

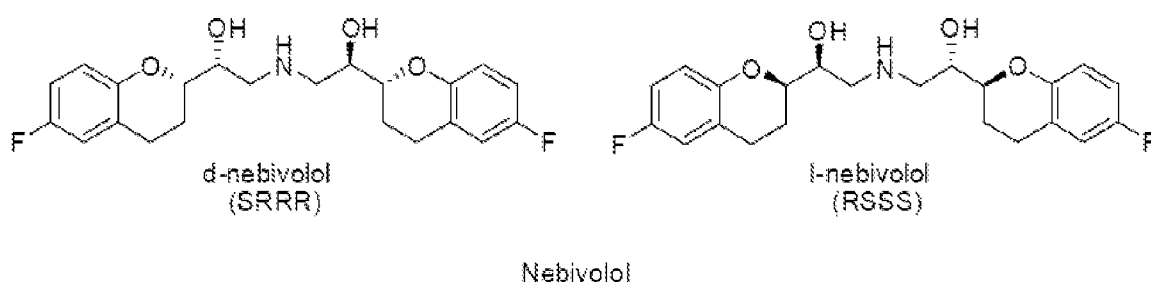
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PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF NEBIVOLOLDESCRIPTIONFIELD OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a novel process for the synthesis of Nebivolol.

- 5 Nebivolol is a racemic mixture of the two enantiomers [2S[2R[R[R]]]] α,α' -[imino-bis (methylene)] bis[6-fluoro-chroman-2-methanol] and [2R[2S[S[S]]]] α,α' -[imino-bis (methylene)] bis[6-fluoro-chroman-2-methanol] (Scheme 2).

- In particular, it is reported the kinetic resolution of the two diastereoisomeric pairs of RS/SR and SS/RR epoxides (scheme 1, mixture 1) by treatment with an amine in a
 10 suitable solvent.

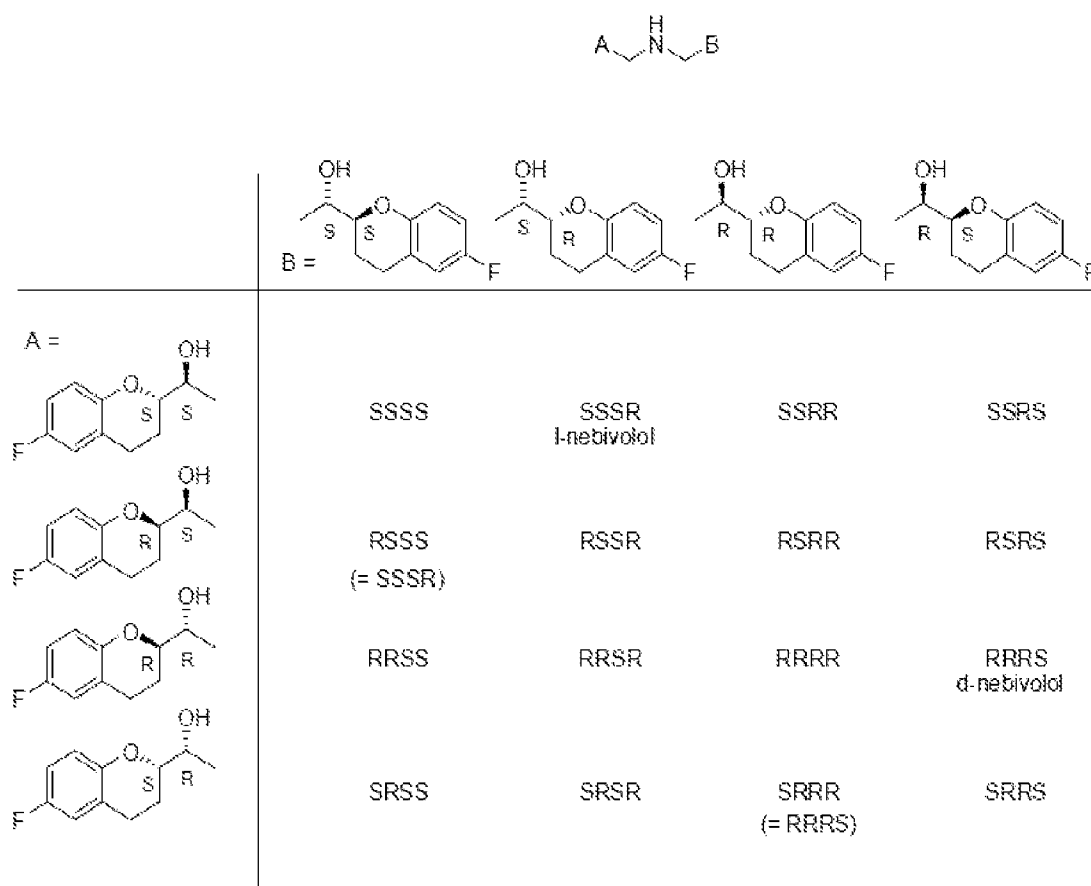
**Scheme 2**STATE OF THE ART

- Nebivolol is known as an adrenergic beta-receptor antagonist, an antihypertensive
 15 agent, a platelet aggregation inhibitor and a vasodilating agent.

Nebivolol has basic properties and may be converted into an acceptable pharmaceutical salt form by treatment with an acid. The hydrochloride salt is the marketed form.

- Nebivolol contains four asymmetric centres, and therefore 16 stereoisomers are
 20 theoretically possible. However, because of the particular structure of the molecule (the presence of an axis of symmetry), only 10 stereoisomers can actually be formed (Scheme 3).

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**Scheme 3.** Possible stereoisomers for nebivolol

In fact, because of the symmetry of the molecule, RSSS = SSSR, RRSS = SSRR, SRSS = SSRS, RRSR = RSRR, SRSR = RSRS and RRRS = SRRR.

- 5 US Patent No 4,654,362 (EP 0145067, Janssen) describes the preparation of Nebivolol with use of epoxide isomers (Scheme 1, mixture 1: RS, SR, RR and SS) as key intermediates in the synthesis. These are separated, with a chromatography column, into the two epoxide racemates (RS/SR) and (RR/SS).

- EP 334429 (Janssen) describes the same process reported in EP 0145067, but with
 10 more experimental details. EP 0334449 describes a stereoselective synthesis of the isomer [2R, αS, 2'S, α'S]- α, α'-[iminobis(methylene)]bis[6-fluoro-3,4-dihydro-2H-1-benzopyran-2-methanol].

- WO 2006/016373 (Hetero Drugs Limited) describes fractional crystallization methods applied at the level of the diastereoisomeric mixture of benzyl nebivolol in the form of
 15 hydrochloride salt, but is silent on epoxide opening or separation methods (compound 1).

