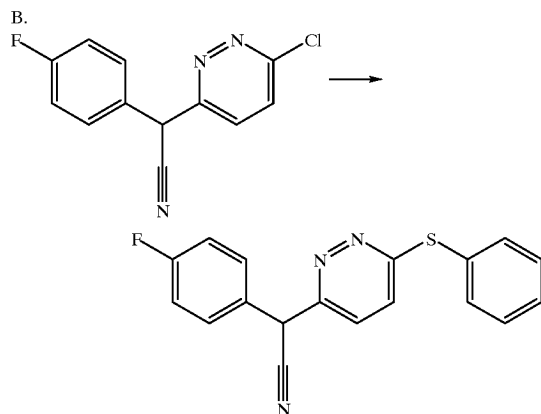
Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 2



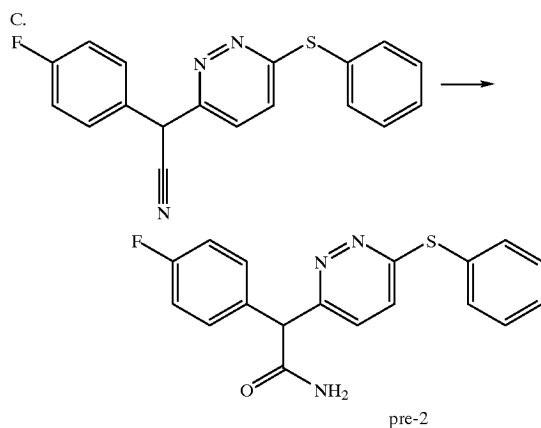
The first intermediate depicted above was prepared in a similar manner as in Example 1A, using

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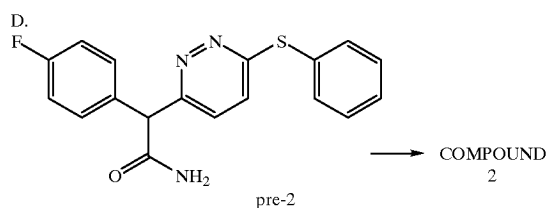
4-fluorophenylacetonitrile, to afford 1.4 g (5.7 mmol, ~15%) of product.



The above intermediate was prepared in a similar manner as in Example 1B. This afforded 0.49 g (1.5 mmol, 56%) of product.



The above intermediate was prepared in a similar manner as Example 1C. This afforded 0.10 g (0.29 mmol, 45%) of compound pre-2. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.65–7.48 (m), 7.47–7.30 (m), 7.29–7.11 (m), 7.06–6.91 (m), 5.85 (s, br).

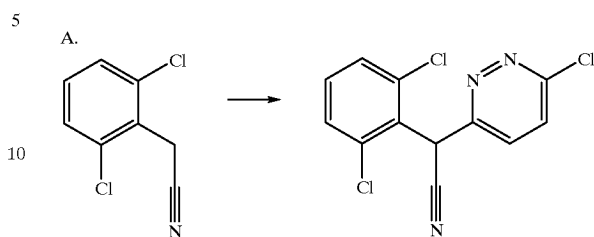


Compound 2 (which is depicted in Table 1) was prepared from pre-2 in a similar manner as in Example 1D. This afforded 0.066 g of product. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.60 (s), 7.62–7.03 (m), 6.44 (d).

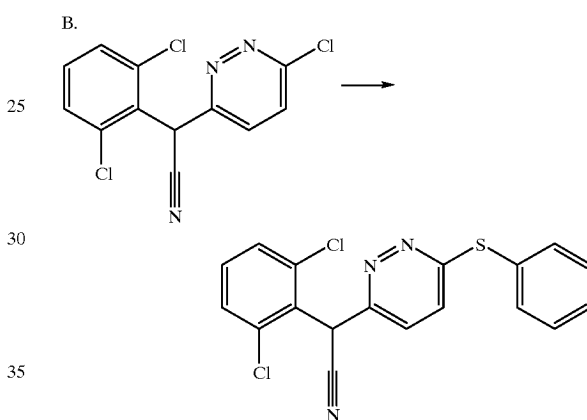
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EXAMPLE 3

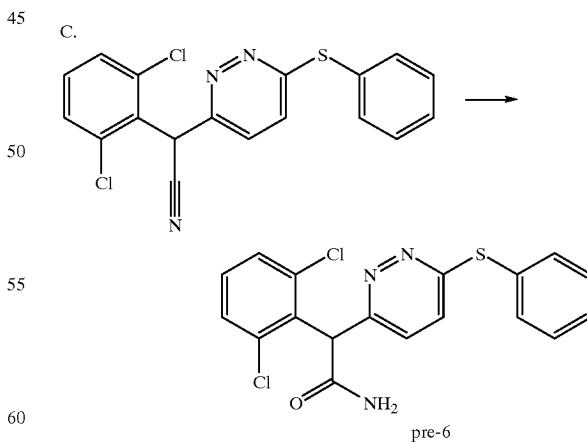
Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 6



The first intermediate in the preparation of compound 6 was prepared in a manner similar to that described in Example 1A, using 2,6-dichlorophenylacetonitrile, to afford 2.49 g (8.38, 28%) of product.



The next step in the synthesis of compound 6 was carried out in a similar manner as described in Example 1B. This afforded 2.82 g (7.6 mmol, 91%) of product.



The final intermediate, pre-6, was prepared in a similar manner as described in Example 1C. This afforded 0.89 g (2.3 mmol, 85%) of product. ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CD₃OD) δ 7.5–7.4 (dd), 7.4 (m), 7.3 (d), 7.2 (m), 7.05 (d).

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INHIBITORS OF p38

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. application Ser. No. 08/822,373, filed Mar. 20, 1997, now U.S. Pat. No. 5,945,418, which claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional application No. 60/034,288, filed Dec. 18, 1996.

TECHNICAL FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to inhibitors of p38, a mammalian protein kinase involved cell proliferation, cell death and response to extracellular stimuli. The invention also relates to methods for producing these inhibitors. The invention also provides pharmaceutical compositions comprising the inhibitors of the invention and methods of utilizing those compositions in the treatment and prevention of various disorders.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Protein kinases are involved in various cellular responses to extracellular signals. Recently, a family of mitogen-activated protein kinases (MAPK) have been discovered. Members of this family are Ser/Thr kinases that activate their substrates by phosphorylation [B. Stein et al., *Ann. Rep. Med. Chem.*, 31, pp. 289-98 (1996)]. MAPKs are themselves activated by a variety of signals including growth factors, cytokines, UV radiation, and stress-inducing agents.

One particularly interesting MAPK is p38. p38, also known as cytokine suppressive anti-inflammatory drug binding protein (CSBP) and RK, was isolated from murine pre-B cells that were transfected with the lipopolysaccharide (LPS) receptor CD14 and induced with LPS. p38 has since been isolated and sequenced, as has the cDNA encoding it in humans and mouse. Activation of p38 has been observed in cells stimulated by stresses, such as treatment of lipopolysaccharides (LPS), UV, anisomycin, or osmotic shock, and by cytokines, such as IL-1 and TNF.

Inhibition of p38 kinase leads to a blockade on the production of both IL-1 and TNF. IL-1 and TNF stimulate the production of other proinflammatory cytokines such as IL-6 and IL-8 and have been implicated in acute and chronic inflammatory diseases and in postmenopausal osteoporosis [R. B. Kimble et al., *Endocrinol.*, 136, pp. 3054-61 (1995)].

Based upon this finding it is believed that p38, along with other MAPKs, have a role in mediating cellular response to inflammatory stimuli, such as leukocyte accumulation, macrophage/monocyte activation, tissue resorption, fever, acute phase responses and neutrophilia. In addition, MAPKs, such as p38, have been implicated in cancer, thrombin-induced platelet aggregation, immunodeficiency disorders, autoimmune diseases, cell death, allergies, osteoporosis and neurodegenerative disorders. Inhibitors of p38 have also been implicated in the area of pain management through inhibition of prostaglandin endoperoxide synthase-2 induction. Other diseases associated with IL-1, IL-6, IL-8 or TNF overproduction are set forth in WO 96/21654.

Others have already begun trying to develop drugs that specifically inhibit MAPKs. For example, PCT publication WO 95/31451 describes pyrazole compounds that inhibit MAPKs, and in particular p38. However, the efficacy of these inhibitors in vivo is still being investigated.

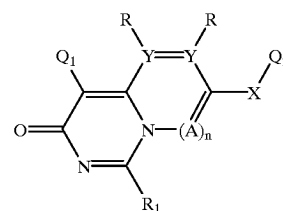
Accordingly, there is still a great need to develop other potent, p38-specific inhibitors that are useful in treating various conditions associated with p38 activation.

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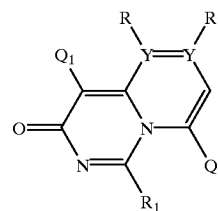
SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention solves this problem by providing compounds which demonstrate strong and specific inhibition of p38.

These compounds have the general formula:



or



wherein each of Q₁ and Q₂ are independently selected from 5-6 membered aromatic carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring systems, or 8-10 membered bicyclic ring systems comprising aromatic carbocyclic rings, aromatic heterocyclic rings or a combination of an aromatic carbocyclic ring and an aromatic heterocyclic ring.

