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## Synthesis and Antiproliferative Activity of Some Steroidal Lactams

Yanmin Huang  
*Guangxi Teachers Education University*

Jianguo Cui  
*Guangxi Teachers Education University*

Sijing Chen  
*Guangxi Teachers Education University*

Chunfang Gan  
*Guangxi Teachers Education University*

Aimin Zhou  
*Cleveland State University, A.ZHOU@csuohio.edu*

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# Synthesis and antiproliferative activity of some steroidal lactams

Yanmin Huang , Jianguo Cui , Sijing Chen , Chunfang Gan , Aimin Zhou

## Introduction

Steroidal compounds display a variety of biological functions and play a very important role in life [1,2]. The steroidal drugs are widely used in traditional medicines, such as antibacterium, hormone kind medication, etc. The introduction of heteroatom or replacement of one or more carbon atoms in steroidal molecule by a heteroatom affects the chemical properties of the steroidal molecule and often results in alterations of its biological activities. The study of natural products which isolated from marine life showed that the steroidal compounds bearing different functional groups, such as hydroxyl, hydroximino, hydrazone, sulfate groups, had excellent cytotoxicity against some tumor cells [3-7].

A variety of steroids with unusual and interesting structures have been synthesized and evaluated for their anti tumor activity [8-10]. In order to evaluate the anti tumor activity of new steroidal derivatives, we synthesized a series of steroidal oxime derivatives and investigated their cytotoxic activity against different types of cancer cells [11,12]. Interestingly we found that the cytotoxic activity of a steroidal oxime is dependent on the cholesteric side chain and function groups at position 3 and 6 on the steroidal nucleus.

Azahomosteroids are also a class of steroid compounds which were synthesized and modified in order to increase biological

activity of steroids. These compounds have been tested successfully as anti cancer drugs against several types of cancer cells [13-17]. In order to find novel and effective anti tumor agents, we synthesized a series of 17a aza D Homo androster 17 one, 3 aza A homo 4 one bile acid and 7 deoxycholic acid derivatives with various groups on the steroidal nucleus, and the results showed that these compounds could exhibit a high cytotoxicity to HeLa tumor cell line in vitro [18,19]. Here, some steroidal compounds carrying lactam at A ring and a different active group on the 6 position of steroidal nucleus were synthesized and evaluated for their antiproliferative activity against some cancer cells.

## Experimental

### Chemistry

The sterols and NaBH<sub>4</sub> were purchased from the Merck Co. All chemicals and solvents were analytical grade and solvents were purified by general methods before being used. Melting points were determined on an X<sub>4</sub> apparatus and were uncorrected. Infrared spectra were measured with a Nicolet FT 360 Spectrophotometer. The <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra were recorded in CDCl<sub>3</sub> on a Bruker AV 600 spectrometer at working frequencies 600 and 150 MHz and a Bruker AV 300 spectrometer at working frequencies 300 and 75 MHz, respectively. Chemical shifts are expressed in parts per million ( $\delta$ ) values and coupling constants (*J*) in Hertz. LREIMS were recorded on a Thermo DSQ instrument. The cell proliferation assay was undertaken by a MTT method using 96 well plates on Biocell ELISA analysis spectrometer.

(3E) Hydroximincholest 6 one (**1**) was prepared according to procedures in the literature [12].

*The synthesis of 4 aza A homocholest 3,6 dione (2) and 3 aza A homocholest 3,6 dione (3)*