Also WO 2006/025070 (Torrent Pharmaceutical) remains within the classical

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synthesis described by US Pat. No. 4,654,362 and merely introduces a method of separation of the diastereoisomeric pairs at the level of benzyl nebivolol in the form of hydrochloride salt. In the subsequent WO 2007/083318 it is claimed the use of diisopropyl ether for the crystallization of benzyl Nebivolol intermediate as free base.

5 WO 2007/041805 (Egis Gyógyszergyár) describes a process for the preparation of $[2S^*[R^*[R^*[R^*]]]]$ and $[2R^*[S^*[S^*[S^*]]]]-(\pm)-\alpha,\alpha'$ -[iminobis(methylene)] bis[6-fluoro-3,4-dihydro-2H-1-benzopyran-2-methanol] and its individual pure $[2S^*[R^*[R^*[R^*]]]]$ and $[2R^*[S^*[S^*[S^*]]]]$ enantiomers starting from very different compounds.

In WO 2008/010022 (Cimex Pharma) and WO 2008/064826 (Zach System) other
10 synthetic methods are advanced, in which however more or less complex procedures for isomer separation have to be provided for.

WO 2008/064827 describes the separate and enantioselective synthesis of d- and l-Nebivolol.

On the basis of literature evidence available to date, Nebivolol synthesis still entails
15 numerous synthetic problems. The original Janssen synthesis going through the epoxides (Scheme 1, mixture 1) is surely the shorter one, but requires a separation by preparative HPLC of the two diastereoisomeric epoxide pairs. The other methods generally envisage many more synthetic steps.

Therefore, the need to develop a novel synthetic process, suitable for industrial use
20 and possibly avoiding the use of preparative HPLC though maintaining a limited number of synthetic steps, is markedly felt.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It has now surprisingly been found a more effective process for the synthesis of Nebivolol, which is summarized in Scheme 1. This process allows to eliminate the
25 drawbacks highlighted hereto for the synthesis routes previously known, i.e., it:

a) avoids separation by preparative HPLC of the pairs (4RR/SS RS/SR) of epoxides enantiomers).

b) does not envisage the separate and parallel synthesis of the various enantiomers.

The reaction of the mixture 1 with an amine in primary alcohols such as methanol,
30 ethanol, propanol, etc., proceeds quickly and cleanly, but almost without any diastereoselectivity, i.e. the two pairs of epoxides contained in 1, (SR + RS) and (RR + SS) exhibit very similar reaction velocities. From studies reported in the literature [Can. J. Chem. (1967), 45, 1597-1600] it seems that the role of alcohol in the opening of epoxides by an amine is not merely that of a solvent, but also of providing acid
35 catalysis.

By conformational analysis studies, we were able to prove that the two epoxides have different conformational preferences. Consequently, a specific interaction with an alcohol can be influenced by the steric hindrance of the alcohol itself. Surprisingly, we

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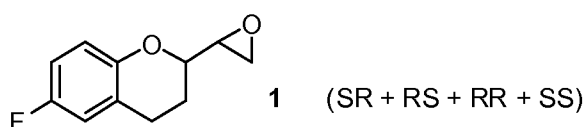
demonstrated that by using sterically hindered alcohols the kinetics of the reaction of opening epoxides **1** by amines is modified so as to make the reaction selective toward one of the two epoxides.

This type of kinetic resolution is obtainable also with other nitrogen nucleophiles, such as ammonia, the azide ion (N_3^-), hydroxylamines.

The remaining epoxide and the product of the opening exhibit very different chemico-physical characteristics, allowing an easy separation thereof extractively, chromatographically or by crystallization.

Hence, object of the present invention is a process for the preparation of Nebivolol, the process comprising:

a. reacting the epoxide mixture **1** (RS, SR, RR and SS) of formula

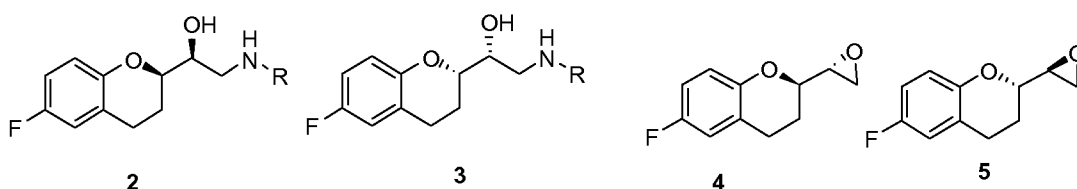


Scheme 4

with an amine $R-NH_2$, wherein:

- R is a protective group selected from methyl, allyl, t-butyl, benzyl, diphenylmethyl, triphenylmethyl, fluorenyl, 9,10-dihydroanthracen-9-yl, dibenzyl, wherein the aromatic rings present in the groups can be possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , an OR_2 group, where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl; and preferably a benzyl group,

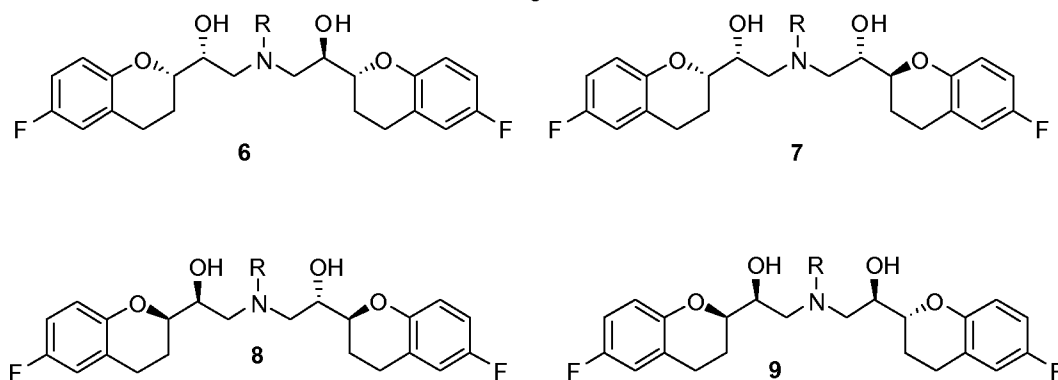
in a suitable solvent represented by a sterically hindered alcohol, alone or in mixture with an apolar solvent, to obtain a mixture of the four compounds **2**, **3**, **4** and **5**, from which the pair **2/3** is separated from the pair **4/5**;



