



Identification of an unexpected shunt pathway product provides new insights into tirandamycin biosynthesis



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ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 5 October 2016

Revised 16 November 2016

Accepted 18 November 2016

Available online 19 November 2016

Keywords:

Tirandamycin
Natural product
Tetramic acid
Biosynthesis
Streptomyces

ABSTRACT

Tirandamycin K (**7**), the first linear 7,13;9,13-diseco-tirandamycin derivative, was isolated from the *tamI* (encoding the TamI P450 monooxygenase) disruption mutant strain ($\Delta tamI$) of marine *Streptomyces* sp. 307–9. Its chemical structure with relative and absolute configurations was elucidated by a combination of extensive spectroscopic analyses and biosynthetic inferences. Structural elucidation of this unusual compound provides new insights into tirandamycin biosynthesis. Moreover, examination of the biological activity of **7** confirms the essential function of the bicyclic ketal ring for antibiotic activities of tirandamycins.

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Tirandamycins belong to the tetramic acid family of natural products featured by a pyrrolidine-2,4-dione ring system.¹ The antibiotic streptolydigin,² the HIV-1 integrase inhibitor equisetin,³ the mycotoxin cyclopiazonic acid,⁴ the fungicidal dihydromaltophilin,⁵ the quorum sensing related molecule 3-(1-hydroxydecyliidene)-5-(2-hydroxyethyl) pyrrolidine-2,4-dione,⁶ and the anti-tumor agents aurantosides,⁷ discoderimides,⁸ and cylindramides,⁹ are among this fast growing family of secondary metabolites. Collectively, they have been attracting continuous interest due to their broad spectrum of biological activities and structural diversity.

Tirandamycins usually contain an intriguing bicyclic ketal moiety in their chemical structures, and exhibit potent antimicrobial activity by targeting bacterial RNA polymerases and hence blocking the transcriptional elongation process.^{1,10} Tirandamycin A (**1**) and B (**2**) were first identified in the 1970s from a terrestrial *Streptomyces* species.¹¹ From 2009 to 2011, we isolated and characterized three novel congeners, including tirandamycin C (**3**),¹² D (**4**)¹² and E (**5**)¹³ from marine *Streptomyces* sp. 307–9, together with the known compounds **1** and **2**. More recently, the laboratories of Shen and Ju discovered more tirandamycin derivatives

(tirandamycin F–J) from *Streptomyces* sp. 17944^{14,15} and *Streptomyces* sp. SCSIO 1666.^{16,17} All these tirandamycins differ from one another in the extent of oxidative tailoring of the bicyclic ketal moiety (Fig. 1), which has been found to be a key determinant of potency against vancomycin-resistant *Enterococcus faecalis* (VRE).¹² This observation is consistent with the previous study¹⁸ revealing that the streptolol ring of streptolydigin (the structural analog to bicyclic ketal of tirandamycin) is involved in a number of key contacts with RNA polymerase (the molecular target of tetramic acid antibiotics including streptolydigin and tirandamycins) determined from co-crystal structure analysis.

To date, two biosynthetic gene clusters responsible for assembly of tirandamycins have been identified independently from two different species of *Streptomyces*.^{19,20} The hybrid polyketide synthase-nonribosomal peptide synthetase (PKS-NRPS) gene cluster (*tam*) is collinearly organized (Fig. 1). Based on detailed sequence analysis of individual domains using consensus sequence motifs as references, the predictions of the polyketide chain starter unit specified by the KS^O domain, the incorporation of a malonate or methylmalonate subunit by each acyltransferase domain (AT), the stereoselectivity of the ketoreductase domain (KR) catalyzed reduction at each β -keto position, and glycine incorporation by the NRPS module, seem to be consistent with tirandamycin structures. *In vitro* characterization of two tailoring enzymes encoded by *tam*, including the P450 monooxygenase TamI,¹³ and the FAD

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Table 1
 ^1H , ^{13}C and 2D NMR data of tirandamycin **7** in CDCl_3 .

