Design, Synthesis, and Evaluation of Bicyclic Peptides as Ammonium Ionophores

By

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Abstract

A series of bicyclic peptides have been designed and synthesized to provide ammonium ion complexation sites via hydrogen bonding in a tetrahedral geometry. Molecular modeling dynamics and electrostatics studies indicate that target compounds **1d-6d** may provide better selectivity for ammonium ions over potassium ions than the ammonium ionophore currently used for blood analysis applications, nonactin. Attempts to synthesize 1d, $cyclo(L-Glu^1-D-Val^2-L-Ala^3-D-Lys^4-D-Val^5-L-Val^6)$ -cyclo-(1 γ - 4ϵ), were unsuccessful due to poor solubility of the synthetic intermediates. This led to the design of **2d-6d** in which specific amino acid residues were chosen to provide higher solubility. Compound 2d, cyclo(L-Glu¹—D-Ala²—D-Ala³—L-Lys⁴—D-Ala⁵—L-Ala⁶)cyclo- $(1\gamma-4\epsilon)$, was successfully synthesized, but was also too insoluble for characterization or testing in an ion selective electrode (ISE) sensor format. Compound $cyclo(L-Glu^1-D-Leu^2-Aib^3-L-Lys^4-D-Leu^5-D-Ala^6)-cyclo-(1\gamma-4\epsilon),$ 6d. was successfully synthesized and characterized. When 6d was incorporated into an ISE sensor and tested as an ammonium ionophore, results indicated that the bicyclic peptide lacked solubility in the ISE membrane. A ¹³C-NMR study has been initiated in order to evaluate selectivity of 6d for ammonium over potassium and sodium cations in solution. Preliminary results with the potassium ionophore valinomycin as a control have been completed.

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1 Introduction

The levels of urea and creatinine in blood are important diagnostic indicators of renal, thyroid, and muscle function.¹ Significant effort has been expended in developing reliable sensors for the detection of these analytes. At the present time, urea and creatinine levels are measured indirectly following enzyme-catalyzed hydrolysis to produce ammonium ions. Typically, measurement of ammonium ion concentrations is achieved by carrier-based ion selective electrodes (ISEs) containing the natural antibiotic nonactin as an ionophore.² In ISEs, a highly viscous liquid membrane (such as plasticized PVC) lies between the aqueous sample containing the ion and an internal electrolyte solution. The membrane is doped with a selective ion carrier (nonactin in the case of ammonium) and a lipophilic salt that acts as an ion exchanger. The potential that develops at the membrane/sample interface is proportional to the activity (concentration) of ammonium ions in the aqueous sample.³

The two key properties of any ion sensor are sensitivity to the desired ion in the required concentration range and selectivity for one specific ion over all other interfering ions, properties that are primarily imparted by the ionophore. As an ammonium ionophore, nonactin, shown in **Figure 1**, forms four hydrogen bonds from its ethereal oxygens to the ammonium ion.⁴ Nonactin-based ISEs show reasonable selectivity for ammonium over sodium ions (log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -2.4$)⁴, but only modest selectivity over potassium ions (log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -2.4$)⁴. For this reason, much effort has focused on the development of new

ammonium ionophores, particularly with increased selectivity over potassium ions to improve accuracy of ammonium ion determinations in the presence of potassium ions.⁴



Figure 1: Nonactin, the current industry standard ammonium ionophore

In designing ammonium ionophores, there are three main factors to consider. The first is size-fit requirements. A rigid framework with a cavity appropriately sized for ammonium ion (ionic radius 1.43 Å)⁵ is necessary to impart high selectivity over interfering cations of other sizes.^{6,7} If the substrate is too flexible, it can change conformations to allow coordination with larger and smaller cations besides the desired ion. In addition, complexation is thermodynamically more favorable when the ionophore is conformationally preorganized into the correct binding geometry in order to minimize the entropic cost of cation binding.³ Secondly, the ammonium ionophore should exhibit a spatial distribution of lone-pair electrons for effective hydrogen bonding with the tetrahedral ammonium ion.⁶ Interfering potassium ions are of similar size $(1.33 \text{ Å})^5$ to ammonium ions, but have spherical symmetry and therefore prefer ionic bonds with coordination numbers of six or higher.² For this reason, the coordination geometry is responsible for imparting selectivity for ammonium over potassium ions. Lastly, the

ionophore should be highly lipophilic⁶ in order to be compatible with the nonpolar membrane environment⁸ of ion selective electrodes and to prevent extraction of the ionophore from the sensor during testing.³

One of the earliest ammonium ionophores exhibiting some of these design elements was the spherical macrotricyclic cryptand reported by Lehn et al.⁵ (shown in Figure 2). This compound exhibited extremely high ammonium over potassium ion selectivity (250 times higher than nonactin) as determined by NMR studies and formed highly stable ammonium complexes (10^5 times higher than nonactin) as calculated by pH metric titration to determine stability constants in aqueous solution. The high selectivity over potassium ion has been attributed to the tetrahedral binding site geometry that favors complexation of the tetrahedral ammonium ion over that of the spherically symmetrical potassium ion. In addition, the macrocyclic nature of the cryptand provides the rigidity necessary to prevent complexation of larger and smaller interfering cations. However, the cryptand is too basic (it exists in its conjugate acid form near neutral blood pH) and hydrophilic (it would leach from the membrane into the aqueous phase during sensor operation) for use as an ionophore in an ISE sensor format.² In addition, this system exhibits a very low dissociation constant indicating very slow cation exchange. For this reason, the cryptand is effectively an ammonium ion sink, whereas an ISE sensor application requires reversible ion binding.⁸



Figure 2: Lehn's macrotricyclic cryptand

Chin et al. reported a rationally designed ammonium receptor, 1,3,5-tris(3,5dimethylpyrazol-1-ylmethyl)-2,4,6-triethyl benzene (shown in **Figure 3**).² This ionophore was designed to have the lone pair electrons on the imine nitrogens preorganized into the correct geometry for binding ammonium ions through hydrogen bonds. The ethyl and methyl groups provide steric interactions to force the receptor into the desired geometry and to block the ligands from binding potassium ions. This ionophore was highly selective (log $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -2.6$ (nonactin -1.0)⁴, log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -2.8$ (nonactin -2.6)⁴) in an ISE sensor format. However, the ammonium detection limit was 10^{-4} M (100 times higher than nonactin) and therefore the sensor was not sufficiently sensitive.⁹ A sensor for blood analysis applications must exhibit sufficient sensitivity to detect lower limits of normal urea and creatinine blood concentrations, which are 1 x 10^{-3} M and 5 x 10^{-5} M respectively.¹⁰



Figure 3: 1,3,5-tris(3,5-dimethylpyrazol-1-ylmethyl)-2,4,6-triethyl benzene ammonium ionophore

Suzuki et al. have synthesized an ammonium ionophore based on a 19-membered crown ether containing three decalino subunits (shown in **Figure 4**).⁶ The decalino subunits add rigidity to prevent folding of the receptor to coordinate smaller cations, add bulkiness to block larger interfering cations from entering the cavity, and also increase the lipophilicity of the ionophore. In an ISE sensor format, this ionophore exhibited similar ammonium over potassium ion selectivity (log $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -1.00$ (nonactin $-1.0)^4$) and increased ammonium over sodium ion selectivity (log $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -3.52$ (nonactin $-2.6)^4$) compared to nonactin and a nearly Nernstian response (58.1 mV/decade) in the activity range 5 x $10^{-6} - 10^{-1}$ M ammonium ion. The observation of Nernstian behavior is particularly important. The relation between the potential difference across the sensor membrane and the activity of ammonium ion should follow the well-known Nernst equation (**Equation 1**):

$$E = E^{\circ} - (2.303 RT/nF) \log a$$
 (1)

Here, E is the electromotive force (emf) of the cell in volts, E° is the emf cell constant, F is the Faraday constant, *a* is the activity of the analyte, n is the charge of the measured species, R is the gas constant, and T is the temperature. This equation is in the form of y = mx + b and therefore a plot of E versus log *a* will give a straight line with a slope of 2.303RT/nF. For the measurement of monovalent cations at 25°C, n = 1 and the slope becomes 59.16 mV/dec. Thus an ISE that measures ammonium ion and operates according to the Nernst equation should exhibit a slope of 59.16 mV/dec.



Figure 4: 19-crown-6 ether with decalino subunits

Nam et al. have reported a thiazole containing dibenzo-18-crown-6 derivative (shown in **Figure 5**) as an ammonium ionophore in an ISE sensor format.⁹ This design is primarily based on size-fit factors. The aromatic units increase rigidity and the thiazoles provide hydrogen bonding sites. This ionophore exhibited high selectivity (log $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -1.3$ (nonactin -1.0)⁴, log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -3.9$ (nonactin -2.6)⁴) and a similar detection limit of ~ 3 x 10⁻⁶ M compared to nonactin (10⁻⁶ M)⁶ in an ISE sensor format.



Figure 5: Dibenzo-18-crown-6 ether with thiazole subunits

Kim et al. designed and synthesized an ammonium receptor based on both hydrogen bonding and cation- π interactions, consisting of two benzene rings held rigidly together by three benzocrown ether units as shown in **Figure 6**.⁶ This ionophore design involves a rigid cavity of the appropriate size containing a spatial distribution of ether lone pair electrons for tetrahedral coordination to ammonium along with cation- π interactions provided by the top and bottom benzene rings. Compared to nonactin-based sensors, ISEs doped with this ionophore exhibited similar selectivity (log $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -0.97$ (nonactin -1.0)⁴, log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -3.00$ (nonactin -2.6)⁴) and a similar detection limit of 3.2×10^{-6} M (nonactin (10^{-6} M)⁶).



