



Design, synthesis and biological evaluation of 1,3-diaryltriazene-substituted sulfonamides as antioxidant, acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase inhibitors

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Abstract: 1,3-diaryltriazenes are one of the most useful and important linkers for many pharmaceutical applications. Therefore, in the current work, a series of 1,3-diaryltriazene sulfonamides **4(a-k)** were synthesized by reacting diazonium salt of sulfanylamide and substituted aromatic amine derivatives **3(a-k)**. The obtained compounds were investigated for antioxidant properties by using different methods such as a DPPH radical scavenging assay, ABTS radical decolorization, cupric reducing antioxidant capacity (CUPRAC) and metal chelating methods. The cholinesterase inhibition activities (acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase) of synthesized compounds were also tested. In general, compounds showed weak antioxidant activity, except compounds **4d** ($IC_{50} = 114.89 \mu M$ for DPPH activity), **4i** ($IC_{50} = 25.31 \mu M$ for ABTS activity), **4a** ($IC_{50} = 86.33 \mu M$ for metal chelating activity), and **4k** (absorbance value $1.229 \mu M$ for CUPRAC). Some of the compounds showed great % inhibition against both acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase with % inhibition values ranging from 11.54 to 93.67 and 62.24 to 98.47, respectively.

Keywords: Sulfanylamide, 1,3-diaryltriazene, antioxidant, anticholinesterase.

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INTRODUCTION

Sulfur-containing drugs, especially sulfonamides, are used for various pharmaceutical applications. Their importance can be dated back from the first use of sulfonamide containing antibacterial drugs. Sulfonamides are used for a wide range of biological applications such as antibacterial (1-3), anti-inflammatory (4, 5), antioxidant (6-8), anticancer (9-14), carbonic anhydrase inhibitors (10, 15-17) and for Alzheimer's disease (18, 19). There are more than 112 FDA approved drugs containing sulfonamide group (20).

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a neurodegenerative disorder featured with cognitive dysfunction and dementia (20). According to the present estimation, about 50 million people are going through this disease and this number might triple up to 152 million by 2050 (World Alzheimer report). Unfortunately, the medicines used for the cure of AD and its progression are not discovered yet. There are some pathophysiology factors like beta-amyloid deposits, inflammation, oxidative stress, dyshomeostasis of biometals, tau-protein aggregation, deficiencies of acetylcholine (ACh) and butyrylcholine (BCh) which are believed to be responsible for the disease progression (21-23).

Inhibition of ACh and BCh hydrolysis by using acetylcholinesterase (AChE) and butyrylcholinesterase (BChE) inhibitors has been considered to increase the level of the ACh and BCh in synapses aiding the restoration of the cholinergic neurotransmission and cognitive capabilities (24, 25). First-line drugs in the symptomatic treatment of AD treatment involve the use of cholinesterase inhibitors such as rivastigmine, galantamine and donepezil (24), but these drugs are reported to have side effects like nausea, gastrointestinal upset, diarrhea, muscular weakness, syncope and weight loss (26). On the other hand, antioxidants are thought to offer a good possibility of combating neurodegeneration and protection against Alzheimer's disease (27,28). Therefore, there is a need for less toxic cholinesterase inhibitors along with antioxidant properties for AD treatment.

More recently, our research group showed the efficient human carbonic anhydrase II (hCA II) inhibition profile of 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides (29, 30). The nanomolar potency was obtained against one of the most abundant isoform hCA II. In the current study, we are focusing on the role of 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides as antioxidant, acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase inhibitors, prompted

by the potent carbonic anhydrase inhibition results.

EXPERIMENTAL SECTION

Chemistry

General synthetic route for the preparation of 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides **4(a-k)** are depicted in Figure 1. The synthesis of the compounds was done as previously described by us (29, 30). Briefly, a solution of sulfanylamide **1** (5 mmol) in ~1-1.5 ml of conc. hydrochloric acid and 5 ml of water was cooled to 0-5 °C. Then, sodium nitrite (7 mmol) in 5 mL of water was added dropwise to the solution under continuous stirring. The mixture was stirred about 15-20 min at 0-5 °C, and diazonium solution was added to aromatic amines (prepared by 5 mmol anilines in 5 mL of MeOH) by adjusting the pH around 6-7 with a saturated sodium acetate solution. After that, the reaction mixture was stirred 5-6 h at 0-5 °C and overnight at room temperature in dark. The obtained colorful mixture was filtered off, washed several times with cold water, and then crystallized from ethanol. Physicochemical and spectroscopic characterization of all compounds **4(a-k)** have been previously described by us (29).