The rings that make up Q₁ are substituted with 1 to 4 substituents, each of which is independently selected from halo; C₁-C₃ alkyl; C₁-C₃ alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; NR'₂; OCF₃; CF₃; NO₂; CO₂R'; CONR'; SR'; S(O)₂N(R')₂; SCF₃; or CN. The rings that make up Q₂ are optionally substituted with up to 4 substituents, each of which is independently selected from halo; C₁-C₃ straight or branched alkyl; C₁-C₃ straight or branched alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl; O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl substituted with NR'₂, OR', CO₂R' or CONR'₂; NR'₂; OCF₃; CF₃; NO₂; CO₂R'; CONR'; R³; OR³, NR³, SR³; C(O)R³; C(O)N(R')R³; C(O)OR³; SR'; S(O)₂N(R')₂; SCF₃; or CN.

R' is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl or (C₂-C₃)-alkenyl or alkynyl.

R³ is selected from 5-6 membered aromatic carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring systems, -(CH₂)_m-W and W, wherein m is 1, 2 or 3.

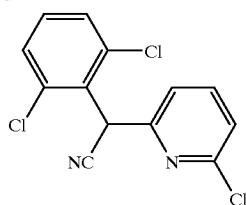
X is selected from -S-, -O-, -S(O)₂-, -S(O)-, -S(O)₂-N(R)-, -N(R)-S(O)₂-, -N(R)-C(O)O-, -O-C(O)-N(R)-, -C(O)-, -C(O)O-, -O-C(O)-, -C(O)-N(R)-, -N(R)-C(O)-, -N(R)-, or -C(R₂)-.

Each R is independently selected from hydrogen, -R², -NR², -OR², SR², -C(O)-NR² or -C(O)-OR² wherein two adjacent R are optionally bound to one another and, together with each Y to which they are respectively bound, form a 4-8 membered carbocyclic or heterocyclic ring;

R² is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl, O-(C₂-C₃)-alkyl, (C₁-C₃)-alkenyl or O-(C₂-C₃)-alkenyl each optionally substituted with W.

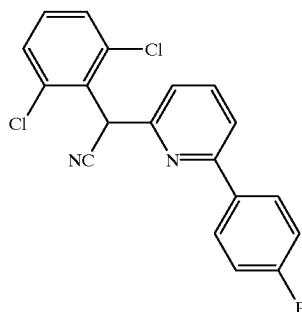
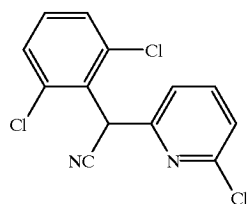
31

-continued



To a slurry of sodium amide, 90% (1.1 eq) in dry tetrahydrofuran is added a solution of 2,6-dichlorobenzyl cyanide (1.0 eq) in dry tetrahydrofuran at room temperature. The mixture is stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. To the reaction mixture is added a solution of 2,6-dichloropyridine (1 eq) in dry tetrahydrofuran. The reaction is monitored by TLC and, when complete, the reaction mixture is diluted with an aqueous saturated sodium bicarbonate solution. The reaction mixture is then extracted with ethyl acetate. The layers are separated and the organic layer is washed with water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate, filtered and concentrated in vacuo. The residue is purified by chromatography on silica gel to yield pure product.

B.



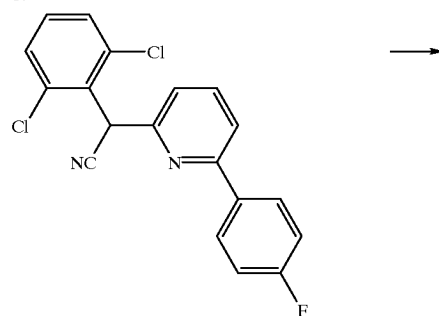
To a solution of 4-fluoro-bromobenzene (1 eq) in dry tetrahydrofuran at -78°C . is added t-butyllithium (2 eq, solution in hexanes). The reaction mixture is then stirred for 30 minutes. To the reaction mixture is added a solution of the product from Step A (1 eq) in dry THF. The reaction mixture is then monitored and slowly brought to room temperature. The reaction mixture is quenched with water then extracted with methylene chloride. The organic phase is washed with

32

water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate and concentrated in vacuo. The residue is purified by chromatography on silica gel to yield the product.

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C.



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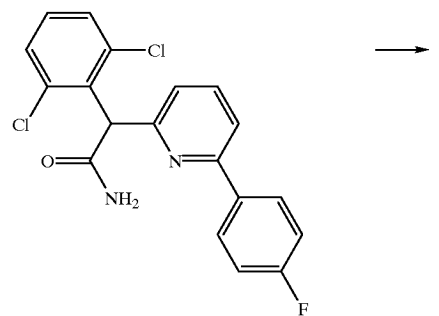
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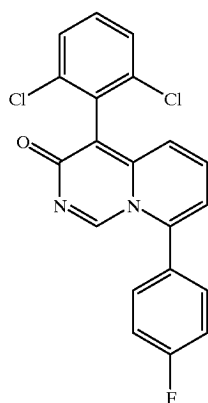
A mixture of the product step B and concentrated sulfuric acid is heated to 100°C . for one hour. The solution is cooled and adjusted to pH 8 with a saturated sodium bicarbonate solution. The reaction mixture is extracted with methylene chloride. The organic layer is washed with water, brine, dried over magnesium sulfate and concentrated in vacuo to give product. The final product is purified by silica gel flash chromatography

D.



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-continued



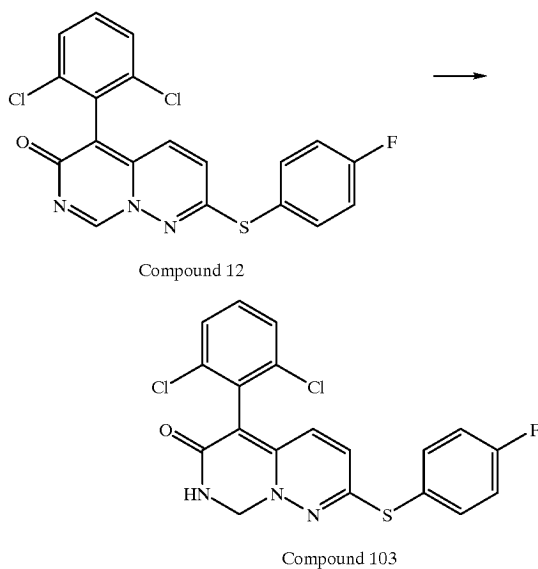
p38 Inhibitor Compound

A solution of the product Step C (1 eq) and N,N-Dimethylformamide dimethylacetal (2 eq) in toluene is heated at 100° C. for one hour. Upon cooling, the resulting mixture is filtered and dissolved in warm ethyl acetate. The product is precipitated with the dropwise addition of diethyl ether. The product is then filtered and washed with diethyl ether to give a p38 inhibitor of formula Ib. The final product is further purified by silica gel chromatography.

Other compounds of formula Ib of this invention may be synthesized in a similar manner using the appropriate starting materials.

EXAMPLE 6

Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 103



Compound 12

Compound 103

This example sets forth a typical synthesis of a compound of formula Ic.

A

The p38 inhibitor compound 12 is prepared essentially as set forth for in Example 4, except that 4-fluorothiophenyl is utilized in step B.

B

Compound 12 was dissolved in dry THF (5 mL) at room temperature. To this solution we added diisobutylaluminum

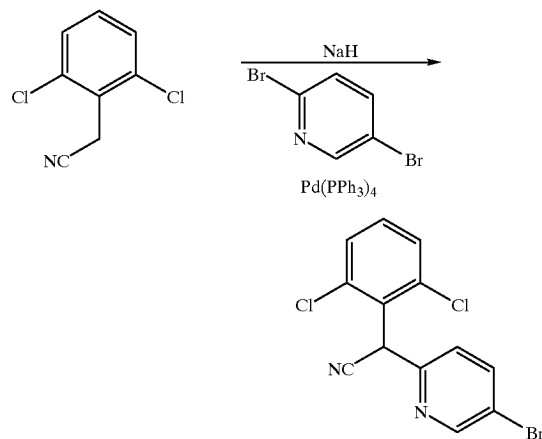
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hydride (1M solution in toluene, 5 mL, 5 mmol) and the reaction was stirred at room temperature for 1 hour. The reaction mix was then diluted with ethyl acetate and quenched by the addition of Rochelle salt. The layers were separated and the organic layer was isolated, washed with water, washed with brine, dried over magnesium sulfate and filtered to yield crude compound 103. The crude product was chromatographed on silica gel eluting with 2% methanol in methylene chloride. Pure compound 103 was thus obtained (210 mg, 50% yield): ¹H NMR (500 Mhz, CDCl₃) 7.51 (m, 1H), 7.38 (d, 2H), 7.20 (t, 2H), 7.08 (t, 2H), 6.70 (broad s, 1H), 6.30 (dd, 2H) , 5.20 (s, 2H).

EXAMPLE 7

Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 201

A.