No.	$\delta_{\text{C}}^{\text{a}}$	Type	δ_{H} , mult (J in Hz) ^a	^1H - ^1H COSY	HMBC	NOESY
1	175.4/177.0	C				
2	116.0/115.2	CH	7.15, d (15.6)/7.14, d (15.4)	3	1, 4	15
3	150.7/152.1	CH	7.57, d (15.7)/7.64, d (15.3)	2	1, 5, 15	5
4	134.1/134.3	C				
5	146.3/147.4	CH	6.16, d (10.3)/6.21, d (10.3)	6, 15	3, 15	3, 8
6	34.8	CH	2.87, m	5, 16	7	7, 8, 15, 16, 17
7	83.9	CH	2.94, dd (10.2, 2.5)	8	5	6, 9, 11, 16, 17
8	42.1	CH	1.15, m	7, 9, 17	17	5, 6, 10a
9	73.5	CH	3.35, td (10.2, 4.6)	8, 10a, 10b	11	7, 8, 10a, 11, 17
10a	38.3	CH ₂	2.06, br dd (12.3, 3.7)	9, 10b	9	8, 9, 10b, 11, 12, 18
10b			1.19, ddd (12.1, 11.7, 11.7)	9, 10a, 11	9, 11	10a, 12, 17
11	77.9	CH	3.47, td (10.0, 1.9)	10b, 12		7, ^b 9, 14, 10a, 18
12	51.6	CH	2.71, m	11, 18	11, 13	10a, 10b, 14
13	212.0	C				
14	30.3	CH ₃	2.22, s		13	12, 18
15	12.2	CH ₃	1.90, s	5	3, 4, 5	2, 6, 16
16	12.8	CH ₃	1.04, d (7.0)	6	5, 6, 7	7, 15
17	12.4	CH ₃	0.91, d (6.5)	8	7, 8, 9	6, 7, 9, 10a
18	17.9	CH ₃	1.03, d (7.0)	12	11, 12, 13	10a, 11, 14
2'	176.6/175.1	C				
3'	99.8/101.9 ^c	C				
4'	192.4/200.8	C				
5'	51.6/49.8	CH ₂	3.97, s/3.84, s		2', 4'	

^a Chemical shifts of tautomers of **ab** and **cd**, respectively; 400 MHz for ^1H NMR and 150 MHz for ^{13}C NMR spectra.

^b The NOESY correlation between H-11 and H-7 might be derived from conformational flexibility of the linear chain.

^c Signals were observed in ^{13}C NMR spectrum but related HMBC correlations could not be observed.

A comparison of the 1D NMR data of **7** (Table 1) and **3**¹² demonstrated that their eastern fragments (Fig. 2) including the tetramic acid ring (C-2'–C-5') and the backbone C-1–C-6 are highly similar to each other. In **7**, notably, the protons and carbon atoms at positions of C-2'–C-5' and C-1–C-6 gave rise to two sets of peaks and the doubling signals disappeared from C-6, which is consistent with the well-known tautomeric behavior of tetramic acids.¹ The split signals are generated by two pairs of slowly interconverting external tautomers (**ab** and **cd**) arising from the rotation of the acyl side chain (Fig. S2). The intensity ratio between tautomer **ab** and **cd** of **7** was found to be 1.5.

When comparing the western fragment of **7** and **3**, the proton chemical shift values of **7** (vs **3**) for H-7 (δ_{H} 2.94 vs δ_{H} 3.49), H-8 (δ_{H} 1.15 vs δ_{H} 1.84), H-9 (δ_{H} 3.35 vs δ_{H} 3.90), H-10_a (δ_{H} 2.06 vs δ_{H} 2.33), H-10_b (δ_{H} 1.19 vs δ_{H} 1.96), H-11 (δ_{H} 3.47 vs δ_{H} 5.70), H₃-14 (δ_{H} 2.22 vs δ_{H} 1.38), H₃-17 (δ_{H} 0.91 vs δ_{H} 0.68), and H₃-18 (δ_{H} 1.03 vs δ_{H} 1.61) were clearly distinct from the corresponding values of **3**¹², demonstrating a different sub-structure.