The solution of thionyl chloride (2.1 mL) in 5 mL dry THF was added to a solution of oxime **1** (450 mg, 0.99 mmol) in dry THF (15 mL). The solution was stirred under anhydrous conditions for 1 h at 0 °C. Then the reaction was terminated and water was added to the solution. The solution was neutralized with ammonia and the product was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> (20 × 3 mL). The combined extract was washed with water, 5% NaHCO<sub>3</sub>, and saturated brine, dried over anhydrous Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub> and evaporated under reduced pressure to give a crude product (750 mg) which was chromatographed on silica gel (elution: petroleum ether (60–90 °C)/EtOAc (1:5)) to give a yellow oily mixture. The oily mixture was further subjected to chromatography (methanol/dichloromethane (1:20)) to afford 184.8 mg of 4 aza A homocholest 3,7 dione (**2**) as white crystals, yield: 45%,  $\theta_{mp}$  212–213 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3190, 3072, 2950, 2850, 2310, 1711, 1687, 1454, 1380, 816; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.671(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.862(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.864(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.868(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.913(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.998(1H, t,  $J$  = 12.6, C<sub>1</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.054(1H, dt,  $J$  = 12.6, 3.6, C<sub>7</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.305(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 7.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.332(1H, dd,  $J$  = 13.2, 4.8, C<sub>7</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.415(1H, d,  $J$  = 9.6, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.599(1H, t,  $J$  = 13.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.311(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 16.2, 9.6, 4.8, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.445(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 16.2, 7.8, 1.2, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 6.007(1H, brt,  $J$  = 4.8, NH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 210.5(C 6), 178.1(C 3), 61.5(C 5), 56.7(C 14), 56.1(C 17), 53.7(C 9), 46.8(C 7), 44.3(C 13), 42.8(C 10), 39.5(C 12), 38.0(C 8), 36.8(C 4a), 36.1(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 34.8(C 1), 31.2(C 2), 28.00(C 25), 27.99(C 16), 23.9(C 15), 23.8(C 24), 22.8(C 23), 22.7(C 27), 22.5(C 26), 21.5(C 11), 18.6(C 21), 12.9(C 19), 12.0(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 416(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

In the reaction, 3 aza A homocholest 3,7 dione (**3**) (the isomer of **2**) was obtained as a byproduct in 21.5% yield (88 mg),  $\theta_{mp}$  235–237 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3190, 3072, 2953, 1707, 1679, 1466, 1368; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.666(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.833(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.860(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.871(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.909(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.022(1H, dd,  $J$  = 26.4, 13.2, C<sub>7</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.372(1H, dd,  $J$  = 12.6, 4.2, C<sub>7</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.534(1H, dd,  $J$  = 13.8, 11.4, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.600(1H, d,  $J$  = 11.4, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.720(1H, dd,  $J$  = 14.4, 2.4, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.048(1H, dddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 7.8, 6.0, 1.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.391(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 12.0, 4.2, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 6.040(1H, brs, NH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 209.5(C 6), 177.5(C 3), 56.7(C 14), 56.1(C 17), 54.9(C 5), 54.1(C 9), 46.9(C 7), 44.3(C 13), 42.8(C 10), 41.5(C 12), 39.52(C 1), 39.48(C 24), 38.0(C 8), 37.6(C 2), 36.1(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 30.6(C 4a), 28.00(C 25), 27.99(C 16), 23.9(C 15), 23.8(C 23), 22.8(C 27), 22.6(C 26), 21.8(C 11), 18.6(C 21), 12.9(C 19), 12.0(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 416(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

*6 Hydroxy 4 aza A homocholest 3 one (4)*

To the stirred solution of **2** (100 mg, 0.24 mmol) in CH<sub>3</sub>OH (15 mL) was added NaBH<sub>4</sub> (30 mg, 0.79 mmol) in one time at room temperature. After 30 min, the reaction was stopped. The solution was neutralized with 1 M HCl. After evaporation of the majority of MeOH under reduced pressure, the residue was extracted with ethyl acetate (3 × 15 mL). The organic layer was washed with cold water and saturated brines. After drying over anhydrous sodium sulfate, the solvent was removed under reduced pressure and a crude product (90 mg) was obtained. After crystallization from methanol, the compound **4** was obtained as a white solid (81 mg, 81%),  $\theta_{mp}$  228–230 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3411, 2933, 2864, 1662, 1466, 1372, 1262, 1094, 1041, 804; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.695(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.863(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.867(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.906(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.144(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.004(1H, dt,  $J$  = 12.6, 3.6, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.137(1H,

dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 1.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.013–2.963(1H, m, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.038(1H, dd,  $J$  = 14.4, 10.8, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.420(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 12.0, 4.2, C<sub>6</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.958(1H, d,  $J$  = 1.8, NH), 5.827(1H, brs, OH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 178.1(C 3), 73.6(C 6), 56.3 (C 14), 56.1(C 17), 54.0(C 9), 45.8(C 5), 43.5(C 13), 42.4(C 10), 39.9(C 12), 39.8(C 24), 39.5(C 8), 38.8(C 7), 38.1(C 4a), 37.7(C 22), 36.2(C 20), 35.8(C 1), 29.5(C 2), 28.2(C 25), 28.0(C 16), 24.2(C 15), 23.9(C 23), 22.8(C 27), 22.6(C 26), 21.2(C 11), 18.7(C 21), 15.3(C 19), 12.1(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 418(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