Scheme 5

b. reacting the amines **2** and **3**, in mixture, with the pair of epoxides **4** and **5**, in mixture, to obtain a mixture of 4 compounds (**6**, **7**, **8** and **9**);

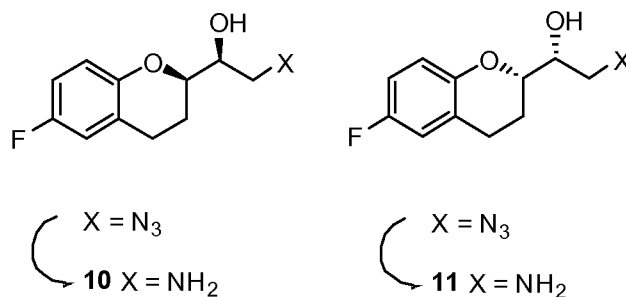
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Scheme 6

- c. separating **6** and **8** (RSSS + SRRR) in mixture from **7** and **9** by fractional crystallization, by a first solvent selected from ethanol, propanol, isopropanol, tert-butanol, 2-methyl-2-butanol (preferably 2-methyl-2-butanol) and subsequently by a mixture between a polar aprotic solvent selected from ethyl acetate, methyl acetate, isopropyl acetate, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, and an apolar solvent selected from pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane, heptane, benzene, toluene (preferably an ethyl acetate/cyclohexane mixture).
- d. removing the protecting group R, with concomitant or subsequent forming of the hydrochloride salt.

As an alternative, the reaction described at point a. can be carried out by:



Scheme 7

- e. reacting the epoxide mixture **1** with ammonia or the azide ion, followed, in the case of azide, by reduction (Scheme 7);
- f. separating the primary amine from the epoxides **4/5** by extraction in a suitable solvent or by chromatography;
- g. carrying out a reductive amination of the amines **10/11** with an aldehyde $R_1\text{CHO}$, wherein R_1 is H, vinyl, phenyl, phenyl mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , OR_2 , where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl; preferably phenyl, to obtain the mixture of amines **2/3**;

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Or, as an alternative to the reaction described at point e.:

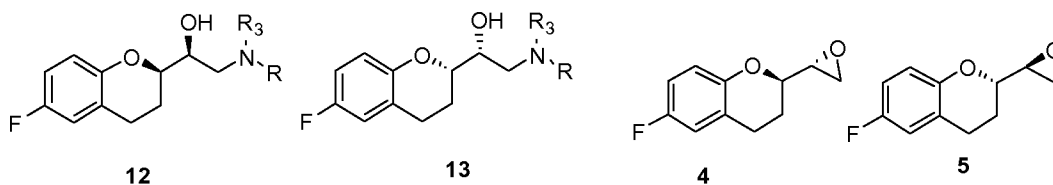
h. reacting the epoxide mixture **1** with hydroxylamines, followed by N-O bond hydrogenation to produce amines **10/11**.

A specific solution of the present invention is a process analogous to that described above, in which, as a partial alternative to point a., after reacting the amine RNH₂ with the epoxide mixture **1**, the pair of compounds **2/3** is not separated from compounds **4/5**, but:

- k. excess of unreacted amine RNH₂ is removed
- i. an alcoholic solvent selected from methanol or ethanol is added, and the compounds are left to react as envisaged at point b.

Another specific solution of the present invention is a process analogous to the above-described one in which, always as an alternative to point a.:

- m. the reaction is had with a secondary amine of RR₃NH type, wherein R has the meaning seen in the foregoing, and R₃ is a benzyl group, possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from : halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF₃, CHF₂, an OR₂ group, where R₂ is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, and preferably a benzyl group, to obtain a mixture of the four compounds **12**, **13**, **4** and **5**, from which the pair **12/13** is separated from the pair **4/5**;

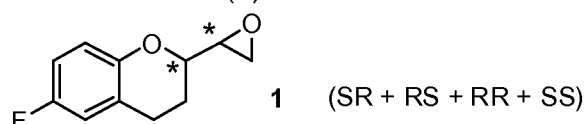


Scheme 8

- n. deprotecting from group R₃, to obtain a mixture of the compounds **2/3**.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

According to the present invention the nebivolol compound is obtained with the method described in Scheme 1 starting from the mixture of the four isomers SR, RS, RR and SS of the epoxide of formula (1)



The epoxide mixture **1** is dissolved in a sterically hindered alcohol selected from iPrOH (isopropanol), sec-BuOH, tert-BuOH, isoamyl, 2-methyl-2-butanol, 2-methyl-2-pentanol, preferably an alcohol selected from: 2-methyl-2-butanol, tert-BuOH, and 2-methyl-2-pentanol, used alone or containing a variable amount of an apolar solvent selected from the group: petroleum ether, pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane, heptane, benzene, toluene, preferentially cyclohexane, in the

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ratio alcohol: apolar solvent of 1:1 to 10:1.

The solution is maintained at a temperature comprised between -20°C and 60°C , preferably between 0°C and 40°C , and even more preferably at 25°C and additioned with an amine R-NH_2 , where:

- 5 R is a protecting group selected from methyl, allyl, t-butyl, benzyl, diphenylmethyl, triphenylmethyl, fluorenyl, 9,10-dihydroanthracen-9-yl, dibenzyl, wherein the aromatic rings can be possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , a group OR_2 , where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl; and preferably a benzyl group, in an amount of 1 to 10 equivalents, preferably 2
10 to 3 equivalents calculated with respect to the RS/SR epoxide mixture of formula 1.

The mixture thus obtained is stirred for 10-40 hours and preferentially for 12 hours. The precipitate formed (a mixture of compounds **2** and **3**) is filtered off. The remaining solution is diluted with an apolar solvent selected from the group: petroleum ether, pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane, heptane, benzene, toluene,
15 preferentially cyclohexane, in an amount that may range from 1 to 40 volumes, and washed with an aqueous acid solution (preferably NaHSO_4 or NaH_2PO_4). The organic phase, containing epoxides **4** and **5**, is concentrated.

Amounts of the mixtures of compounds **2/3** and **4/5** are reacted in a ratio ranging from 0.7:1 to 1:0.7, and preferentially in an equimolar amount, in an inert organic solvent,
20 like an aromatic hydrocarbon, a low molecular weight alcohol such as methanol, ethanol, isopropanol, butanol, a ketone, an ether or a polar aprotic solvent, preferentially ethanol (as reported in US 4,654,362). The mixture, maintained at a temperature comprised between 40°C and 120°C , preferentially between 50°C and 90°C , is mixed to completion of the reaction; then, the solvent is evaporated.

