

Modified Cyclic Dinucleotide Compounds

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Field of the Invention

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This invention relates to novel modified cyclic dinucleotide compounds ("CDNs") of formula (I), and pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, that induce cytokine production. These modified CDNs are composed of one 3',5'-linked locked nucleic acid (LNA) and a 2'-monofluorinated 3',5'-linked nucleotide both of which comprise a purine nucleobase and a phosphorothioate moiety. In addition, the invention relates to pharmaceutical compositions and combinations comprising said compounds, and to their use in methods for the treatment of diseases associated with or modulated by STING (Stimulator of Interferon Genes). Particularly, the pharmaceutical compositions of the invention are suitable for the therapy of inflammation, allergic and autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases, cancer and as vaccine adjuvants.

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Background of the Invention

The role of the immune system is to protect the body from pathogens and malignant cells. However, viruses and cancer cells find ways to evade the immune system. The aim of immunotherapies is thus to initiate an antigen specific immune response or to re-activate a pre-existing response in certain cell types of the immune system against the pathogenic invaders or cancerous cells.

The immune system consists of several specialized lineages which can be roughly grouped into two arms, the innate and the adaptive immune system. For a successful immune reaction, lineages from both arms have to act in concert. A major role of the innate immune system is to mount a rapid immune response against pathogens or malignant cells which, unlike the adaptive system, is not antigen specific and long lasting. In addition to the direct killing of pathogens or transformed cells, the innate immune system also activates and subsequently directs the adaptive immune system. Antigen presenting cells such as dendritic cells capture and present antigens in the form of a peptide-major histocompatibility complex (MHC) complex to T cells in lymphoid tissues. This antigen presentation together with the secretion of certain cytokines leads to the activation and differentiation of antigen specific effector CD4 and CD8 T

cells. Type I interferon (IFN) production by antigen presenting cells, and other cell types, is considered a key event in the activation of T cells as the lack of type I IFN resulted in a reduced T cell dependent immune response against viral infections or tumor cells (Zitvogel et al, Nature Reviews Immunology 15, 405 - 414, 2015). On the other hand, the presence of a type I IFN signature during cancer therapy is associated with increased numbers of tumor infiltrating T cells and potentially favorable clinical outcome (Sistigu et al, Nature Medicine 20, 1301 – 1309, 2014). Recent studies in mice have shown that efficient secretion of type I IFN in the tumor microenvironment and the induction of a T cell dependent immune response against cancer cells depends on the presence of the adaptor protein *stimulator of interferon genes* (STING, also known as Tmem173, MPYS, MITA, ERIS) (Woo et al, Immunity 41, 5, 830 – 842, 2014; Corrales et al, Cell Reports 11, 1018 – 1030, 2015; Deng et al, Immunity 41, 5, 843 – 852, 2014). The importance of the presence of type I IFN was highlighted by the fact that the deletion of STING resulted in reduced type I IFN levels in the tumor microenvironment and in a reduced anti-tumor effect in several mouse tumor models. On the other hand, the specific activation of STING resulted in an improved, antigen specific T cell immune response against cancer cells.

STING belongs to the family of nucleic acid sensors and is the adaptor for cytosolic DNA signaling. In its basal state STING exists as a dimer with its N terminal domain anchored in the ER and the C-terminal domain residing in the cytosol. Cyclic dinucleotides (CDNs), generated by the protein cyclic GMP-AMP Synthase (cGAS) are the natural ligands of STING (Ablasser et al, Nature 498, 380 – 384, 2013). Binding of CDNs to STING induces conformational changes which allows the binding and activation of the TANK binding kinase (TBK1) and interferon regulatory factor 3 (IRF3) and the relocalisation from the ER to perinuclear endosomes (Liu et al, Science 347, Issue 6227, 2630-1 – 2630-14, 2015). Phosphorylation of the transcription factor IRF3 and NF- κ B by TBK1 results in expression of multiple cytokines including type I IFN.

Given the importance of type I IFN in several malignancies including viral infections and cancer therapy, strategies that allow the specific activation of STING are of therapeutic interest.

WO 2014/093936 describes cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases and two canonical 3',5' phosphodiester or phosphorothioate moieties and induce STING-dependent cytokine production.

US 7,709,458 describes cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases and two canonical 3',5' phosphodiester moieties and can be used to inhibit cancer cell proliferation or to increase cancer cell apoptosis, in particular the symmetrical bacterial CDN c-di-GMP.

US 7,592,326 describes immunostimulatory cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases and two canonical 3',5' phosphodiester moieties, in particular the symmetrical bacterial CDN c-di-GMP.

WO 2016/096174 and WO 2016/145102 describe cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases and two canonical 3',5' phosphodiester or phosphorothioate moieties and induce STING-dependent cytokine production.

Bioorg. Med. Chem. Lett. 18 (2008) 5631–5634 describes immunostimulatory mono- and bis-phosphorothioate analogues of symmetrical bacterial CDN c-di-GMP.

WO 2014/189805 describes cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases and at least one non-canonical 2',5' phosphodiester or phosphorothioate moiety and induce STING-dependent cytokine production.

- 5 WO 2015/185565 describes cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases, one or two cyclopentane instead of ribose tetrahydrofuran rings and one non-canonical 2',5' phosphodiester moiety and modulate STING.

WO 2016/120305 describes cyclic dinucleotide compounds that feature two purine nucleobases, one ribose moiety in which the 2'-OH is replaced with a 2'-F and one non-canonical 2',5' phosphodiester moiety and modulate STING.

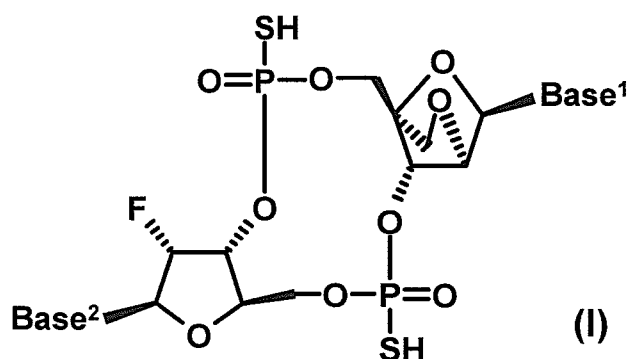
- 10 US 2014/0329889, WO 2014/099824, WO 2015/017652, Cell 154, 748–762 (2013), and Molecular Cell 51, 226–235 (2013) describe the cyclic dinucleotide 2'3'-cGAMP (cyclic [G(2',5')pA(3',5')p]) which features two purine nucleobases, one canonical 3',5' and one non-canonical 2',5' phosphodiester moieties. Non-canonically linked 2'3'-cGAMP binds to human STING with higher affinity than canonically linked 3'3'-cGAMP or symmetrical bacterial c-di-GMP and induces type I interferon production.

- 15 Further cyclic dinucleotides with 2',5'-2',5' or 2',5'-3',5' connectivity are disclosed as STING agonists in WO 2017/027645 and WO 2017/027646, respectively.

Summary

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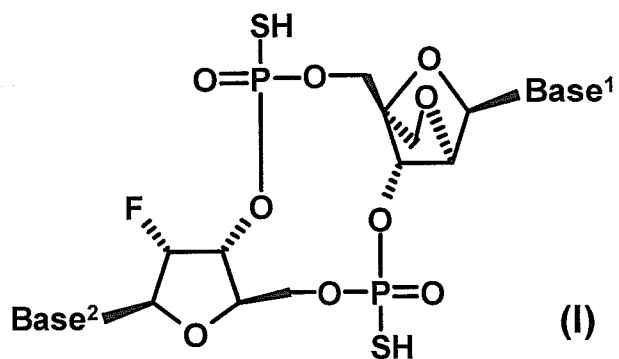
The present disclosure relates to a compound of formula (I)



wherein

- 25 Base¹ and Base² are purine nucleobases independently selected from the group consisting of purine, adenine, guanine, xanthine, and hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms, the isoforms, tautomers, stereoisomers, metabolites, prodrugs, solvates, hydrates, and the salts thereof.

In a first aspect, the present disclosure relates to a compound of formula (I)



wherein

Base¹ and Base² are independently selected from the group consisting of purine, adenine, guanine, xanthine, and

5 hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms,

or a salt thereof.

In a second aspect, the present disclosure relates to a pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more compounds of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents.

- 5 In a third aspect, the present disclosure relates to a pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more compounds of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, and one or more additional therapeutic agents, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents.

In a fourth aspect, the present disclosure relates to a compound of formula (I) or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for use as a medicament.

The present disclosure relates to the use of a compound of formula (I) or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof as a vaccine adjuvant. In a fifth aspect, the present disclosure relates to a compound of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, for use as a vaccine adjuvant. In a sixth aspect, the present disclosure relates to a vaccine comprising a compound of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter.

The present disclosure relates to a method for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING, particularly for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer, in a patient in need thereof.

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Also, the present disclosure relates to the use of one or more of said inhibitors in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING, particularly for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer, in a patient in need thereof. In a seventh aspect, the present disclosure relates to use of a compound of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, in the preparation of a medicament for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer in a patient in need thereof.

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Also, the present disclosure relates to a compound of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof for use in a method for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING, particularly for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer, in a patient in need thereof.

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Other aspects of the present disclosure will become apparent to the person skilled in the art directly from the foregoing and following description and examples.

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General Terms and Definitions

5 Terms not specifically defined herein should be given the meanings that would be given to them by one of skill in the art in light of the disclosure and the context. As used in the specification, however, unless specified to the contrary, the following terms have the meaning indicated and the following conventions are adhered to.

10 The terms "compound(s) according to this invention", "compound(s) of formula (I)", "compound(s) of the invention" and the like denote the compounds of the formula (I) according to the present invention including their tautomers, stereoisomers and mixtures thereof and the salts thereof, in particular the pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, and the solvates and hydrates of such compounds, including the solvates and hydrates of such tautomers, stereoisomers and salts thereof.

15 Unless specifically indicated, throughout the specification and the appended claims, a given chemical formula or name shall encompass tautomers and all stereo, optical and geometrical isomers (e.g. enantiomers, diastereomers, E/Z isomers etc.) and racemates thereof as well as mixtures in different proportions of the separate enantiomers, mixtures of diastereomers, or mixtures of any of the foregoing forms where such isomers and enantiomers exist, as well as salts, including pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof and solvates thereof such as for instance hydrates
20 including solvates of the free compounds or solvates of a salt of the compound.

In case a compound of the present invention is depicted in form of a chemical name and as a formula, the formula shall prevail in case of any discrepancy.

An asterisk may be used in sub-formulas to indicate the bond which is connected to the core molecule as defined.