*6 Hydroxy 3 aza A homocholest 3 one (8)*

Compound **8** was prepared similarly according to the procedure of **4**, but the compound **3** used as starting material instead of the compound **2**. Yield: 90%,  $\theta_{mp}$  245–247 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3378, 2937, 2868, 1650, 1462, 1380, 1209, 1143, 1094, 1021; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.697(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.863(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.867(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.909(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.152(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 2.270(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 8.4, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.634(1H, t,  $J$  = 13.2, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.865(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.6, 7.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.725(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 9.3, 4.2, C<sub>6</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.984(1H, d,  $J$  = 1.8 Hz, NH), 6.003(1H, brs, OH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 178.1(C 3), 73.6(C 6), 56.3 (C 14), 56.1(C 17), 54.0(C 9), 45.8(C 5), 43.5(C 13), 42.4(C 10), 39.9(C 12), 39.8(C 24), 39.5(C 8), 38.8(C 7), 38.1(C 4a), 37.7(C 22), 36.2(C 20), 35.8(C 1), 29.5(C 2), 28.2(C 25), 28.0(C 16), 24.2(C 15), 23.9(C 23), 22.8(C 27), 22.6(C 26), 21.2(C 11), 18.7(C 21), 15.3(C 19), 12.1(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 418 (M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

*6 Hydroximino 4 aza A homocholest 3 one (5)*

Compound **2** (100 mg, 0.24 mmol) was dissolved in 10 mL of 95% CH<sub>3</sub>CH<sub>2</sub>OH. After the mixture was heated to 60 °C, CH<sub>3</sub>COO Na·3H<sub>2</sub>O (33 mg, 0.24 mmol) and NH<sub>2</sub>OH·HCl (20 mg, 0.27 mmol) were added into the solution in 10 min. The mixture was stirred for 1 h at 60 °C. Then reaction was terminated and the majority of solvent was evaporated under reduced pressure. Distilled water was added into the reaction mixture, and the product was extracted with ethyl acetate. The combined extract was washed with saturated brine, dried with anhydrous sodium sulfate and evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was subject to chromatography (methanol/dichloromethane (1:20)) to produce 81 mg of **5** (90%),  $\theta_{mp}$  243–245 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3321, 3240, 2940, 2864, 1654, 1470, 1380, 968; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.650(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.842(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.862(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.867(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.898(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.865(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 6.0, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.001(1H, dt,  $J$  = 12.0, 3.0, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.333(1H, d,  $J$  = 10.8, C<sub>8</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.611(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 11.4, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.046(1H, d,  $J$  = 13.8, C<sub>7</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.025(1H, dd,  $J$  = 13.8, 6.0, C<sub>7</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.377(1H, dd,  $J$  = 13.2, 4.8, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.419(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 15.0, 11.4, 4.2, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 6.193(1H, brs, NH), 9.094(1H, brs, NOH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 179.1(C 3), 158.7(C 6), 56.6(C 14), 56.2(C 17), 54.4(C 9), 54.0(C 5), 47.8(C 13), 42.8(C 10), 42.4(C 24), 41.3(C 4a), 39.8(C 12), 39.5(C 7), 37.8(C 8), 36.1(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 31.9(C 1), 29.9(C 2), 28.1(C 25), 28.0(C 16), 24.0(C 15), 23.8(C 23), 22.8(C 27), 22.6(C 26), 21.7(C 11), 18.6(C 21), 12.5(C 19), 12.0(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 431(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