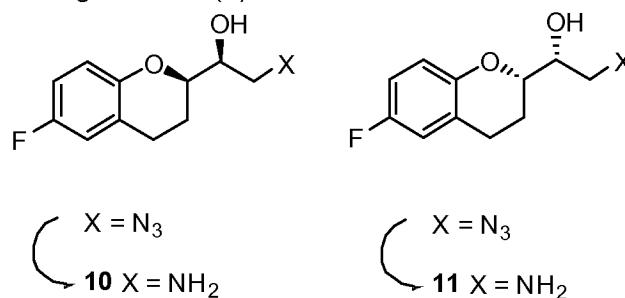
25 The residue thus obtained is crystallized from an alcohol selected from ethanol, propanol, isopropanol, tert-butanol, 2-methyl-2-butanol, preferably 2-methyl-2-butanol, and subsequently from a mixture between a polar aprotic solvent selected from ethyl acetate, methyl acetate, isopropyl acetate, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, and an apolar solvent selected from pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane,
30 heptane, benzene, toluene; preferably a ethyl acetate/cyclohexane mixture, until reaching a >99% purity in the pair **6/8**.

The compounds of formula **6/8** thus obtained, in case R is a benzyl group, are converted into neбиволol free base by hydrogenolysis with methods known to a person skilled in the art, and with a catalyst selected from Pd/C , $\text{Pd}(\text{OH})_2/\text{C}$. Among those,
35 the use of $\text{Pd}(\text{OH})_2$ is preferable, as it offers advantages related to final product purity and reaction velocity. In case R is one of the other groups envisaged, deprotections are carried out by methods known in the state of the art; e.g., in case $\text{R}=\text{methyl}$, deprotection can be carried out photochemically, as described in Tetrahedron Letters

(1989) 3977, for R=allyl, a catalytic hydrogenation can be done with a Pd-based catalyst, for R=t.butyl a treatment with methanol and hydrochloric acid is carried out, as described in J. Org. Chem. (2002), 8928-8937.

The nebivolol free base is converted into its hydrochloride salt after dissolution in 5 ethanol according to methods known to a person skilled in the art (WO 95/22325).

In an alternative embodiment of the present invention, intermediates 2 and 3 are produced through steps (e) and (g). The SR, RS, RR and SS epoxide mixture 1 is reacted in an alcohol sterically hindered as seen in the foregoing, with ammonia or an azide, preferably sodium azide, at a temperature comprised between -20° and 60°C , preferably between 0°C and 40°C and even more preferably at 25°C . In case the azide is used, the reaction is followed by an intermediate reaction according to methods known in the state of the art, preferably by catalytic hydrogenation with a Pd/C or $\text{Pd}(\text{OH})_2/\text{C}$ type catalyst, with obtainment of the corresponding primary amine according to the following scheme (7):



15

Then, primary amine is separated from epoxides **4/5** by extraction in a suitable solvent or by chromatography. Finally, a reductive amination of amines **10/11** is performed with an aldehyde R_1CHO , wherein R_1 is selected from the group: H, vinyl, phenyl, phenyl mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , OR_2 , where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, according to methods known in the art, typically with a borohydride. Thus, the mixture of amines **2/3** is obtained.

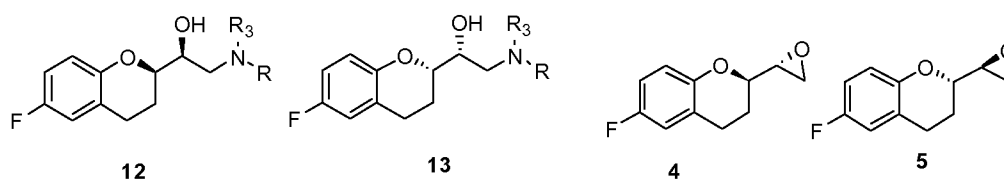
In another alternative embodiment of the invention, the SR, RS, RR and SS epoxide mixture **1** is reacted with hydroxylamine followed by N-O bond hydrogenation according to methods known in the art, typically by catalytic hydrogenation with a Pd-based catalyst, with obtainment of amines 10 and 11, which are then subjected to reductive amination, as described above, with an aldehyde R_1CHO and a borohydride, such as sodium borohydride, lithium borohydride, sodium cyanoborohydride, triacetoxysodium borohydride.

30 In another different embodiment, the pair of compounds 2 and 3 is not separated from compounds 4 and 5, but, after removal of the unreacted excess of amine RNH_2 and addition of a suitable solvent, the compounds 2 and 3 are left to react with the

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compounds 4 and 5 as already described above, directly obtaining the mixture of compounds 6, 7, 8 and 9. The suitable solvent added to the mixture is an alcoholic solvent, selected e.g. from methanol and ethanol.

The process of the invention can also be carried out according to a further variant, according to which the SR, RS, RR and SS mixture of the epoxide **1** is reacted, always in a sterically hindered alcohol analogously to what described in synthetic step a., with a secondary amine of RR_3NH type, wherein R has the meaning seen in the foregoing, and R_3 is a benzyl group, possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , an OR_2 group, where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, to obtain a mixture of the four compounds **12**, **13**, **4** and **5**, from which the pair **12/13** is separated from the pair **4/5**.

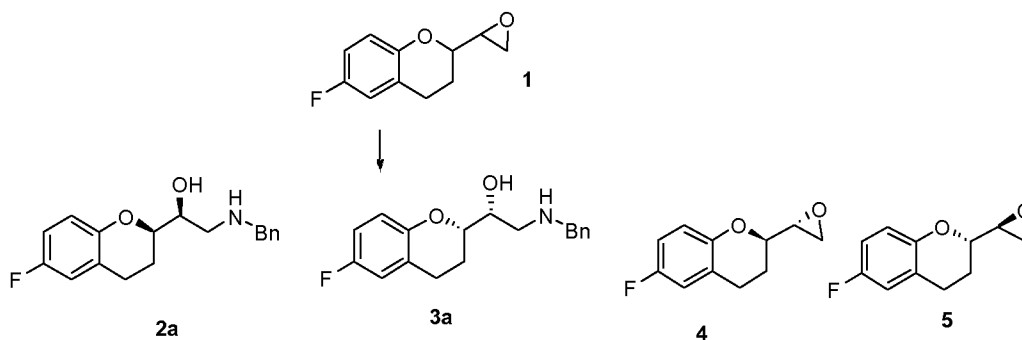


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Finally, a deprotonation from group R_3 is performed, with obtainment of the mixture of the compounds **2/3**. Deprotonation from group R_3 may be performed with known procedures, e.g. through catalytic hydrogenation with a known catalyst such as Pd/C or $Pd(OH)_2/C$.