Figure 6: Two benzene rings held together by three benzocrown ether units

McGimpsey et al. have designed and synthesized an ammonium ionophore for an ISE based on a cyclic depsipeptide structure.⁸ The design of this ionophore was inspired by valinomycin, the naturally occurring antibiotic having a high selectivity for potassium ions. Valinomycin, a cyclic depsipeptide consisting of alternating amide and ester linkages (12 total) (shown in **Figure 7a**), preorganizes through hydrogen bonding of its amide carbonyl groups to form a pocket with its six ester carbonyl oxygens available for electrostatic stabilization of potassium ions through octahedral-type complexation.¹¹ The new ionophore (shown in **Figure 7b**) consists of alternating amide and ester units (6 total), which is effectively half of a valinomycin molecule. Unlike valinomycin, this depsipeptide is too rigid to fold upon itself and therefore provides a cavity appropriately sized for ammonium ions, which provides the tetrahedral complexation geometry required for ammonium ion binding, but not the octahedral binding geometry required by potassium ions. ISE sensors incorporating this ionophore exhibited similar selectivity for ammonium over potassium and sodium ions compared to nonactin-based sensors (log

 $K_{NH_4^+,K^+} = -0.6$ (nonactin -1.0)⁴, log $K_{NH_4^+,Na^+} = -2.1$ (nonactin -2.4)⁴) and a nearly Nernstian response (60.1 mV/decade at 37°C).



Figure 7: (a) Valinomycin (b) new depsipeptide ammonium ionophore

Cyclic peptides are known to bind and transport metal cations in biological systems.¹² Their ease of synthesis and potential for flexible sequence modification make them good candidates for new ionophores.¹³ However, ordinary cyclic peptides are too flexible to bind substrates in a well-defined cavity¹⁴, leading to low selectivity as sensor components. The addition of a second ring in bicyclic peptides should increase cation binding selectivity by increasing rigidity. Andreu et al. have synthesized cyclo(1,5- ε -succinoyl) (Lys-Gly-Gly)₂ (shown in **Figure 8a**) which exhibits a slight preference for binding Sr²⁺ over other cations.¹³ Zanotti et al. have reported synthesis, conformation, and calcium-binding studies for the bicyclic nonapeptides cyclo(Glu¹-X²-

Pro³-Gly⁴-Lys⁵-X⁶-Pro⁷-Gly⁸)-cyclo- $(1\gamma \rightarrow 5\epsilon)$ Gly⁹, where X = Ala or Leu (shown in **Figure 8b**).^{15,16}



Figure 8: (a) cyclo(1,5- ε -succinoyl) (Lys-Gly-Gly-Gly)₂ (b) cyclo(Glu¹-X²-Pro³-Gly⁴-Lys⁵-X⁶-Pro⁷-Gly⁸)-cyclo-(1 $\gamma \rightarrow 5\varepsilon$) Gly⁹, where X = Ala or Leu

Our research has been directed toward the synthesis and evaluation of new bicyclic peptide ammonium ionophores with predicted ammonium over potassium ion selectivity greater than the industry standard nonactin in an ISE sensor format in order to improve the accuracy of ammonium ion determinations in the presence of potassium ions for clinical evaluation of urea and creatinine levels. The ease of synthesis and demonstrated cation-binding ability make bicyclic peptides promising candidates. Molecular modeling suggests the target compounds 1d, 2d, 3d, 4d, 5d, and 6d shown in Figure 9 should exhibit tetrahedral coordination geometry in a cavity appropriately sized for ammonium ions.



Figure 9: Target bicyclic peptide ammonium ionophores

The naming system for these compounds is based on their preparation from three important synthetic precursors, as shown in **Figure 10** for target **1d** (applicable to all target compounds).



Figure 10: General synthetic scheme for target compound 1d

2 Experimental

2.1 General Methods and Materials

Mass spectra were performed by Synpep Corp. (Dublin, CA) and Bayer Diagnostics Analytical Department (Medfield, MA). ¹H and ¹³C-NMR were recorded on a Bruker Avance 400. All Fmoc-protected amino acids, all Wang resins, benzotriazole-1-yl-oxytris-pyrrolidino-phosphonium hexafluorophosphate (PyBOP), and 1-hydroxybenzotriazole hydrate (HOBT) were purchased from Calbiochem-Novabiochem Corp. All solvents and reagents were analytical reagent grade, purchased from local suppliers, and used as received without further purification. Buffers were prepared with deionized water (18 M Ω ·cm).

2.2 Molecular Modeling Calculations

Molecular modeling was performed on an SGI 320 running Windows NT, as previously reported.⁸ Calculations were carried out using the Molecular Operating Environment version 2000.02 computing package (Chemical Computing Group Inc., Montreal, PQ, Canada). Structures were minimized first using the AMBER94 potential control under a solvent dielectric of 5. PEF95SAC was used to calculate partial charges. Minimized structures were then subjected to a 30-ps molecular dynamics simulation employing the NVT statistical ensemble. The structures were heated to 400 K, equilibrated at 310 K, and cooled to 290 K in the dynamics thermal cycle at a rate of 10 K/ps. The lowest energy structures obtained from these dynamics calculations were then minimized again.

Using the minimized structures, docking energies of the ammonium and the potassium cations were calculated by employing the default parameters supplied with the program.

2.3 Synthesis

The synthetic scheme for target compound 1d is shown in Scheme 1.









2.3.1 Synthesis of 1a

Solid phase peptide synthesis was carried out on 5 g of Fmoc-Ala-Wang resin (0.41 mmol/g loading). The resin was swelled by adding 30 mL DMF and mixing with N₂ for 30 min., at which point the DMF was removed by aspiration. The resin-bound N-Fmoc protected alanine was deprotected with 20% piperidine in DMF (30 mL, 10 min.). The solution was removed by aspiration and the resin was washed 3x with 30 mL DMF, 3x with 30 mL MeOH, 1x with 30 mL EtOH, and vacuum dried. A Kaiser test was performed by adding 2 drops of each of three solutions to a few resin beads and heating in the oven for 3-4 min. The solutions were prepared by dissolving 5 g of ninhydrin in 100 mL EtOH, dissolving 80 g of phenol in 20 mL EtOH, and adding 2 mL of a 0.001 M aqueous solution of potassium cyanide to 98 mL pyridine.¹⁷ A positive Kaiser test for free amine, as indicated by blue beads, confirmed successful deprotection. The resin was reswelled in 30 mL of DMF mixed with N₂ for 10 min. 2.60 g (2.5 eq) Fmoc-D-Lys(Z), 2.67 g (2.5 eq) PyBOP, 0.69 g (2.5 eq) HOBT, and 1.8 mL (5 eq) diisopropylethylamine (DIPEA) were dissolved in 5 mL DMF and added to the prepared resin. The total volume was increased to 30 mL and mixed with N₂ for 4 hr. at which time the solution was removed by aspiration and the resin was rinsed 3x with DMF, 3x with MeOH, 1x with EtOH, and vacuum dried. A negative Kaiser test confirmed complete coupling. This [deprotection - rinses - Kaiser test - coupling reaction - rinses - Kaiser test] cycle was repeated for the remaining four amino acid residues to give (Resin)-(L-Ala)-(D-Lys(Z))—(D-Val)—(L-Val)—(L-Glu(OBzl))—(D-Val-Fmoc). In the event of incomplete coupling, as indicated by a positive Kaiser test, the coupling reaction was repeated. The terminal valine residue was deprotected and a Kaiser test was performed to confirm successful deprotection. The resin was rinsed 3x with DMF, 3x with MeOH, 2x with DMF, 2x with MeOH, and vacuum dried.

The linear peptide was cleaved from the resin with 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/triisopropylsilane (TIS) 95/2.5/2.5 over 2.5 hr. by mixing with N₂. The peptide solution was removed by aspiration and concentrated down to a few mL's. Cold ether precipitated the linear peptide as a white solid, which was collected by filtration. The peptide was dissolved in MeOH and reprecipitated twice to obtain 1.2 g (67% yield) of a white powder. ¹H and ¹³C-NMR and ESI MS of this and subsequent compounds may be found in **Appendix A**. ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO), δ 0.64-1.02 (m, 18H), 1.13-1.68 (m, 9H), 1.75-2.15 (m, 5H), 2.28-2.51 (m, 2H), 2.88-3.02 (m, 2H), 4.10-4.56 (m, 7H), 5.00 (s, 2H), 5.08 (s, 2H), 7.17-7.51 (m, 12H), 7.65-8.18 (m, 7H), 8.42 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, DMSO), δ 17.7, 17.9, 18.2, 18.2, 18.7, 18.9, 19.7 (CH₃), 22.9, 28.1, 29.4 (CH₂), 30.3 (CH), 30.4 (CH₂), 30.8, 31.1 (CH), 32.2, 40.5 (CH₂), 47.8, 52.2, 52.7, 57.7, 57.7, 58.2 (CH), 65.5, 65.9 (CH₂), 128.1, 128.3, 128.4, 128.7, 128.8 (CH, Ar), 136.5, 137.6 (C, Ar), 156.4, 168.5, 170.9, 171.0, 171.1, 171.4, 172.3, 174.3 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₄₄H₆₆N₇O₁₁ (M+H⁺) 868.5 found 868.2 (100).