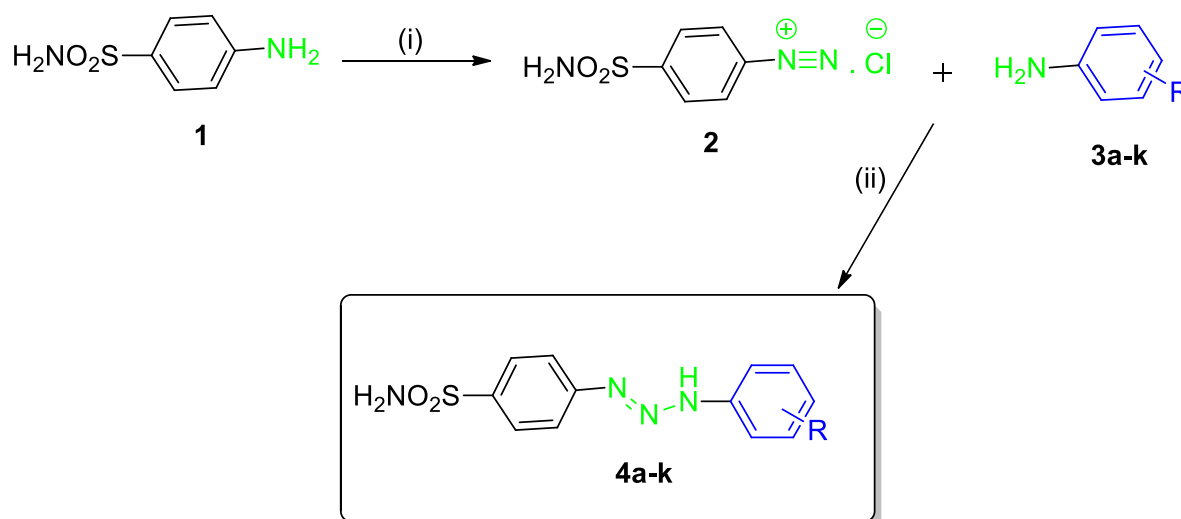


Figure 1. General synthetic route for the synthesis of 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides **4a-k**.

DPPH Free radical scavenging assay

The DPPH (2,2-diphenyl-1-picrylhydrazyl) radical scavenging activity of the synthesized compounds was determined by spectrophotometric method based on the reduction of an ethanolic solution of DPPH (31). 2, 5, 10, 20 μ L of 1mM stock solution of each compound were completed to 40 μ L with DMSO and mixed with 160 μ L of 0.1 mM of DPPH free radical solution. The mixture was left to stand for 30 min in the dark and the absorbance was then measured at 517 nm against a blank. Inhibition of free radical, DPPH, in percent (I%) was calculated according to the formula:

$$I \% = \frac{(A_{\text{control}} - A_{\text{sample}})}{A_{\text{control}}} \times 100;$$

where A_{control} is the absorbance of the control reaction (containing all reagents except for the tested compounds), and A_{sample} is the absorbance of the test compounds. Tests were carried out in triplicate. BHA (butylated hydroxyanisole), BHT (butylated hydroxytoluene) and α -Toc (α -Tocopherol) were used as positive control.

ABTS cation radical scavenging assay

The ABTS⁺ (2,2'-azino-bis(3-ethylbenzothiazoline-6-sulfonic acid)), cationic radical scavenging activity assay determines the inhibition percentage as a function of time and concentration, and evaluated relative to the activity of BHT, BHA and α -Toc (32). 2, 5, 10 and 20 μ L of 1 mM stock solutions were completed to 40 μ L with the DMSO. Then 160 μ L of 7 mM ABTS

solutions were added into each well in the micro plate. After keeping them for 6 min in dark at room temperature, the absorbances were measured at 734 nm. ABTS cation radical scavenging activities as % inhibition were determined by using the below equation:

$$\% \text{Inhibition} = (A_{\text{control}} - A_{\text{sample}}) / A_{\text{control}} \times 100$$

where A is the absorbance. Tests were carried out in triplicate. BHA, BHT and α -Toc were used as positive control.