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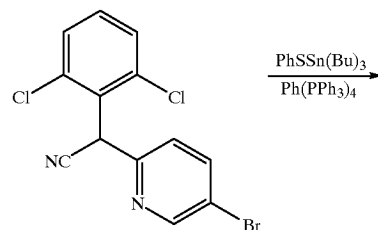
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The starting nitrile shown above (5.9 g, 31.8 mmol) was dissolved in DMF (20 ml) at room temperature. Sodium hydride (763 mg, 31.8 mmol) was then added, resulting in a bright yellow-colored solution. After 15 minutes a solution of 2,5 dibromopyridine (5.0 gr, 21.1 mmol) in DMF (10 mL) was added followed by Palladium tetrakis (triphenylphosphine)(3 mmol). The solution was then refluxed for 3 hrs. The reaction was cooled to room temperature and diluted with ethyl acetate. The organic layer was then isolated, washed with water and then with brine, dried over magnesium sulfate, filtered and evaporated in vacuo to a crude oil. Flash column chromatography eluting with 10% ethyl acetate in hexane afforded product (5.8 g, 84%) as an off white solid.

B.

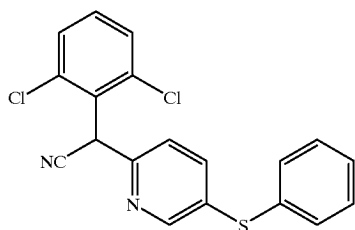


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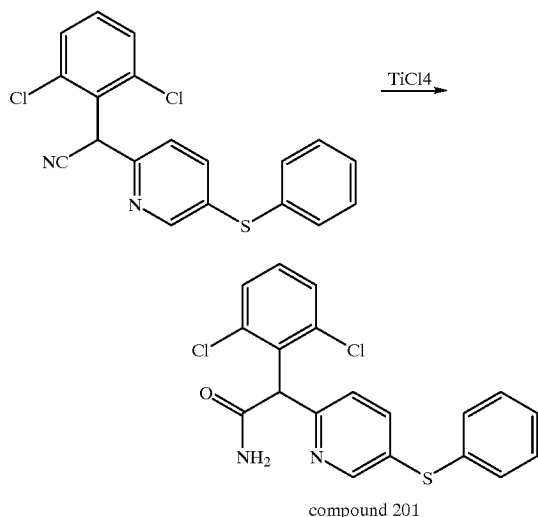
35

-continued



The bromide produced in step A (194.8 mg, 0.57 mmol) was dissolved in xylene (15 ml). To this solution we added thiophenylstannane (200 μ L, 587 μ mol) and palladium tetrakis (triphenylphosphine) (25 mg). The solution was refluxed overnight, cooled, filtered and evaporated in vacuo. The crude product was chromatographed on silica gel, eluting with methylene chloride, to yield pure product (152 mg, 72%) as a yellow oil.

C.

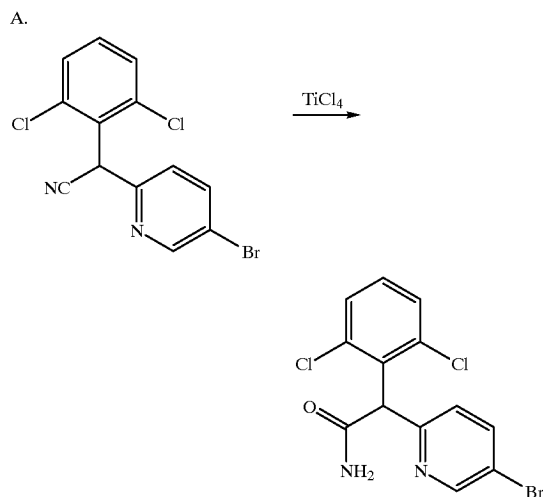


The nitrile produced in step B (1.2 g, 3.37 mmol) was dissolved in glacial acetic acid (30 mL). To this solution we added water (120 μ L, 6.67 mmol) followed by titanium tetrachloride (760 μ L, 6.91 mmol), which resulted in an exotherm. The solution was then refluxed for two hours, cooled and poured into 1N HCl. The aqueous layer was extracted with methylene chloride. The organic layer was backwashed with 1N NaOH, dried over magnesium sulfate and filtered over a plug of silica gel. The plug was first eluted with methylene chloride to remove unreacted starting materials, and then with ethyl acetate to yield compound 201. The ethyl acetate was evaporated to yield pure compound 201 (1.0 g, 77%).

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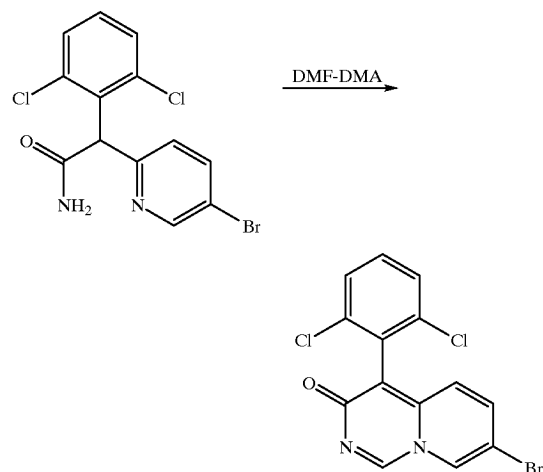
EXAMPLE 8

Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 110



The starting nitrile (3.76 g, 11.1 mmol) was first dissolved in glacial acetic acid (20 ml). To this solution we added titanium tetrachloride (22.2 mmol) and water (22.2 mmol) and heated the solution to reflux for 1 hour. The reaction mixture was then cooled and diluted in water/ethyl acetate. The organic layer was then isolated, washed with brine and dried over magnesium sulfate. The organic layer was then filtered and evaporated in vacuo. The resulting crude product was chromatographed on silica gel eluting with 5% methanol in methylene chloride to afford pure product as a yellow foam (2.77 g, 70%).

B.

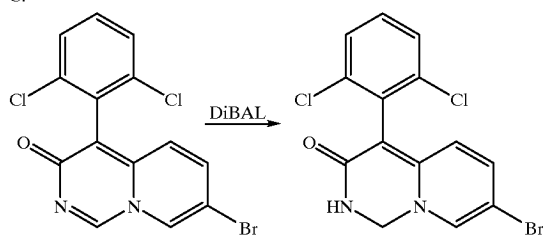


The amide produced in step A (1.54 g, 4.3 mmol) was dissolved in toluene (20 ml). We then added N,N-dimethylformamide dimethylacetal (1.53 g, 12.9 mmol), heated the resulting solution for 10 minutes then allowed it to cool to room temperature. The reaction was then evaporated in vacuo and the residue was chromatographed on silica gel eluting with 2–5% methanol in methylene chlo-

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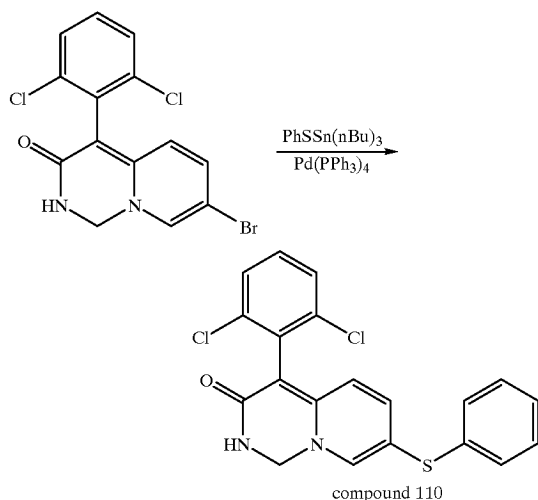
ride. The recovered material was then dissolved in hot ethyl acetate. The solution was allowed to cool resulting in the crystallization of pure product as a yellow solid (600 mg, 40%). Additional material (~800 mg) was available from the mother liquor.

C.



The bromide from step B (369 mg, 1 mmol) was dissolved in THF (10 ml). We then added Diisobutylaluminum hydride (1.0M solution, 4 mmol), stirred the reaction at room temperature for 10 minutes, and then quenched the reaction with methanol (1 ml). A saturated solution of Rochelle salts was then added and the mixture was extracted with ethyl acetate. The organic layer was isolated, dried over magnesium sulfate, evaporated and the residue was chromatographed on silica gel eluting with 1–3% methanol in methylene chloride to afford a bright orange solid (85 mg, 23% yield).

D.



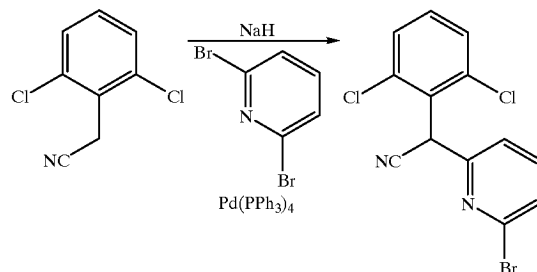
The bromide produced in step C (35.2 mg, 0.1 mmol) was dissolved in xylene (12 ml). To this solution we added thiophenol (0.19 mmol) followed by tributyltin methoxide (0.19 mmol). The resulting solution was heated to reflux for 10 minutes, followed by the addition of palladium tetrakis (triphenylphosphine) (0.020 mmol). The reaction was heated and monitored for the disappearance of the bromide starting material. The reaction was then cooled to room temperature and passed through a plug of silica gel. The plug was eluted initially with methylene chloride to remove excess tin reagent and then with 5% methanol in ethyl acetate to elute the p38 inhibitor. The filtrate was concentrated and then re-chromatographed on silica gel using 5% methanol in ethyl acetate as eluent affording pure compound 110 (20 mg, 52%).