2.3.2 Synthesis of 1b

The 1.20 g (1.38 mmol) of linear peptide **1a** was dissolved in approximately 450 mL DMF and 50 mL benzene. 0.682 g (1.3 eq) O-(7-Azabenzotriazole-1-yl)-N,N,N',N'- tetramethyluronium hexafluorophosphate (HATU), 0.244 g (1.3 eq) 1-Hydroxy-7-

azabenzotriazole (HOAT), and 2.4 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL of DMF was added and the solution was stirred for 24 hr. at room temperature. At this point, the DMF was removed in vacuo, 55-60 °C. The residue was dissolved in DCM and extracted 3x with 100 mL of saturated NaHCO₃, 3x with 100 mL of 10% citric acid, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The organic solution was concentrated completely, and then dissolved in MeOH. The peptide was precipitated with ether/hexanes at -4 °C and collected by filtration to give 170 mg (14% yield) of crude monocyclized peptide. Characterization by ¹H and ¹³C-NMR and ESI MS was inconclusive.

2.3.3 Synthesis of 1c

The 170 mg (0.200 mmol) of **1b** was combined with 30 mg from a previous synthesis and dissolved in 100 mL of MeOH. The benzyl protecting groups on the glutamic acid and lysine side chains were removed by using 0.2 g of Pd activated carbon (10 wt%), and H₂ at atmospheric pressure while stirring the solution for 3 hr. The spent catalyst was removed by filtration and the solution was concentrated totally in vacuo, 40 °C. ¹H and ¹³C-NMR spectra in DMSO confirmed loss of benzyl groups. The 120 mg (96% yield) of peptide was used without further purification or characterization.

2.3.4 Synthesis of 1d

The 120 mg (0.192 mmol) of **1c** was stirred in 15 mL thionyl chloride for 1.5 hr. at which point the thionyl chloride was removed in vacuo. The residue was dissolved in benzene,

and then concentrated completely to remove residual thionyl chloride. The peptide acid chloride was dissolved in 30 mL DCM, to which 0.27 mL (10 eq) triethylamine (TEA) was added and the solution was stirred for 18 hr. at which point, the solution was concentrated completely, then redissolved in 5% MeOH/DCM. The addition of cold ether precipitated 20 mg of a brown solid which was collected by filtration. Characterization by ESI MS was inconclusive.

2.3.5 Synthesis of 2a

Solid phase synthesis was carried out on 5.035 g of Fmoc-Ala-Wang resin (0.41 mmol/g loading) for the amino acid sequence (L-Ala)—(L-Lys(Z))—(D-Ala)—(D-Ala)—(L-Glu(OBzl))—(D-Ala) using the same general solid phase methods described for compound **1a**.

The linear peptide was cleaved from the resin with 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/TIS 95/2.5/2.5 mixed with N₂ for 2.5 hr. The peptide solution was removed by aspiration and concentrated down to a few mL's. Cold ether precipitated the linear peptide as a white solid, which was collected by filtration. The peptide was dissolved in MeOH, precipitated with cold ether, and filtered to obtain 1.24 g (77% yield) of a white powder. R_f(RP) .35 (1.9:1 H₂O/MeCN); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO), δ 0.90-1.33 (m, 21H), 1.35-1.49 (m, 1H), 1.53-1.77 (m, 2H), 2.05-2.31 (m, 4H), 2.62-2.77 (m, 2H), 3.10-3.26 (m, 1H), 3.53-3.66 (m, 1H), 3.75-4.14 (m, 7H), 4.76 (s, 2H), 4.85 (s, 2H), 7.00 (t, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 1H), 7.03-7.22 (m, 10H, Ar), 7.67 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 1H), 7.75 (d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 1H), 7.83

(d, J = 7.1 Hz, 1H), 8.19 (d, J = 7.3 Hz, 1H), 8.59 (d, J = 8.1 Hz, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, DMSO), δ 17.9, 17.9, 18.4, 18.4 (CH₃), 22.8, 27.7, 29.4, 30.2, 32.0, 40.5 (CH₂), 48.4, 48.6, 48.6, 48.8, 52.1, 52.4 (CH), 65.5, 66.0 (CH₂), 128.1, 128.3, 128.4, 128.7, 128.8 (CH, Ar), 136.4, 137.6 (C, Ar), 156.4, 170.4, 170.8, 171.6, 172.1, 172.3, 172.3, 174.7 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₃₈H₅₄N₇O₁₁ (M+H⁺) 784.4 found 784.0 (100).

2.3.6 Synthesis of 2b

1.26 g (1.61 mmol) of **2a** was dissolved in 600 mL of DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.791 g (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.283 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 2.8 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL of DMF was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 4 hr., at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 55-60 °C. The residue was dissolved in MeOH and cold ether was added to precipitate a white solid, which was collected by filtration and redissolved in MeOH. A white solid that precipitated out of the MeOH solution was removed by filtration. The solution was concentrated completely and purified by reverse phase (C18) column chromatography (1.2:1 H₂O:MeCN) to obtain 250 mg (20% yield) of a white solid. $R_f(RP)$.31 (1.2:1 H₂O/MeCN); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, MeOD), δ 1.50-1.82 (m, 18H), 1.91-2.14 (m, 2H), 2.17-2.37 (m, 2H), 2.64-2.79 (m, 2H), 3.31-3.44 (m, 2H), 4.28-4.33 (m, 1H), 4.38-4.44 (m, 1H), 4.51-4.61 (m, 2H), 4.68-4.80 (m, 2H), 5.31 (s, 2H), 5.37 (s, 2H), 7.47-7.71 (m, 10H, Ar); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, MeOD), δ 17.4, 17.9, 18.1, 19.2 (CH₃), 24.4, 27.6, 30.9, 31.5, 32.2, 41.6 (CH₂), 50.0, 50.7, 51.0, 52.0, 55.0, 56.7 (CH), 67.8, 67.9 (CH₂), 129.2, 129.4, 129.6, 129.7, 129.9, 130.0 (CH, Ar), 137.9, 138.8 (C, Ar),

159.4, 174.3, 174.6, 174.6, 174.8, 174.8, 174.9, 175.9 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₃₈H₅₂N₇O₁₀ (M+H⁺) 766.4 found 766.3 (6), calcd. M+Na⁺ 788.4 found 788.3 (100).

2.3.7 Synthesis of 2c

250 mg of **2b** was combined with 120 mg from a previous synthesis for a total of 370 mg (0.483 mmol) and dissolved in 50 mL of MeOH. The benzyl protecting groups on the glutamic acid and lysine side chains were removed by using 0.2 g of Pd activated carbon (10 wt%), and H₂ at atmospheric pressure while stirring the solution for 3.5 hr. The spent catalyst was removed by filtration and the solution was concentrated completely. Analytical TLC with ninhydrin tests showed a product mixture and therefore the hydrogenation reaction was repeated for 3.5 hr. The product was 160 mg (61% yield) of a white solid. Essentially complete loss of benzyl protecting groups was confirmed by ¹H and ¹³C-NMR. The peptide was used without further purification or characterization.

2.3.8 Synthesis of 2d

160 mg (0.295 mmol) of **2c** was dissolved in 125 mL of DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.146 (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.052 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 0.52 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL of DMF was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 4 hr., at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 45° C. The residue was dissolved in MeOH and a white suspension was removed by centrifugation. The solution was concentrated completely and extracted 3x with DCM/H₂0. The aqueous portion was vacuum evaporated and

dissolved in 1:1:3 MeOH:EtOAc:DCM. The insoluble portion was removed by filtration. Again, the solution was concentrated completely, dissolved in MeOH, reprecipitated with cold ether, and collected by centrifugation 4x to obtain 45 mg (29% yield) of a yellow solid. This was redissolved in 50 mL of MeOH, cooled to 5 °C for 4 hr., and centrifuged to collect 10 mg of an insoluble white precipitate. ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for $C_{23}H_{37}N_7O_7Na$ (M+Na⁺) 546.3 found 546.3 (25) in the partially purified product (prior to the final precipitation from MeOH).

2.3.9 Synthesis of 3a

Solid phase synthesis was carried out on Wang resin (1.1 mmol/g loading) for the amino acid sequence (L-MeAla)—(L-Lys(Z))—(D-Ala)—(D-MeAla)—(L-Glu(OBzl))—(D-Ala). 2.803 g Wang resin was swelled in 30 mL DMF mixed with N₂ for 30 min. at which point the DMF was removed by aspiration. 3.006 g (3 eq) of Fmoc-MeAla was dissolved in 50 mL of dry DCM and stirred at 0 °C. 1.45 mL diisopropylcarbodiimide (DIPCDI) in 5 mL of DMF was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min. At this point, the solution was concentrated completely, dissolved in 5 mL DMF, and added to the resin. 0.038 g (0.1 eq) dimethylaminopyridine (DMAP) in DMF was added to the resin and the total volume was increased to 40 mL. The solution was mixed with N₂ for 1.5 hr. covered at room temperature. Loading of the first amino acid to the resin was evaluated by cleaving the Fmoc protection group from a known mass of resin (20 mg) in a 100 mL solution of 20% piperidine in DMF and monitoring the UV absorption at 290 nm. Using a molar extinction coefficient of 4950 a loading of 72% was obtained.

Stepwise addition of the next 5 amino acids was carried out according to the standard solid phase method described for compound **1a**. The Kaiser test was inconclusive for secondary amines, so completeness of reaction was monitored by UV absorption of Fmoc when coupling to resin-bound terminal MeAla residues. In addition, deprotection reactions were allowed longer reaction time (15-20 min.) and repeated.