25 The term "substantially pure" as used herein with regard to compounds of formula (I) refers to one (Rp,Rp), (Rp,Sp), (Sp,Rp) or (Sp,Sp) diastereomer which is at least 75% pure relative to the other possible diastereomers with respect to the phosphor atoms. In preferred embodiments, a substantially pure compound of general formula (I) is at least 85% pure, at least 90% pure, at least 95% pure, at least 97% pure, or at least 99% pure.

30 The term "protecting group" as used herein, and unless otherwise defined, refers to a chemical functional group that is attached to an oxygen, nitrogen or phosphorus atom to prevent further reaction of that atom, or for other purposes. A wide variety of protecting groups are known to those skilled in the art of organic synthesis, and are described, for example, in "Protective Groups in Organic Synthesis" by T.W. Greene and P.G.M. Wuts, Third Edition, 1999.

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The term "pharmaceutically acceptable" is employed herein to refer to those compounds, materials, compositions, and/or dosage forms which are, within the scope of sound medical judgment, suitable for use in contact with the tissues of human beings and animals without excessive toxicity, irritation, allergic response, or other problem or complication, and commensurate with a reasonable benefit/risk ratio.

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As used herein, "pharmaceutically acceptable salt" refers to derivatives of the disclosed compounds wherein the parent compound is modified by making acid or base salts thereof. Examples of pharmaceutically acceptable salts include, but are not limited to, mineral or organic acid salts of basic residues such as amines; alkali, ammonium or organic salts of acidic residues such as phosphodiester or phosphorothioate moieties; and the like.

10 The terms "modulated" or "modulating", or "modulate(s)", as used herein, unless otherwise indicated, refer to the activation of the STING pathway with one or more compounds of the present invention, in this case representing STING agonists.

The terms "treatment" and "treating" as used herein embrace both therapeutic, i.e. curative and/or palliative, and
15 preventive, i.e. prophylactic, treatment.

Therapeutic treatment refers to the treatment of patients having already developed one or more of said conditions in manifest, acute or chronic form. Therapeutic treatment may be symptomatic treatment in order to relieve the symptoms of the specific indication or causal treatment in order to reverse or partially reverse the conditions of the indication or to stop or slow down progression of the disease. Also, therapeutic treatment embraces treatment over a
20 period of time as well as chronic therapy.

Preventive treatment ("prevention", "prophylactic treatment") refers to the treatment of patients at risk of developing one or more of said conditions, prior to the clinical onset of the disease in order to reduce said risk.

The terms "treatment" and "treating" include the administration of one or more active compounds in order to prevent or delay the onset of the symptoms or complications and to prevent or delay the development of the disease,
25 condition or disorder and/or in order to eliminate or control the disease, condition or disorder as well as to alleviate the symptoms or complications associated with the disease, condition or disorder.

The term "therapeutically effective amount" means an amount of a compound of the present invention that (i) treats or prevents the particular disease or condition, (ii) attenuates, ameliorates, or eliminates one or more symptoms of
30 the particular disease or condition, or (iii) prevents or delays the onset of one or more symptoms of the particular disease or condition described herein.

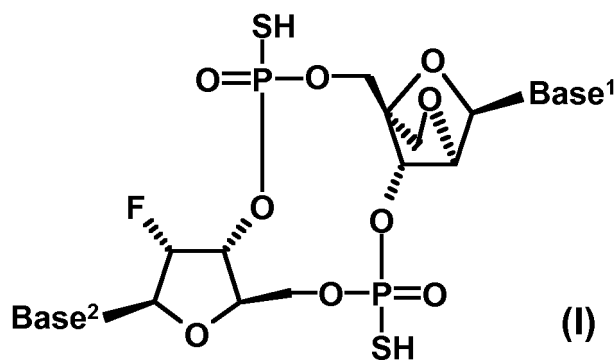
When this invention refers to patients requiring treatment, it relates primarily to treatment in mammals, in particular humans.

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Detailed Description of the Invention

5 Compounds of the Invention

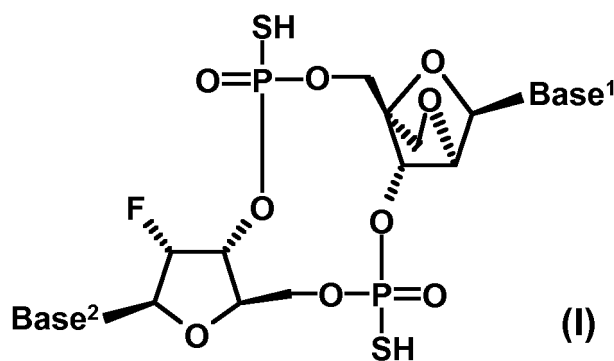
In one aspect of the present invention, it is found that modified CDNs of formula (I)



wherein Base¹ and Base² are defined as hereinbefore and hereinafter, exhibit favorable binding affinity to human
 10 STING and favorable activity in cells bearing different human STING alleles which could allow for achieving pharmacological efficacy at low doses.

Therefore, the compounds of formula (I), as defined hereinbefore or hereinafter, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof are expected to be useful in the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING.

15 Thus, according to one aspect of the present invention, a compound of formula (I)



wherein Base¹ and Base² are defined as hereinbefore or hereinafter, is provided as well as the isoforms, tautomers, stereoisomers, metabolites, prodrugs, solvates, hydrates, and the salts thereof, particularly the physiologically acceptable salts thereof with inorganic or organic bases.

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Some preferred meanings of the substituents Base¹ and Base² will be given hereinafter. Any and each of these definitions may be combined with each other.

According to one embodiment, Base¹ is selected from the group consisting of purine, adenine, guanine, xanthine, and hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms.

According to another embodiment, Base¹ is selected from the group consisting of adenine and guanine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms.

5 According to another embodiment, Base¹ is purine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base¹ is adenine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base¹ is guanine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base¹ is xanthine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base¹ is hypoxanthine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

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According to one embodiment, Base² is selected from the group consisting of purine, adenine, guanine, xanthine, and hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms,

According to another embodiment, Base² is selected from the group consisting of adenine, guanine and hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms.

15 According to another embodiment, Base² is purine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base² is adenine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

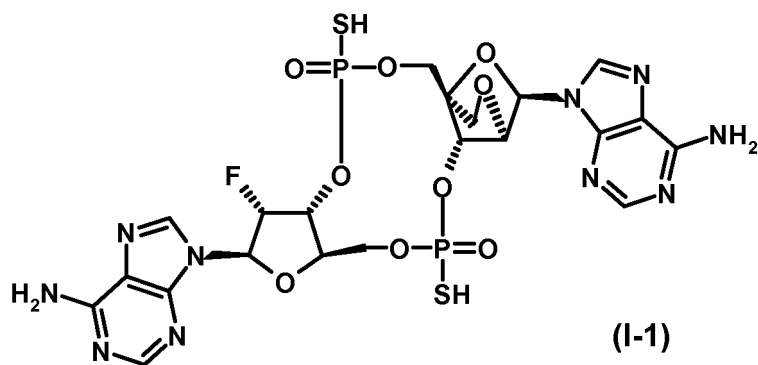
According to another embodiment, Base² is guanine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

According to another embodiment, Base² is xanthine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

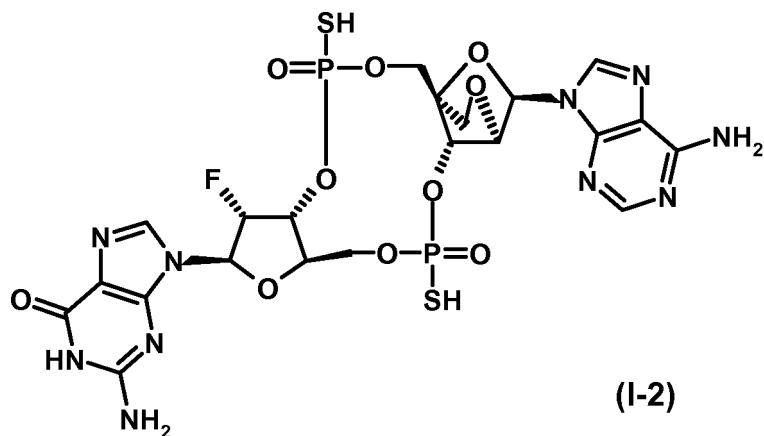
According to another embodiment, Base² is hypoxanthine, connected through its N⁹ nitrogen atom.

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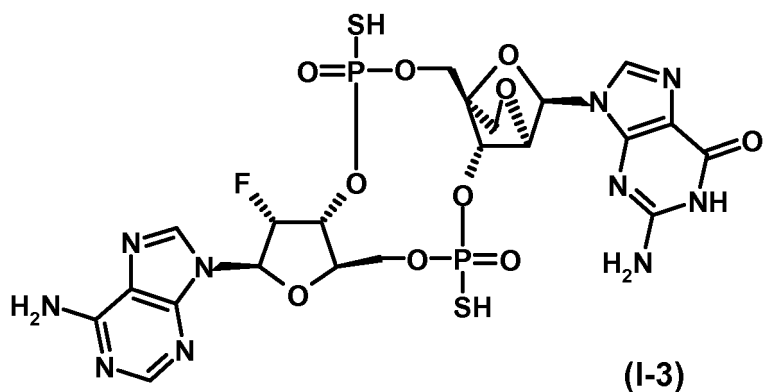
According to another embodiment, the compound of formula (I) is compound (I-1)



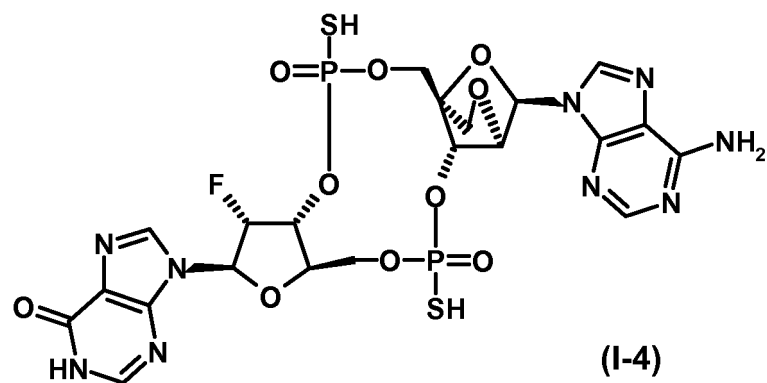
According to another embodiment, the compound of formula (I) is compound (I-2)



According to another embodiment, the compound of formula (I) is compound (I-3)



5 According to another embodiment, the compound of formula (I) is compound (I-4)



The compounds of the present invention possess chiral phosphor atoms with either Rp or Sp configuration. All stereoisomers of the compounds of formula (I), (I-1), (I-2), (I-3), and (I-4), either in substantially pure form or as the mixtures thereof, are covered by the subject invention. The compounds of general formula (I), (I-1), (I-2), (I-3), and (I-4) as substantially pure (Rp,Rp), (Rp,Sp), (Sp,Rp) or (Sp,Sp) stereoisomers are preferred.