Significantly, the absence of proton signals from 4 to 6 ppm indicated that **7** lacks the unique β - γ olefin (C-11=C-12) found in **3**. Instead, an additional methine signal (H-12, δ_{H} 2.71, m) was observed, corresponding to the proton that would be removed upon a dehydration reaction leading to the C-11=C-12 double bond in **3**.

Comparative analysis of the ^1H - ^1H COSY spectra of **7** and **3** revealed similar correlation patterns (Fig. 2), suggesting that their backbone structures were closely related. Further examination of the ^1H - ^{13}C HMBC spectrum revealed correlations from the protons H-12 (δ_{H} 2.71), H₃-14 (δ_{H} 2.21), and H₃-18 (δ_{H} 1.03) to a carbonyl carbon (C-13, δ_{C} 211.83), which strongly suggested that the bicyclic ring should not be present in **7**. Thus, we proposed that **7** is a heretofore unknown tirandamycin pathway derived metabolite, and **7** would be analogous, yet distinct from the linear intermediate **8** (Fig. 1), which is predicted based on collinear annotation of the hybrid PKS-NRPS biosynthetic assembly-line.²⁰

Using the structure of **8** as a template, extensive analyses of ^1H and ^{13}C NMR data, and 2D correlations including ^1H - ^1H COSY, HSQC, and HMBC (Table 1 and Figs. S2–S6) enabled assignment of all protons and carbons for **7** in its planar structure (Fig. 2).

The most remarkable difference is the appearance of the C-9 hydroxy functionality in **7**, whereas the predicted structure **8** bears the C-8=C-9 olefin. The electrospray ionization-high resolution mass spectrometry (ESI-HRMS) data also supported the deduced chemical structure of **7**. As observed, the m/z values of 428.2040, 388.2115 (positive ion mode), and 404.2077 (negative ion mode) should correspond to $[\text{M}-\text{H}_2\text{O}+\text{Na}]^+$ (calc. 428.2049), $[\text{M}-2\text{H}_2\text{O}+\text{H}]^+$ (calc. 388.2124) and $[\text{M}-\text{H}_2\text{O}-\text{H}]^-$ (calc. 404.2073) of the molecular formula of **7** ($\text{C}_{22}\text{H}_{33}\text{NO}_7$), respectively.

The relative configurations of the adjacent (1,2) or alternate (1,3) stereocenters in the acyclic carbon chain of **7** were determined using a combination of $^3J_{\text{H,H}}$ coupling constant and NOE correlation analyses for each fragment progressively (Table 1 and Figs. S7–S13).²¹ First, the small coupling constant between H-6 and H-7 ($^3J_{\text{H-6,H-7}} = 2.5$ Hz) revealed a *gauche* arrangement of the two protons in Newman projection, and NOE correlations of H-5/H-8, H-6/H-8 and H-7/H₃-16 agreed with the *erythro* configuration of C-6 and C-7 in Fisher projection, which defined the $6R^*,7R^*$ configurations (Fig. S8). Similarly, the large coupling constant between H-7 and H-8 ($^3J_{\text{H-7,H-8}} = 10.2$ Hz) was consistent with an *anti* conformation in Newman projection, and NOE correlations of H-6/H-8, H-7/H-9, H-6/H-17 and H-7/H-17 revealed $7R^*,8S^*$ configurations (Fig. S9). The large coupling constant for H-8 and H-9 ($^3J_{\text{H-8,H-9}} = 10.4$ Hz) and NOE correlations of H-7/H-9, H-8/H-10, H-9/H-17 and H-10/H-17 were consistent with $8S^*,9S^*$ configurations (Fig. S10). As to the 1,3 alternate stereocenter from C-9 to C-11, the two fragments of C-9–C-10 and C-10–C-11 were deduced separately with the same logic. The small coupling constant of $^3J_{\text{H-9,H-10a}}$ (3.7 Hz) and the large value of $^3J_{\text{H-9,H-10b}}$ (10.2 Hz) revealed the *gauche* and *anti* arrangement for H-9/H-10a and H-9/H-10b in Newman projections (Fig. S11), respectively. The NOE correlation of H-8/H-10a, and H-9/H-11 revealed $9S^*,10a\text{-}proR^*$ configurations. Again, the small coupling constants between H-10a and H-11 ($^3J_{\text{H-10a,H-11}} = 1.9$ Hz) and the large value for H-10_b and H-11 ($^3J_{\text{H-10b,H-11}} = 10.0$ Hz), together with the NOE correlations of H-9/H-11, H-10a/H-12, and H-10b/H12 revealed $10a\text{-}proR^*,11R^*$ configurations (Fig. S12). Finally, the large coupling constant value of $^3J_{\text{H-11,H-12}}$ (10.1 Hz) and NOE correlations between H-10a and H₃-18 confirmed $11R^*,12R^*$ configurations (Fig. S13). The sum of these