The linear peptide was cleaved from the resin with 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/TIS 95/2.5/2.5 over 2.5 hr. by mixing with N_2 . The peptide solution was removed by aspiration and concentrated completely to yield an oil. ESI MS indicated that none of the desired product was formed.

The general scheme for synthesis of the intermediates **4a** and **4b** of target compound **4d** is shown in **Scheme 2**.







2.3.10 Synthesis of 4a

Solid phase synthesis was carried out on Wang resin (1.0 mmol/g loading) for the amino acid sequence (L-Glu-OAll)—(D-Ala)—(Aib)—(L-Lys(Z))—(Aib)—(D-Leu). 2.013 g Wang resin was swelled in 30 mL DMF mixed with N₂ for 30 min. at which point the DMF was removed by aspiration. 2.059 g (2.5 eq) of Fmoc-Glu-OAll was dissolved in 50 mL of dry DCM and stirred at 0 °C. 0.79 mL DIPCDI in 5 mL of DMF was added and the reaction mixture was stirred for 30 min., at which point the solution was concentrated completely, dissolved in 5 mL DMF, and added to the resin. 0.025 g (0.1 eq) DMAP in DMF was added to the resin and the total volume was increased to 40 mL. The solution was mixed with N₂ for 70 min. at room temperature. Loading of the first amino acid to the resin was evaluated by cleaving the Fmoc protecting group from a known mass of resin (20 mg) in a 100 mL solution of 20% piperidine in DMF and monitoring the UV absorption at 290 nm. Using a molar extinction coefficient of 4950 a loading of 59% was obtained. The resin was capped with 0.22 mL (2 eq to resinglutamic acid) acetic anhydride and 0.19 mL (2 eq to resin-glutamic acid) pyridine in 30 mL of DMF for 30 min. mixing with N_2 . Stepwise addition of the next 5 amino acids was carried out according to the solid phase method described for compound **1a**. The Kaiser test was inconclusive for aminoisobutyric acid free amine, so coupling reactions were repeated twice for 10 hr. for resin-bound terminal Aib residues.

The glutamic acid O-Allyl protecting group was removed according to a modified procedure.¹⁷ A solution of 5.398 g (3 eq) of tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium(0) dissolved in 67.5 mL (15 mL/g of resin) 37:2:1 chloroform/acetic acid/N-methylmorpholine (NMM) was added to the resin and mixed with N₂ for 2 hr. At this point, the solution was filtered off and the resin was subjected to a series of rinses: 30 mL 0.5% DIPEA in DMF, 3x 2 min.; 30 mL 0.5% sodium diethyldithiocarbamate in DMF, 3x 10 min.; 30 mL DMF, 1x 2 hr.; 30 mL DMF, 1x 10 min.; 30 mL 0.5% HOBT in DMF, 3x 5 min.; 30 mL DMF, 3x 1 min.; 30 mL MeOH, 3x 1 min.; 30 mL EtOH, 1x 1 min. The deprotection reaction was repeated and the resin was subjected to similar rinses.

2.3.11 Synthesis of 4b

The resin was swelled in 30 mL DMF mixing with N_2 for 30 min. to prepare for on-resin cyclization. 2.024 g (2.5 eq) PyBOP, 0.526 g (2.5 eq) HOBT, and 1.4 mL (5 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL DMF was added to the resin. The volume was increased to 50 mL and mixed with N_2 for 18.5 hr. The resin was subjected to the normal solid phase rinses and vacuum dried. The Kaiser test was weakly positive, indicating incomplete cyclization, so

the cyclization reaction was repeated for 23 hr. Again, the Kaiser test was weakly positive, so the reaction was repeated a third time for 6 hr. The resin was then rinsed and vacuum dried.

The peptide was cleaved from the resin with 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/TIS 95/2.5/2.5 over 2.5 hr. by mixing with N₂. The peptide solution was removed by aspiration and concentrated down to a few mL's. A white solid precipitated out with the addition of cold ether and was collected by centrifugation. The solid was dissolved in 1 mL MeOH. Added H₂O precipitated a white solid and the yellow solution was decanted off to give 60 mg (5% yield) of a white solid. ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for $C_{36}H_{56}N_7O_{10}$ (M+H⁺) 746.4 found 746.2 (4), calcd. M-(Z)+H⁺ 612.4 found 611.9 (100).

2.3.12 Synthesis of 5a

Solid phase synthesis was carried out on 5.228 g D-Ala-Wang resin (0.72 mmol/g loading) for the amino acid sequence (D-Ala)—(L-Glu(OBzl))—(D-Leu)—(Aib)—(L-Lys(Z))—(Aib) as described for compound **1a**. The Kaiser test was inconclusive for aminoisobutyric acid free amine so the coupling reaction of the resin-bound terminal Aib residue with Fmoc-Lys(Z) was repeated twice for 20 hr. each time.

The peptide was cleaved from the resin with 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/TIS 95/2.5/2.5 over 1.5 hr. by mixing with N_2 . The peptide solution was removed by aspiration and concentrated down to a few mL's. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography (19:1

DCM:MeOH then 6.1:1 DCM:MeOH) to give 650 mg of a white solid. Column chromatography (2.6:1 DCM:MeOH) was used to purify additional fractions recovered from the second flash column to give an additional 330 mg for a total of 980 mg (31% yield) of linear peptide. R_f .30 (3:1 DCM/MeOH); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, MeOD), δ 0.58-1.66 (m, 37H), 1.81-1.95 (m, 2H), 2.16-2.30 (m, 1H), 2.36-2.45 (m, 1H), 2.82-2.94 (m, 2H), 3.12 (s, 2H), 3.80-4.06 (m, 4H), 4.75-4.89 (m, 4H), 6.99-7.16 (m, 10H, Ar); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, MeOD), δ 19.3, 21.8, 23.9, 23.9, 24.1 (CH₃), 24.4 (CH₂), 26.0 (CH₃), 26.9 (CH), 27.8 (CH₃), 28.0, 31.1, 32.2, 32.3, 40.7, 41.8 (CH₂), 52.2, 54.6, 55.1, 56.4 (CH), 58.3, 58.4 (C), 67.6, 67.8 (CH₂), 129.2, 129.4, 129.5, 129.9 (CH, Ar), 138.0, 138.8 (C, Ar), 159.4, 173.4, 174.6, 174.7, 174.8, 176.3, 177.6, 180.2 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₄₃H₆₃N₇O₁₁ (M+H⁺) 854.5 found 854.3 (100), calcd. M+Na⁺ 876.5 found 876.3 (33), calcd. M+K⁺ 892.5 found 892.3 (23).

2.3.13 Synthesis of 5b

800 mg (0.937 mmol) of linear peptide **5a** was dissolved in 400 mL DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.464 g (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.166 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 2.4 mL (10 eq) DIPEA in 5 mL of DMF was added and the solution was stirred for 4 hr. at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 45 °C. The residue was taken up in EtOAc and the insoluble white precipitate was removed by filtration. The organic solution was extracted 3x with 30 mL 10% citric acid, 3x with 30 mL saturated NaHCO₃, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The solution was purified by flash column chromatography (EtOAc) to give 450 mg (57% yield) of a white solid. R_f .47 (EtOAc); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃), δ 0.79-0.98 (m, 6H), 1.09-
2.49 (m, 29H), 2.93-3.36 (m, 2H), 3.73 (t, J = 6.7 Hz, 1H), 4.03-4.21 (m, 1H), 4.41-4.58 (m, 1H), 4.79-4.94 (m, 1H), 4.98-5.18 (m, 4H), 5.62 (t, J = 5.6 Hz, 1H), 6.17 (s, 1H), 6.35-6.57 (m, 1H), 6.97-7.20 (m, 2H), 7.21-7.44 (m, 10H, Ar), 7.61 (s, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃), δ 16.5, 21.4, 21.4 (CH₃), 21.8, 22.5 (CH₂), 22.9, 23.4, 23.8 (CH₃), 24.8 (CH), 26.0, 27.9 (CH₂), 27.9 (CH₃), 30.3, 38.8, 39.5 (CH₂), 50.4, 51.4, 51.5, 53.2 (CH), 56.9, 57.4 (C), 66.4, 66.7 (CH₂), 128.5, 128.6, 128.8, 128.9, 129.1 (CH, Ar), 136.2, 136.9 (C, Ar), 156.8, 172.2, 172.9, 173.5, 174.0, 174.6, 175.9, 176.5 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₄₃H₆₂N₇O₁₀ (M+H⁺) 836.4 found 836.2 (6), calcd. M+Na⁺ 858.4 found 858.2 (100).

2.3.14 Synthesis of 5c

400 mg (0.478 mmol) of **5b** was dissolved in 100 mL of 1:1 DCM:MeOH. The benzyl protecting groups on the glutamic acid and lysine side chains were removed by using 0.2 g of Pd activated carbon (10 wt%) and H₂ at atmospheric pressure while stirring the solution for 1.5 hr. The spent catalyst was removed by filtration and the solution was concentrated completely in vacuo, 40 °C, to give 305 mg (105% yield) of a white solid. ¹H and ¹³C-NMR spectra in MeOD confirmed complete loss of benzyl protecting groups. The peptide was used without further purification or characterization.

