Methotrexate Prodrugs Sensitive to Reactive Oxygen Species for the Improved Treatment of Rheumatoid Arthritis - DTU Orbit (07/10/2019)

Methotrexate (MTX) is the standard of care in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), a common autoimmune disease that is characterized by chronic inflammation in the synovial membrane of joints. Unfortunately, MTX suffers from high discontinuation rates due to a large variability in efficacy and, in particular, adverse effects. As inflammation is associated with elevated levels of reactive oxygen species (ROS) like H₂O₂, we propose to improve treatment through site-selective delivery of MTX to inflammatory tissue by use of a H₂O₂ sensitive MTX prodrug. To establish proof-of-concept, two novel H₂O₂ sensitive, thiazolidinone-based MTX prodrugs were synthesized and evaluated for this purpose. MTX-γ-thiazolidinone (MTX-γ-TZ) exhibited the most promising properties – good to high chemical and metabolic stability, excellent aqueous solubility, while being activated when subjected to patho-physiological concentrations of H₂O₂. In vivo, MTX-γ-TZ exhibited comparable efficacy to MTX in a murine collagen type II-induced arthritis (CIA) model while treated mice showed indications of reduced toxicity as their body weight decreased less towards the end of the study, compared to the MTX-treated group.

General information
Publication status: Published
Organisations: Department of Chemistry, Organic Chemistry, Department of Micro- and Nanotechnology, Colloids and Biological Interfaces, Technical University of Denmark, MC2 Therapeutics ApS, Capdela Group ApS, University of Copenhagen
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Pages: 738-746
Publication date: 2018
Peer-reviewed: Yes

Publication information
Journal: European Journal of Medicinal Chemistry
Volume: 156
ISSN (Print): 0223-5234
Ratings:
BFI (2018): BFI-level 1
Scopus rating (2018): CiteScore 5.14 SJR 1.21 SNIP 1.464
Web of Science (2018): Impact factor 4.833
Web of Science (2018): Indexed yes
Original language: English
Keywords: Rheumatoid arthritis, Inflammation, Methotrexate, Reactive oxygen species, Prodrug, Thiazolidinone
DOIs:
10.1016/j.ejmech.2018.07.045

Research output: Contribution to journal › Journal article – Annual report year: 2018 › Research › peer-review