Preparation

The compounds according to the invention and their intermediates may be obtained using methods of synthesis which are known to the one skilled in the art and described in the literature of organic synthesis. Preferably the compounds are obtained analogously to the methods of preparation explained more fully hereinafter, in particular as described in the experimental section. In some cases the sequence adopted in carrying out the reaction schemes may be varied. Variants of these reactions that are known to the skilled person but are not described in detail here may also be used. The general processes for preparing the compounds according to the invention will become apparent to the skilled person on studying the following methodology. Starting compounds are commercially available or may be prepared by methods that are described in the literature or herein, or may be prepared in an analogous or similar manner. Before the reaction is carried out, any corresponding functional groups in the starting compounds may be protected using conventional protecting groups. These protecting groups may be cleaved again at a suitable stage within the reaction sequence using methods familiar to the one skilled in the art.

CDNs disclosed herein can be prepared as described in detail below, or by other methods known to those skilled in the art. It will be understood by one of ordinary skill in the art that these schemes are in no way limiting and that variations of detail can be made without departing from the spirit of the present invention.

CDNs may be obtained by methods described in Chem. Rev. 113, 7354-7401 (2013), Org. Lett., 12, 3269-3271 (2010), Tetrahedron 49, 1115-1132 (1993), WO 2017/0247645, WO 2017/027646, WO 2014/189805, WO 2016/096174, WO 2015/185565, WO 2016/145102 or WO 2016/120305 and references cited therein.

According to another aspect of the present invention, the compounds of formula (I) and salts thereof may be prepared by the methodology described hereinafter.

Those who are skilled in the art will recognize that the two phosphorothioate moieties in formula (I) may each exist in the R configuration (R_P) or S configuration (S_P). The methodology described hereinafter may yield up to four diastereomers with respect to the phosphor atoms which may be separated by methods known to the person who is skilled in the art, e.g. by chromatography and/or fractional crystallization, for example HPLC with suitable solvent systems and columns at different stages of the synthesis. In some cases, for example when one sulfurization step proceeds in a diastereoselective fashion, the methodology described hereinafter may preferentially yield only two diastereomers which may be separated by chromatographic or crystallization methods known to the person who is skilled in the art at different stages of the synthesis.

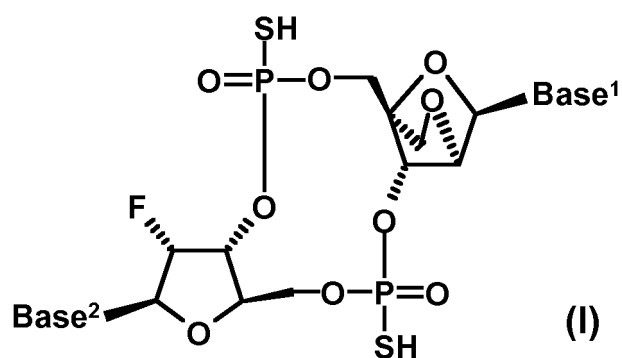
As mentioned above, the compounds of formula (I) may be converted into salts by methods known to the one skilled in the art, particularly for pharmaceutical use into the pharmaceutically acceptable salts.

The compounds according to the invention are advantageously also obtainable using the methods described in the examples that follow, which may also be combined for this purpose with methods known to the skilled person from the literature.

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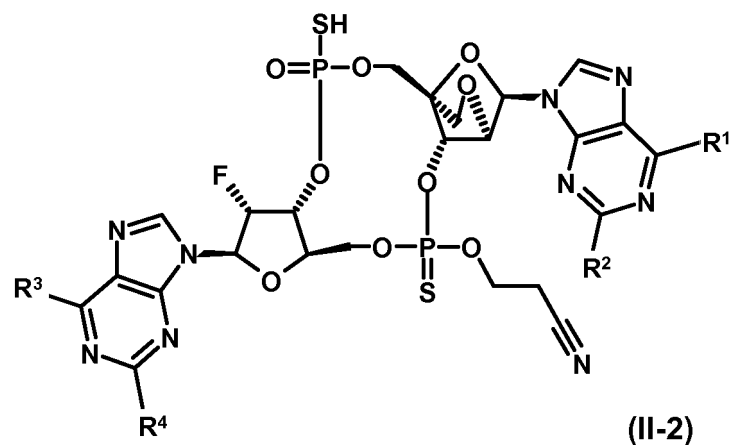
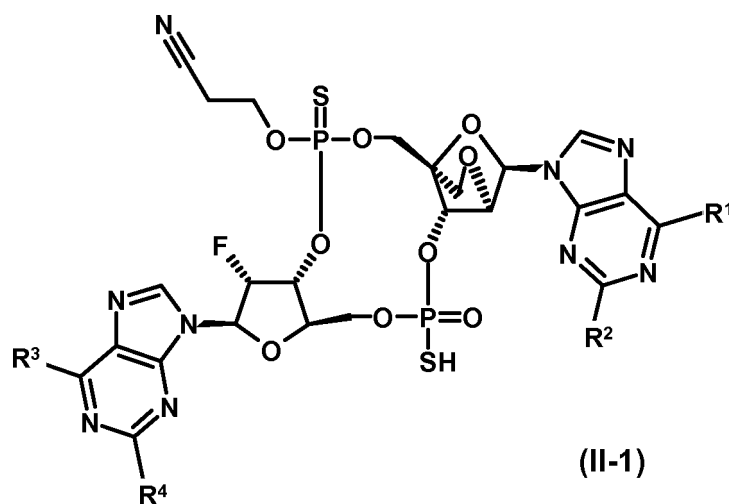
Substituents not explicitly specified within the following methods of preparation are understood to cover the definitions mentioned hereinbefore under the Summary of the Invention.

A compound of formula (I)



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may be prepared by deprotection of a compound of formula (II-1) or (II-2)



wherein either

R¹ denotes NH bearing a suitable protecting group, such as benzoyl, and R² denotes H ("protected adenine") or

5 R¹ denotes OH and R² denotes NH bearing a suitable protecting group, such as *iso*-butyryl or *N,N*-dimethylformamidinyl ("protected guanine") or

R¹ and R² both denote OH ("xanthine") or

R¹ denotes OH and R² denotes H ("hypoxanthine") or

R¹ and R² both denote H ("purine"); and

10 wherein either

R³ denotes NH bearing a suitable protecting group, such as benzoyl, and R⁴ denotes H ("protected adenine") or

R³ denotes OH and R⁴ denotes NH bearing a suitable protecting group, such as *iso*-butyryl or *N,N*-dimethylformamidinyl ("protected guanine") or

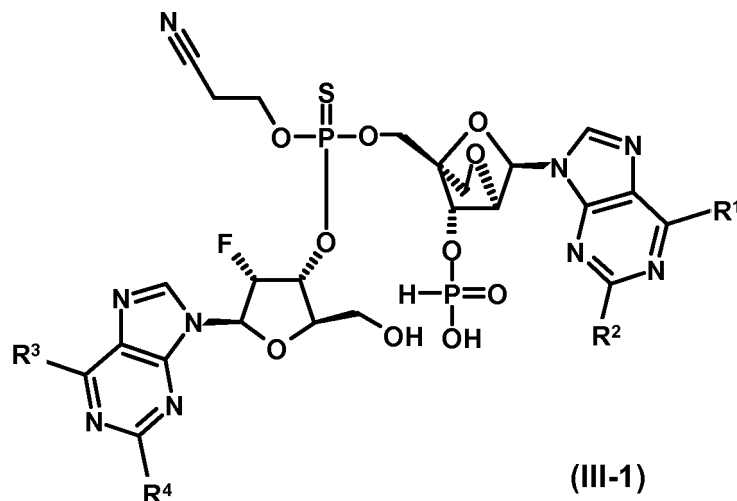
R³ and R⁴ both denote OH ("xanthine") or

15 R³ denotes OH and R⁴ denotes H ("hypoxanthine") or

R³ and R⁴ both denote H ("purine").

For example, a compound of formula (II-1) or (II-2) is dissolved in a suitable mixture, for example methylamine or aqueous ammonia in methanol or ethanol, and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 20-60°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 1-24 hours.

A compound of formula (II-1) may be prepared by cyclization and subsequent sulfurization of a compound of formula (III-1):

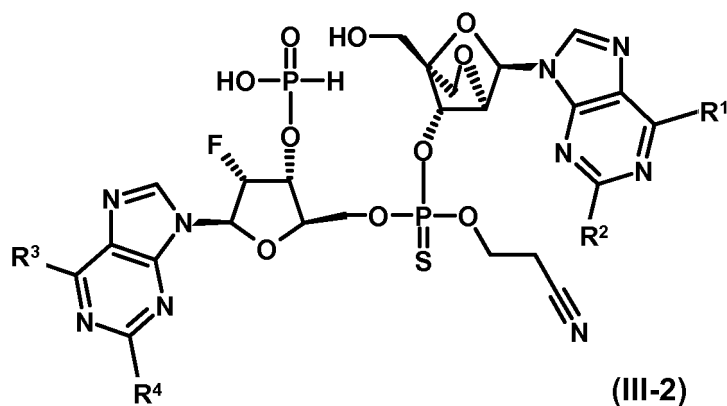


5 wherein R¹, R², R³, and R⁴ are defined as hereinbefore.

For example, a compound of formula (III-1) is dissolved in a suitable solvent, for example pyridine or a mixture of pyridine and dichloromethane, and treated with a suitable coupling reagent, for example 2-chloro-5,5-dimethyl-1,3,2-dioxaphosphorinane 2-oxide (DMOCP), diphenyl chlorophosphate, pivaloyl chloride or adamantoyl chloride, and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example -50°C to 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-2 hours.