2.3.15 Synthesis of 5d

305 mg (0.498 mmol) of **5c** was dissolved in 150 mL of DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.246 g (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.088 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 0.87 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL of DMF was added to the peptide solution for 4 hr. at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 45 °C. The residue was taken up in EtOAc and the insoluble white precipitate was removed by centrifugation. The organic solution was extracted 3x with 30 mL of 10% citric acid and 3x with 30 mL of saturated NaHCO₃ and dried with Na₂SO₄. The solution was concentrated completely and dried in vacuo to give 5 mg of a white solid. Characterization by ESI MS was inconclusive.

2.3.16 Synthesis of 6a

Solid phase synthesis was carried out on 5.642 g D-Ala-Wang resin (0.72 mmol/g loading) for the amino acid sequence (D-Ala)—(L-Glu(OBzl))—(D-Leu)—(Aib)—(L-Lys(Z))—(D-Leu) as described for compound **5a**.

The peptide was cleaved from the resin in two consecutive reactions of 30 mL of TFA/H₂0/TIS 95/2.5/2.5 mixed with N₂ for 30 min. each. The peptide solutions were removed by aspiration, combined, and concentrated to a few mL's. The residue was purified by column chromatography (4.6:1 DCM:MeOH) and then flash column chromatography (19:1 DCM:MeOH) to give 1.40 g (39% yield) of a light yellow solid. R_f .30 (4.6:1 DCM/MeOH); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, MeOD), δ 0.61-0.79 (m, 14H), 1.01-1.35 (m, 16H), 1.37-1.63 (m, 9H), 1.82-1.99 (m, 2H), 2.17-2.30 (m, 1H), 2.32-2.43 (m,

1H), 2.89 (t, J = 6.7 Hz, 2H), 3.36-3.48 (m, 2H), 3.67-3.75 (m, 1H), 3.82-3.91 (m, 2H), 4.01-4.11 (m, 2H), 4.80-4.91 (m, 4H), 7.03-7.16 (m, 10H, Ar); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, MeOD), δ 18.9, 21.7, 22.8, 23.5, 24.0, 24.1 (CH₃), 24.5 (CH₂), 26.0, 26.9 (CH), 27.7 (CH₃), 28.4, 31.0, 32.0, 32.6, 40.6, 41.8, 41.8 (CH₂), 52.5, 53.3, 54.4, 54.7, 56.1 (CH), 58.3 (C), 67.6, 67.8 (CH₂), 129.2, 129.4, 129.5, 129.9 (CH, Ar), 138.0, 138.8 (C, Ar), 159.4, 173.7, 174.9, 174.9, 175.1, 175.9, 177.5, 180.6 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₄₅H₆₇N₇O₁₁ (M+H⁺) 882.5 found 882.6 (15), calcd. M+Na⁺ 904.5 found 904.6 (30), calcd. M+K⁺ 920.5 found 920.6 (18).

2.3.17 Synthesis of 6b

1.361 g (1.544 mmol) of linear peptide **6a** was dissolved in 680 mL DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.764 g (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.274 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 2.7 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL of DMF was added and the solution was stirred for 4 hr. at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 45 °C. The residue was taken up in EtOAc and the insoluble white precipitate was removed by filtration. The organic solution was extracted 3x with 30 mL 10% citric acid, 3x with 30 mL saturated NaHCO₃, and dried over Na₂SO₄. The solution was purified by flash column chromatography (EtOAc) to give 600 mg (45% yield) of a white solid. R_f .40 (EtOAc); ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃), δ 0.80-0.99 (m, 12H), 1.19-1.91 (m, 21H), 2.01-2.24 (m, 3H), 2.39-2.48 (m, 2H), 3.10-3.26 (m, 2H), 3.98-4.15 (m, 2H), 4.18-4.28 (m, 1H), 4.28-4.40 (m, 1H), 4.48-4.58 (m, 1H), 5.02-5.12 (m, 4H, Ar), 5.44 (t, *J* = 5.9 Hz, 1H), 6.58 (d, *J* = 7.8 Hz, 1H), 6.64 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 1H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 5.06 Hz, 1H), 7.06 (s, 1H), 7.28-7.36 (m, 10H, Ar), 7.41-7.46 (m,

1H), 7.56 (d, J = 7.1 Hz, 1H); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃), δ 17.3, 21.9, 22.1 (CH₃), 22.5 (CH₂), 23.6, 23.6 (CH₃), 23.7 (CH₃), 24.4 (CH₂), 25.4, 25.4 (CH), 28.0 (CH₃), 28.1, 29.2, 30.5, 39.7, 40.3, 40.4 (CH₂), 51.5, 51.7, 52.4, 52.6, 54.1 (CH), 57.0 (C), 66.9, 67.0 (CH₂), 128.2, 128.3, 128.4, 128.7, 128.7 (CH, Ar), 135.9, 136.8 (C, Ar), 156.8, 172.0, 172.9, 173.0, 173.0, 173.3, 174.1, 174.7 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₄₅H₆₅N₇O₁₀Na (M+Na⁺) 886.5 found 886.6 (100).

2.3.18 Synthesis of 6c

571 mg (0.661 mmol) of **6b** was dissolved in 150 mL of 1:1 DCM:MeOH. The benzyl protecting groups on the glutamic acid and lysine side chains were removed by using 0.2 g of Pd activated carbon (10 wt%) and H₂ at atmospheric pressure while stirring the solution for 1.5 hr. The spent catalyst was removed by filtration and the solution was concentrated completely in vacuo, 40 °C, to give 400 mg (94% yield) of a white solid. ¹H and ¹³C-NMR spectra in MeOD confirmed complete loss of benzyl groups. The peptide was used without further purification or characterization.

2.3.19 Synthesis of 6d

202 mg (0.316 mmol) of **6c** was dissolved in 100 mL DMF and stirred at 0 °C. 0.156 g (1.3 eq) HATU, 0.056 g (1.3 eq) HOAT, and 0.55 mL (10 eq) DIPEA dissolved in 5 mL DMF was added to the peptide solution and stirred for 4 hr. at which point the DMF was removed in vacuo, 45 °C. The residue was taken up in EtOAc and the insoluble white

precipitate was removed by filtration. The organic solution was extracted 3x with 30 mL 10% citric acid, 3x with 30 mL saturated NaHCO₃, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated completely to give 26 mg of a whitish yellow solid.

The cyclization reaction and workup described above were repeated on the remaining 190 mg of **6c** to give an additional 33 mg for a total of 60 mg (16% yield) of whitish yellow solid. ¹H-NMR (400 MHz, MeOD), δ 0.84-1.00 (m, 12H), 1.25-1.89 (m, 24H), 1.99-2.21 (m, 4H), 4.09-4.42 (m, 5H); ¹³C-NMR (100 MHz, MeOD), δ 17.4, 22.0, 22.7, 23.8, 23.9 (CH₃), 24.4 (CH₂), 24.8, 26.4 (CH₃), 26.6, 26.6 (CH), 27.7, 29.0, 31.7, 31.9, 40.2, 41.7, 41.8 (CH₂), 54.3, 54.3, 54.0, 54.0, 52.8 (CH), 58.2 (C), 174.2, 174.5, 174.9, 175.3, 175.4, 175.6, 176.9 (C=O). ESI MS m/z (%) calcd. for C₃₀H₅₂N₇O₇ (M+H⁺) 622.4 found 622.3 (100).

2.4 ISE Membrane and Electrode Preparation

This work was performed by Dr. John Benco. Six membrane cocktails were prepared to test **6d**. The specific formulations are as follows: M1, 69/30/1 wt % of nitrophenyl octyl ether (NPOE)/PVC/**6d**; M2, same as M1 with 10 mol % of potassium tetrakis (4-chlorophenyl)borate (KtpClPB) to **6d**; M3, same as M1 with 50 mol % of KtpClPB to **6d**; M4, 69/30/1 wt % of dioctyl phthalate (DOP)/PVC/**6d**; M5, same as M4 with 10 mol % of KtpClPB to **6d**. Membrane cocktails were prepared as 10 wt % solutions in THF. The base electrodes were constructed in a thick-film planar format using a polymeric internal electrolyte layer as

previously reported.⁸ Two wafers composed of 100 individual electrode elements each were used for the sensor construction. The polymer, methacrylamidopropylmethyl-ammonium chloride (MAPTAC), for the internal electrolyte was prepared as a 10 wt % solution in EtOH, spun on to the planar wafers at 750 rpm for 30 s, and allowed to dry for 1 h before membrane deposition. Internal electrolyte thickness was \sim 3.5 µm. The wafers were then quartered, giving wafers of 25 sensors each. Membrane cocktails were deposited (0.9 mL) onto the wafers and allowed to cure for 24 h before use, giving a membrane thickness of \sim 105 µm. The planar wafers were singulated by hand, giving 25 sensors for each formulation.

2.5 ISE Testing

This work was carried out by Dr. John Benco. The sensors were housed in the proprietary flow-through cell used with the Bayer Diagnostics Rapidpoint 400 critical care system as previously reported.⁸ This system uses a saturated Ag/AgCl reference cell. Two flow cells were constructed, which contained 1-2 sensors of each formulation for a total of 14 tested sensors. Each cell was tested individually on the Rapidpoint system that maintains a 37°C temperature for the cell. The sensors were tested using solutions containing NH₄Cl (0.5-100 mM), 100 mM Tris buffer (pH 7.2), and 0.05 g/L Brij 700. Selectivity testing was based on the separate solution method (SSM)¹⁸, where i = j = 0.1 M.