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EXAMPLE 9

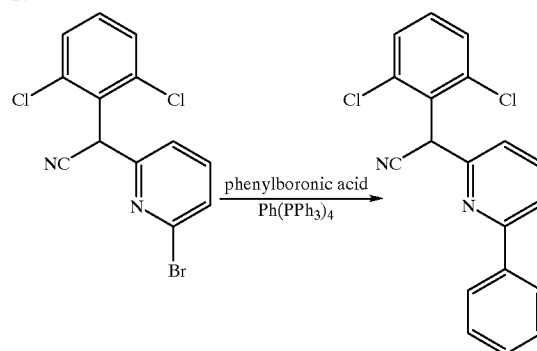
Synthesis of p38 Inhibitor Compound 202

A.



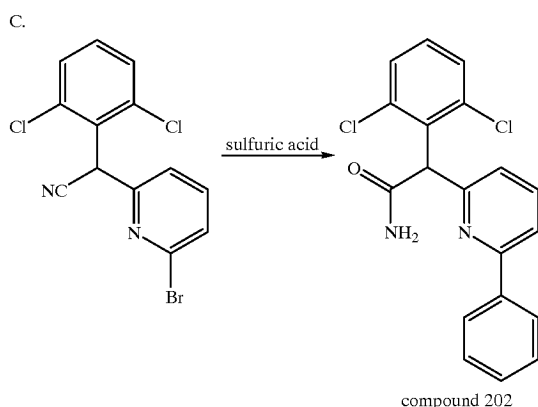
The starting nitrile (2.32 g, 12 mmol) was dissolved in DMF (10 ml) at room temperature. Sodium hydride (12 mmol) was then added resulting in a bright yellow colored solution. After 15 minutes, a solution of 2,6 dibromopyridine (2.36 gr, 10 mmol) in DMF (5 ml) was added, followed by Palladium tetrakis (triphenylphosphine) (1.0 mmol). The solution was then refluxed for 3 hours. The reaction was next cooled to room temperature and diluted with ethyl acetate. The organic layer was isolated, washed with water and brine, dried over magnesium sulfate, filtered and evaporated in vacuo to a crude oil. Flash column chromatography eluting with 10% ethyl acetate in hexane afforded product (1.45 g, 42%) as a white solid.

B.



The bromo compound produced in step A (1.77 g, 5.2 mmol) was dissolved in toluene (20 ml) and the resulting solution was degassed. Under a nitrogen atmosphere, a solution of phenylboronic acid (950 mg, 7.8 mmol) in ethanol (4 ml) and a solution of sodium carbonate (1.73 g, 14 mmol) in water (4 ml) were added. The reaction mixture was heated to reflux for one hour and then was cooled to room temperature. The reaction was diluted with ethyl acetate and washed with water and brine. The organic layer was then dried with magnesium sulfate, filtered and concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified on silica gel eluting with 30% ethyl acetate in hexane to afford product as a white solid (1.56 g, 88%).

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The nitrile from step B (700 mg, 2.07 mmol) was dissolved in concentrated sulfuric acid (10 ml) and heated to 80° C. for 1 hour. The reaction was then cooled to room temperature and the pH was adjusted to 8 using 6N sodium hydroxide. The mixture was next extracted with ethyl acetate. The organic layer was isolated, dried with magnesium sulfate and evaporated in vacuo to yield compound 202 as a yellow foam (618 mg, 84%).

EXAMPLE 10

Cloning of p38 Kinase in Insect Cells

Two splice variants of human p38 kinase, CSBP1 and CSBP2, have been identified. Specific oligonucleotide primers were used to amplify the coding region of CSBP2 cDNA using a HeLa cell library (Stratagene) as a template. The polymerase chain reaction product was cloned into the pET-15b vector (Novagen). The baculovirus transfer vector, pVL-(His)₆-p38 was constructed by subcloning a XbaI-BamHI fragment of pET15b-(His)₆-p38 into the complementary sites in plasmid pVL1392 (Pharmingen).

The plasmid pVL-(His)₆-p38 directed the synthesis of a recombinant protein consisting of a 23-residue peptide (MGSSHHHHHHSSGLVPRGSHMLE, where LVPRGS represents a thrombin cleavage site) fused in frame to the N-terminus of p38, as confirmed by DNA sequencing and by N-terminal sequencing of the expressed protein. Monolayer culture of *Spodoptera frugiperda* (Sf9) insect cells (ATCC) was maintained in TNM-FH medium (Gibco BRL) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum in a T-flask at 27° C. Sf9 cells in log phase were co-transfected with linear viral DNA of *Autographa californica* nuclear polyhedrosis virus (Pharmingen) and transfer vector pVL-(His)₆-p38 using Lipofectin (Invitrogen). The individual recombinant baculovirus clones were purified by plaque assay using 1% low melting agarose.

EXAMPLE 11

Expression and Purification of Recombinant p38 Kinase

Trichoplusia ni (Tn-368) High-Five™ cells (Invitrogen) were grown in suspension in Excel-405 protein free medium (JRH Bioscience) in a shaker flask at 27° C. Cells at a density of 1.5×10⁶ cells/ml were infected with the recombinant baculovirus described above at a multiplicity of infection of 5. The expression level of recombinant p38 was monitored by immunoblotting using a rabbit anti-p38 anti-

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body (Santa Cruz Biotechnology). The cell mass was harvested 72 hours after infection when the expression level of p38 reached its maximum.

Frozen cell paste from cells expressing the (His)₆-tagged p38 was thawed in 5 volumes of Buffer A (50 mM NaH₂PO₄ pH 8.0, 200 mM NaCl, 2mM β-Mercaptoethanol, 10% Glycerol and 0.2 mM PMSF). After mechanical disruption of the cells in a Microfluidizer, the lysate was centrifuged at 30,000×g for 30 minutes. The supernatant was incubated batchwise for 3–5 hours at 4° C. with Talon™ (Clontech) metal affinity resin at a ratio of 1 ml of resin per 2–4 mgs of expected p38. The resin was settled by centrifugation at 500×g for 5 minutes and gently washed batchwise with Buffer A. The resin was slurried and poured into a column (approx. 2.6×5.0 cm) and washed with Buffer A+5 mM imidazole.

The (His)₆-p38 was eluted with Buffer A+100 mM imidazole and subsequently dialyzed overnight at 4° C. against 2 liters of Buffer B, (50 mM HEPES, pH 7.5, 25 mM β-glycerophosphate, 5% glycerol, 2 mM DTT). The His₆ tag was removed by addition of at 1.5 units thrombin (Calbiochem) per mg of p38 and incubation at 20° C. for 2–3 hours. The thrombin was quenched by addition of 0.2 mM PMSF and then the entire sample was loaded onto a 2 ml benzamidine agarose (American International Chemical) column.

The flow through fraction was directly loaded onto a 2.6×5.0 cm Q-Sepharose (Pharmacia) column previously equilibrated in Buffer B+0.2 mM PMSF. The p38 was eluted with a 20 column volume linear gradient to 0.6M NaCl in Buffer B. The eluted protein peak was pooled and dialyzed overnight at 4° C. vs. Buffer C (50 mM HEPES pH 7.5, 5% glycerol, 50 mM NaCl, 2 mM DTT, 0.2 mM PMSF).

The dialyzed protein was concentrated in a Centriprep (Amicon) to 3–4 mls and applied to a 2.6×100 cm Sephacryl S-100HR (Pharmacia) column. The protein was eluted at a flow rate of 35 mls/hr. The main peak was pooled, adjusted to 20 mM DTT, concentrated to 10–80 mgs/ml and frozen in aliquots at -70° C. or used immediately.

EXAMPLE 12

Activation of p38

P38 was activated by combining 0.5 mg/ml p38 with 0.005 mg/ml DD-double mutant MKK6 in Buffer B+10 mM MgCl₂, 2 mM ATP, 0.2 mM Na₂VO₄ for 30 minutes at 20° C. The activation mixture was then loaded onto a 1.0×10 cm MonoQ column (Pharmacia) and eluted with a linear 20 column volume gradient to 1.0 M NaCl in Buffer B. The activated p38 eluted after the ADP and ATP. The activated p38 peak was pooled and dialyzed against buffer B+0.2 mM Na₂VO₄ to remove the NaCl. The dialyzed protein was adjusted to 1.1M potassium phosphate by addition of a 4.0M stock solution and loaded onto a 1.0×10 cm HIC (Rainin Hypopore) column previously equilibrated in Buffer D (10% glycerol, 20 mM β-glycerophosphate, 2.0 mM DTT)+1.1MK₂HPO₄. The protein was eluted with a 20 column volume linear gradient to Buffer D+50 mM K₂HPO₄. The double phosphorylated p38 eluted as the main peak and was pooled for dialysis against Buffer B+0.2 mM Na₂VO₄. The activated p38 was stored at -70° C.