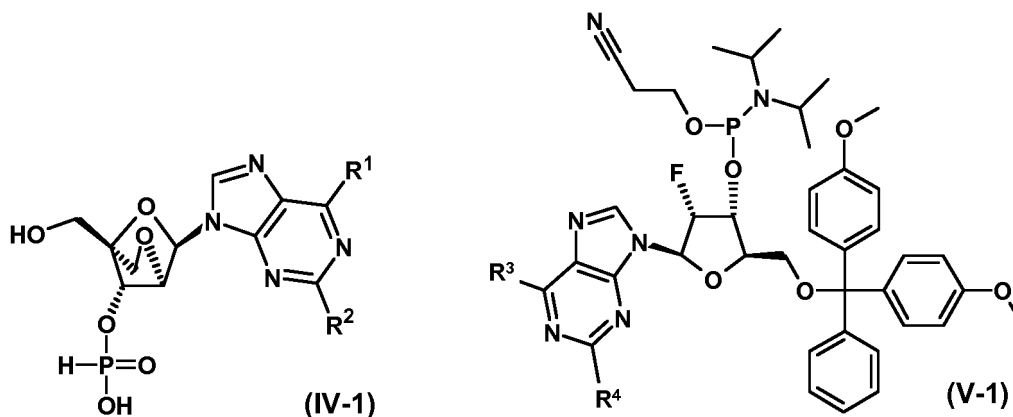
10 The cyclization reaction is quenched by treatment with a suitable sulfurization reagent, for example, 3*H*-1,2-benzodithiol-3-one or elemental sulfur, and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example -50°C to 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-2 hours.

In analogous fashion, a compound of formula (II-2) may be prepared by cyclization and subsequent sulfurization of a
15 compound of formula (III-2):



wherein R¹, R², R³, and R⁴ are defined as hereinbefore.

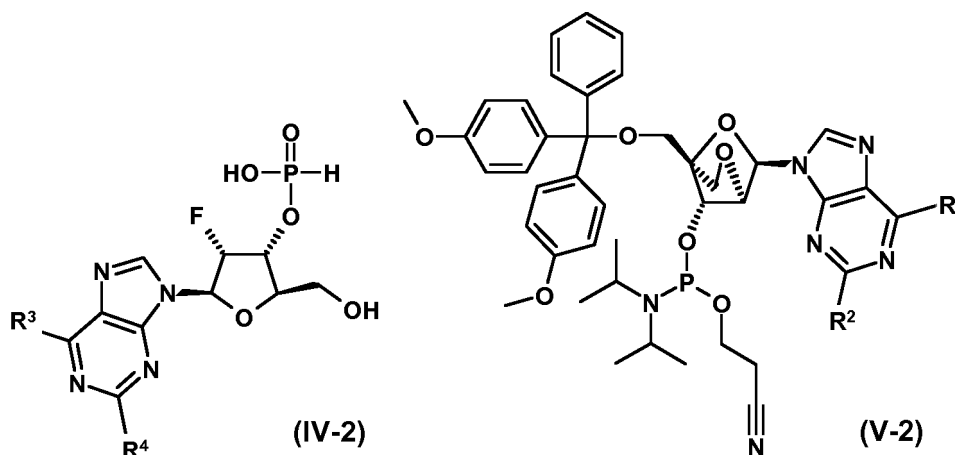
A compound of formula (III-1) may be prepared by coupling of a compound of formula (IV-1) with a compound of formula (V-1):



wherein R¹, R², R³, and R⁴ are defined as hereinbefore.

- 5 For example, a compound of formula (V-1) is dissolved in a suitable solvent, for example acetonitrile, and is treated with a solution of a compound of formula (IV-1) dissolved in a suitable solvent, for example acetonitrile, optionally in the presence of a suitable coupling reagent, for example tetrazole, Activator 42[®] (activator solution, containing 5-(3,5-bis(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)-1H-tetrazole in acetonitrile), pyridinium dichloroacetate or pyridinium trifluoroacetate (or mixtures coupling reagents), and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time,
- 10 for example 0.1-2 hours. The coupling reaction is quenched by treatment with a suitable sulfurization reagent, for example, 3-((N,N-dimethylaminomethylidene)amino)-3H-1,2,4-dithiazole-3-thione (DDTT) or phenylacetyl disulfide (PADS) or 3H-1,2-benzodithiol-3-one 1,1-dioxide (Beaucage's reagent), and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-2 hours. After evaporation of the solvent, the residue is dissolved in a suitable solvent, for example a mixture of dichloromethane and water, and treated with a suitable
- 15 reagent, for example dichloroacetic acid, and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-1 hour.

A compound of formula (III-2) may be prepared in analogous fashion by coupling of a compound of formula (IV-2) with a compound of formula (V-2):



wherein R¹, R², R³, and R⁴ are defined as hereinbefore.

A compound of formula (IV-1) may be prepared by reaction of a compound of formula (V-2), as defined hereinbefore. For example, a commercially available compound of formula (V-2) is dissolved in a suitable mixture, for example acetonitrile containing water, and treated with pyridinium trifluoroacetate, and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 1-30 minutes. Then *tert*-butylamine is added and the mixture stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-1 hour. The product is isolated by evaporation of the solvent then dissolved in a suitable solvent, for example dichloromethane containing water, and treated with dichloroacetic acid and stirred at a suitable temperature, for example 0 - 20°C, for a suitable period of time, for example 0.1-1 hour.

The compounds of general formula I, or synthetic intermediates thereof, may be resolved into their diastereomers by taking advantage of their different physico-chemical properties using methods known *per se*, e.g. chromatography and/or fractional crystallization.

The compounds according to the invention are advantageously also obtainable using the methods described in the examples that follow, which may also be combined for this purpose with methods known to the skilled person from the literature.

The pharmaceutically acceptable salts of the present invention can be synthesized from the parent compound which contains an acidic moiety by conventional chemical methods. Generally, such salts can be prepared by reacting the free acid forms of these compounds with a sufficient amount of the appropriate base in water or in an organic diluent like ether, ethyl acetate, ethanol, n-propanol, isopropanol, acetone or acetonitrile, or a mixture thereof. Alternatively, reversed phase chromatography of compounds of the invention (free acid or salt form) employing "volatile buffers", such as aqueous solutions of triethylammonium acetate, triethylammonium formate, ammonium acetate or ammonium hydrogencarbonate, yields the compounds of the invention as the respective triethylammonium or ammonium salt after lyophilization / freeze drying. Alternatively, salts can be prepared by ion exchange, for example by treating aqueous solutions of the compounds of the invention (free acid or salt form) with a cation exchanger.

Pharmacological Activity

Compounds according to the present invention exhibit favorable binding affinity to human STING. The binding affinity can, for instance, be determined by scintillation proximity assay (SPA)-based competition binding assay as described in Nat. Chem. Biol. 10, 1043–1048 (2014). Alternatively, the binding affinity can, for instance, be determined by isothermal titration calorimetry (ITC) as described in Molecular Cell 51, 226–235 (2013). Alternatively, the binding affinity can, for instance, be determined by surface plasmon resonance (SPR) as described in WO 2016/145102.

Alternatively, the binding affinity can, for instance, be determined by differential scanning fluorimetry (DSF) as described below.

Compounds according to the present invention exhibit favorable cellular activity. The *in vitro* cytokine induction can be measured in reporter cell lines, for instance in THP1 cells, as described below. Human STING exists in at least five known variants (WT, HAQ, REF / 232H, AQ, Q / 293Q). To test the activity of the different CDNs on the human STING variants, THP1-STING KO cells can be stably transduced with vectors encoding for the different STING variants. Furthermore, the *in vitro* cytokine induction can be measured in human primary PBMCs or human dendritic cells.

Compounds according to the present invention exhibit favorable stability in *in vitro* cellular assays, for example with THP1 cells, Calu-3 cells or human hepatocytes. Furthermore, compounds according to the present invention exhibit favorable pharmacokinetic (PK) properties. The PK properties can be determined in pre-clinical animal species, for example mouse, rat, hamster, dog, guinea pig, mini pig, cynomolgus monkey, rhesus monkey. The PK properties of a compound can be described, for example, by the following parameters: Mean residence time (MRT), elimination half-life ($t_{1/2}$, i.e. the time required for the concentration of the drug to reach half of its original value), volume of distribution (V_D , i.e. the apparent volume in which a drug is distributed), area under the curve (AUC, i.e. the integral of the concentration-time curve after a single dose), clearance (CL, i.e. the volume of plasma cleared of the drug per unit time), as described in E. Kerns & L. Di (Drug-like properties: concepts, structure design and methods: from ADME to toxicity optimization, Elsevier, 1st ed, 2008). Furthermore, compounds according to the present invention exhibit favorable *in vivo* pharmacological activity, for instance in mouse MC38, B16, 4T1, Colon26, EMT6 tumor models after intratumoral application.

Favorable binding affinity to human STING in combination with favorable cellular activity, and / or favorable PK properties can enable lower doses for pharmacological efficacy. Lower doses have the advantages of lower “drug load” or “drug burden” (parent drug and metabolites thereof) for the patient causing potentially less side effects, and lower production costs for the drug product. Similarly potent activity against variants of human STING is advantageous as it maximizes the chances to induce the desired pharmacological response in patients with single-nucleotide polymorphisms, when a fixed dose is administered.

The binding of compounds of the invention to human STING may be demonstrated using the following assay:

DIFFERENTIAL SCANNING FLUORIMETRY (DSF)

Materials:

Hard-Shell®PCR Plates 384-Well thin-wall (Catalog# HSP3805R, BIO-RAD)

Microseal®B' Adhesive Seals for PCR Plates (Catalog# MSB-1001, BIO-RAD)

SYPRO orange solution in DMSO (SIGMA cat.-no. S5692-500UL), concentration “5000x”

Instrumentation: Reader: CFX384 Real-Time System (Bio-Rad)

Pipetting Robot: HamiltonStarlet

Assay buffer: 20mM Tris, 150mM NaCl pH7.5

Target Protein: Human STING (hSTING, residues 155-341, wild-type sequence with N-terminal His8-tag and TEV-cleavage site, MW: 23601.5Da)

Protein stock solution: c = 309µM stock solution in assay buffer

- 5 Final Assay concentrations of test compounds: 100µM, 3µM target protein, "5x" SYPR Orange

Assay procedure:

1) Compound stock solutions and dilutions thereof were prepared in assay buffer

2) 5µl fluorescent dye stock solution (5000x SYPRO Orange) was mixed with 50µl target protein (309µM) and 945µl buffer.

- 10 3) 2µl of this protein-dye-mixture (25x SYPRO Orange and 15µM Protein) was added to 8µl compound solution. Final volume was 10µL.

4) Certain well positions were used as negative control.

5) The plates were prepared for duplicate measurement and centrifuged for 2 min at 1000g.

6) In the measurement, 160 cycles of 0.5°C were used (temperature ramp 15s/cycle, 15°C to 95°C).

- 15 Data analysis: The dissociation curves were processed in Bio-Rad CFX Manager. Peak type was set to "negative". In the case of Examples 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1, at least two T_m measurements were averaged. The changes in T_m ("thermal shift") are shown in table 1.