20 EXAMPLES

The invention is hereinafter described in detail by the following examples, purely by way of illustration and not for limitative purposes, and with reference to scheme 9 herebelow:



Scheme 9

Example 1 (opening of epoxides **1** with benzylamine in 2-methyl-2-butanol):

The diastereometric mixture of (RR/SS)- and (RS/SR)-6-fluoro-2-(oxiran-2-yl)chroman (mixture **1**) (50 g, 88%, 226.8 mmol, epoxides ratio $\approx 1:1$) is placed in the

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reaction vessel and dissolved in 2-methyl-2-butanol (420 mL). Benzylamine (42.5 mL, 352.9 mmol) is added in one time to the solution under stirring. The solution is kept under stirring for 12 hours. At the end of the reaction, the amine **2a/3a** formed is filtered under vacuum and dried (purity 96.2% 18.2 g, 57.9 mmol). The filtered solution is washed with 1M NaHSO₄ and H₂O (200 mL x 3) to pH=5-6 and then concentrated under reduced pressure to ¼ of the volume (110 mL). To the mixture thus obtained, cyclohexane (420 mL, equal to the initial volume of the reaction) is added under brisk stirring. The solution is then filtered, dried (Na₂SO₄) and concentrated to obtain 18.4 g (purity 80%, 74.2 mmol, 65%) of mixture **4/5**.

The amines deriving from the opening of epoxides **4/5** with benzylamine are formed in very low percentages and eliminated with the acid washing of the organic solution. The identity and purity of the compounds obtained is evaluated by comparison with reference standards by HPLC, using a Merck Symmetry C-8 chiral column, 5 δm, 250 x 4.6 mm, and a suitable binary gradient.

Mixture 2a/3a: 1H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆, δ): 7.31 (5H, m); 6.88 (2H, m); 6.68 (1H, m); 4.99 (brs, 1H), 3.88 (1H, m); 3.73 (2H, m); 3.66 (1H, m); 2.73 (2H, m); 2.73 (1H, m); 2.58 (1H, m); 2.10 (1H, br); 2.03 (1H, m); 1.68 (1H, m). MS: calcd for C₁₈H₂₀FNO₂ 301.1, found: 302.1

Mixture 4/5: 1H-NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆, δ): 1.80 (1H, m), 2.00 (1H, m), 2.65-2.85 (4H, m), 3.15 (1H), 3.75 (2H, m), 6.80 (1H, m), 6.90 (2H, m MS (*m/z*): calcd. for C₁₁H₁₁FO₂ 194.1; found 236.5 [M + H⁺ + MeCN]⁺; 194.5 [M]⁺.

Example 2 (opening of epoxides **1** with benzylamine in 2-methyl-2-butanol/cyclohexane mixture):

The mixture of epoxides **1** (10 g, purity 89.5%, 46.1 mmol) is dissolved in a 4:1 mixture of cyclohexane and 2-methyl-2-butanol (50 mL), benzylamine (8.5 mL, 7.65 mmol) is added and the mixture is mixed at room temperature. After about 10 hours a white precipitate is formed. After 38 hours a control by HPLC shows that the RS/SR epoxides pair has been completely consumed. The precipitate is filtered, obtaining 4.80 g of amine **2a/3a** (purity: 99%, yield: 70%), while the filtrate is additioned with cyclohexane (40 mL).

This organic solution is washed with 1M NaHSO₄ (3x100 mL). During the first washing a yellow oil is separated from the solution (this oil contains possible dialkylation products and the amine of epoxides **4/5**) and is eliminated. Then, it is washed with water (2x100 mL) to neutral pH, dried on Na₂SO₄, filtered and the solvent is removed under reduced pressure to obtain 3.70 g of mixture **4/5** (purity: 76%, yield: 83%).

The identity and purity of the compounds obtained is evaluated by comparison with reference standards by HPLC, using a Merck Symmetry C-8 chiral column, 5 μm, 250 x 4.6 mm, and a suitable binary gradient.

Comparison Example 3 (synthesis of amines deriving from the pair of epoxides **4/5**):

A sample of mixture **4/5** (0.5 g, 2.57 mmol), obtained by chromatographic purification of mixture **1**, is dissolved in ethanol (5 mL) and additioned with benzylamine (0.84 mL, 7.72 mmol).

- 5 The mixture is heated to reflux until complete disappearance of the starting epoxides. The product is isolated by precipitation from the reaction mixture placed at 4°C.

¹H-NMR (DMSO-6d): 7.31 (5H, m); 6.88 (2H, m); 6.68 (1H, m); 4.85 (brs, 1H), 3.95 (1H, m); 3.73 (2H, s); 3.66 (1H, m); 2.75-2.60 (4H, m); 2.10 (1H, br); 1.90 (1H, m); 1.72 (1H, m).

- 10 **Example 4** (reaction of amines 2/3 with epoxides 4/5):