*6 Hydroximino 3 aza A homocholest 3 one (9)*

Compound **9** was prepared similarly according to the procedure of **5** using the compound **3** as the starting material. Yield: 81%,  $\theta_{mp}$  245–257 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3119, 2929, 2859, 1658, 1470, 1381, 1135, 959, 910; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.589(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.799(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.791(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6 Hz, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.807(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6 Hz, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.834(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6 Hz, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.880(1H, dd,  $J$  = 13.5, 6.6 Hz, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 1.956(1H, m, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.065(1H, brt,  $J$  = 9.0 Hz, C<sub>8</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.167(1H, td,  $J$  = 14.4, 7.8 Hz, C<sub>8</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.572(1H, dd,  $J$  = 22.8, 13.8 Hz, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.238(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.6,

9.6 Hz, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.296(1H, m, C<sub>7</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.423(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.6, 9.0 Hz, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 6.428(1H, brs, NH), 9.004(1H, brs, NOH); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 179.6(C 4), 158.9(C 6), 56.5(C 14), 56.0(C 17), 53.9(C 9), 53.7(C 5), 42.6(C 13), 42.1(C 24), 39.6(C 10), 39.4(C 12), 37.9(C 1), 36.0(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 35.6(C 2), 34.4(C 8), 30.7(C 4a), 29.5(C 7), 28.0(C 25), 27.9(C 16), 23.9(C 15), 23.7(C 23), 22.6(C 27), 22.4(C 26), 21.3(C 11), 18.4(C 21), 12.2(C 19), 11.9(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 431(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

#### 4 aza A Homocholest 3,6 dione 6 thiosemicarbazone (**6**)

A mixture of 4 aza A homocholest 3,6 dione (100 mg, 0.249 mmol), thiosemicarbazide (124 mg, 0.5 mmol), and a few drops of glacial acetic acid (0.5 mL) in 95% ethanol (20 mL) was stirred at 60–70 °C for 2 h. After completion of the reaction, the majority of solvent was evaporated and some water was added to this solution. The mixture was extracted with CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> and the extract was washed with saturated brine, dried with anhydrous sodium sulfate and evaporated under reduced pressure. The resulting residue was chromatographed on a column of silica gel with a mixture of DCM:methanol (20:1) to give compound **6** (91 mg, 72%),  $\theta_{mp}$  228–230 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3452, 3338, 2941, 2859, 1658, 1580, 1462, 1350, 1221, 1150, 1071, 956; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.665(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.823(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.867(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.872(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.907(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.975(1H, dd,  $J$  = 14.4, 8.4, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.244(1H, d,  $J$  = 9.0, C<sub>7</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.301(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 14.4, 6.6, 1.8, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.597(1H, t,  $J$  = 13.8, C<sub>1</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.672(1H, dd,  $J$  = 12.6, 2.4, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.396(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 15.0, 9.6, 4.8, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.490(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 8.4, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 6.082(1H, brs, (C=S) NH), 6.355(1H, brs, (C=S) NH), 7.058(1H, d,  $J$  = 4.2, (C=O) NH), 8.756(1H, brs, N NH C); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 179.1(C=S), 178.4(C 3), 155.5(C 6), 56.4(C 14), 56.1(C 17), 55.5(C 9), 54.1(C 5), 49.4(C 13), 43.2(C 4a), 42.9(C 24), 39.5(C 12), 38.5(C 8), 36.8(C 10), 36.1(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 34.8(C 1), 31.9(C 2), 30.9(C 7), 28.07(C 16), 28.02(C 25), 24.2(C 19), 23.8(C 15), 22.8(C 26), 22.6(C 27), 21.5(C 23), 18.6(C 11), 12.6(C 21), 12.0(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 489.