Table 1: hSTING binding as determined by differential scanning fluorimetry

Example	hSTING T _m shift [°C]
1.1	27.6
1.2	21.0
2.1	30.3
2.2	21.8
3.1	30.7
3.2	22.4
3.3	21.6
3.4	10.9
4.1	30.0
4.2	21.4
Example 5 Compound 23 in WO 2016/145102	21.1

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Surprisingly it was found that compounds according to the present invention exhibit significantly improved binding compared to analogs where the LNA moiety is replaced with a ribose moiety, e.g. LNA Examples 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1 exhibit significantly larger thermal shifts, i.e. improved binding, compared to ribose Example 5 / Compound 23 ("3'3'-RR-(2'F-G)(A)") in WO 2016/145102. The improved binding of compounds according to the present invention in the above differential scanning fluorimetry (DSF) assay was also confirmed in a surface plasmon resonance (SPR) assay.

25

The cellular activity of the compounds of the invention may be demonstrated using the following in vitro THP1 assay:

IN VITRO CYTOKINE INDUCTION

The cytokine-induction activities of compounds according to the present invention have been demonstrated by using a THP1 reporter cell line.

5 Activation of the STING protein expressed in THP1 cells results in an increase of interferon production. By the stable integration of an interferon regulatory factor (IRF)-inducible SEAP (secreted embryonic alkaline phosphatase) reporter construct the functional interferon signaling pathway can be monitored. Using Invivogen's QUANTI-Blue™ colorimetric enzyme assay and a suitable optical density (OD) reader the activity of SEAP can be detected and quantified. This technique could be used to characterize pharmacological modification of the STING protein.

10 Measurements of SEAP activity were performed in THP1-Blue ISG cells stably expressing the human STING protein and the IRF-inducible SEAP reporter construct. Cells were cultivated for expansion in RPMI1640 medium with 10% fetal calf serum, 50 µg/ml Penicillin-Streptomycin, 100µg/ml Zeocin, and 100µg/ml Normocin in a 37°, 95% humidity and 5% CO₂ incubator. Assay-ready cells were stored as frozen stocks.

In preparation for the assay, the cells were thawed in Zeocin-/ Normocin-free medium and were distributed into the 15 assay plates with a density of 15000 cells/ 15 µL per well. Compounds were prepared by an 8- or 16-point serial dilution in 50% aqueous DMSO and a final dilution step into medium to ensure a final DMSO concentration of 0.5% in the assay. 5µL of diluted compounds plus 5 µL medium were added to the plates, followed by a 24 hours incubation at 37°C.

At the day of the assay, 75 µl per well of Quanti-Blue reagent was added to all wells of the plate and the plate was 20 incubated another 30 minutes at 37°C. The OD at 620 nm was measured on the EnVision reader (PerkinElmer).

EC₅₀ values and Hill slopes were derived from 8- or 16-point four parametric non-linear curve fittings with the Megalab software (Boehringer Ingelheim) using the OD at 620 nM. See Table 2.

Table 2: Cellular activity in THP1-Blue ISG cell assay

Example	EC ₅₀ [µM]
1.1	0.11
1.2	0.06
2.1	0.14
2.2	0.05
3.1	0.15
3.2	0.07
3.3	0.13
3.4	2.0
4.1	0.17
4.2	0.11

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Several single nucleotide polymorphisms have been identified in the human STING gene that may affect the response to cyclic dinucleotides. To determine the activity of compounds of the invention, THP1-Blue ISG reporter

cell lines expressing the different human STING variants have been generated. To do so, the endogenous human STING was first deleted using the CRISPR/CAS9 system: THP1-Blue ISG cells were electroporated with ALL-IN-ONE CRISPR plasmids targeting the STING gene (purchased from Sigma encoding the gRNA and GFP as a reporter gene for successful transduction). GFP positive cells then were sorted 24h post transfection and expanded.

5 Cells were then dispersed in semisolid methocel medium to allow single cell clone isolations. Clones were then screened for cGAMP responsiveness using the Quanti-blue reporter assay. Non-responsive clones were subsequently analysed for STING loss by western blotting and sequencing of the STING locus.

For the overexpression of the human STING variants, a confirmed THP1-Blue ISG hSTING KO clone was transduced with individual retroviral plasmids (MSCV-ires-GFP-Blasti) encoding the allelic variants of hSTING (WT, 10 HAQ, R232H, AQ and R293Q), respectively. Transduced cells were sorted for different levels of GFP fluorescence and STING allele expression was analysed by western blot. Populations expressing ectopic STING protein (WT, HAQ, R232H, AQ and R293Q) at comparable levels to endogenous STING levels from the parental, unmodified THP1-Blue ISG cell lines were selected and used to characterize compounds. Surprisingly it was found that 15 lines, e.g. Examples 2.1, 3.1 and 4.1 exhibit $\leq 1 \mu\text{M}$ EC₅₀ values in the WT, HAQ, R232H, AQ and R293Q variant cell line, respectively, indicating lack of pronounced variant differences / selectivity. The observed cellular activity is STING-dependent as no activity was observed in a THP1 cell line where human STING was deleted.

Cellular stability of compounds of the invention was determined as follows: The compound was dissolved in cell 20 culture medium (MEM supplemented with 10% FCS, 1% non-essential amino acids and 1% pyruvate) to a final concentration of 10 μM and incubated with human lung epithelial cell line Calu-3 (60000 cells/well in 24-well plate) for up to 24 h. Samples of the cell culture supernatants were taken at 1, 6, 24 h and quantified by LC-MS/MS.

Methods of Treatment

25 In another aspect of the present invention, it is found that compounds of formula (I) or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof may be useful for the treatment of diseases or conditions wherein the modulation of STING is of therapeutic benefit. Furthermore, due to their activity the compounds of the present invention are suitable as vaccine adjuvants.

30 Diseases and conditions associated with or modulated by STING embrace, but are not limited to inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, for example allergic rhinitis or asthma, infectious diseases or cancer.

Autoimmune diseases include, but are not limited to systemic lupus erythematosus, psoriasis, insulin-dependent 35 diabetes mellitus (IDDM), dermatomyositis and Sjogren's syndrome (SS).

Inflammation represents a group of vascular, cellular and neurological responses to trauma. Inflammation can be characterized as the movement of inflammatory cells such as monocytes, neutrophils and granulocytes into the tissues. This is usually associated with reduced endothelial barrier function and oedema into the tissues. Inflammation can be classified as either acute or chronic. Acute inflammation is the initial response of the body to
5 harmful stimuli and is achieved by the increased movement of plasma and leukocytes from the blood into the injured tissues. A cascade of biochemical event propagates and matures the inflammatory response, involving the local vascular system, the immune system, and various cells within the injured tissue. Prolonged inflammation, known as chronic inflammation, leads to a progressive shift in the type of cells which are present at the site of inflammation and is characterised by simultaneous destruction and healing of the tissue from the inflammatory process.

10 When occurring as part of an immune response to infection or as an acute response to trauma, inflammation can be beneficial and is normally self-limiting. However, inflammation can be detrimental under various conditions. This includes the production of excessive inflammation in response to infectious agents, which can lead to significant organ damage and death (for example, in the setting of sepsis). Moreover, chronic inflammation is generally
15 deleterious and is at the root of numerous chronic diseases, causing severe and irreversible damage to tissues. In such settings, the immune response is often directed against self-tissues (autoimmunity), although chronic responses to foreign entities can also lead to bystander damage to self-tissues. The aim of anti-inflammatory therapy is therefore to reduce this inflammation, to inhibit autoimmunity when present and to allow for the physiological process or healing and tissue repair to progress.

20 The compounds of the invention may be used to treat inflammation of any tissue and organs of the body, including musculoskeletal inflammation, vascular inflammation, neural inflammation, digestive system inflammation, ocular inflammation, inflammation of the reproductive system, and other inflammation, as exemplified below.

25 Musculoskeletal inflammation refers to any inflammatory condition of the musculoskeletal system, particularly those conditions affecting skeletal joints, including joints of the hand, wrist, elbow, shoulder, jaw, spine, neck, hip, knee, ankle, and foot, and conditions affecting tissues connecting muscles to bones such as tendons. Examples of musculoskeletal inflammation which may be treated with compounds of the invention include arthritis (including, for example, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ankylosing spondylitis, acute and chronic infectious
30 arthritis, arthritis associated with gout and pseudogout, and juvenile idiopathic arthritis), tendonitis, synovitis, tenosynovitis, bursitis, fibrositis (fibromyalgia), epicondylitis, myositis, and osteitis (including, for example, Paget's disease, osteitis pubis, and osteitis fibrosa cystica). Ocular inflammation refers to inflammation of any structure of the eye, including the eye lids. Examples of ocular inflammation which may be treated with the compounds of the invention include blepharitis, blepharochalasis, conjunctivitis, dacryoadenitis, keratitis, keratoconjunctivitis sicca (dry
35 eye), scleritis, trichiasis, and uveitis. Examples of inflammation of the nervous system which may be treated with the

compounds of the invention include encephalitis, Guillain-Barre syndrome, meningitis, neuromyotonia, narcolepsy, multiple sclerosis, myelitis and schizophrenia.

5 Examples of inflammation of the vasculature or lymphatic system which may be treated with the compounds of the invention include arthrosclerosis, arthritis, phlebitis, vasculitis, and lymphangitis.

10 Examples of inflammatory conditions of the digestive system which may be treated with the compounds of the invention include cholangitis, cholecystitis, enteritis, enterocolitis, gastritis, gastroenteritis, inflammatory bowel disease (such as Crohn's disease and ulcerative colitis), ileitis, and proctitis.

15 Examples of inflammatory conditions of the reproductive system which may be treated with the compounds of the invention include cervicitis, chorioamnionitis, endometritis, epididymitis, omphalitis, oophoritis, orchitis, salpingitis, tubo-ovarian abscess, urethritis, vaginitis, vulvitis, and vulvodynia.

20 The agents may be used to treat autoimmune conditions having an inflammatory component. Such conditions include acute disseminated alopecia universalis, Behcet's disease, Chagas' disease, chronic fatigue syndrome, dysautonomia, encephalomyelitis, ankylosing spondylitis, aplastic anemia, hidradenitis suppurativa, autoimmune hepatitis, autoimmune oophoritis, celiac disease, Crohn's disease, diabetes mellitus type 1, giant cell arteritis, goodpasture's syndrome, Grave's disease, Guillain-Barre syndrome, Hashimoto's disease, Henoch-Schonlein purpura, Kawasaki's disease, lupus erythematosus, microscopic colitis, microscopic polyarteritis, mixed connective tissue disease, multiple sclerosis, myasthenia gravis, opsoclonus myoclonus syndrome, optic neuritis, ord's thyroiditis, pemphigus, polyarteritis nodosa, polymyalgia, rheumatoid arthritis, Reiter's syndrome, Sjogren's syndrome, temporal arteritis, Wegener's granulomatosis, warm autoimmune haemolytic anemia, interstitial cystitis, lyme disease, morphea, psoriasis, sarcoidosis, scleroderma, ulcerative colitis, and vitiligo.