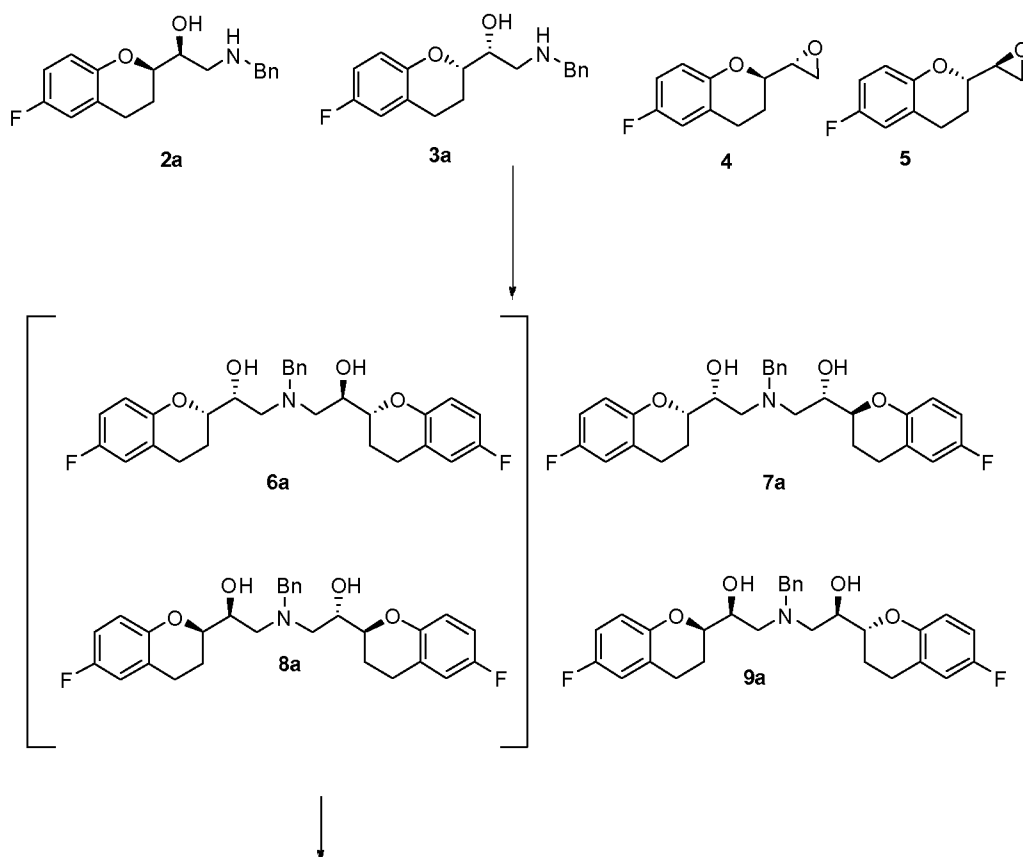
- The compounds (±)-(RS/SR)-2-(Benzylamino)-1-(6-fluorochroman-2-yl)ethanol **2a/3a** (18.26 g) and (±)-(RR/SS)-6-fluoro-2-(oxiran-2-yl) chroman **4/5** (18.4 g) are dissolved in absolute ethanol (60 mL) and maintained at reflux until disappearance of the starting reagents. At the end of the reaction the mixture is left to reach room
- 15 temperature and the solvent is removed under reduced pressure. The residue is taken up in 2-methyl-2-butanol (150 mL, 4 vol) heated to dissolution (80°C) and left at room temperature for 24h under gentle stirring. The obtained solid is filtered, taking it up with 2-methyl-2-butanol (20 mL) and dried on a filter. The solid thus obtained (10.5 g) is suspended in cyclohexane/ethyl acetate 9/1 (100 mL, 10 vol) and heated to reflux
- 20 until dissolution. It is then left to reach room temperature and the obtained solid is filtered, taking it up with cyclohexane (20 mL). It is dried on a filter, obtaining 9.80 g of mixture **6a/8a** with purity higher than 99%. The compounds **7a/9a** remained in the crystallization waters.

- The identity and purity of the compounds is evaluated by comparison with reference
- 25 standards by HPLC, using a Merck Symmetry C-8 chiral column, 5 µm, 250 x 4.6 mm, and a suitable binary gradient.

¹H-NMR (DMSO-6d): 7.33-7.19 (m, 5H), 6.90-6.72 (4H, m), 6.68-6.51 (m, 2H), 4.82 (d, 1H, *J* = 3.0 Hz), 4.74 (1H, d, *J* = 5.0 Hz), 4.00-3.90 (m, 1H), 3.87-3.70 (m, 4H), 3.53 (d, 1H, *J* = 16.0 Hz), 2.83-2.40 (m, 8H), 1.90-1.70 (m, 2H), 1.68-1.50 (m, 2H).

- 30 MS (*m/z*): calcd. for C₂₉H₃₁F₂NO₄ 495.2; found 496.7 [M + H]⁺

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Scheme 10

Example 5 (removal of protective group):

The mixture **6a/8a** (4.00 g) is dissolved in EtOAc/absolute ethanol 1/4 (450 mL), and 20% Pd(OH)₂/C (50% wet, 200 mg) is added to the solution, under inert atmosphere (N₂). The mixture is maintained under hydrogen atmosphere. Upon disappearance of the initial compound, the mixture is filtered on celite or on material suitable for the purpose, washing it with the reaction mixture (50 mL). The solvents are removed under reduced pressure, obtaining a white solid residue (3.30 g) utilized as such in the subsequent step.

The identity and purity of the compounds is evaluated by comparison with reference standards by HPLC, using a Merck Symmetry C-8 chiral column, 5 μm, 250 x 4.6 mm, and a suitable binary gradient.

¹H-NMR (DMSO-6d): 6.92-6.82 (4H, m), 6.75-6.65 (m, 2H), 5.00 (d, 1H), 4.85 (1H, d), 3.98-3.82 (m, 2H), 3.70-3.60 (m, 2H), 2.85-2.60 (m, 8H), 2.10-2.00 (m, 1H), 1.98-1.82 (m, 1H), 1.80-1.60 (m, 2H).

MS (*m/z*): calcd. for C₂₂H₂₅F₂NO₄ 405.2; found 406.6 [M + H]⁺.

Example 6 (salification of Nebivolol):

Nebivolol free base (3.30 g, 8.70 mmol) is suspended in absolute ethanol (100 mL) and heated to fall until complete dissolution. To this solution, 1.25 M ethanolic HCl

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(7.5 mL) is added. The obtained solution is concentrated under reduced pressure, until obtaining a 15% concentration of the product. During solvent evaporation, progressive formation of a white precipitate is observed. The solid is filtered by washing with cold absolute ethanol, to obtain 3.10 g of nebigolol hydrochloride salt.

5 The chiral purity of the product and the ratio between the two enantiomers is evaluated by comparison with reference standards, by HPLC with an AKZO NOBEL column, Kromasil 5-AmyCoat, 5 μ m, 250 mm x 4.6 and a suitable binary gradient.

$^1\text{H-NMR}$ (DMSO- d_6): 8.66 (brs, 2H), 6.96-6.85 (m, 4H), 6.80-6.70 (2H, m), 5.96 (d, 1H, $J = 5.0$ Hz), 5.77 (d, 1H, $J = 5.0$ Hz), 4.12-4.06 (1H, m), 4.05-3.93 (m, 2H), 3.92-3.86 (m, 1H), 3.40-3.28 (m, 1H), 3.27-3.10 (m, 2H), 3.00 (t, 1H, $J = 6.0$ Hz), 2.90-2.68 (m, 4H), 2.15-2.05 (m, 1H), 1.95-1.85 (m, 1H), 1.80-1.60 (m, 2H).

MS (m/z): calcd. for $\text{C}_{22}\text{H}_{25}\text{F}_2\text{NO}_4$ 405.2; found 406.6 $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$.

