Differentiation between the 25R- and 25S-isomers of 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol by 13C NMR spectroscopy

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Summary This study was designed to examine whether 13C nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectroscopy can be used to differentiate between the 25R and 25S diastereoisomers of 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol, a key intermediate in the biosynthetic pathway of chenodeoxycholic acid. Chemical shift values were assigned to the individual carbon atoms with the help of model compounds and multiplicity in the single-frequency off-resonance decoupled spectra. It was found that the corresponding carbons 1–20 afforded identical chemical shifts for both compounds, whereas five of the remaining side-chain carbons gave observed shift differences of 0.05–0.20 ppm. Thus 13C NMR can be used as an additional tool to distinguish between the two 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol isomers at C-25.


Supplementary key words stereospecificity of 26-hydroxylation reactions in bile acid synthesis.

The generally accepted mechanism whereby the cholesterol side chain is degraded to form bile acids involves 26-hydroxylated intermediates (1, 2). The hydroxylation at C-26 is accompanied by the introduction of asymmetry at C-25 and thus, two diastereoisomers, 25R and 25S of the corresponding bile
alcohols are possible. Recent studies in our laboratory on the biosynthetic pathway of chenodeoxycholic acid (3, 4) have demonstrated that the microsomal and mitochondrial 26-hydroxylase systems in rat and human liver follow a stereochemical course during the formation of 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol (25R and 25S). The two triols have been synthesized in the laboratory (5) and show identical GLC and mass spectral characteristics. They can only be separated by multiple development thin-layer chromatography (5) and the configuration at C-25 has been assigned by comparison of their molecular rotation differences with those of (25R and 25S)-5β-cholestan-3α,7α,12α,26-tetrols (6). Lida et al. (7) have described a proton magnetic resonance method for assignment of configuration to epimeric secondary alcohols in sterols but the validity of their method in the case of primary alcohols has yet to be established. Recently, 13C NMR spectroscopy has been employed to assign the pro-R and pro-S configuration to the terminal methyl groups in cholesterol side chain (8, 9). The present report describes the differentiation between (25R) and (25S) 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triols by this technique.

Materials and methods

Preparation of compounds: (25R)- and (25S)-5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triols were synthesized according to Dayal et al. (5). (25R)-5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol had a melting point of 155-157°C and [α]D25 = +15.9°, and (25S)-5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol had a melting point of 138-140°C and [α]D25 = +8.8°. 2-Methylpentanol was obtained from Union Carbide Chemical Co., Hackensack, NJ.

13C NMR spectra: The isomeric bile alcohols (10 mg) were each dissolved in 0.35 ml CDCl3 containing 1% tetramethylsilane (Me4Si) (v/v) as an internal reference. The 13C NMR spectra were recorded at 25.2 MHz.

Fig. 1. Proton noise-decouples 13C NMR spectrum of (25R) 5β-cholestane-3α,7α,26-triol. Assignment of chemical shifts to individual carbons is shown in Table 1.
Table 1. $^{13}$C NMR chemical shifts for (25R) and (25S) 5β-cholestan-3α,7α,26-triols

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Carbon</th>
<th>δ Values</th>
<th>Carbon</th>
<th>δ Values</th>
<th>Carbon</th>
<th>δ Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1      | 35.34 (T)
| 2      | 30.62 (T)
| 3      | 71.82 (D)
| 4      | 39.71 (T)
| 5      | 41.51 (D)
| 6      | 34.59 (T)
| 7      | 68.40 (D)
| 8      | 39.34 (D)
| 9      | 32.84 (D)
| 10     | 35.01 (S)
|        |          |        |          | (25R)   | (25S)   |
| 11     | 20.60 (T) | 12     | 39.71 (T) | 21     | 35.74 (D) |
| 13     | 12.60 (T) | 14     | 50.41 (D) | 22     | 36.11 (T) |
| 15     | 23.67 (T) | 16     | 28.30 (T) | 23     | 23.33 (T) |
| 17     | 18.66 (Q) | 18     | 56.07 (D) | 24     | 33.55 (T) |
| 19     | 22.80 (Q) | 20     | 39.71 (T) | 25     | 35.74 (D) |
| 21     | 18.71 (Q) | 22     | 36.21 (D) | 26     | 68.26 (T) |
| 23     | 23.33 (T) | 24     | 68.10 (T) | 27     | 16.53 (Q) |
| 25     | 35.74 (D) | 26     | 68.40 (T) | 28     | 16.73 (Q) |

Note: Chemical shifts were measured in ppm relative to tetramethylsilane.

The multiplicity of peaks in the $^{13}$C NMR spectra is expressed as S, singlet; D, doublet; T, triplet; Q, quartet.

Values obtained for (25R) 5β-cholestan-3α,7α,26-triol. Individual assignment to C-4 and C-12 could not be made in this case.