EXAMPLE 13

P38 Inhibition Assays

A. Inhibition of Phosphorylation of EGF Receptor Peptide

This assay was carried out in the presence of 10 mM MgCl₂, 25 mM β-glycerophosphate, 10% glycerol and 100 mM HEPES buffer at pH 7.6. For a typical IC₅₀ determination, a stock solution was prepared containing all of the above components and activated p38 (5 nM). The stock solution was aliquotted into vials. A fixed volume of DMSO or inhibitor in DMSO (final concentration of DMSO in reaction was 5%) was introduced to each vial, mixed and incubated for 15 minutes at room temperature. EGF receptor peptide, KRELVEPLTPSGEAPNQALLR, a phosphoryl acceptor in p38-catalyzed kinase reaction (1), was added to each vial to a final concentration of 200 μM. The kinase reaction was initiated with ATP (100 μM) and the vials were incubated at 30° C. After 30 minutes, the reactions were quenched with equal volume of 10% trifluoroacetic acid (TFA).

The phosphorylated peptide was quantified by HPLC analysis. Separation of phosphorylated peptide from the unphosphorylated peptide was achieved on a reverse phase column (Deltapak, 5 μm, C18 100D, part no. 011795) with a binary gradient of water and acetonitrile, each containing 0.1% TFA. IC₅₀ (concentration of inhibitor yielding 50% inhibition) was determined by plotting the % activity remaining against inhibitor concentration.

The results for several of the inhibitors of this invention are depicted in Table 2 below:

TABLE 2

Compound	IC ₅₀ (μM)	Compound	IC ₅₀ (μM)
1	>20	24	0.5
2	>20	25	0.28
5	5.0	26	6.0
6	0.7	27	0.62
7	4.1	28	0.18
8	4.4	29	0.25
9	>20	30	6
10	>20	101	0.2
12	0.6	102	0.005
13	1.3	103	0.005
14	1.4	104	0.100
15	1.4	105	0.620
16	0.8	106	0.009
17	3.5	107	0.320
18	1.2	108	<0.005
19	1.9	109	<0.005
20	0.76	110	0.120
21	0.45	201	0.220
22	1.7	202	0.072
23	0.2		

Pre-2, pre-3 and pre-5 were also tested in this assay. None of those compounds demonstrated any inhibition of kinase activity at 20 μM. Pre-6 (compound 201), a compound of formula Ie, demonstrated an inhibition having an IC₅₀ of 0.22 μM.

Other inhibitors of this invention will also inhibition having kinase activity of p38.

B. Inhibition of ATPase Activity

This assay was carried out in the presence of 10 mM MgCl₂, 25 mM β-glycerophosphate, 10% glycerol and 100 mM HEPES buffer at pH 7.6. For a typical K_i determination, the K_m for ATP in the ATPase activity of activated p38 reaction was determined in the absence of inhibitor and in the presence of two concentrations of inhibitor. A stock solution was prepared containing all of the above components and activated p38 (60 nM). The stock solution was

aliquotted into vials. A fixed volume of DMSO or inhibitor in DMSO (final concentration of DMSO in reaction was 2.5%) was introduced to each vial, mixed and incubated for 15 minutes at room temperature. The reaction was initiated by adding various concentrations of ATP and then incubated at 30° C. After 30 minutes, the reactions were quenched with 50 μl of EDTA (0.1 M, final concentration), pH, 8.0. The product of p38 ATPase activity, ADP, was quantified by HPLC analysis.

Separation of ADP from ATP was achieved on a reversed phase column (Supelcosil, LC-18, 3 μm, part no. 5-8985) using a binary solvent gradient of following composition: Solvent A—0.1 M phosphate buffer containing 8 mM tetrabutylammonium hydrogen sulfate (Sigma Chemical Co., catalogue no. T-7158), Solvent B—Solvent A with 30% methanol.

K_i was determined from the rate data as a function of inhibitor and ATP concentrations. The results for several of the inhibitors of this invention are depicted in Table 3 below:

TABLE 3

Compound	K _i (μM)
1	>20
2	15
3	5.0
5	2.9
6	0.4

Other p38 inhibitors of this invention will also inhibit the ATPase activity of p38.

C. Inhibition of IL1, TNF, IL-6 and IL-8 Production in LPS-Stimulated PBMCs

Inhibitors were serially diluted in DMSO from a 20 mM stock. At least 6 serial dilutions were prepared. Then 4× inhibitor stocks were prepared by adding 4 μl of an inhibitor dilution to 1 ml of RPMI1640 medium/10% fetal bovine serum. The 4× inhibitor stocks contained inhibitor at concentrations of 80 μM, 32 μM, 12.8 μM, 5.12 μM, 2.048 μM, 0.819 μM, 0.328 μM, 0.131 μM, 0.052 μM, 0.021 μM etc. The 4× inhibitor stocks were pre-warmed at 37° C. until use.

Fresh human blood buffy cells were separated from other cells in a Vacutainer CPT from Becton & Dickinson (containing 4 ml blood and enough DPBS without Mg²⁺/Ca²⁺ to fill the tube) by centrifugation at 1500×g for 15 min. Peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs), located on top of the gradient in the Vacutainer, were removed and washed twice with RPMI1640 medium/10% fetal bovine serum. PBMCs were collected by centrifugation at 500×g for 10 min. The total cell number was determined using a Neubauer Cell Chamber and the cells were adjusted to a concentration of 4.8×10⁶ cells/ml in cell culture medium (RPMI1640 supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum).

Alternatively, whole blood containing an anti-coagulant was used directly in the assay.

We placed 100 μl of cell suspension or whole blood in each well of a 96-well cell culture plate. Then we added 50 μl of the 4× inhibitor stock to the cells. Finally, we added 50 μl of a lipopolysaccharide (LPS) working stock solution (16 ng/ml in cell culture medium) to give a final concentration of 4 ng/ml LPS in the assay. The total assay volume of the vehicle control was also adjusted to 200 μl by adding 50 μl cell culture medium. The PBMC cells or whole blood were then incubated overnight (for 12–15 hours) at 37° C./5% CO₂ in a humidified atmosphere.

The next day the cells were mixed on a shaker for 3–5 minutes before centrifugation at 500×g for 5 minutes. Cell culture supernatants were harvested and analyzed by ELISA

for levels of IL-1b (R & D Systems, Quantikine kits, #DBL50), TNF- α (BioSource, #KHC3012), IL-6 (Endogen, #EH2-IL6) and IL-8 (Endogen, #EH2-IL8) according to the instructions of the manufacturer. The ELISA data were used to generate dose-response curves from which IC50 values were derived.

Results in whole blood for various p38 inhibitors of this invention are shown in Table 4 below:

compound	IL-1 β (IC ₅₀) μ M	IL-6 (IC ₅₀) μ M	TNF- α (IC ₅₀) μ M
6	3	1	1
12	1.4	1	0.23
23	2.7	1.2	0.72
24	6.9	—	—
26	1.4	4.3	0.37
101	0.91	4.3	0.78
102	1	0.44	0.21
103	0.67	0.37	0.39

Results for various p38 inhibitors of this invention in the LPS-stimulation assay are shown in Table 5:

TABLE 5

Compound #	IL-1 (IC ₅₀ : μ M)	TNF (IC ₅₀ : μ M)	Compound #	IL-1 (IC ₅₀ : μ M)	TNF (IC ₅₀ : μ M)
2	15	20	19	2.9	8.6
3	14	14	20	0.95	1.3
6	0.45	0.45	21	0.45	>20
7	5	20	22	1.1	2.9
8	3.5	10	23	0.32	>20
9	>20	>20	24	0.19	0.57
10	20	>20	25	0.35	0.90
11	2	>20	26	0.037	0.22
12	0.1	0.2	29	0.24	0.3
13	0.7	0.9	30	3.2	>6
14	0.35	0.87	101	0.029	0.115
15	0.21	0.28	102	0.014	0.090
16	0.97	2.2	103	0.031	0.075
17	5	20	104	0.68	0.43
18	3.1	5	107	0.8	3.3
			109	0.24	0.16

Other p38 inhibitors of this invention will also inhibit the production of IL-1, TNF and IL-6, as well as IL-8 in LPS-stimulated PBMCs or whole blood.

D. Inhibition of IL-6 and IL-8 Production in IL-1-Stimulated PBMCs

This assay was carried out on PBMCs exactly the same as above except that 50 μ l of an IL-1b working stock solution (2 ng/ml in cell culture medium) was added to the assay instead of the (LPS) working stock solution.

Cell culture supernatants were harvested as described above and analyzed by ELISA for levels of IL-6 (Endogen, #EH2-IL6) and IL-8 (Endogen, #EH2-IL8) according to the instructions of the manufacturer. The ELISA data were used to generate dose-response curves from which IC50 values were derived.

Results for p38 inhibitor compound 6 are shown in Table 6 below:

TABLE 6

Cytokine assayed	IC ₅₀ (μ M)
IL-6	0.60
IL-8	0.85

E. Inhibition of LPS-Induced Prostaglandin Endoperoxide Synthase-2 (PGHS-2, or COX-2) Induction in PBMCs

Human peripheral mononuclear cells (PBMCs) were isolated from fresh human blood buffy coats by centrifugation in a Vacutainer CPT (Becton & Dickinson). We seeded 15×10^6 cells in a 6-well tissue culture dish containing RPMI 1640 supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum, 50U/ml penicillin, 50 μ g/ml streptomycin, and 2 mM L-glutamine. Compound 6 (above) was added at 0.2, 2.0 and 20 μ M final concentrations in DMSO. Then we added LPS at a final concentration of 4 ng/ml to induce enzyme expression. The final culture volume was 10 ml/well.