Example 7 (opening of epoxides 1 with sodium azide)

A mixture of epoxides 1 (200 mg, 1.03 mmol) and sodium azide (100 mg, 1.5 mmol) in teramyl alcohol (2 mL) is additioned of DMF dropwise until complete solubilization. the solution thus obtained is mixed at room temperature until complete disappearance of the pair of RS/SR epoxides. Then, the mixture is washed with water (5x) and dried on sodium sulphate; it is filtered, the solvents are evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue is purified by flash chromatography, obtaining 90 mg (73%) of the pair of azides deriving from RS/SR epoxides (Scheme 7, $\text{X} = \text{N}_3$) and 80 mg of the pair 4/5. MS (m/z): calcd. for $\text{C}_{11}\text{H}_{12}\text{FN}_3\text{O}_2$ 237.0; found 238.1 $[\text{M} + \text{H}]^+$.

Example 8 (azide reduction and reductive amination)

A solution of the azides deriving from the opening of the RS/SR epoxides (90 mg, 0.38 mmol) is subjected to catalytic hydrogenation in EtOH and in the presence of 5% Pd/C. The solution thus obtained is filtered and additioned with benzaldehyde (40 mg, 0.38 mmol) and triacetoxysodium borohydride (90 mg, 0.41 mmol). At the end of the reaction the solvents are distilled at reduced pressure and the residue is taken up with dichloromethane and washed with 5% Na_2CO_3 , followed by anhydrication on sodium sulphate. A chromatographic purification of the residue thus obtained yields 68 mg (60%) of the mixture of amines 2a/3a.

Example 9 (opening of epoxides 1 with benzylhydroxylamine)

A mixture of epoxides 1 (200 mg, 1.03 mmol) and O- benzylhydroxylamine (184 mg, 1.5 mmol, from commercial hydrochloride salt) in teramyl alcohol (3 mL) is additioned with DMF dropwise until complete solubilization. The solution thus obtained is mixed at room temperature until disappearance of the RS/SR epoxides. Then, the mixture is washed with water (5x) and thereafter dried on sodium sulphate. It is filtered, solvents are evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue is purified by flash chromatography, obtaining 103 mg (65%) of the pair of hydroxylamines deriving from

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the RS/SR epoxides and 75 mg of the pair **4/5**.

MS (*m/z*): calcd. for $C_{18}H_{20}F_2NO_3$ 317.1; found 318.2 $[M + H]^+$.

By treatment analogously to what reported in Example 8, the pair of hydroxylamines thus obtained is converted into the amines **2a/3a**.

- 5 **Example 10** (opening of RS/SR epoxides with t-butylamine and reaction *in situ* with epoxides 4/5)

To a mixture of epoxides **1** (500 mg, 85%, 2.2 mmol) in teramyl alcohol (5 mL) tertbutylamine (0.34 mL, 3.28 mmol) is added and the mixture is mixed until disappearance of the mixture of RS/SR epoxides. The solution is washed with 0.01N
10 $NaHSO_4$ (4x) to remove excess tertbutylamine, additioned with ethanol (2 mL) and heated to reflux until disappearance of the pair of epoxides **3/4**. The solvents are distilled under reduced pressure, and the residue purified by flash chromatography to obtain the mixture of compounds **6-9**, wherein R = tert-butyl (363 mg, 72%).

MS (*m/z*): calcd. for $C_{27}H_{35}F_2NO_3$ 459.3; found 460.4 $[M + H]^+$.

- 15 **Example 11** (opening of the epoxydes with dibenzylamine and selective deprotection of a benzyl)

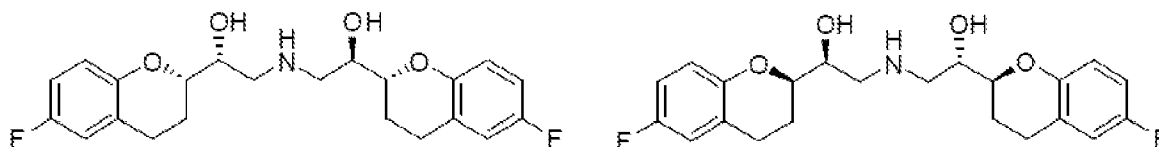
A solution of the epoxydes **1** (100 mg, 0.51 mmol), dibenzylamine (150 μ L, 0.70 mmol) in teramyl alcohol (1 mL) is mixed at room temperature, until disappearance of the RS/SR epoxides. Then, the crude product of the reaction is purified by flash
20 chromatography, obtaining 63 mg (63%) of the amine mixture deriving from the opening of the RS/SR epoxydes with dibenzylamine and 51 mg (65%) of the pair of epoxides **4/5**.

The dibenzylamine mixture is dissolved in ethanol (5mL) and hydrogenated with 5% Pd/C to obtain the benzylamines **2a/3a** as main products (29 mg, 74%).

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CLAIMS

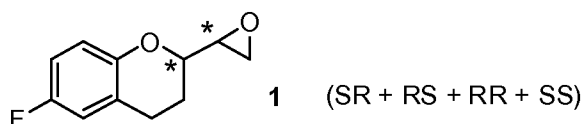
1. A process for the preparation of the compound Nebivolol in the form of racemic mixture of the two enantiomers [2S[2R[R[R]]]] α, α' -[imino-bis (methylene)] bis[6-fluoro-chroman-2-methanol] and [2R[2S[S[S]]]] α, α' -[imino-bis (methylene)] bis[6-fluoro-chroman-2-methanol], having the following formulas



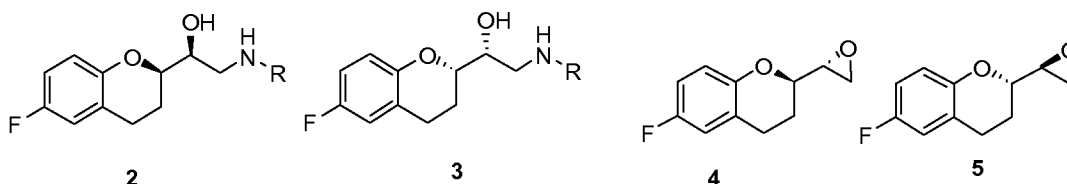
Nebivolol (SRRR + RSSS)

comprising the following steps:

- a. reacting a mixture of the four isomers SR, RS, RR and SS of the epoxide of formula (1)