#### 4 aza A Homocholest 3,6 dione 6 semicarbazone (**7**)

Compound **7** was prepared similarly according to the procedure of **6**, but the semicarbazide used as an attack reagent instead of the thiosemicarbazide and the reaction mixture was heated at 70–80 °C for 6 h. Yield: 62%.  $\theta_{mp}$  219–220 °C; IR(KBr)  $\nu/cm^{-1}$ : 3448, 2949, 2868, 1654, 1576, 1470, 1376, 1227; <sup>1</sup>H NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 600 MHz)  $\delta$ : 0.652(3H, s, 18 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.806(3H, s, 19 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.866(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.871(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 26 or 27 CH<sub>3</sub>), 0.902(3H, d,  $J$  = 6.6, 21 CH<sub>3</sub>), 1.880(1H, dd,  $J$  = 14.4, 6.0, C<sub>7</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.021(1H, ddd,  $J$  = 12.6, 6.0, 3.6, C<sub>1</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.389(1H, d,  $J$  = 10.8, C<sub>5</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 2.656(1H, dd,  $J$  = 15.0, 3.6, C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H), 2.827(1H, brd,  $J$  = 16.2, C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 3.050(1H, m, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H), 3.387(1H, dd,  $J$  = 12.0, 4.2, C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H), 4.908(1H, brs, NC(O) NH), 6.021(1H, brs, NC(O) NH), 6.264(1H, d,  $J$  = 4.2, (C=O) NH), 7.995(1H, s, N NH C); <sup>13</sup>C NMR(CDCl<sub>3</sub>, 150 MHz)  $\delta$ : 178.0(C 3), 157.8(C 6), 152.0(NC(O)NH<sub>2</sub>), 56.3(C 14), 56.1(C 17), 54.4(C 9), 49.2(C 5), 42.9(C 13), 42.8(C 4a), 41.4(C 10), 39.6(C 12), 39.5(C 24), 37.6(C 8), 36.2(C 2), 36.1(C 22), 35.7(C 20), 32.6(C 1), 31.7(C 7), 28.1(C 16), 28.0(C 25), 24.1(C 19), 23.8(C 15), 22.8(C 26), 22.6(C 27), 21.7(C 23), 18.6(C 11), 12.5(C 21), 12.0(C 18); ESI MS  $m/z$ : 473(M+1)<sup>+</sup>.

#### Antiproliferative activity

##### Material and methods

Stock solutions of the compounds were prepared in sterile dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) (Sigma) at a concentration of 10 mg/mL and afterward diluted with complete nutrient medium (RPMI

1640) supplemented with 10% heat inactivated fetal bovine serum and 0.1 g/L penicillin G + 0.1 g/L streptomycin sulfate.

##### Cell culture

SMMC 7404 (human liver carcinoma), MGC 7901 (human gastric carcinoma), HeLa (human cervical carcinoma) cancer cells were grown in the medium (RPMI 1640) supplemented with 10% cosmic calf serum and 0.1 g/L penicillin G + 0.1 g/L streptomycin sulfate in a humidified atmosphere of 5% CO<sub>2</sub> at 37 °C.

##### Assay for cell viability

The viability of these cells was determined using MTT (3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide) dye reduction assay. Briefly, cells (1  $\times$  10<sup>4</sup> cells per well) were seeded in 96 well plates. One day after seeding, the cells were treated with different concentration of each compound. An equal amount of DMSO was added to the cells used as negative controls. All were treated in triplicate. After reincubated for 72 h, the cells were washed with sterile phosphate buffer saline (PBS). The 190  $\mu$ L of RPMI 1640 and 10  $\mu$ L of the tetrazolium dye (MTT) (5 mg/mL) solution were added to each well, and the cells were incubated for an additional 4 h. The medium was discarded and 200  $\mu$ L of DMSO was added to dissolve the purple formazan crystals formed. The absorbance (A) at 492 nm was measured using a Biocell ELISA analysis spectrometer. The IC<sub>50</sub> value was calculated as the concentration of drug yielding 50% cell survival. The effect of compounds on the morphology of treated human carcinoma cells was investigated by the light microscope and then photographed by Nikon (TE2000 U) inverted microscope.