25 The agents may be used to treat T-cell mediated hypersensitivity diseases having an inflammatory component. Such conditions include contact hypersensitivity, contact dermatitis (including that due to poison ivy), urticaria, skin allergies, respiratory allergies (hayfever, allergic rhinitis) and gluten-sensitive enteropathy (Celiac disease).

30 Other inflammatory conditions which may be treated with the agents include, for example, appendicitis, dermatitis, dermatomyositis, endocarditis, fibrositis, gingivitis, glossitis, hepatitis, hidradenitis suppurativa, iritis, laryngitis, mastitis, myocarditis, nephritis, otitis, pancreatitis, parotitis, pericarditis, peritonitis, pharyngitis, pleuritis, pneumonitis, prostatitis, pyelonephritis, and stomatitis, transplant rejection (involving organs such as kidney, liver, heart, lung, pancreas (e.g., islet cells), bone marrow, cornea, small bowel, skin allografts, skin homografts, and heart valve xenografts, sepsis, and graft vs host disease), acute pancreatitis, chronic pancreatitis, acute respiratory distress syndrome. Sexary's syndrome, congenital adrenal hyperplasia, nonsuppurative thyroiditis,

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hypercalcemia associated with cancer, pemphigus, bullous dermatitis herpetiformis, severe erythema multiforme, exfoliative dermatitis, seborrheic dermatitis, seasonal or perennial allergic rhinitis, bronchial asthma, contact dermatitis, atopic dermatitis, drug hypersensitivity reactions, allergic conjunctivitis, keratitis, herpes zoster ophthalmicus, iritis and iridocyclitis, chorioretinitis, optic neuritis, symptomatic sarcoidosis, fulminating or disseminated pulmonary tuberculosis chemotherapy, idiopathic thrombocytopenic purpura in adults, secondary thrombocytopenia in adults, acquired (autoimmune) haemolytic anemia, leukaemia and lymphomas in adults, acute leukaemia of childhood, regional enteritis, autoimmune vasculitis, multiple sclerosis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, solid organ transplant rejection, sepsis. Preferred treatments include treatment of transplant rejection, rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, multiple sclerosis. Type 1 diabetes, asthma, inflammatory bowel disease, systemic lupus erythematosus, psoriasis, chronic pulmonary disease, and inflammation accompanying infectious conditions (e.g., sepsis).

In one aspect the disease or condition to be treated using compounds of the invention is cancer. Examples of cancer diseases and conditions in which compounds of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts or solvates thereof may have potentially beneficial anti-tumour effects include, but are not limited to, cancers of the lung, bone, pancreas, skin, head, neck, uterus, ovaries, stomach, colon, breast, ovary, esophagus, small intestine, bowel, endocrine system, thyroid gland, parathyroid gland, adrenal gland, urethra, prostate, penis, testes, ureter, bladder, kidney or liver; urothelial cancer; rectal cancer; cancer of the anal region; carcinomas of the fallopian tubes, endometrium, cervix, vagina, vulva, renal pelvis, renal cell; sarcoma of soft tissue; myxoma; rhabdomyoma; fibroma; lipoma; teratoma; cholangiocarcinoma; hepatoblastoma; angiosarcoma; hemangioma; hepatoma; fibrosarcoma; chondrosarcoma; myeloma; chronic or acute leukemia; lymphocytic lymphomas; primary CNS lymphoma; neoplasms of the CNS; spinal axis tumours; squamous cell carcinomas; synovial sarcoma; malignant pleural mesotheliomas; brain stem glioma; pituitary adenoma; bronchial adenoma; chondromatous hamartoma; mesothelioma; Hodgkin's Disease or a combination of one or more of the foregoing cancers.

Preferred cancers, which may be treated with compounds according to the invention, are skin, lung, liver, colon, brain, breast, ovary, prostate cancer, pancreas, kidney, stomach, head, neck, skin and urothelial cancer, as well as lymphoma and leukemia.

The new compounds may be used for the prevention, short-term or long-term treatment of the above-mentioned diseases, optionally also in combination with surgery, radiotherapy or other "state-of-the-art" compounds, such as e.g. cytostatic or cytotoxic substances, cell proliferation inhibitors, anti-angiogenic substances, steroids or antibodies.

In their role as adjuvants, in certain embodiments the present compounds and compositions may be used as adjuvants in a therapeutic or prophylactic strategy employing vaccine(s). Thus, the substantially pure CDNs of the present invention, or prodrugs or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, may be used together with one or more vaccines selected to stimulate an immune response to one or more predetermined antigens. The substantially pure

CDNs of the present invention, or prodrugs or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, may be provided together with, or in addition to, such vaccines.

Such vaccine(s) can comprise inactivated or attenuated bacteria or viruses comprising the antigens of interest, purified antigens, live viral or bacterial delivery vectors recombinantly engineered to express and/or secrete the antigens, antigen presenting cell (APC) vectors comprising cells that are loaded with the antigens or transfected with a composition comprising a nucleic acid encoding the antigens, liposomal antigen delivery vehicles, or naked nucleic acid vectors encoding the antigens. This list is not meant to be limiting. By way of example, such vaccine(s) may also comprise an inactivated tumor cell that expresses and secretes one or more of GM-CSF, CCL20, CCL3, IL-12p70, FLT-3 ligand, cytokines.

The dose range of the compounds of general formula (I) applicable per day is usually from 0.00001 to 10 mg per kg body weight, for example from 0.00001 to 1 mg per kg body weight of the patient. Each dosage unit may conveniently contain from 0.001 to 1000 mg, for example from 0.001 to 100 mg.

The actual therapeutically effective amount or therapeutic dosage will of course depend on factors known by those skilled in the art such as age and weight of the patient, route of administration and severity of disease. In any case the compound or composition will be administered at dosages and in a manner which allows a therapeutically effective amount to be delivered based upon patient's unique condition.

The compounds, compositions, including any combinations with one or more additional therapeutic agents, according to the invention may be administered by mucosal (e.g. oral, sublingual, vaginal, nasal, cervical, etc.), intra-tumoral, peri-tumoral, transdermal, inhalative, or parenteral (e.g. subcutaneous, intravenous, intramuscular, intraarterial, intradermal, intrathecal and epidural administrations) route. Of the possible methods of administration, intra-tumoral, peri-tumoral, subcutaneous or intravenous administration is preferred.

The compounds of the present invention exhibit several advantages, such as favorable binding affinity to human STING, favorable cellular activity, i.e. in cells bearing different human STING alleles, favorable stability in cellular assays.

Thus, in a further aspect the invention provides new compounds of formula (I), including pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, which induce cytokine production in STING-dependent fashion *in vitro* and/or *in vivo* and possess suitable pharmacological and pharmacokinetic properties for use in therapy, i.e. for use as medicaments.

In a further aspect the invention provides new compounds of formula (I), including pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, for use in a method for the treatment of a disease or condition associated with or modulated by STING.

In a further aspect the invention provides new compounds of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, for example allergic rhinitis or asthma, for the treatment of infectious diseases or of cancer, or for the use as vaccine adjuvants.

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In another aspect, the present invention provides the use of a compound of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, in the manufacture of a medicament for use in the treatment of a disease or condition in which modulation of STING is beneficial.

10 In a further aspect, the present invention provides the use of a compound of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, in the manufacture of a medicament for use in the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, for example allergic rhinitis or asthma, for the treatment of infectious diseases or of cancer.

Accordingly, the present invention relates to compounds of formula (I) as a medicament.

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Furthermore, the present invention relates to the use of a compound of formula (I) in a method for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING in a patient, preferably in a human.

Furthermore, the present invention relates to the use of a compound of formula (I) in a method for the treatment of
20 inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, for example allergic rhinitis or asthma, for the treatment of infectious diseases or of cancer.

In yet another aspect the present invention relates to a method for the treatment of a disease or condition associated with or modulated by STING in a mammal that includes the step of administering to a patient, preferably a human, in
25 need of such treatment a therapeutically effective amount of a compound or a pharmaceutical composition of the present invention.

In a further aspect the invention provides a method for the treatment of a disease or condition associated with or modulated by STING, in a subject comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of
30 formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, to the subject.

In a further aspect the invention provides a method for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, for example allergic rhinitis or asthma, for the treatment of infectious diseases or of cancer, in a patient in need thereof, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of formula (I), or a
35 pharmaceutically acceptable salt, thereof to the patient.

In a related aspect, the present invention relates to methods of inducing, stimulating, or adjuvanting an immune response in an individual. These methods comprise administering the substantially pure CDNs of the present invention, or prodrugs or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, to the individual.

- 5 In a further aspect the invention provides the use of a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, for the manufacture of an immunogenic composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition, for the treatment or prevention of a disease.

- 10 In a further aspect the invention provides a method of treating or preventing a disease comprising the administration to a human subject suffering from or susceptible to a disease, an immunogenic composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition and a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

- 15 In a further aspect the invention provides a vaccine composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition and a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, for use in the treatment or prevention of a disease.

- 20 In a further aspect the invention provides the use of a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, for the manufacture of a vaccine composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition, for the treatment or prevention of a disease.

- In a further aspect the invention provides a method of treating or preventing a disease comprising the administration to a human subject suffering from or susceptible to disease, a vaccine composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition and a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

25 **Pharmaceutical Compositions**

- In another aspect of the present invention, it is found that pharmaceutical compositions of the above-mentioned compounds may be formulated that are suitable for the administration of therapeutically effective amounts of said inhibitors for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING.

- 30 For the purposes of this disclosure, the pharmaceutical compositions may be administered by a variety of means including non-parenterally, parenterally, by inhalation spray, topically, or rectally in formulations containing pharmaceutically acceptable carriers, adjuvants and vehicles. Intra-tumoral (directly into the tumor mass) or peri-tumoral (around the tumor mass) administration of the compounds of the present invention may directly activate
35 locally infiltrating DC, directly promote tumor cell apoptosis or sensitize tumor cells to cytotoxic agents.

The pharmaceutical compositions of the disclosure may be in the form of a sterile injectable preparation, such as a sterile injectable aqueous or oleaginous suspension. This suspension may be formulated according to the known art using those suitable dispersing or wetting agents and suspending agents which are mentioned above or below. The sterile injectable preparation may also be a sterile injectable solution or suspension in a non-toxic parenterally acceptable diluent or solvent such as a solution in 1,3-butane-diol or prepared as a lyophilized powder. Among the acceptable vehicles and solvents that may be employed are water, Ringer's solution and isotonic sodium chloride solution. In addition, sterile fixed oils may conventionally be employed as a solvent or suspending medium. For this purpose any bland fixed oil may be employed including synthetic mono- or diglycerides. In addition, fatty acids such as oleic acid may likewise be used in the preparation of injectables.

