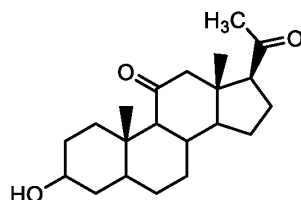


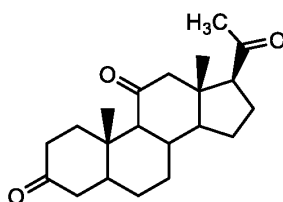
The Claims Defining the Invention are as Follows:

1. A process for preparing a compound of Formula (I)



Formula (I)

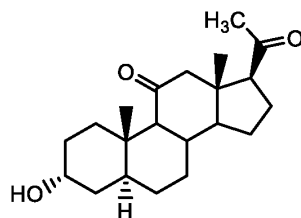
comprising a ruthenium-catalyzed reduction of the 3-ketone of compound of Formula (II)



Formula (II)

to provide a compound of Formula (I).

2. A process according to claim 1 wherein the reduction provides $\geq 80:20$ stereoselectivity 3α -hydroxy : 3β -hydroxy of Formula (I).
3. A process according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the compound of Formula (I) is 3α -hydroxy- 5α -pregnane-11,20-dione of Formula (Ia)

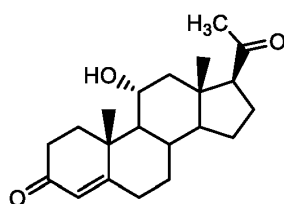


Formula (Ia).

4. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the ruthenium catalyst is selected from the group consisting of $\text{RuCl}(\text{p-cymene})[(\text{R,R})\text{-Tsdpen}]$, $\text{RuCl}(\text{p-cymene})[(\text{S,S})\text{-Tsdpen}]$, $\text{RuCl}(\text{mesitylene})[(\text{S,S})\text{-Tsdpen}]$, $\text{RuCl}(\text{p-cymene})[(\text{S,S})\text{-Fsdpen}]$, and $\text{RuCl}[(\text{S,S})\text{-Ms-DENEB}]$.
5. A process according to any one of claims 1 to 4 comprising mixing a compound of

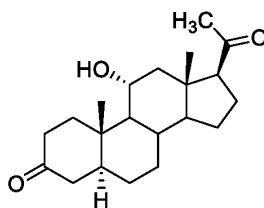
Formula (II) with a carbonate salt in an organic solvent.

6. A process according to claim 5 wherein the carbonate salt is potassium hydrogen carbonate or potassium carbonate.
7. A process according to claim 5 wherein the organic solvent is isopropyl alcohol.
8. A process according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising
 - i) reduction of 11 α -hydroxyprogesterone of Formula (III)



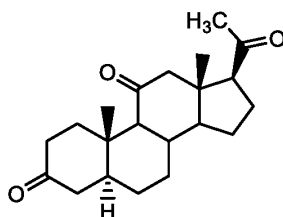
Formula (III)

to provide 11 α -hydroxy-3,20-diketo-5 α -H-pregnane of Formula (IV)



Formula (IV)

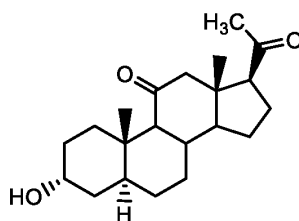
- ii) oxidation of 11 α -hydroxy-3,20-diketo-5 α -H-pregnane of Formula (IV) to provide 3,11,20-triketo-5 α -H-pregnane of Formula (II)



Formula (II)

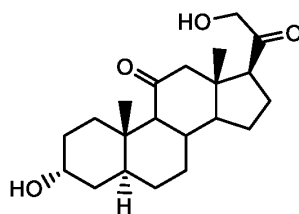
- iii) reduction of 3,11,20-triketo-5 α -H-pregnane of Formula (II) to provide a compound of Formula (Ia).
9. A process according to claim 8 wherein the reduction at step i) is a palladium catalyzed hydrogenation.

10. A process according to claim 9 wherein the palladium catalyst is Pd/CaCO₃.
11. A process according to claim 9 or 10 wherein the hydrogenation further comprises an organic solvent.
12. A process according to claim 11 wherein the organic solvent is dichloromethane, dichloromethane/trimethylamine, or dichloromethane/triethylamine.
13. A process according to claim any one of claims 8 to 12 wherein the oxidation at step ii) comprises addition of NaOCl and a phase transfer catalyst.
14. A process according to claim 13 wherein the phase transfer catalyst is tetrabutylammonium hydrogen sulfate.
15. A process according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising iv) hydroxylation of a compound of Formula (Ia)



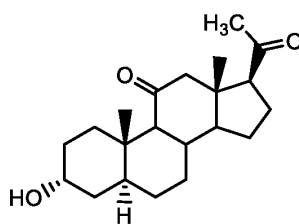
Formula (Ia)

to provide a compound of Formula (V)

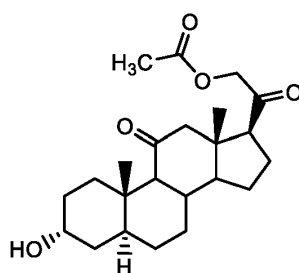


Formula (V).

16. A process according to any one of the preceding claims further comprising iv) acetylation of a compound of Formula (Ia)

*Formula (Ia)*

to provide a compound of Formula (VI)

*Formula (VI).*

17. A process according to any one of the preceding claims practiced on a multigram scale, preferably a kilogram scale, more preferably a multikilogram scale, more preferably an industrial scale.
18. A process according to any one of the preceding claims wherein the product is suitable for therapeutic administration to a human.
19. Compounds of Formula (Ia), Formula (V) or Formula (VI) prepared by the process of any one of the preceding claims.
20. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound prepared by the process of any one of claims 1 to 18.
21. An anesthetic composition comprising a compound prepared by the process of any one of claims 1 to 18.