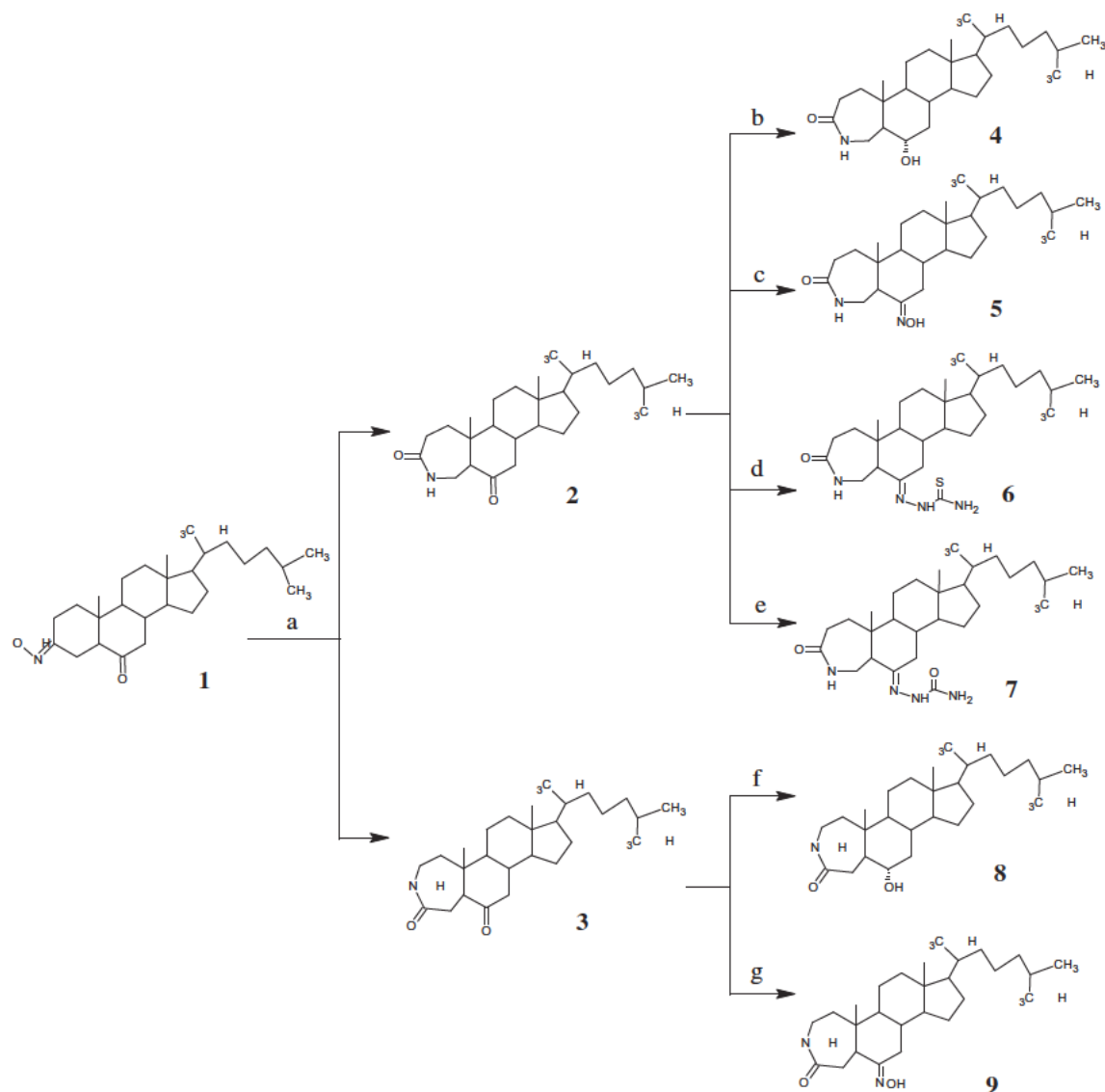
## Results and discussion

### Chemistry

Scheme 1 outlines the synthetic procedures of compounds **2–9**. In our previous report [12], compound **1** was obtained in 66.5% yield by four steps using cholesterol as a starting material. The structure of compound **1** had been confirmed by its IR and NMR spectra.

The compounds **2** and **3** were synthesized by Beckmann rearrangement of **1** with SOCl<sub>2</sub>/THF at 0 °C. In the reaction, the compound **2** with 4 aza structure was obtained as a major product in 45% yield. At the same time, the compound **3** with 3 aza structure was obtained as a byproduct in 21.5% yield. The structures of **2** and **3** were confirmed by analysis of the proton and carbon NMR chemical shifts at 2 C and 4a C. Resonances showing of C<sub>4a</sub>  $\beta$ H at 3.311 ppm (ddd,  $J$  = 16.2, 9.6 and 4.8 Hz) and C<sub>4a</sub>  $\alpha$ H at 3.445 ppm (ddd,  $J$  = 16.2, 7.8, 1.2 Hz) demonstrated a position of 4 NH in the compound **2**, while the chemical shifts found for C<sub>2</sub>  $\alpha$ H at 3.048 ppm (dddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 7.8, 6.0, 1.8 Hz) and C<sub>2</sub>  $\beta$ H at 3.391 ppm (ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 12.0, 4.2 Hz) were an indicative of the 3 NH in the compound **3**. Here, the amide protons produced a coupling effect to C<sub>4</sub> H in **2** and C<sub>2</sub> H in **3**, respectively. Moreover, <sup>1</sup>H NMR revealed the presence of the broad singlet at 6.007 ppm in **2** and 6.040 ppm in **3** for the amide proton.