Formulations suitable for topical administration in the mouth include lozenges comprising the active ingredient in a flavored base, usually sucrose and acacia or tragacanth; pastilles comprising the active ingredient in an inert base such as gelatin and glycerin, or sucrose and acacia; and mouthwashes comprising the active ingredient in a suitable liquid carrier.

Formulations suitable for vaginal administration may be presented as pessaries, tampons, creams, gels, pastes, foams or spray formulations containing in addition to the active ingredient such carriers as are known in the art to be appropriate.

Formulations suitable for parenteral administration include aqueous and nonaqueous isotonic sterile injection solutions which may contain antioxidants, buffers, bacteriostats and solutes which render the formulation isotonic with the blood of the intended recipient; and aqueous and non-aqueous sterile suspensions which may include suspending agents and thickening agents. The formulations may be presented in unit-dose or multi-dose sealed containers, for example, ampoules and vials, and may be stored in a freeze-dried (lyophilized) condition requiring only the addition of the sterile liquid carrier, for example water for injections, immediately prior to use. Injection solutions and suspensions may be prepared from sterile powders, granules and tablets of the kind previously described.

Thus, according to another aspect of the present invention, pharmaceutical compositions comprising one or more compounds of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents are provided.

Furthermore, the present invention relates to the use of a pharmaceutical composition according to this invention for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING in a patient, preferably in a human.

According to one embodiment of the second aspect of the present invention, a pharmaceutical composition is provided that comprises one or more of the above-mentioned compounds, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents for use in a method for the treatment of diseases or conditions associated with or modulated by STING.

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According to another embodiment, a vaccine comprising one or more compounds of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, is provided.

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In a further aspect the invention provides a vaccine adjuvant comprising a compound of formula (I) or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

In a further aspect the invention provides an immunogenic composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition and a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.

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In a further aspect the invention provides an immunogenic composition comprising an antigen or antigen composition and a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, for use in the treatment or prevention of a disease.

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According to another embodiment, a pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more compounds of formula (I), or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, and one or more additional therapeutic agents, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents is provided. Preferably, this composition comprises one compound of formula (I) or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof and one or more additional therapeutic agents.

Combination Therapy

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The compounds of the invention may be used on their own or may be combined with pharmaceutically acceptable excipients, in an amount sufficient to induce, modify, or stimulate an appropriate immune response. The immune response can comprise, without limitation, specific immune response, non-specific immune response, both specific and non-specific response, innate response, primary immune response, adaptive immunity, secondary immune response, memory immune response, immune cell activation, immune cell proliferation, immune cell differentiation, and cytokine expression. In certain embodiments, the compounds and compositions thereof described herein are administered in conjunction with one or more additional compositions including vaccines intended to stimulate an immune response to one or more predetermined antigens; adjuvants; CTLA-4 and PD-1 pathway antagonists, lipids, liposomes, chemotherapeutic agents, immunomodulatory cell lines, etc..

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The compounds and compositions thereof described herein may be administered before, after, and/or simultaneously with an additional therapeutic or prophylactic composition or modality. These include, without limitation, B7

costimulatory molecule, interleukin-2, interferon- γ , GM-CSF, CTLA-4 antagonists, OX-40/OX-40 ligand, CD40/CD40 ligand, sargramostim, levamisole, vaccinia virus, Bacille Calmette-Guerin (BCG), liposomes, alum, Freund's complete or incomplete adjuvant, detoxified endotoxins, mineral oils, surface active substances such as lipolecithin, pluronic polyols, polyanions, peptides, and oil or hydrocarbon emulsions. Carriers for inducing a T cell immune response which preferentially stimulate a cytolytic T cell response versus an antibody response are preferred, although those that stimulate both types of response can be used as well. In cases where the agent is a polypeptide, the polypeptide itself or a polynucleotide encoding the polypeptide can be administered. The carrier can be a cell, such as an antigen presenting cell (APC) or a dendritic cell. Antigen presenting cells include such cell types as macrophages, dendritic cells and B cells. Other professional antigen-presenting cells include monocytes, marginal zone Kupffer cells, microglia, Langerhans' cells, interdigitating dendritic cells, follicular dendritic cells, and T cells. Facultative antigen-presenting cells can also be used. Examples of facultative antigen-presenting cells include astrocytes, follicular cells, endothelium and fibroblasts. The carrier can be a bacterial cell that is transformed to express the polypeptide or to deliver a polynucleotide which is subsequently expressed in cells of the vaccinated individual. Adjuvants, such as aluminum hydroxide or aluminum phosphate, can be added to increase the ability of the vaccine to trigger, enhance, or prolong an immune response. Additional materials, such as cytokines, chemokines, and bacterial nucleic acid sequences, like CpG, a toll-like receptor (TLR) 9 agonist as well as additional agonists for TLR 2, TLR 4, TLR 5, TLR 7, TLR 8, TLR9, including lipoprotein, LPS, monophosphoryl lipid A, lipoteichoic acid, imiquimod, resiquimod, and in addition retinoic acid-inducible gene I (RIG-I) agonists such as poly I:C, used separately or in combination with the described compositions are also potential adjuvants. Other representative examples of adjuvants include the synthetic adjuvant QS-21 comprising a homogeneous saponin purified from the bark of *Quillaja saponaria* and *Corynebacterium parvum* (McCune et al., Cancer, 1979; 43:1619).

Methods for co-administration with an additional therapeutic agent are well known in the art (Hardman, et al. (eds.) (2001) Goodman and Gilman's The Pharmacological Basis of Therapeutics, 10th ed., McGraw-Hill, New York, NY; Poole and Peterson (eds.) (2001) Pharmacotherapeutics for Advanced Practice: A Practical Approach, Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, Phila., PA; Chabner and Longo (eds.) (2001) Cancer Chemotherapy and Biotherapy, Lippincott, Williams & Wilkins, Phila., PA). Generally, co-administration or administration together indicates treating a subject with two or more agents, where the agents can be administered simultaneously or at different times. For example, such agents may be delivered to a single subject as separate administrations, which may be at essentially the same time or different times, and which may be by the same route or different routes of administration. Such agents may be delivered to a single subject in the same administration (e.g. same formulation) such that they are administered at the same time by the same route of administration.

Because of the adjuvant properties of the compounds of the present invention, their use may also be combined with other therapeutic modalities including other vaccines, adjuvants, antigen, antibodies, and immune modulators. Examples are provided below.

Adjuvants

In addition to the compounds of the present invention and compositions thereof described herein, the compositions or methods of the present invention may further comprise one or more additional substances which, because of their nature, can act to stimulate or otherwise utilize the immune system to respond to the cancer antigens present on the targeted tumor cell(s). Such adjuvants include, but are not limited to, lipids, liposomes, inactivated bacteria which induce innate immunity (e.g., inactivated or attenuated *Listeria monocytogenes*), compositions which mediate innate immune activation via Toll-like Receptors (TLRs), (NOD)-like receptors (NLRs), Retinoic acid inducible gene-based (RIG)-I-like receptors (RLRs), C-type lectin receptors (CLRs) and/or pathogen-associated molecular patterns ("PAMPs"). Examples of PAMPs include lipoproteins, lipopolypeptides, peptidoglycans, zymosan, lipopolysaccharide, neisserial porins, flagellin, profillin, galactoceramide, muramyl dipeptide. Peptidoglycans, lipoproteins, and lipoteichoic acids are cell wall components of Gram-positive. Lipopolysaccharides are expressed by most bacteria, with MPL being one example. Flagellin refers to the structural component of bacterial flagella that is secreted by pathogenic and commensal bacterial. Galactosylceramide is an activator of natural killer T (NKT) cells. Muramyl dipeptide is a bioactive peptidoglycan motif common to all bacteria.

Immune Checkpoint Inhibitors

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with an immune checkpoint inhibitor, such as an immune checkpoint inhibitor selected from the group consisting of a CTLA-4 pathway antagonist, a PD-1 pathway antagonist, a Tim-3 pathway antagonist, a Vista pathway antagonist, a BTLA pathway antagonist, a LAG-3 pathway antagonist, or a TIGIT pathway antagonist. In some embodiments, the immune checkpoint inhibitor is selected from the group consisting of an anti-CTLA-4 antibody, an anti-PD-1 antibody, an anti-Tim-3 antibody, an anti-Vista antibody, an anti-BTLA antibody, an anti-LAG-3 antibody, or an anti-TIGIT antibody.

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with CTLA-4 pathway antagonists. In some embodiments, the combination is used to treat a solid tumor or a hematologic malignancy. CTLA-4 is thought to be an important negative regulator of the adaptive immune response. Activated T cells upregulate CTLA-4, which binds CD80 and CD86 on antigen-presenting cells with higher affinity than CD28, thus inhibiting T-cell stimulation, IL-2 gene expression and T-cell proliferation. Anti-tumor effects of CTLA4 blockade have been observed in murine models of colon carcinoma, metastatic prostate cancer, and metastatic melanoma. In some embodiments, the CTLA-4 pathway antagonist is an anti-CTLA-4 antibody molecule selected from the group consisting of tremelimumab and ipilimumab.

Ipilimumab (a CTLA-4 antibody, also known as MDX-010, CAS No. 477202-00-9) and tremelimumab (IgG2 monoclonal antibody formerly known as ticilimumab, CP-675,206) are humanized monoclonal antibodies that bind to human CTLA4 and prevent its interaction with CD80 and CD86. Other negative immune regulators which may be

targeted by a similar strategy include programmed cell death 1 (PD-1), B and T lymphocyte attenuator, transforming growth factor beta [^], interleukin-10, and vascular endothelial growth factor.

In some embodiments, the compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with an anti-CTLA-4 antibody and an anti-PD-1 antibody. In one embodiment, the combination includes an anti-PD-1 antibody molecule, e.g., as described herein, and an anti-CTLA-4 antibody, e.g., ipilimumab. Exemplary doses that can be use include a dose of anti-PD-1 antibody molecule of about 1 to 10 mg/kg, e.g., 3 mg/kg, and a dose of an anti-CTLA-4 antibody, e.g., ipilimumab, of about 3 mg/kg.

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with PD-1 pathway antagonists. In some embodiments, the combination is used to treat a solid tumor or a hematologic malignancy. PD-1 is another negative regulator of adaptive immune response that is expressed on activated T-cells. PD-1 binds to B7-H1 and B7-DC, and the engagement of PD-1 suppresses T-cell activation. Antitumor effects have been demonstrated with PD-1 pathway blockade. Anti-PD-1 antibody molecules (e.g. Nivolumab (Opdivo™), pembrolizumab (Keytruda™), and pidilizumab), and AMP-224 have been reported in the literature to be examples of PD-1 pathway blockers which may find use in the present invention. In some embodiments, the PD-1 pathway antagonist is an anti-PD-1 antibody molecule selected from the group consisting of nivolumab, pembrolizumab or pidilizumab.