After overnight incubation at 37° C., 5% CO₂, the cells were harvested by scraping and subsequent centrifugation, then the supernatant was removed, and the cells were washed twice in ice-cold DPBS (Dulbecco's phosphate buffered saline, BioWhittaker). The cells were lysed on ice for 10 min in 50 μ l cold lysis buffer (20 mM Tris-HCl, PH 7.2, 150 mM NaCl, 1% Triton-X-100, 1% deoxycholic acid, 0.1% SDS, 1 mM EDTA, 2% aprotinin (Sigma), 10 μ g/ml pepstatin, 10 μ g/ml leupeptin, 2 mM PMSEF, 1 mM benzamidine, 1 mM DTT) containing 1 μ l Benzonase (DNase from Merck). The protein concentration of each sample was determined using the BCA assay (Pierce) and bovine serum albumin as a standard. Then the protein concentration of each sample was adjusted to 1 mg/ml with cold lysis buffer. To 100 μ l lysate an equal volume of 2xSDS PAGE loading buffer was added and the sample was boiled for 5 min. Proteins (30 μ g/lane) were size-fractionated on 4–20% SDS PAGE gradient gels (Novex) and subsequently transferred onto nitrocellulose membrane by electrophoretic means for 2 hours at 100 mA in Towbin transfer buffer (25 mM Tris, 192 mM glycine) containing 20% methanol. The membrane was pretreated for 1 hour at room temperature with blocking buffer (5% non-fat dry milk in DPBS supplemented with 0.1% Tween-20) and washed 3 times in DPBS/0.1% Tween-20. The membrane was incubated overnight at 4° C. with a 1: 250 dilution of monoclonal anti-COX-2 antibody (Transduction Laboratories) in blocking buffer. After 3 washes in DPBS/0.1% Tween-20, the membrane was incubated with a 1:1000 dilution of horseradish peroxidase-conjugated sheep antiserum to mouse Ig (Amersham) in blocking buffer for 1 h at room temperature. Then the membrane was washed again 3 times in DPBS/0.1% Tween-20 and an ECL detection system (SuperSignal™ CL-HRP Substrate System, Pierce) was used to determine the levels of expression of COX-2.

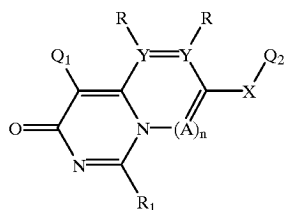
Results of the above mentioned assay indicate that compound 6 inhibits LPS induced PGHS-2 expression in PBMC's.

While we have hereinbefore presented a number of embodiments of this invention, it is apparent that our basic construction can be altered to provide other embodiments which utilize the methods of this invention.

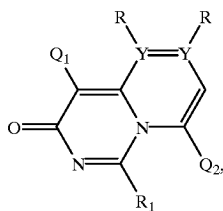
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We claim:

1. A compound of the formula:



or



wherein:

each of Q_1 and Q_2 are independently selected from phenyl, 5-6 membered aromatic heterocyclic ring systems having one nitrogen heteroatom;

Q_1 is substituted with 1 to 4 substituents, independently selected from halo; C_1-C_3 alkyl; C_1-C_3 alkyl substituted with NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl substituted with NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; NR'_2 ; OCF_3 ; CF_3 ; NO_2 ; CO_2R' ; $CONR'$; SR' ; $S(O_2)N(R')_2$; SCF_3 ; or CN ; and

Q_2 is optionally substituted with up to 4 substituents, independently selected from halo; C_1-C_3 straight or branched alkyl; C_1-C_3 straight or branched alkyl substituted with NR' , NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' , or $CONR'_2$; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl substituted with NR' , NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; NR'_2 ; OCF_3 ; CF_3 ; NO_2 ; CO_2R' ; $CONR'$; SR' ; $S(O_2)N(R')_2$; SCF_3 ; or CN ;

wherein R' is selected from hydrogen, (C_1-C_3) -alkyl or (C_2-C_3) -alkenyl or alkynyl; and

X is selected from $-S-$, $-O-$, $-S(O_2)-$, $-S(O)-$, $-C(O)-$, $-N(R)-$, or $-C(R)_2-$;

each R is independently selected from hydrogen or (C_1-C_3) alkyl;

Y is C ;

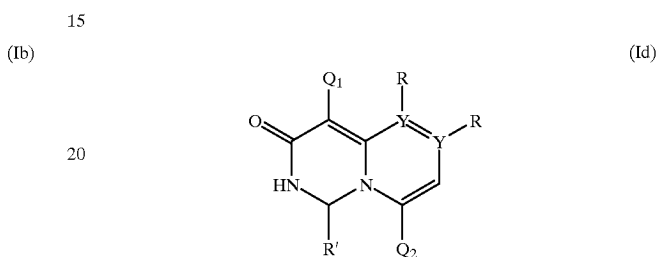
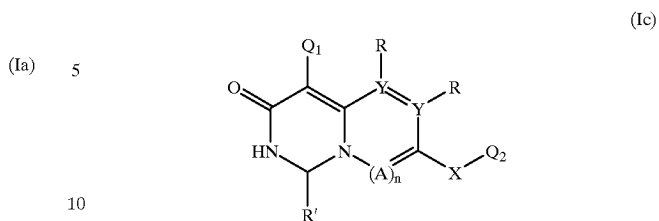
A is CR' ;

n is 1; and

R_1 is selected from hydrogen, (C_1-C_3) -alkyl, OH , or $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl.

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2. A compound of the formula:



wherein:

each of Q_1 and Q_2 are independently selected from phenyl, 5-6 membered aromatic heterocyclic ring systems, wherein each of said heterocyclic rings has a single nitrogen heteroatom;

Q_1 is substituted with 1 to 4 substituents, independently selected from halo; C_1-C_3 alkyl; C_1-C_3 alkyl substituted with NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl substituted with NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; NR'_2 ; OCF_3 ; CF_3 ; NO_2 ; CO_2R' ; $CONR'$; SR' ; $S(O_2)N(R')_2$; SCF_3 ; or CN ; and

Q_2 is optionally substituted with up to 4 substituents, independently selected from halo; C_1-C_3 straight or branched alkyl; C_1-C_3 straight or branched alkyl substituted with NR' , NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' , or $CONR'_2$; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl; $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl substituted with NR' , NR'_2 , OR' , CO_2R' or $CONR'_2$; NR'_2 ; OCF_3 ; CF_3 ; NO_2 ; CO_2R' ; $CONR'$; R^3 ; OR^3 ; NR^3 ; SR^3 ; $C(O)R^3$; $C(O)N(R')R^3$; $C(O)OR^3$; SR' ; $S(O_2)N(R')_2$; SCF_3 ; or CN ;

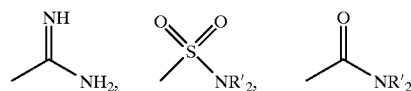
wherein R' is selected from hydrogen, (C_1-C_3) -alkyl or (C_2-C_3) -alkenyl or alkynyl; and

R^3 is selected from phenyl, $-(CH_2)_m-W$ or W , wherein m is 1, 2, or 3;

X is selected from $-S-$, $-O-$, $-S(O_2)-$, $-S(O)-$, $-N(R)-$, or $-C(R)_2-$;

each R is independently selected from hydrogen or (C_1-C_3) -alkyl;

W is selected from $-N(R')_2$, $-OR'$, $-SR'$, $-S(O)R'$, $-S(O_2)R'$, $C(O)OR'$,



or any 5 to 6-membered saturated or unsaturated heterocyclic ring having up to 2 nitrogen heteroatoms, wherein said heterocyclic ring is optionally substituted with up to 3 substituents independently selected from halo, C_1-C_3 alkyl, $O-(C_1-C_3)$ -alkyl, NR'_2 , OCF_3 , CF_3 , NO_2 , CO_2R' , $CONR'$ or CN ;

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Y is C;

A is CR';

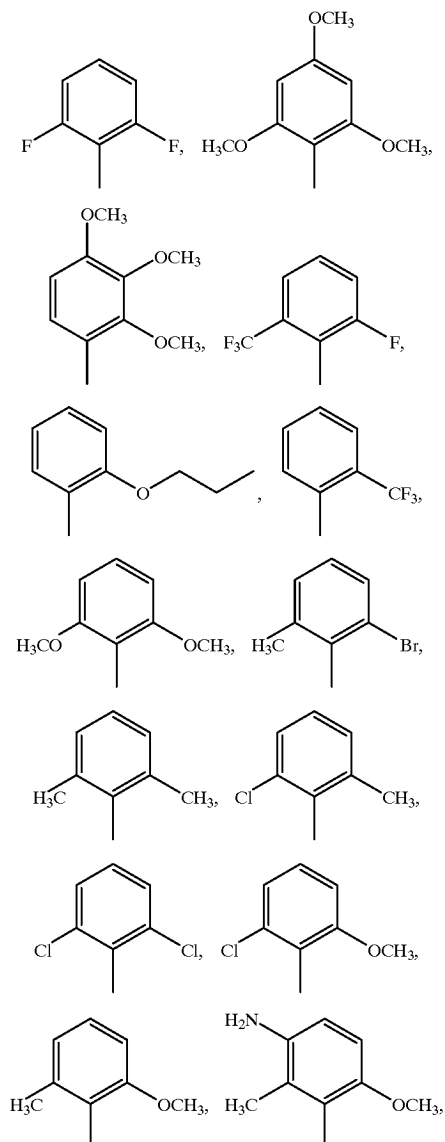
n is 1; and

R₁ is selected from hydrogen, (C₁-C₃)-alkyl, OH, or O-(C₁-C₃)-alkyl.