Compounds **4** and **8** were obtained by reduction using NaBH<sub>4</sub> as reductant in CH<sub>3</sub>OH. The structures of compounds **4** and **8** were deduced from its analytical and spectral data. In the <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum, the resonances showing of C<sub>6</sub>  $\beta$ H at 3.420 ppm (ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 12.0, 4.2 Hz) and 6 C at 73.6 ppm for **4** and C<sub>6</sub>  $\beta$ H at 3.725 ppm (ddd,  $J$  = 15.6, 9.3, 4.2 Hz) and 6 C at 73.6 ppm for **8** demonstrated a position of 6 hydroxy respectively. In IR spectrum, the absorption peaks at 3411–3378 cm<sup>-1</sup> showed that 6 carbonyl had been converted to 6 hydroxy in **4** and **8**.



**Scheme 1.** Reagents and conditions: (a)  $\text{SOCl}_2/\text{THF}$ ,  $0\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ ; (b)  $\text{NaBH}_4/\text{MeOH}$ , rt; (c)  $\text{H}_2\text{NOH}\cdot\text{HCl}/\text{Na}_2\text{Ac}\cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{EtOH}$ , reflux; (d)  $\text{H}_2\text{NC}(\text{S})\text{NHNH}_2/\text{EtOH}$ ,  $60\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ ; (e)  $\text{H}_2\text{NC}(\text{O})\text{NHNH}_2/\text{EtOH}$ ; (f)  $\text{NaBH}_4/\text{MeOH}$ , rt; (g)  $\text{H}_2\text{NOH}\cdot\text{HCl}/\text{Na}_2\text{Ac}\cdot 3\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{EtOH}$ , reflux.

Compounds **5** and **9** were synthesized by the oxidation of **2** and **3**. The structures of **5** and **9** were confirmed by analysis of IR,  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR chemical shifts at  $7\text{ }^\circ\text{C}$ . In the IR spectra, the absorptions of  $1711$  and  $1707\text{ cm}^{-1}$  for the original carbonyl group in **2** and **3**, were absent and replaced by a new absorption at  $1654\text{ cm}^{-1}$  ( $\text{C}=\text{N}$ ) for **5** and  $1658\text{ cm}^{-1}$  for **9**. IR spectra bands at  $3321\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in **5** and  $3119\text{ cm}^{-1}$  in **9** indicate the presence of a hydroximino group. In the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of compounds **5** and **9**, the signal for  $\text{C}_7\text{ }^\beta\text{H}$  was shifted downfield, appearing at  $3.025\text{ ppm}$  for **5** and  $3.296\text{ ppm}$  for **9** due to the deshielding influence of the hydroxyl oxygen of the oxime which confirmed the (*E*) configuration [20]. Also, the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR revealed the presence of broad singlet (1H) at  $9.094\text{ ppm}$  in **5** and at  $9.004\text{ ppm}$  in **9** for the NOH group.

Similarly, the reaction of compound **2** with thiosemicarbazide or semicarbazide using few drops of glacial acetic acid as a catalyst afforded the corresponding product **6** or **7**. In the IR spectra, the compound **6** showed intense bands in the region  $1150\text{ cm}^{-1}$  due to the  $\nu(\text{C}=\text{S})$  stretching of the thiocarboxamide group. In addition, the absorption bands at  $1580\text{ cm}^{-1}$  were attributed to the  $\nu(\text{C}=\text{N})$

stretching vibration, which also confirms the formation of desired thiosemicarbazone in the compound **6**. Similarly, the compound **7** showed an absorption band of the  $\nu(\text{C}=\text{N})$  stretching vibration at  $1576\text{ cm}^{-1}$ . The compounds **6** and **7** showed additional sharp bands in the region  $3452\text{--}3338\text{ cm}^{-1}$  due to the  $\nu(\text{N-H})$  stretching vibration. In the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum, the singlets appearing at  $8.756\text{ ppm}$  for **6** and  $7.995\text{ ppm}$  for **7** confirmed the presence of  $\text{N-H-C}$  protons in the **6** and **7**.