Metal Chelating Activity

The chelating ability of synthesized compounds was examined according to the method of Dinis et al. (33). 2, 5, 10 and 20 μ L of 1 mM stock solutions were completed to 188 μ L with the DMSO. Then, each sample was mixed with 4 μ L of 2 mM iron(II) chloride. The reaction was started by adding 8 μ L of 5 mM ferrozine. The mixture was left to stand for 10 min at room temperature, then the absorbance was measured at 562 nm against a blank. The results were expressed as percentage of inhibition of the ferrozine -Fe²⁺ complex formation. EDTA was used as a positive control. The percentage inhibition of the ferrozine -Fe²⁺ complex formation was calculated using the formula given below:

$$\text{Chelating ability (\%)} = (A_{\text{control}} - A_{\text{sample}}) / A_{\text{control}} \times 100$$

Cupric reducing antioxidant capacity (CUPRAC) assay

CUPRAC method comprises the reduction of Cu(II)-Neocuproine into its colored form Cu(I)-Neocuproine chelate in the presence of antioxidant compounds (34). The absorbance at 450 nm was measured when the complex was obtained. 61 μ L of 10 mM CuCl₂, 61 μ L of 7.5 mM Neocuproine and 61 μ L of 1 M of NH₄OAc solutions were added into the prepared solutions to adjust the concentrations as 10, 25, 50, and 100 μ M. The absorbance values were compared with the standard molecules BHA, BHT and α -Toc. Each of samples was applied three times to verify the results.

Anticholinesterase inhibition assay

The inhibitory effect of 1,3-diaryltriazine-substituted sulfonamide derivatives **4(a-k)** on AChE and BChE activities was determined according to the slightly modified spectrophotometric method of Ellman et al. (35). All compounds were dissolved in DMSO to prepare stock solutions at 4 mM concentration. Aliquots of 150 μ L of 100 mM sodium phosphate buffer (pH 8.0), 10 μ L of sample solution and 20 μ L AChE (or BChE) solution were mixed and incubated for 15 min at 25 °C, and DTNB (5,5'-dithio-bis(2-nitrobenzoic acid)) (10 μ L) is added. The reaction was then initiated by the addition of acetylthiocholine iodide (or butyrylthiocholine

iodide) (10 μ L). 30 minutes after addition of substrates (acetylthiocholine iodide or butyrylthiocholine iodide), the absorbances were measured at 412 nm. The final concentration of the tested compounds' solution was 200 μ M.

$$\% \text{Inhibition} = (A_{\text{control}} - A_{\text{sample}}) / A_{\text{control}} \times 100$$

where A is the absorbance. Tests were carried out in triplicate. Galantamine was used as positive control.

Statistical analysis

The results of the antioxidant and anticholinesterase activity assays are expressed as the mean \pm SD of three parallel measurements. The statistical significance was estimated using a Student's t-test, where p-values < 0.05 were considered significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the present study, we report the synthesis, antioxidant, acetylcholinesterase and butyrylcholinesterase inhibition activities of 1,3-diaryltriazine-substituted sulfonamide derivatives **4(a-k)** obtained from sulfanylamide as a lead molecule. The compounds were obtained via the reaction of diazonium salt of sulfanylamide with substituted aromatic amine derivatives **3(a-k)**. These compounds were previously synthesized and fully characterized by us a potent and selective human carbonic anhydrase II (hCA II) inhibitors.

The antioxidant capacities of prepared 1,3-diaryltriazine-substituted sulfonamides are assayed by using several antioxidant methods, including DPPH free radical scavenging, ABTS cation radical scavenging, cupric reducing (CUPRAC) and metal chelating methods. Also, acetylcholinesterase (AChE) and butyrylcholinesterase (BChE) inhibitory activities were investigated.

The DPPH free radical scavenging activity of the synthesized compounds was assayed and compared with BHT, BHA and α -TOC used as standards. The DPPH free radical scavenging activity of the synthesized compounds is given in Table 1 as an IC₅₀ values. As depicted in Table 1, three compounds show better DPPH activity than the standard BHT, which are **4d** (4-CN), **4f** (4-BuO) and **4j** (2,3,4,5,6-F) with IC₅₀ values of 114.89, 162.29, and 219.88 μ M, respectively. In case of compounds **4a** (4-F), **4b** (4-Cl), **4c** (4-MeO), **4e** (4-Acetyl), **4g** (2-CN), **4h** (3-NO₂), and **4i** (3,4-diMeO), there was no significant DPPH activity with IC₅₀ values of >1000 μ M. On the other hand, all compounds displayed lesser DPPH activity than other standards BHA and α -TOC.

The results revealed that some of the compounds from the series show good ABTS cation radical scavenging activity. The compound **4i** (3,4-diMeO) showed the best ABTS activity with IC₅₀ value of 25.31 μ M, which is more active than the

standards BHA, BHT and α -TOC. The compounds **4f** (4-BuO) and **4j** (2,3,4,5,6-F) were also sensitive to ABTS cation radical scavenging activity with IC₅₀ values of 53.01 and 50.79 μ M, respectively. The IC₅₀ values of the remaining

compounds were ranging from 108.89 to 610.34 μM , except the compound **4d** (4-CN) which has no ABTS cation radical scavenging activity ($\text{IC}_{50} > 1000 \mu\text{M}$) as demonstrated in Table 1.