2.6 ¹³C-NMR Study of Valinomycin binding Potassium Cations

This study was based on a modified procedure.¹⁹ A solution was made by dissolving 20 mg of commercially available valinomycin in 0.50 mL of 1:1 (v:v) MeOD:CDCl₃. A ¹³C-NMR spectrum was recorded after each 10 μ L addition of stock solutions of potassium thiocyanate in 1:1 (v:v) MeOH:CHCl₃. **Table 1** shows the KSCN concentrations for each experiment. ¹³C-NMR spectra were recorded by locking on MeOD with 512—9000 scans and the spectra were calibrated with respect to MeOD.

Spectrum	KSCN (mmol)	Total Volume (mL)	[KSCN] (mM)
1	0.0	0.50	0.0
2	0.2	0.51	0.4
3	0.4	0.52	0.8
4	0.6	0.53	1.1
5	0.8	0.54	1.5
6	1.2	0.55	2.2
7	1.6	0.56	2.9
8	2.0	0.57	3.5
9	2.4	0.58	4.1
10	2.8	0.59	4.7
11	3.2	0.60	5.3
12	3.6	0.61	5.9
13	4.5	0.62	7.3
14	5.4	0.63	8.6
15	6.3	0.64	9.8
16	7.2	0.65	11.1
17	8.1	0.66	12.3
18	9.0	0.67	13.4
19	9.9	0.68	14.6
20	10.8	0.69	15.7
21	11.7	0.70	16.7
22	12.6	0.71	17.7
23	13.5	0.72	18.8
24	14.4	0.73	19.7
25	15.3	0.74	20.7
26	16.2	0.75	21.6
27	17.1	0.76	22.5

 Table 1: ¹³C-NMR experiments of valinomycin with increasing amounts of KSCN

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Selection of Synthetic Methods

The decision to utilize a solid phase Fmoc-protection strategy on a Wang resin was based on the demonstrated success of that strategy in our working group as well as by others.^{17,20-23} These methods are well understood and give good yields. The mechanisms of Fmoc deprotection and PyBOP/HOBT-mediated amino acid coupling are shown below in **Figures 11** and **12**. The benzyl protecting groups on the glutamic acid and lysine side chains were chosen because the protected residues are available commercially and because they are known to be stable to Fmoc deprotection conditions (basic) and resin cleavage conditions (acidic). These groups are easily removed by hydrogenation.



Figure 11: Mechanism of Fmoc deprotection



Figure 12: Mechanism of PyBOP/HOBT-mediated coupling reaction

The use of the activating agents HATU and HOAT in cyclization of the linear peptide was based on the experience of both Ghadiri's working group²⁴ as well as that of our own. The reaction is carried out in DMF under dilute (2 mg/ mL) conditions in order to favor intramolecular cyclization over intermolecular coupling. The mechanism of HATU/HOAT-mediated coupling is very similar to that shown for PyBOP in **Figure 12**. Thionyl chloride was employed for the second cyclization step, based on the success our group has had with the reagent in the cyclization of a depsipeptide ammonium ionophore.⁸

3.2 Design and Synthesis

3.2.1.1 Design of 1d

The design of bicyclic peptide target compound **1d** has elements that are similar to the cyclic depsipeptide ammonium ionophore⁸ reported recently by our group (shown in **Figure 7b**). Target **1d** is the bicyclic and all-amide equivalent of this depsipeptide, both of which are shown in **Figure 13**. The stereochemical pattern, L-D-D-L-L-D, of both is based on the potassium ionophore valinomycin $(L-D-D-L)_3$ and was expected, based on modeling, to prevent formation of helices that would hinder cyclization.



Figure 13: Depsipeptide ammonium ionophore (left) and target compound 1d (right)

Molecular modeling of **1d** indicated that it may offer enhanced ammonium over potassium selectivity compared to nonactin, the industry standard ammonium ionophore. Whereas nonactin has a flexible crown-ether backbone that allows wrapping-type complexes with both ammonium and potassium ions, bicyclic peptide **1d** has a more rigid structure that provides the tetrahedral coordination required for complexation of ammonium ions, but cannot effectively exhibit the octahedral coordination required for complexation of potassium ions. **Figure 14** shows minimized structures of **1d** with both ammonium and potassium ions. Ammonium ion sits deeply within the cavity and forms at least four hydrogen bonds to **1d**. On the other hand, potassium does not sit as deeply within the pocket, indicating less favorable complexation.



Figure 14: Complexation of 1d with ammonium (left) and potassium (right) cations

To estimate the selectivity of **1d** for binding ammonium over potassium ions compared to nonactin, docking energies were obtained for the ion/ionophore complex in each case, as previously reported.⁸ The difference in docking energies between ammonium and potassium ion for **1d** was 12 kcal/mol more negative than that calculated for nonactin. While these calculations give relative values only, they indicate qualitatively that **1d** may show increased ammonium over potassium selectivity compared to nonactin.

3.2.1.2 Attempted Synthesis of 1d

The linear peptide **1a** was synthesized and characterized in good (67%) yield. However, **1a** exhibited poor solubility and was very difficult to dissolve in a variety of solvents, including DMSO and DMF. After the first cyclization reaction to give **1b**, the solvent extraction process created an emulsion between the DCM and aqueous layers, probably due to the limited solubility of the peptide in either phase. Based on the low yield of **1b**

(14 %), the decision was made to start a new synthesis of **1a** in order to scale up the amount of the intermediate 1b. In an attempt to increase the yield during the cyclization of the second batch of **1a**, the reaction was carried out in 500 mL of DMF at 0 °C for 4 hr in order to favor intramolecular cyclization over intermolecular coupling by decreasing the rate of collisions by lowering the temperature. The product of the second synthesis was purified by multiple precipitations from MeOH/ether only, since 1b did not exhibit sufficient solubility to purify by column chromatography and we believed much of the desired product of the first synthetic attempt was lost during the solvent extraction in the emulsion that formed. Intermediate 1b was never unambiguously characterized due to the large amount of impurities present, ultimately caused by the poor solubility that prevented the use of effective purification techniques. The ¹H and ¹³C-NMR spectra showed the expected signals for peptide 1b, but clearly contained considerable impurities. The MS showed no 1b, but this can potentially be explained by the poor solubility of **1b** (Synpep Corp., the contractor who provided the MS analysis, used only acetonitrile as a matrix). The final cyclization with thionyl chloride appeared completely unsuccessful, resulting in a brown solid that contained no 1d by MS. In fact, activation of the carboxyl group by acid chloride formation is rarely done by peptide practitioners due to its reputation of being "overactivated" and therefore prone to numerous side reactions²⁵

3.2.2.1 Design of 2d

The attempted synthesis of target compound **1d** highlighted the importance of solubility in the synthesis of peptides. Target compound 2d was designed in an attempt to increase solubility of intermediate and final compounds by decreasing aggregation through the replacement of bulky valine residues by smaller alanine residues. Additionally, it was realized that the incorporation of D-lysine and L-glutamic acid in target compound 1d would result in two different atropoisomers depending on which side of the cyclic peptide the second ring is formed. As shown in **Figure 15**, one isomer has the bridgehead hydrogen on glutamic acid pointing outside the cavity and the bridgehead hydrogen on lysine pointing in towards the cavity and the other has the bridgehead hydrogen on glutamic acid pointing in towards the cavity and the bridgehead hydrogen on lysine pointing outside the cavity. In an attempt to favor the formation of just one atropoisomer, the stereochemistry of the bridgehead residues were both designed as L. As shown in Figure 15, the two possible atropoisomers of 2d can have both of the bridgehead hydrogens pointing in toward the central cavity or both pointing out away from the central cavity. Based on the work of Paolillo et al.¹⁶, the isomer with both hydrogens pointing out away from the central cavity should be favored by steric interactions during formation of the second ring. The stereochemistry assignment, L-L-D-D-L-D, was designed to give the two most expensive amino acids, the benzyl protected lysine and glutamic acid residues, the naturally occurring L configuration in order to minimize overall cost of the synthesis while still retaining the stereochemical pattern seen in valinomycin and the previous bicyclic target compound 1d. Molecular modeling calculations to estimate the selectivity of target compound 2d with ammonium and potassium ions gave a difference in docking energies similar to that calculated for target compound **1d**, indicating that the change in amino acid residues and stereochemistry should not significantly affect complexation behavior.



Figure 15: The two possible atropoisomers of (a) target compound 1d (b) target compound 2d

3.2.2.2 Synthesis of 2d

In order to evaluate the most effective cyclization conditions, the preliminary synthesis product **2a** was divided. One portion was subjected to cyclization using HATU/HOAT activation and the other portion was activated with thionyl chloride. The product of the HATU/HOAT cyclization **2b** was characterized by MS and ¹H and ¹³C-NMR, but no **2b** was visible in the MS of the product of the thionyl chloride reaction. Acid chlorides of benzyloxycarbonyl-protected peptides such as **2a** are known to undergo the serious side

reaction of spontaneous decomposition to the corresponding Leuchs anhydride with loss of benzyl chloride.²⁵ Both the linear peptide **2a** and the monocyclized intermediate **2b** showed limited solubility. However, solubility was sufficiently high in acetonitrile/water solvent systems to successfully purify **2b** through reverse phase column chromatography. The success of the HATU/HOAT method in the first cyclization led to the decision to employ this method for the final cyclization. Compound **2d** was characterized by MS in the crude product mixture and was subsequently purified by a series of precipitations from MeOH/ether in which a marked decrease in solubility was observed. The final precipitated **2d** was essentially insoluble and therefore it was impossible to characterize by MS or NMR or to test its utility as an ammonium ionophore in an ISE sensor format.