#### *In vitro* evaluation of the antiproliferative activity

##### *Structure activity relationship*

To evaluate the antiproliferative activity of these compounds, the  $\text{IC}_{50}$  values were determined in SMMC 7404, HeLa and MGC 7901 cancer cells by using a MTT assay according to the manufacturer's instructions. MTT is a compound that can be taken up by viable cells and reduced by a mitochondrial dehydrogenase forming a formazan product in living cells. The absorbance of the formazan product at  $492\text{ nm}$  is in linear proportion to cell numbers. The results were summarized as  $\text{IC}_{50}$  values in  $\mu\text{mol/L}$  in Table 1.



**Table 1**In vitro antiproliferative activities (IC<sub>50</sub> in  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ) of the compounds **2–9**.

| Compounds | Carcinoma cell lines |      |           |
|-----------|----------------------|------|-----------|
|           | MGC 7901             | HeLa | SMMC 7404 |
| <b>2</b>  | 26.5                 | 42.1 | 25.3      |
| <b>3</b>  | 31.8                 | 11.3 | 28.9      |
| <b>4</b>  | 15.8                 | 17.2 | 16.8      |
| <b>5</b>  | 12.8                 | 22.8 | 17.6      |
| <b>6</b>  | 15.3                 | 6.5  | 40.9      |
| <b>7</b>  | 36.6                 | 10.6 | 78.3      |
| <b>8</b>  | >100                 | 7.7  | 77        |
| <b>9</b>  | 16.3                 | 5.6  | 17.9      |
| Cisplatin | 6.7                  | 10.1 | 23.2      |

Apparently all steroidal lactams (**2–9**) displayed a distinct cytotoxicity against these cancer cells. Although the cytotoxic activity against MGC 7901 and SMMC 7404 cells was not significantly different between 4 *N* lactam **2** and 3 *N* lactam **3** or **5** and **9**, 3 *N* lactams showed a higher cytotoxicity against HeLa cells than 4 *N* lactams. Interestingly 4 *N* lactam **4** exhibited a high cytotoxicity to all cancer cells tested, but the cytotoxic activity was remarkably decreased in 3 *N* lactam **8** although HeLa cells were sensitive to the compound.

Compounds **2** and **4–7**, with same 4 *N* lactam structure and different types of 6 substituted groups, showed a distinct difference in their cytotoxicity against these cancer cells. The analogs **4** and **5**, with a hydroxyl or a hydroximino at C 6, remarkably increased their cytotoxic activity against MGC 7901 and SMMC 7404 cells in comparison with the analogs **2** and **7**, which have a carbonyl or semicarbazone groups at C 6. Compounds **6** and **7** with a thio semicarbazone or semicarbazone groups at C 6 had a better cytotoxicity than compounds **2**, **4** and **5** against HeLa cells. Here compounds **6**, **8**, **9** (**6**: 6.56  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ; **8**: 7.76  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ; **9**: 5.6  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ) were even more cytotoxic than cisplatin to HeLa cells (positive contrast: 10.1  $\mu\text{mol/L}$ ).

## Conclusion

We have prepared a series of 3 aza A homo 3 oxysterol and 4 aza A homo 3 oxysterol derivatives with different substituted groups at position 6 of the ring B. The antiproliferative activity of the synthesized compounds against SMMC 7404, HeLa and MGC 7901 cancer cells was investigated. All these compounds displayed a distinct cytotoxicity against these cancer cells. Our results revealed that the structures of functional groups at position 6 on the steroidal ring are crucial for the IC<sub>50</sub> value of antiproliferative activities of these compounds and the cytotoxic activity against MGC 7901 and SMMC 7404 cells was not significantly different between 4 *N* lactams and 3 *N* lactams when its 6 substituted group was a carbonyl or a hydroximino, but all 3 *N* lactams showed a higher cytotoxicity against HeLa cells than 4 *N* lactams. Our findings could provide new evidence showing the relationship between the chemical structure and biological activity and may be useful for the design of novel chemotherapeutic drugs.

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