analyses established relative configurations of $6R^*$, $7R^*$, $8S^*$, $9S^*$, $11R^*$, $12R^*$ for **7**. Based upon the absolute configuration of **2** ($6R$, $7R$, $8S$) determined from a crystal structure,²² we conclude that **7** takes the absolute configuration of $6R$, $7R$, $8S$, $9S$, $11R$, $12R$ (Fig. 1).

The new tirandamycin derivative **7** was isolated from the *Streptomyces* sp. 307–9 *AtamI* strain with a yield of approximately 0.9 mg/L. To address whether its production is associated with the absence of *tamI*, we re-visited the metabolic profile of the wild type *Streptomyces* sp. 307–9 strain and found **7** was also produced, albeit in a significantly lower yield than the *AtamI* strain (data not shown).

Complete characterization of the structure of **7**, the first identified linear tirandamycin derivative, enabled the determination of the stereochemistry at C-12, and allowed the unreduced keto group at C-13 (due to the putatively inactive KR domain in module 1) to be firstly observed, which is essential for formation of the bicyclic ring. The fact that **7** was released by the final NRPS TamD module strongly suggests that the chain release machinery does not require formation of the bicyclic ring. However, the possibility that the bicyclic ketal ring is formed prior to the chain release cannot be excluded. In addition, it is unclear if the formation of aberrant intermediate **7** is related to the type II thioesterase (TE) TamB presumably with proofreading activity²⁰ or the conserved hypothetical protein TamC (Fig. 1).

Compared to the structure of **8** predicted from the architecture of Tam PKS-NRPS assembly, **7** retains the C-9 hydroxyl group assumed to be removed by the dehydratase domain in module 3 (DH_3). Therefore, it is likely that DH_3 is skipped during biosynthesis of **7**. More surprisingly, the stereochemistry of the C-9 ($9S$ or 9^*S^*) and the C-11 ($11R$ or 11^*S^*) alcohol in **7** contradicts the B-type KR_3 and the B-type KR_2 (Fig. 1) that are predicted to establish the 9^*R^* ($9R$) and 11^*R^* ($11S$) stereochemistry²⁰ (the quotation marks denote a deviation from the classical *RS* system defined by Keatinge-Clay et al.²³) based on the presence of LDD motif.²⁴ Interestingly, this abnormal $11R$ configuration in **7** was also seen in **6** (Fig. 1).¹⁷ These inconsistencies point to modules 3 and 2, suggest-