MHz using a Fourier-transform-equipped Varian XL-100 spectrometer. All samples were analyzed in tubes (5 mm o.d.) at probe ambient temperatures of 27°C. The number of spectral accumulations were 58–60 K and the interferograms were accumulated with 8 K of memory. Sweep widths of 6000 Hz or 5500 Hz were used, corresponding to 1.33 Hz per address (0.06 ppm) or 1.45 Hz per address (0.05 ppm). Chemical shifts are expressed in parts per million (ppm) relative to Me₄Si as internal standard. The $^{13}$C NMR

Fig. 2. Proton noise-decoupled $^{13}$C NMR spectrum of (25S) 5β-cholestan-3α,7α,26-triol. Assignment of chemical shifts to individual carbons is shown in Table 1. Peaks of small magnitude at 829.68, 58.06, and 60.86 ppm are due to impurities.
Fig. 3. Proton noise-decoupled 13C NMR spectrum of a mixture of the (25R) and (25S) isomers of 3β-cholestan-5β-ol 3a,7a,26-triol. Peaks due to carbon atoms in the side-chain (including C-17) are also shown in expanded plots. Peaks of small magnitude at 615.46, 68.12, 29.66, and 65.81 are due to impurities.
spectra were first recorded in the proton noise-decoupling mode in order to measure the exact chemical shifts of all the $^{13}$C nuclei present. The degree of substitution of each carbon atom was determined by obtaining a second series of spectra in the single-frequency off-resonance (sfor) proton decoupling mode.

**Results and discussion**

The chemical shift data for the two $5\beta$-cholestane-3$\alpha,7\alpha,26$-triols and for a mixture of the two triols are given in Table 1 and their $^{13}$C NMR spectra are shown in Figs. 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The substituents attached to the various carbon atoms could be determined from a detailed study of the sfor spectra and the sfor $^{13}$C NMR spectrum of (25S) $5\beta$-cholestane-3$\alpha,7\alpha,26$-triol is shown in Fig. 4. The observed multiplicity of the peaks facilitated the assignment of chemical shifts to the various carbon atoms and has been incorporated in Table 1, along with the chemical shifts.

As seen from this table, the resonances due to all the 27 carbons were resolved, except for two pairs (carbons 4 and 12 and carbons 20 and 25) in case of (25S) $5\beta$-cholestane-3$\alpha,7\alpha,26$-triol and one pair (carbons 20 and 25) in case of (25R) $5\beta$-cholestane-3$\alpha,7\alpha,26$-triol. Resonances due to carbons 4 and 12 were identical when the 25S and the 25R isomers were mixed together.

Using methyl 3$\alpha,7\alpha$-dihydroxy-5$\beta$-cholan-24-oate as a model compound (10), the carbons C-1 to C-20 could be systematically assigned, based on the multiplicity of the signals in the sfor spectra and comparison of chemical shifts. 2-Methylpentanol served as a model (Fig. 5) for the assignment of chemical shift values to carbons C-24 to C-27 in the side chain. A $\gamma$-effect of C-20 ($-2.69$ ppm) and $\delta$-effect of C-17 and C-21 (+0.25 ppm each) (11) were taken into account for assignment of C-24. Carbons 21, 22 and 23 gave chemical shifts similar to those observed for the

![Fig. 4](image)

**Fig. 4.** sfor $^{13}$C NMR spectrum of (25S) $5\beta$-cholestane-3$\alpha,7\alpha,26$-triol. The sfor spectrum between $831$–$43$ ppm is also shown in an expanded plot.

![Fig. 5](image)

**Fig. 5.** Observed $^{13}$C NMR chemical shifts for C-1, C-2, C-2' and C-3 in 2-methylpentanol.
cholesterol side chain (12, 13), carbon 23 was upfield by 0.6 ppm due to the δ-effect of the -OH group at C-26.

As expected, the two compounds showed identical chemical shifts for carbons C-1 to C-20, being far away from the chiral carbon C-25, and shift differences were observed only for carbons in the side chain as pointed out in Fig. 3. Identity in chemical shifts was found for the chiral carbons C-20 and C-25, but not for the adjacent carbons, except for C-17, for which the shift difference was too small to be resolved. Thus, the oxygenated carbon C-26 showed a downfield shift (+0.16 ppm) for the 25R compared to the 25S isomer, whereas the non-oxygenated carbons C-2, C-21, C-22, C-24, and C-27 exhibited upfield shifts (−0.05, −0.10, −0.13, and −0.20 ppm, respectively). Carbon-23, furthest from both asymmetric carbons (C-20 and C-25) in the side chain, was isochronous in the spectra of the two compounds.

13C NMR spectroscopy can thus be used to study the stereospecificity of microsomal and mitochondrial 26-hydroxylation in bile acid biosynthesis. However, it may sometimes be necessary to use precursors enriched in 13C since it is difficult to isolate milligram quantities from biological tissues.

The authors appreciate the help of Dr. M. Uskokovic of Hoffmann-La Roche in obtaining the 13C NMR spectra. This work was supported by U.S. Public Health Service grants AM-18707, HL-17818, and AM-19696.

Manuscript received 6 March 1979 and in revised form 20 August 1979; accepted 21 September 1979.

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