3. The compound according to claim 1 or 2, wherein Q₁ is selected from phenyl or pyridyl having 1 to 3 substituents independently selected from chloro, fluoro, bromo, —CH₃, —OCH₃, —OH, —CF₃, —OCF₃, —O(CH₂)₂CH₃ or NH₂, and wherein at least one of said substituents is in the ortho position and said substituents are independently selected from chloro, fluoro, bromo, —CH₃, —OCH₃, —OH, —CF₃, —OCF₃, —O(CH₂)₂CH₃ or NH₂.

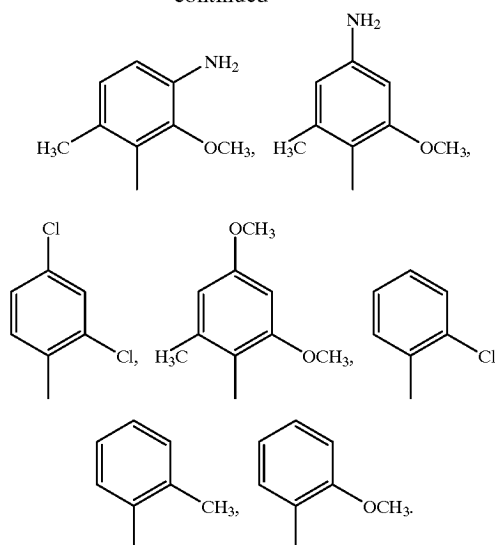
4. The compound according to claim 3, wherein Q₁ contains at least two substituents, both of which are in the ortho position.

5. The compound according to claim 3, wherein Q₁ is selected from:



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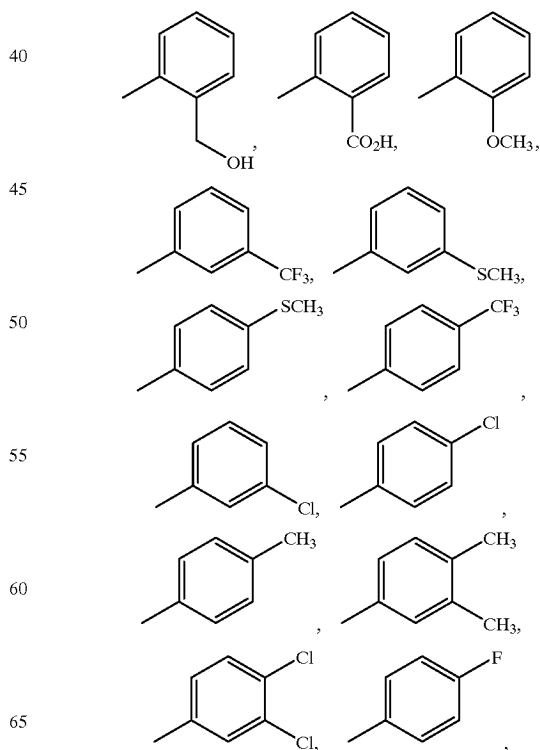
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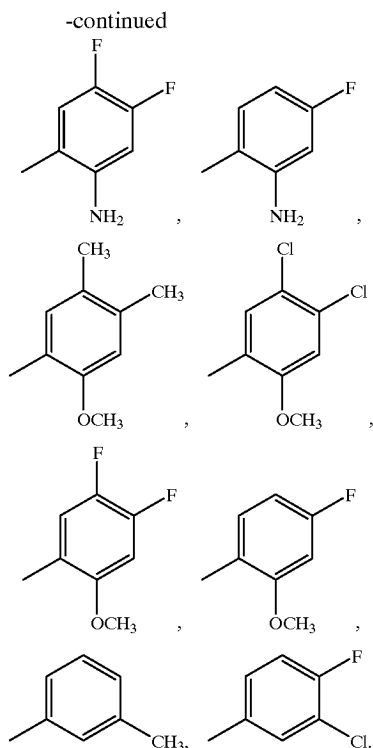
6. The compound according to claim 5, wherein Q₁ is selected from 2-fluoro-6-trifluoromethylphenyl, 2,6-difluorophenyl or 2,6-dichlorophenyl.

7. The compound according to any one of claims 1 to 2, wherein Q₂ is selected from phenyl or pyridyl and wherein Q₂ optionally having up to 3 substituents, each of which is independently selected from chloro, fluoro, bromo, methyl, ethyl, isopropyl, —OCH₃, —OH, —NH₂, —CF₃, —OCF₃, —SCH₃, —OCH₃, —C(O)OH, C(O)OCH₃, C(O)NH₂ and —CH₂CH₂OH.

8. The compound according to claim 1, wherein Q₂ is selected from:



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9. The compound according to claim 8, wherein Q_2 is selected from phenyl, 3,4-dimethylphenyl, 3-chlorophenyl, 2-carboxyphenyl, or 4-fluorophenyl.

10. The compound according to claim 1 or 2, wherein X is selected from $-S-$, $-O-$, $-S(O_2)-$, $-S(O)-$, $-NR-$, $-C(R_2)-$ or $-C(O)-$.

11. The compound according to claim 9, wherein X is S.

12. The compound according to claim 1, wherein each R attached to Y is independently selected from hydrogen or methyl.

13. The compound according to claim 2, wherein Q_1 is 2,6-dichlorophenyl.

14. The compound according to claim 2, wherein Q_2 is selected from 2-carbomethoxyphenyl, 2-methylphenyl, 4-fluorophenyl, 2-carboxyphenyl, 2-carboxamidophenyl, 2-methyl-4-chlorophenyl, 2-bromophenyl, 2-methylenehydroxyphenyl or 2-pyridyl.

15. The compound of formula (1c) according to claim 2, wherein:

R and R_1 are hydrogen;

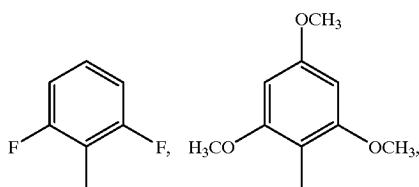
X is S;

n is 1

Q_1 is 2,6-dichlorophenyl; and

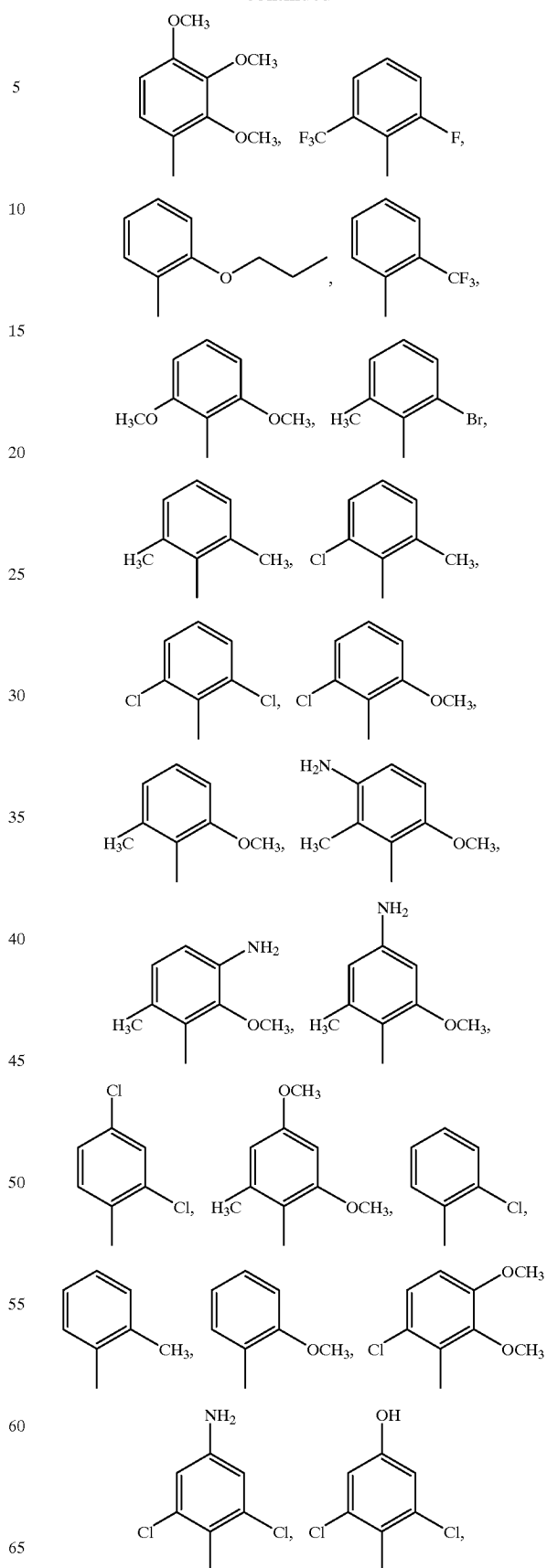
Q_2 is phenyl.