ing that atypical events might occur during these two rounds of polyketide elongation and processing. This also leads to re-consideration of a previously proposed mechanism for bicyclic ketal ring formation in tirandamycin¹⁹ (and streptolydigin^{3,25}). Specifically, the $9R$ hydroxyl group was proposed to be required for nucleophilic attack of the C-13 carbonyl carbon. The resultant hemiketalization, dehydration and attack of the C-7 OH group on the oxonium ion would generate the bicyclic ketal (Fig. 3A).^{3,19} With respect to the catalyzing enzyme, it was hypothesized that DH_3 might play a significant role,¹⁹ which if correct would require ACP_4 to swing the linear pentaketide intermediate (**9**, Fig. 3) back to DH_3 through contact between ACP_4 and DH_3 . Although similar noncanonical contacts between ACP and DH domains from different modules have been previously reported in epothilone²⁶ and curacin²⁷ biosynthesis, the possibility of KR_4 providing the active site for bicyclic ring formation cannot be excluded. This hypothesis (Fig. 3A) is plausible and overrides another mechanism²⁰ (Fig. 3B) that we proposed before the publication of the streptolydigin biosynthetic gene cluster.³ The retention of C-9 oxygen is in good agreement with the previous [¹³C,¹⁸O]-labeled precursor feeding study for streptolydigin,²⁵ showing that the C-9/C-13 bridging ether oxygen originates from the C-9/C-10 acetate unit. Due to the high similarity between the tirandamycin and streptolydigin biosynthetic gene clusters, it is likely these two pathways share a common spiroketalization mechanism. However, the presence of DH_3 indeed raises the question whether and how the C-9 alcohol escapes the dehydratase activity. Identification of **7** bearing the C-9 hydroxy clearly indicates that DH_3 -catalyzed dehydration can be avoided, which provides important evidence to support the mechanism shown in Fig. 3A.

The abnormal stereochemistry of C-9 alcohol presumably installed by the B-type KR_3 with noncanonical stereoselectivity may explain why **7** escapes from the cyclization step since the incorrect configuration ($9S$) of the C-9 OH group might disfavor cyclization, thus making the pentaketide **10** skip the ring formation steps (Fig. 1). To our knowledge, there have been no previous