The metal chelating properties of the 1,3-diaryltriazeno-substituted sulfonamide derivatives **4(a-k)** on iron(II) ions were presented in Table 1 and compared with standard EDTA. It was considered that compound **4a** (4-F)

and **4e** (4-acetyl) were the most active compounds with IC_{50} values 86.33 and 99.10 μM , respectively, which showed chelating activity similar to standard compound EDTA ($\text{IC}_{50} = 52.35 \mu\text{M}$). Also, compounds **4c** (4-MeO), **4d** (4-CN), **4g** (2-CN) and **4h** (3- NO_2) showed moderate activity with IC_{50} values ranging from 120.52 to 198.86 μM . The remaining compounds had no activity in metal chelating assay with IC_{50} values $> 1000 \mu\text{M}$ (Table 1).

Table 1. DPPH free radical scavenging, ABTS cation radical scavenging and metal chelating activities of 1,3-diaryltriazeno-substituted sulfonamides **4(a-k)** and controls BHA, BHT, α -Toc, and EDTA.

Comp. R	IC_{50} (μM) ^a		
	DPPH Free Radical Scavenging Activity	ABTS Cation Radical Scavenging Activity	Metal Chelating Activity
4a 4-F	>1000	146.33 \pm 1.76	86.33 \pm 1.70
4b 4-Cl	>1000	176.97 \pm 1.67	>1000
4c 4-MeO	>1000	108.89 \pm 1.53	121.31 \pm 1.88
4d 4-CN	114.89 \pm 2.50	>1000	198.86 \pm 1.80
4e 4-Acetyl	>1000	610.34 \pm 3.07	99.10 \pm 1.02
4f 4-BuO	162.29 \pm 2.76	53.01 \pm 0.25	>1000
4g 2-CN	>1000	460.17 \pm 3.05	120.52 \pm 1.58
4h 3- NO_2	>1000	369.50 \pm 1.03	147.13 \pm 1.14
4i 3,4-diMeO	>1000	25.31 \pm 0.21	>1000
4j 2,3,4,5,6-F	219.88 \pm 2.92	50.79 \pm 1.62	>1000
4k 3,4-diCl	813.65 \pm 1.18	394.08 \pm 1.10	>1000
BHA ^b ---	61.72 \pm 0.85	45.40 \pm 1.08	-
BHT ^b ---	232.11 \pm 3.01	26.54 \pm 0.18	-
α-TOC ^b ---	56.86 \pm 0.77	34.12 \pm 0.41	-
EDTA ^b ---	-	-	52.35 \pm 1.15

^a IC_{50} values represent the means (standard deviation of three parallel measurements) ($p < 0.05$).

^b Reference compounds.

Table 2. Cupric ion reducing antioxidant capacity (CUPRAC) of the 1,3-diaryltriazeno-substituted sulfonamides **4(a-k)** and controls BHA, BHT, and α -Toc.

Comp. R	Absorbance Values (μM) ^a			
	10 μM	25 μM	50 μM	100 μM
4a 4-F	0.102 \pm 0.013	0.119 \pm 0.002	0.155 \pm 0.008	0.168 \pm 0.006
4b 4-Cl	0.079 \pm 0.004	0.111 \pm 0.036	0.127 \pm 0.021	0.168 \pm 0.009
4c 4-MeO	0.271 \pm 0.088	0.224 \pm 0.008	0.418 \pm 0.058	0.744 \pm 0.051
4d 4-CN	0.095 \pm 0.003	0.099 \pm 0.005	0.188 \pm 0.062	0.244 \pm 0.043
4e 4-Acetyl	0.340 \pm 0.001	0.406 \pm 0.001	0.549 \pm 0.004	0.889 \pm 0.008
4f 4-BuO	0.166 \pm 0.064	0.236 \pm 0.036	0.366 \pm 0.044	0.882 \pm 0.046
4g 2-CN	0.102 \pm 0.004	0.098 \pm 0.012	0.134 \pm 0.002	0.151 \pm 0.001
4h 3- NO_2	0.131 \pm 0.057	0.127 \pm 0.036	0.250 \pm 0.083	0.301 \pm 0.019
4i 3,4-diMeO	0.176 \pm 0.006	0.328 \pm 0.004	0.626 \pm 0.016	1.083 \pm 0.022
4j 2,3,4,5,6-F	0.122 \pm 0.006	0.156 \pm 0.005	0.197 \pm 0.008	0.290 \pm 0.024
4k 3,4-diCl	0.599 \pm 0.001	0.726 \pm 0.008	0.965 \pm 0.005	1.229 \pm 0.002
BHA ^b	0.288 \pm 0.015	0.572 \pm 0.046	1.026 \pm 0.013	1.984 \pm 0.035
BHT ^b	0.303 \pm 0.010	0.610 \pm 0.010	1.167 \pm 0.024	2.000 \pm 0.173
α-TOC ^b	0.179 \pm 0.001	0.296 \pm 0.012	0.482 \pm 0.017	0.912 \pm 0.065