16. The compound according to claim 2, wherein Q_1 is selected from:



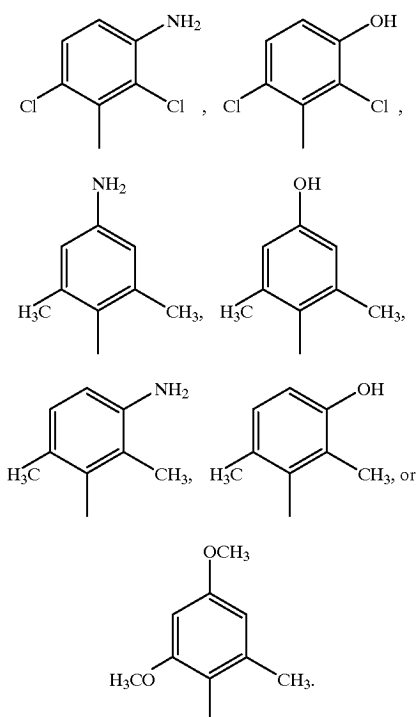
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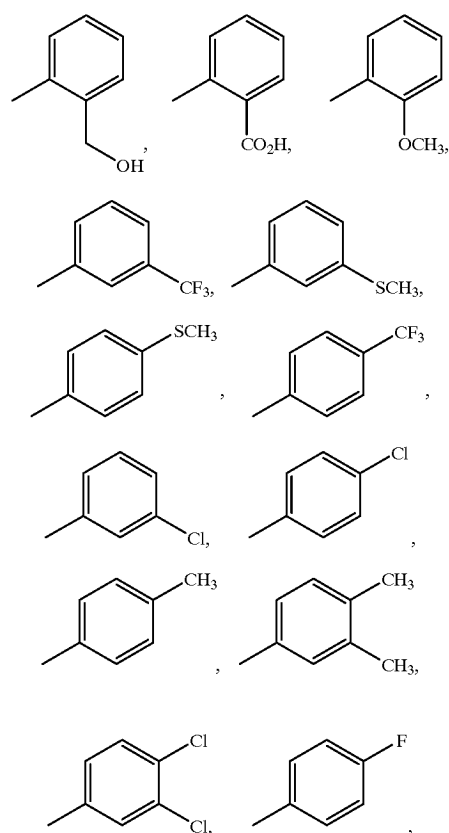


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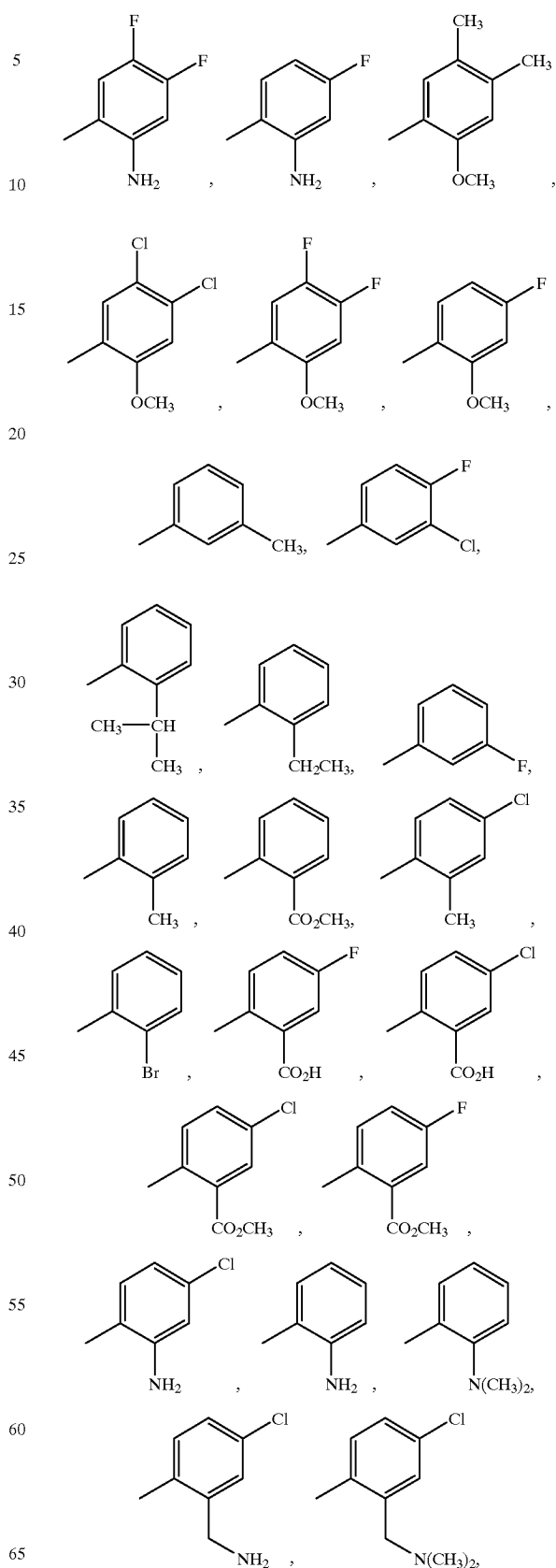


17. The compound according to claim 2, wherein, Q_2 is selected from:



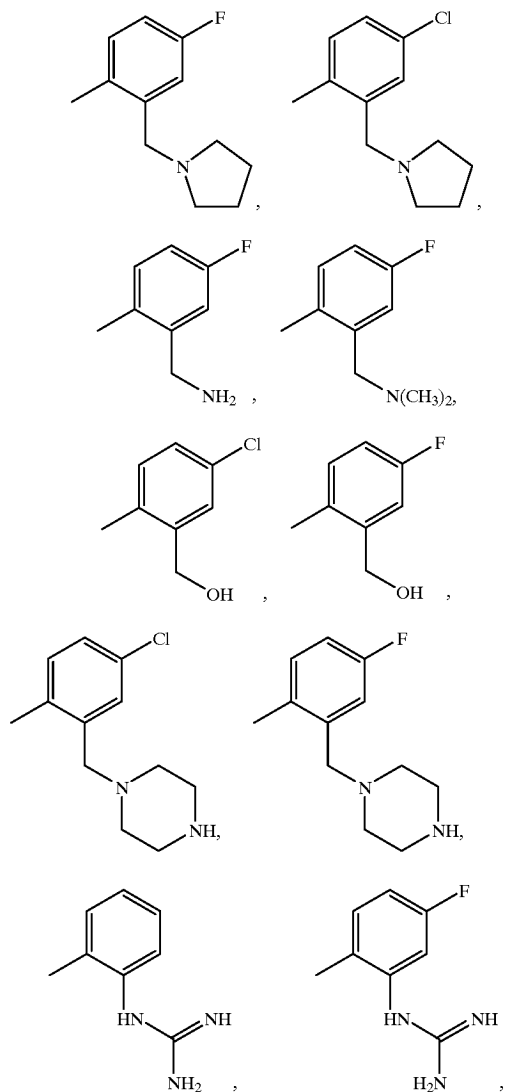
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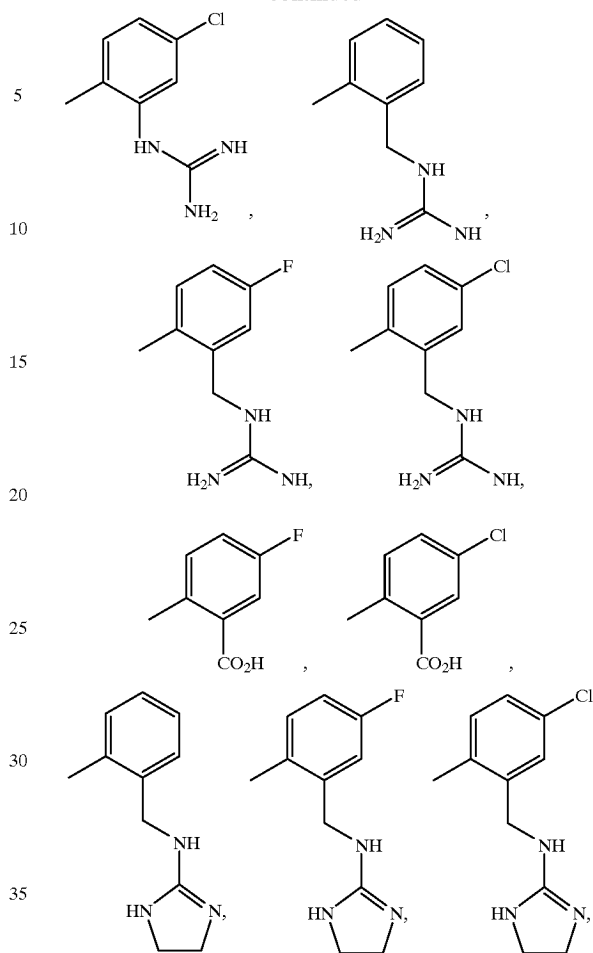
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unsubstituted 2-pyridyl or unsubstituted phenyl.

18. A pharmaceutical composition comprising an amount of a compound according to any one of claim 1 or 2 effective to inhibit p38, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier.

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