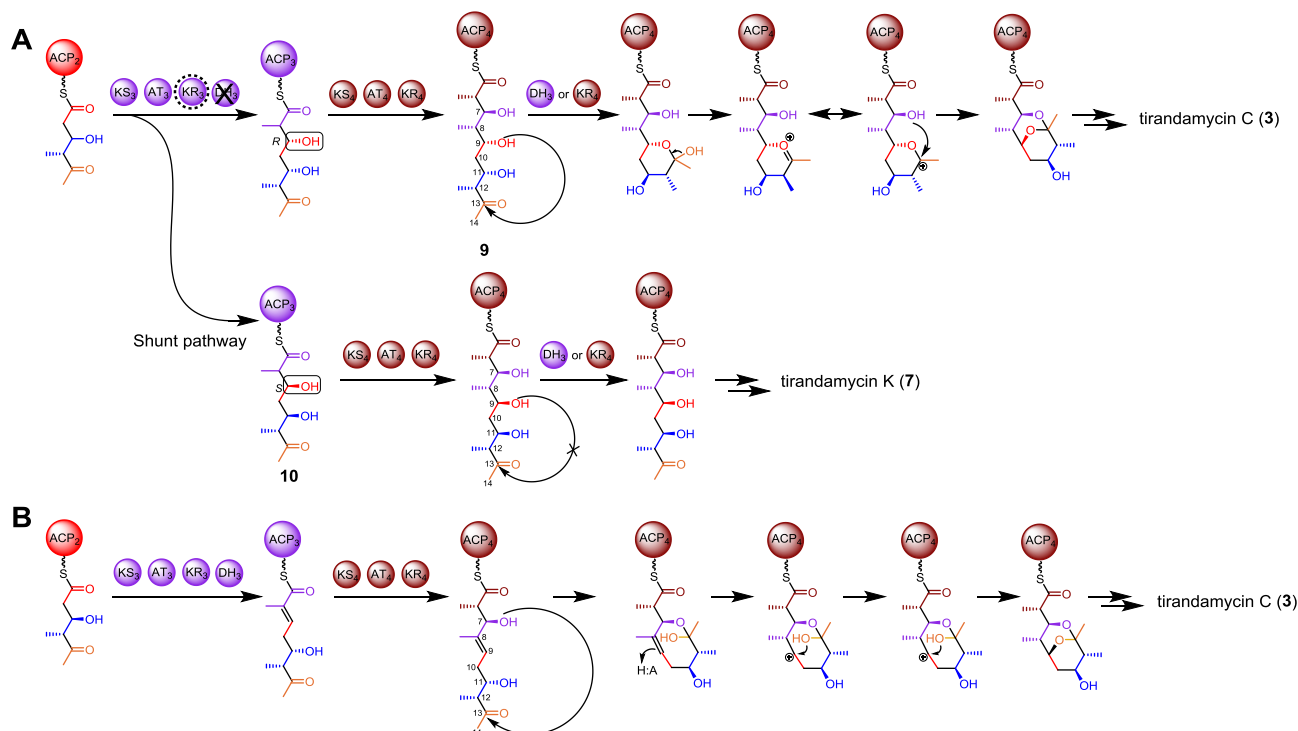


Figure 3. Two proposed mechanisms for bicyclic ketal ring formation in tirandamycin biosynthesis. Tirandamycin K (**7**) is proposed to be a shunt pathway product in this study.

Table 2
Biological activities of tirandamycin K (**7**) and C (**3**).

	Minimal inhibitory concentration (μM)	
	Tirandamycin K (7)	Tirandamycin C (3)
<i>Escherichia coli</i> TolC mutant W3110	100	0.78
<i>Staphylococcus aureus</i> ATCC 6538P	>400	12.5
Multidrug resistant <i>S. aureus</i> (MRSA)	>400	25
Vancomycin-resistant <i>enterococci</i> (VRE)	200	12.5

reports of an LDD motif containing a B-type ketoreductase domain aberrantly catalyzing keto group reduction to establish the opposite stereochemistry. Exceptions have only been observed when unnatural polyketide analogs were employed prior to this study.^{23,28} It could be speculated that an unusual event might occur when the triketide intermediate carried by ACP₂ binds to the catalytic groove of KR₃. Some specific active site residues, or an atypical dynamic conformation of KR₃ may account for the “incorrect” stereochemistry.

Finally, the antibacterial activity of **7** against a select group of Gram-negative and Gram-positive strains including the *Escherichia coli* W3110 TolC disruption mutant strain, the *Staphylococcus aureus* 8325 NorA disruption mutant strain, the *S. aureus* ATCC 6538P, and the vancomycin-resistant *Enterococci* (VRE), was evaluated using **3** as a control. It was found that **7** was much less potent than **3** toward all four strains (Table 2). Together with the facts that all known bioactive tirandamycins contain a bicyclic ketal ring system,^{11–17} and the analogous ketal ring in streptolydigin provides key contacts with its molecular target RNA polymerase,¹⁸ we suggest that the bicyclic ketal moiety should be necessary for the antibacterial activity of tirandamycins.

In summary, we have identified tirandamycin K (**7**) as the first tirandamycin derivative without the bicyclic ketal system. Its discovery has motivated us to re-interrogate the tirandamycin biosynthetic pathway, which suggests that the DH₃ (or KR₄) domain is likely to be a key element for bicyclic ketal formation. To test this hypothesis, *in vitro* and *in vivo* characterization of the enzymatic functions of DH₃ and KR₄ will be required, and are currently ongoing in our laboratories.

Acknowledgments

This work was supported by National Natural Science Foundation of China under grant numbers of 21472204 to S.L. and

31300075 to W.Z., NIH of United States Grant R35 GM118101 to D.H.S., and the Youth Innovation Promotion Association of CAS (2015166) to W.Z. We also thank the financial support from the Applied Basic Research Programs of Science and Technology of Qingdao (14-2-4-10-jch).

A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data associated with this article can be found, in the online version, at <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.tetlet.2016.11.080>.

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