^a Values expressed are means \pm SD of three parallel absorbance measurements ($p < 0.05$) ^b Reference compounds

The cupric reducing antioxidant capacity (CUPRAC) method was also applied to identify the antioxidant capacity of the prepared 1,3-diaryltriazeno-substituted sulfonamide derivatives. As expected, the activity of the compounds increased with increasing

concentration as summarized in Table 2. The compounds **4i** (3,4-diMeO) and **4k** (3,4-diCl) showed a better CUPRAC capacity than standard α -TOC. The compound **4k** had better activity at concentrations 10 and 25 μM than all three standards. Interestingly, these two active

compounds have 3,4-disubstitution on the phenyl ring make them different from the rest of the compounds.

Table 3. Anticholinesterase activities of the 1,3-diaryltriazenesubstituted sulfonamides **4(a-k)** at 200 μ M and standard drug galanthamine.

Comp.	R	AChE (Inhibition %) ^a	BChE (Inhibition %) ^a
4a	4-F	11.54±0.26	84.18±1.20
4b	4-Cl	13.55±0.76	67.26±1.39
4c	4-MeO	25.16±0.64	90.22±0.88
4d	4-CN	33.50±0.49	79.00±0.46
4e	4-Acetyl	84.48±1.02	77.21±0.20
4f	4-BuO	67.07±0.48	82.14±4.33
4g	2-CN	69.60±0.67	62.24±1.16
4h	3-NO₂	67.70±0.27	71.51±1.80
4i	3,4-diMeO	85.01±0.78	90.22±0.10
4j	2,3,4,5,6-F	93.67±0.30	98.47±0.56
4k	3,4-diCl	55.35±0.32	97.00±0.61
Galantamine^b		84.20±0.74	87.86±0.24

^a 200 μ M, ^b Standard drug

In the current series of 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides, most of the compounds showed great potency against both cholinesterase enzymes (AChE and BChE). In general, all compounds had higher BChE inhibition activity than AChE inhibition activity, except the compounds **4e** (4-acetyl) and **4g** (4-CN). In case of AChE inhibition, the compounds **4e**, **4i** and **4j** showed better activity than standard drug galanthamine with %inhibition values of 84.48, 85.01 and 93.67, respectively. The compounds **4f** (4-BuO), **4g** (2-CN), **4h** (3-NO₂) and **4k** (3,4-diCl) were moderate inhibitors of this enzyme with %inhibition values ranging from 55.35 to 69.60. For BChE activity, compounds **4j** (2,3,4,5,6-F) and **4k** (3,4-diCl) showed the highest %inhibition at 200 μ M with 98.47 and 97.00, respectively. The remaining compounds also showed good inhibition against BChE enzyme with %inhibition values ranging from 62.24 to 90.22.

CONCLUSIONS

In the present study, 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides **4(a-k)** were synthesized from the reaction of diazonium salt of sulfonamide and substituted aromatic amines. The antioxidant activities of the compounds were investigated by DPPH, ABTS, metal chelating and CUPRAC methods. The AChE and BChE inhibition studies were also examined. In general, compounds showed weak DPPH, ABTS, metal chelating and CUPRAC activity. However, several compounds were good and promising antioxidant capacity, such as compounds **4d** (IC₅₀ =114.89 μ M for DPPH activity), **4i** (IC₅₀ =25.31 μ M for ABTS activity), **4a** (IC₅₀ = 86.33 μ M for metal chelating activity), and **4k** (absorbance value 1.229 μ M for CUPRAC). The best biological results were obtained against BChE enzyme inhibition in this study. Specifically, compounds **4j** and **4k** showed excellent %inhibition against this enzyme with

%inhibition values of 98.47 and 97.00, respectively. Since the AChE and BChE enzymes are related with neurodegenerative disorders and their inhibition is important for this type of brain disorders, these 1,3-diaryltriazenesulfonamides may be considered of interest for *in vivo* studies.

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