3.2.3.1 Design of 3d

Target compound **3d** was designed to exhibit increased solubility by preventing the intermolecular hydrogen bonding that is generally believed to be responsible for the poor solubility of peptides²⁶ such as **2a-2d**. We predicted, based on investigations by Narita²⁶, that the replacement of two of the alanine residues in **2d** with N-methyl alanine residues in **3d** would increase solubility by disrupting hydrogen bonding between molecules. The amino acid sequence was designed to prevent cyclization at a hindered N-methylated amine. The stereochemistry was unchanged from bicyclic peptide **2d** to bicyclic peptide target **3d**.

3.2.3.2 Attempted Synthesis of 3d

Solid phase synthesis of **3a** was complicated by the incorporation of the two Nmethylated residues because the Kaiser test used to monitor deprotection and coupling reactions is inconclusive for secondary amines. The Novabiochem catalog contains a method for detecting the free secondary amine of proline residues called a chloranil test.¹⁷ However, this technique was inconclusive, usually giving orange or brown resin beads, when a blue color is indicative of a positive test, in both the presence and absence of secondary amine. For this reason, the extent of coupling was instead estimated by cleaving the Fmoc protecting group from a known mass of resin (20 mg) in a 100 mL solution of 20% piperidine in DMF and monitoring the UV absorption at 290 nm. Since the extinction coefficient of the Fmoc group is known at this wavelength to be 4950 M^{-1} cm⁻¹, the UV absorption of the free Fmoc moiety can be used to calculate the concentration of the Fmoc group in solution, which can be related to the amount of peptide on the known mass of resin. However, this technique has limited sensitivity. The MS of the crude mixture after the resin cleavage reaction showed that the linear peptide **3a** was not present, but various deletion peptides were present. This was strong evidence that N-terminal coupling reactions of the N-methylated residues were not effective.

3.2.4.1 Design of 4d

Like target compound **3d**, **4d** was designed to have increased solubility by preventing intermolecular hydrogen bonding. However, due to the limited success of coupling reactions involving N-methylated residues in the synthesis of **3d**, the decision was made

to incorporate two aminoisobutyric acid residues, which are also known to increase solubility by disrupting β -sheet formation²⁶, instead of the N-methylated alanine residues. Additionally, we replaced one alanine residue with a leucine residue in an attempt to increase the solubility of the peptides by increasing their lipophilicity.

The synthetic strategy for target **4d** was developed after a literature search of on-resin cyclization methods.²⁷⁻³⁷ On-resin cyclization methods are desirable because, in theory, intermolecular reactions to form polymers are impossible and therefore yields of the intramolecular reaction should be increased dramatically compared to solution-phase cyclization reactions. In addition, this strategy would eliminate one step from the synthesis. The method involves anchoring the side chain of glutamic acid to the resin and building the linear peptide using standard solid phase techniques using an allyl protecting group on the carboxy terminus during chain elongation. This is followed by solution-phase deprotection of the allyl protecting group prior to on-resin head-to-tail peptide cyclization methods because it required the smallest overall change in strategy. This synthetic scheme still allowed the use of Fmoc protecting groups on the Wang resin and benzyl protection for the lysine residue.

3.2.4.2 Attempted synthesis of 4d

The allyl-protecting group on-resin cyclization method gave only 5% yield of crude peptide **4b** based on an estimated resin loading of 59%. This is too low for a practical

synthesis of **4d**. In addition, MS showed that ~97% of the crude peptide **4b** had been deprotected (benzyloxycarbonyl protecting group) at the lysine residue leading to the conclusion that the benzyl group was removed during the allyl deprotection reaction. Since deprotection occurred prior to the cyclization reaction, the deprotected and monocyclized peptide formed was most likely a mixture of head-to-tail cyclized and head-to-side chain cyclized products since both the N-terminus and the lysine side chain amine were available for participation in the cyclization reaction.

3.2.5.1 Design of 5d

Based on the low yield (5% to resin loading) obtained by this on-resin cyclization method, the decision was made to return to our previous synthetic strategy of solid phase synthesis to produce the linear peptide followed by two solution-phase cyclization reactions. Target compound **5d** is the analogue of **4d** produced by this synthetic strategy. The amino acid sequence was reversed in order to make the solid phase synthesis easier by starting with an alanine residue, which is commercially available preloaded on the resin.

3.2.5.2 Attempted synthesis of 5d

The first attempt to make **5a** via solid phase synthesis resulted in a low yield of an oil. This oil was found to contain primarily **5a** that had been deprotected (the benzyloxycarbonyl protecting group had been lost from the lysine side chain according to the MS). We suspected that the benzyloxycarbonyl protecting group was lost during the 6 hr. cleavage reaction. The work of Erickson et al. confirmed that benzyloxycarbonyl protecting groups are approximately 40 to 60 times less stable than benzyl ester protecting groups, and that they are removed under the acidic conditions (95% TFA) of the cleavage reaction.³⁸ They observed 0.5% deprotection of Lys(*Z*) after 20 min. exposure to 50% TFA in CH₂Cl₂. In the second solid phase synthesis of **5a**, the cleavage reaction time was shortened to 1.5 hr. and repeated twice in order to test which reaction time produced optimum yields of the linear peptide. MS of the two cleavage fractions showed a good yield of **5a** in the first fraction, but essentially none in the second cleavage fraction. This supported the conclusion that longer cleavage times lowered the yield of linear peptide **5a** through loss of the benzyloxycarbonyl protecting group.

Both the linear peptide **5a** and the monocyclized intermediate **5b** exhibited dramatically increased solubility in organic solvents compared to intermediates **1a**, **2a**, **1b**, and **2b**. The linear peptide **5a** was completely soluble in pure DCM, despite the free acid and free amine functions that may be expected to prevent solubility in such a nonpolar solvent. The great solubility of the intermediates **5a** and **5b** made purification by column chromatography highly successful.

The final cyclization reaction and subsequent work-up were performed exactly the same as the first cyclization reaction, but gave only 5 mg of a white solid after the solvent extraction. Characterization by MS was inconclusive, since only very low intensity signals of the correct mass were observed.

3.2.6.1 Design of 6d

After study structures generated by molecular modeling and physical models of target peptide **5d**, we concluded that the bulky aminoisubutyric acid residues were causing the ring to be too rigid to allow for the second cyclization to occur. Specifically, we hypothesized that the methyl groups on the aminoisobutyric acid residue between the alanine and lysine residues were initiating an unfavorable steric interaction with the alanine carbonyl group as the lysine and glutamic acid side chains began to come together to form the second ring.

Target bicyclic peptide **6d** was designed on the basis of this hypothesis. The interfering aminoisobutyric acid residue was replaced by a lipophilic leucine residue for the purpose of decreasing steric hindrance while attempting to retain the good solubility observed in the intermediates of **5d**. Both computer and physical models led us to believe that a D configuration for the alanine and leucine residues would be most favorable for promoting the second cyclization reaction through steric interactions forcing the L-glutamic acid and L-lysine side chains onto the same side of the ring.

3.2.6.2 Synthesis of 6d

Intermediates **6a** and **6b** were synthesized and purified using the same methods that proved successful for the second synthesis of **5a** and **5b**. Both intermediates also exhibited the good solubility seen in **5a** and **5b**. In this case, the second cyclization reaction was successful in producing bicyclic peptide **6d** in 16% yield, lending support to our hypothesis of harmful steric interactions caused by the aminoisobutyric acid residue preventing cyclization of 5c.

Multiple precipitations were performed on **6d** from THF/ether, DCM/hexane, and MeOH/ether/hexane solvent systems in attempts to purify the bicyclic peptide (purification by chromatography was not possible because **6d** was not visible on TLC plates by UV absorption, iodine, or p-anisaldehyde visualization methods). Unfortunately, none of these precipitations purified the bicyclic peptide based on ¹H and ¹³C-NMR (**6d** seemed partially soluble in all of the tried solvent systems).

3.3 Sensor Fabrication and Testing

Bicyclic peptide **6d** was incorporated into a planar ISE structure employing a polymeric solid contact material and tested in a commercially available point-of-care clinical diagnostic system, as previously reported.⁸ Six membrane formulations were tested in order to determine which environment would yield the best potentiometric response. Each sensor membrane consisted of plasticized PVC. Formulations differed as to the type of plasticizer used (NPOE or DOP) and the amount of the lipophilic salt KtpClPB present (0, 10, or 50 mol% to **6d**).

Figures 16 and 17 show the potentiometric responses of the six membrane formulations to increasing concentrations of aqueous NH_4Cl . The membrane containing the plasticizer NPOE with 50 mol% KtpClPB to 6d exhibited the largest potential increases with

increasing ammonium concentration (highest slope (60.7 mV/dec), closest to the ideal Nernstian response (see **Table 2**)). The membranes containing the plasticizer NPOE in the absence of KtpClPB and all formulations containing the plasticizer DOP exhibited sub Nernstian behavior.



Figure 16: Potentiometric responses of planar ISEs to NH_4^+ ($10^{-4} - 10^{-1}$ M) for membranes 1-3 based on **6d**



Figure 17: Potentiometric responses of planar ISEs to NH_4^+ ($10^{-4} - 10^{-1}$ M) for membranes 4-6 based on **6d**

In the case of membrane formulations utilizing NPOE (M1-M3), it can be seen that as the mole ratio of lipophilic salt to **6d** increases there is a corresponding increase in the slope of the sensors as a function of ammonium concentration. In particular, it is observed that in the absence of lipophilic salt (i.e. formulation M1) the sensors essentially exhibit no response to ammonium ions. This general trend is also observed in the case of the membrane formulations utilizing DOP (M4-M6). These results suggest that the response of the sensors is not determined by the ionophore (and is therefore independent of the ionophore), but rather is a function of the lipophilic salt concentration.