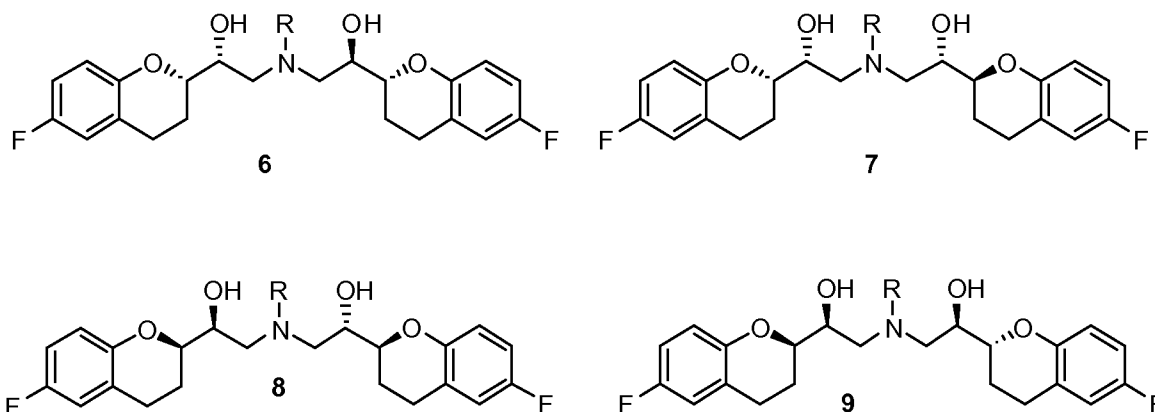


- with an amine $R-NH_2$, wherein R is a protecting group selected from methyl, allyl, t-butyl, benzyl, diphenylmethyl, triphenylmethyl, fluorenyl, 9,10-dihydroanthracen-9-yl, dibenzyl, wherein the aromatic rings can be possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , an OR_2 group, where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, in a solvent represented by a sterically hindered alcohol selected from iPrOH, sec-BuOH, tert-BuOH, isoamyl, 2-methyl-2-butanol, 2-methyl-2-pentanol, used alone or in mixture with an apolar solvent selected from the group petroleum ether, pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane, heptane, benzene, toluene, to obtain a mixture of the four compounds **2**, **3**, **4** and **5**, from which the pair **2/3** is separated from the pair **4/5**;



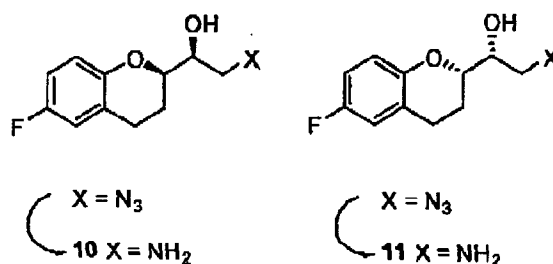
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b. reacting the amines **2** and **3**, in mixture, with the pair of epoxides **4** and **5**, in mixture, to obtain a mixture of four compounds (**6**, **7**, **8** and **9**);



- c. separating the compounds **6** and **8** (RSSS + SRRR), in mixture, from **7** and **9** by fractional crystallization, by a first solvent selected from ethanol, isopropanol, butanol, tert-butanol, 2-methyl-2-butanol, and subsequently by a mixture of a polar aprotic solvent selected from methyl acetate, ethyl acetate, isopropyl acetate, acetone, methyl ethyl ketone, acetonitrile, isopropyl ether, with an apolar solvent selected from pentane, hexane, cyclohexane, methylcyclohexane, heptane, benzene, toluene.
- d. removing the protecting group R, and optionally subsequently forming the hydrochloride salt, to obtain the final product Nebivolol or Nebivolol hydrochloride.
2. A process according to claim 1, where R is a benzyl group.
 3. A process according to claim 1, where the amines **2** and **3** are separated from the epoxides **4** and **5** by precipitation and filtration.
 4. A process of claim 1, wherein the sterically hindered alcohol, defined at point a), is selected from 2-methyl-2-butanol, tert-BuOH, and 2-methyl-2-pentanol.
 5. A process according to claim 1, wherein the apolar solvent, defined at point (a), is cyclohexane.
 6. A process according to claim 1, wherein the solvents for the fractional crystallization defined at point c) are 2-methyl-2-butanol and subsequently an ethyl acetate/cyclohexane mixture.
 7. A process according to claim 1, comprising, as an alternative to the synthetic step described at point a), the following steps:
 - e. reacting the SR, RS, RR and SS mixture of epoxide **1** with ammonia or with an azide, followed, in the case of azide, by reduction to the corresponding primary amine:

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f. separating the primary amine from the epoxides 4/5 by extraction in a suitable solvent or by chromatography;

- 5 g. carrying out a reductive amination of the amines 10/11 with an aldehyde R_1CHO , wherein R_1 is selected from the group: H, vinyl, phenyl, phenyl mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , OR_2 , where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, to obtain the mixture of amines 2/3.

8. A process according to claim 7, wherein R_1 is a phenyl group.

- 10 9. A process according to claim 7, comprising, as an alternative to the synthetic step described at point e., the following step:

h. reacting the mixture SR, RS, RR and SS of epoxide 1 with hydroxylamine, followed by N-O bond hydrogenation and obtainment of the amines 10/11.

10. A process according to claim 1, comprising, as a partial alternative to point a.,
 15 after the reacting of the amine RNH_2 with the SR, RS, RR and SS mixture of the epoxide 1, the following steps:

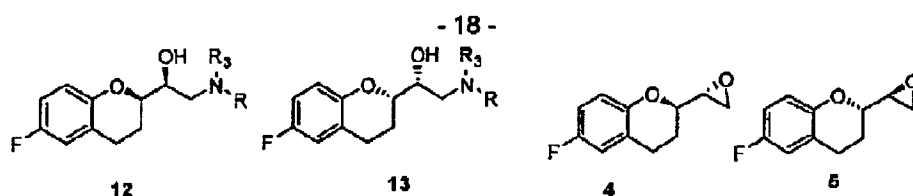
k. excess of unreacted amine RNH_2 is removed;

i. an alcohol solvent selected from methanol or ethanol is added and the compounds 2/3 are left to react directly with the compounds 4/5 as envisaged at point

- 20 b.

11 A process according to claim 1, comprising, as a partial alternative to point a. the following steps:

m. the mixture SR, RS, RR and SS of the epoxide 1 is reacted with a secondary amine of RR_3NH type, wherein R has the meaning seen in the foregoing, and R_3 is a
 25 benzyl group, possibly mono- or disubstituted with a group selected from: halogen, nitro, a C1-C4 alkyl chain, CF_3 , CHF_2 , an OR_2 group, where R_2 is a hydrogen, a C1-C4 alkyl, to obtain a mixture of the four compounds 12, 13, 4 and 5, from which the pair 12/13 is separated from the pair 4/5;



n. eliminating the group R_3 , to obtain a mixture of compounds 2/3

12. A process according to claim 11, wherein R_3 is a benzyl group.

13. A process according to claim 1, wherein the deprotecting envisaged at
 5 point d. is performed by catalytic hydrogenation with $\text{Pd}(\text{OH})_2$.