Table 2 shows the results of selectivity studies that were carried out on the six membrane formulations using the separate solution method. M3, the formulation showing the best response for ammonium cation, was in fact the most selective for potassium, followed by ammonium, sodium, calcium, magnesium, and lithium cations $(K^+ > NH_4^+ > Na^+ > Ca^{2+})$ $> Mg^{2+} > Li^+$). The other membrane formulations (with the exception of M1, which was least selective for ammonium) showed a similar selectivity pattern. This sequence of cation selectivity shows a good correlation to the Hofmeister series ($K^+ > NH_4^+ > Na^+ >$ $Li^+ \sim Ca^{2+} > Mg^{2+}$), which has been observed for ISE membranes incorporating the plasticizers NPOE and DOP without any ionophore component.¹⁸ The sequence of cation selectivities (in the absence of ionophore) is determined by the difference between the standard free energies of solvation for the ions in the aqueous and organic phases respectively. Taken alone, the results of the selectivity studies indicate that 6d is more selective for potassium ions than for ammonium ions. However, the potentiometric results (as shown in **Figures 16** and **17**) in combination with the selectivity data provide evidence that the potentiometric response of the sensors is independent of the ionophore and is instead dependent only on the lipophilic salt likely acting as a non-specific ion exchanger. In light of these results, we suggest that the ionophore is not soluble in the membrane phase and is therefore incapable of forming complexes with ions. This suggestion is supported by the low solubility of 6d observed in nonpolar solvents such as THF and CHCl₃. These solvents have dielectric constants ($\varepsilon = 7.6$ and 4.8 respectively) on the same order of NPOE and DOP plasticized PVC membranes ($\varepsilon_{mem} = 14$ and 4.8 respectively)¹⁸ and thus model the polymeric matrix of the membrane phase. In addition,

¹H-NMR spectra of **6d** in CDCl₃ and THF- d_8 show broad structureless resonances for all peaks, indicative of poor solubility.

	Selectivity coefficients, log $K_{NH_{4}^{+}, j}^{POT}$					
Membrane ^a	Li ⁺	Na ⁺	K^+	Ca ²⁺	Mg ²⁺	Slope ^b
M1	0.5	0.7	1.2	0.6	0.4	6.8
M2	-1.8	-1.2	-0.3	-1.6	-1.7	48.6
M3	-2.3	-1.0	0.1	-1.5	-1.8	60.7
M4	-1.0	-0.7	0.0	-0.9	-1.1	20.7
M5	-0.7	-0.3	0.3	-0.8	-1.0	37.5
M6	-1.4	-0.8	0.0	-2.6	-2.6	45.8
Nonactin ^d	- 3.5 ⁴	-2.4^4	-1.0^{4}	-3 .8 ⁷	-4.0^{7}	59.3 ^c

Table 2: Selectivity of 6d for Ammonium over Other Cations

^{*a*} M1, 69/30/1 wt % of NPOE/PVC/6d; M2, same as M1 with 10 mol % of KtpClPB to 6d; M3, same as M1 with 50 mol % of KtpClPB to 6d; M4, 69/30/1 wt % of DOP/PVC/6d; M5, same as M4 with 10 mol % of KtpClPB to 6d; M6, same as M4 with 50 mol % of KtpClPB to 6d. ^{*b*}Determined between 10^{-3} and 10^{-1} M cation at 37°C. ^{*c*}At 25°C. ^{*d*}Data for nonactin taken from references indicated.

3.4 ¹³C-NMR Study of Valinomycin binding Potassium Cations

Due to the apparent lack of solubility of **6d** in the ISE membranes, the decision was made to employ solution NMR methods in an attempt to evaluate the selectivity of **6d** for ammonium over other interfering cations. Selectivities of ionophores in solution are calculated from the ratios of the equilibrium dissociation constants for the metal-ligand complexes of the various cations. The dissociation constant (K_d) of a ligand with a given metal cation may be calculated by fitting a sigmoidal plot of experimental data to **Equation 2** to give K_d :

$$y = \frac{B_{\max}x}{K_d + x}$$
(2)

Here, *x* is the concentration of free ligand, *y* is the complex fraction, and B_{max} is the maximum number of binding sites. Based on molecular modeling, it appears that the carbonyl groups of **6d** are primarily responsible for forming the hydrogen bonds to ammonium cations (or ion-dipole interactions with interfering cations), although some amide nitrogen atoms also seem to contribute. The carbonyl groups should give the best measure of complexation because they should undergo the greatest change in electronic environment upon cation binding. Carbonyl participation in hydrogen bonding (or ion-dipole interactions) causes an increase in electron density toward the oxygen atom with a concurrent decrease in electron density away from the carbon atom. For this reason, the deshielded carbon atoms of the carbonyls of **6d** should show a downfield shift in the ¹³C-NMR spectra upon complexation. Comparison of the integration of the free versus complexed carbonyl signals in the ¹³C-NMR spectra of **6d** should allow determination of the extent of complexation occurring in a given solution.

In order to establish test conditions and validate the method, a control study of valinomycin was performed. Valinomycin (shown in **Figure 7a**) is the standard potassium ionophore used commercially in biosensors. A cyclic depsipeptide consisting of alternating amide and ester linkages (12 total), valinomycin preorganizes through hydrogen bonding of its amide carbonyl groups to form a pocket with its six ester carbonyl oxygens available for electrostatic stabilization of potassium ions through octahedral-type complexation. Due to the symmetry of the molecule, free (uncomplexed)

valinomycin only shows four carbonyl signals, two ester and two amide, in its ¹³C-NMR spectrum. The ion-dipole interaction which takes place upon binding of potassium by valinomycin induces a shift of electron density on the carbonyl bonds towards the oxygen atoms resulting in an observed downfield shift of these signals.¹⁹

The decision was made to employ a 1:1 CDCl₃:MeOD solvent system in the NMR study since cation complexation is most favorable in nonpolar solvents, but the polar solvent MeOD is necessary for solubility of **6d**. 20 mg of valinomycin was dissolved in 0.50 mL of 1:1 CDCl₃:MeOD (3.6 mM solution) and the initial spectrum was attained. Spectra were performed on the same solution after every 10 μ L addition of stock solutions of KSCN in 1:1 CHCl₃:MeOH (with an increasing number of scans as the solvent peaks grew in intensity). The downfield (complexed) carbonyl signals began to appear at a 1:1.6 mole ratio of valinomycin to KSCN and gradually increased in comparison to the free valinomycin signals (see **Figure 18**) until the free signals were indistinguishable from the noise (complexation ~100%) at a 1:5.75 mole ratio of valinomycin to KSCN.



Figure 18: ¹³C-NMR carbonyl signals of valinomycin as a function of [KSCN]

The extent of complexation of each solution was estimated from comparison of the integration (by peak height) of the farthest upfield (~171 ppm) and farthest downfield (~177 ppm) signals, which were selected because no splitting of these peaks was observed. The slight signal splitting observed is probably due to the loss of symmetry (and therefore signal equivalence) caused by the change in conformation upon binding the potassium cation. The plot of complexation versus KSCN concentration is shown in **Figure 19**. This data was imported into SigmaPlot 8.02 and the program settings for simple ligand binding for one site saturation were used to fit the curve to Equation 2, resulting in $K_d = 10^{-2}$ M. This is two orders of magnitude higher than the known value for the binding of potassium by valinomycin in MeOH ($K_d = 10^{-4}$ M).¹⁸ However, the difference could be due to water contamination of the sample ($K_d = 0.4$ M in H₂O)¹⁸, which could increase the dissociation constant significantly.



Figure 19: Valinomycin-potassium complex as a function of potassium concentration

4 Conclusions

A series of bicyclic peptides have been designed for complexation of ammonium cations through hydrogen bonding. Molecular modeling suggested these compounds could exhibit better ammonium over potassium cation selectivity than nonactin, the industry standard ammonium ionophore, in an ISE sensor format by exhibiting the tetrahedral coordination geometry required for ammonium binding, but not the octahedral coordination geometry required for potassium binding.

Bicyclic peptide 2d was synthesized, but lacked the solubility necessary for characterization or evaluation in an ISE sensor. We were successful in enhancing solubility of the peptide intermediates of 5d in organic solvents through the incorporation of two aminoisobutyric acid residues. However, the second cyclization reaction was unsuccessful, presumably due to an unfavorable steric interaction between one of the aminoisobutyric acid residues and the carbonyl group of the neighboring alanine residue. Replacement of this aminoisobutyric acid residue in 5d with a leucine residue led to the successful synthesis and characterization of bicyclic peptide 6d. 6d was incorporated into an ISE sensor and tested as an ammonium ionophore, but lacked solubility in the ISE membrane.

Future work will involve a solution ¹³C-NMR study of ammonium, potassium, and sodium ion binding with **6d**. Preliminary results of a control ¹³C-NMR potassium-binding study of valinomycin suggest this method should be successful in evaluating selectivity of 6d for ammonium over interfering cations.

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Appendix: ¹H, ¹³C, and DEPT135 NMR Spectra and ESI MS



















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