In some embodiments the PD-1 pathway antagonist is an immunoadhesin (e.g., an immunoadhesin comprising an extracellular or PD-1 binding portion of PD-L1 or PD-L2 fused to a constant region (e.g., an Fc region of an immunoglobulin sequence). In some embodiments, the PD-1 inhibitor is AMP-224 (B7-DCIg; Amplimmune; e.g., disclosed in WO2010/027827 and WO2011/066342) is a PD-L2 Fc fusion soluble receptor that blocks the interaction between PD-1 and B7-H1.

In some embodiments the PD-1 pathway antagonist is a PD-L1 or PD-L2 inhibitor. In some embodiments the PD-L1 or PD-L2 inhibitor is an anti-PD-L1 antibody or an anti-PD-L2 antibody. In some embodiments, the anti-PD-L1 inhibitor is chosen from YW243.55.S70, MPDL3280A, MEDI-4736, MSB-0010718C, or MDX-1105. In some embodiments, the PD-L1 inhibitor is an anti-PD-L1 antibody MSB0010718C. MSB0010718C (also referred to as A09-246-2; Merck Serono) is a monoclonal antibody that binds to PD-L1.

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with TIM-3 pathway antagonists. In some embodiments, the combination is used to treat a solid tumor or a hematologic malignancy. In some embodiments, the TIM- 3 pathway antagonist is an anti-TIM-3 antibody. In some embodiments, anti-TIM-3 antibody molecules are disclosed in US 2015/0218274, published on August 6, 2015, entitled "Antibody Molecules to TIM-3 and Uses Thereof".

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with LAG-3 pathway antagonists. In some embodiments, the combination is used to treat a solid tumor or a hematologic malignancy. In some embodiments, the LAG-3 pathway antagonist is an anti-LAG-3 antibody. In some embodiments the anti- LAG-3 antibody molecules are disclosed in US 2015/0259420, filed March 13, 2015, entitled "Antibody Molecules to LAG-3 and Uses Thereof".

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T-cell Receptor Agonists

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with a T-cell receptor agonist, such as a CD28 agonist, an OX40 agonist, a GITR agonist, a CD137 agonist, a CD27 agonist or an HVEM agonist.

- 10 The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with a CD27 agonist. Exemplary CD27 agonists include an anti-CD27 agonistic antibody, e.g. as described in PCT Publication No. WO 2012/004367.

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with a GITR agonist. In some embodiments, the combination is used to treat a solid tumor or a hematologic malignancy. Exemplary GITR agonists include, e.g., GITR fusion proteins and anti-GITR antibodies (e.g., bivalent anti-GITR antibodies).

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TLR Agonists

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with a Toll like receptor agonist. The term "Toll like receptor" (or "TLR") as used herein refers to a member of the Toll-like receptor family of proteins or a fragment thereof that senses a microbial product and/or initiates an adaptive immune response. In one embodiment, a TLR activates a dendritic cell (DC). Toll like receptors (TLRs) are a family of pattern recognition receptors that were initially identified as sensors of the innate immune system that recognize microbial pathogens. TLRs comprise a family of conserved membrane spanning molecules containing an ectodomain of leucine-rich repeats, a transmembrane domain and an intracellular TIR (Toll/IL-1R) domain. TLRs recognize distinct structures in microbes, often referred to as "PAMPs" (pathogen associated molecular patterns). Ligand binding to TLRs invokes a cascade of intra-cellular signaling pathways that induce the production of factors involved in inflammation and immunity.

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TLR agonists known in the art and finding use in the present invention include, but are not limited to, the following:

Pam3Cys, a TLR-1/2 agonist;

- 30 CFA, a TLR-2 agonist;

MALP2, a TLR-2 agonist;

Pam2Cys, a TLR-2 agonist;

FSL-1, a TLR-2 agonist;

Hib-OMPC, a TLR-2 agonist;

- 35 polyribosinic:polyribocytidic acid (Poly I:C), a TLR-3 agonist;
polyadenosine-polyuridylic acid (poly AU), a TLR-3 agonist;

Polyinosinic-Polycytidylic acid stabilized with poly-L-lysine and carboxymethylcellulose

(Hiltonol®), a TLR-3 agonist;

monophosphoryl lipid A (MPL), a TLR-4 agonist;

LPS, a TLR-4 agonist;

5 bacterial flagellin, a TLR-5 agonist;

sialyl-Tn (STn), a carbohydrate associated with the MUC1 mucin on a number of human cancer cells and a TLR-4 agonist;

imiquimod, a TLR-7 agonist;

resiquimod, a TLR-7/8 agonist;

10 loxoribine, a TLR-7/8 agonist; and

unmethylated CpG dinucleotide (CpG-ODN), a TLR-9 agonist.

Because of their adjuvant qualities, TLR agonists are preferably used in combinations with other vaccines, adjuvants and/or immune modulators, and may be combined in various combinations. Thus, in certain embodiments, the mono-
 15 or di-FCDN compounds that bind to STING and induce STING-dependent TBK1 activation and an inactivated tumor cell which expresses and secretes one or more cytokines which stimulate dendritic cell induction, recruitment and/or maturation, as described herein can be administered together with one or more TLR agonists for therapeutic purposes.

20 *Antibody Therapeutics*

The compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with therapeutic antibodies. In some embodiments, the mechanism of action of the therapeutic antibody is Antibody-Dependent Cell-Mediated Cytotoxicity (ADCC). ADCC is a mechanism of cell-mediated immune defense whereby an effector cell of the immune system actively lyses a target cell, whose membrane-surface antigens have been bound by specific antibodies. It is one of
 25 the mechanisms through which antibodies, as part of the humoral immune response, can act to limit and contain infection. Classical ADCC is mediated by natural killer (NK) cells; macrophages, neutrophils and eosinophils can also mediate ADCC. ADCC is an important mechanism of action of therapeutic monoclonal antibodies, including trastuzumab and rituximab, against tumors. Compounds of the present invention may act to potentiate ADCC.

30 The following are an exemplary list of antibodies which may be used together with the compounds of the present invention.

Muromonab-CD3, Infliximab, adalimumab, Omalizumab, Daclizumab, Rituximab, Ibritumomab, Tositumomab, Cetuximab, Trastuzumab, Alemtuzumab, Lym-1 Ipilimumab, Vitaxin, Bevacizumab and Abciximab.

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Additional therapeutic antibodies that may be used in combination with the

compounds of the present invention include a prolactin receptor (PRLR) inhibitor, a HER3 inhibitor, an EGFR2 and/or EGFR4 inhibitor, an M-CSF inhibitor, an anti-APRIL antibody, or an anti-SIRP^α or anti-CD47 antibody.

Chemotherapeutic Agents

- 5 In additional embodiments of the methods described herein, the compounds of the present invention are used in combination with chemotherapeutic agents (e.g. small molecule pharmaceutical compounds). Thus the methods further involve administering to the subject an effective amount of one or more chemotherapeutic agents as an additional treatment or a combination treatment. In certain embodiments the one or more chemotherapeutic agents is selected from the group consisting of abiraterone acetate, altretamine, anhydrovinblastine, auristatin, bexarotene, bicalutamide, BMS 184476, 2,3,4,5,6-pentafluoro-N-(3-fluoro-4-methoxyphenyl)benzene sulfonamide, bleomycin, N,N-dimethyl-L-valyl-L-valyl-N-methyl-L-valyl-L-prolyl-L-proline-tbutylamide, cachectin, cemadotin, chlorambucil, cyclophosphamide, 3',4'-didehydro-4'-deoxy-8'-norvincaleukoblastine, docetaxol, doxetaxel, cyclophosphamide, carboplatin, carmustine, cisplatin, cryptophycin, cyclophosphamide, cytarabine, dacarbazine (DTIC), dactinomycin, daunorubicin, decitabine, dolastatin, doxorubicin (adriamycin), etoposide, 5-fluorouracil, finasteride, flutamide, hydroxyurea and hydroxyureataxanes, ifosfamide, liarozole, lonidamine, lomustine (CCNU), enzalutamide, mechlorethamine (nitrogen mustard), melphalan, mivobulin isethionate, rhizoxin, sertenef, streptozocin, mitomycin, methotrexate, taxanes, nilutamide, onapristone, paclitaxel, prednimustine, procarbazine, RPR109881, stramustine phosphate, tamoxifen, tasonermin, taxol, tretinoin, vinblastine, vincristine, vindesine sulfate, and vinflunine.
- 15
- 20 In additional embodiments the methods described herein, the compounds of the present invention are used in combination with chemotherapeutic agents and/or additional agents for treating the indications as described in the methods herein. In some embodiments, the compounds of the present invention are used in combination with one or more agents selected from the group consisting of sotrastaurin, nilotinib, 5-(2,4-dihydroxy-5-isopropylphenyl)-N-ethyl-4-(4-(morpholinomethyl)phenyl)isoxazole-3-carboxamide, dactolisib, 8-(6-Methoxy-pyridin-3-yl)-3-methyl-1-(4-piperazin-1-yl-3-trifluoromethyl-phenyl)-1,3-dihydro-imidazo[4,5-c]quinolin-2-one, 3-(2,6-dichloro-3,5-dimethoxyphenyl)-1-(6-((4-(4-ethylpiperazin-1-yl)phenyl)amino)pyrimidin-4-yl)-1-methylurea, buparlisib, 8-(2,6-difluoro-3,5-dimethoxyphenyl)-N-(4-((dimethylamino)methyl)-1H-imidazol-2-yl)quinoxaline-5-carboxamide, (S)-N1-(4-methyl-5-(2-(1,1,1-trifluoro-2-methylpropan-2-yl)pyridin-4-yl)thiazol-2-yl)pyrrolidine-1,2-dicarboxamide, (S)-1-(4-chlorophenyl)-7-isopropoxy-6-methoxy-2-(4-(methyl-(((1R,4S)-4-(4-methyl-3-oxopiperazin-1-yl)cyclohexyl)methyl)amino)phenyl)-1,2-dihydroisoquinolin-3(4H)-one, deferasirox, letrozole, (4S,5R)-3-(2'-amino-2-morpholino-4'-(trifluoromethyl)-[4,5'-bipyrimidin]-6-yl)-4-(hydroxymethyl)-5-methyloxazolidin-2-one, (S)-5-(5-chloro-1-methyl-2-oxo-1,2-dihydropyridin-3-yl)-6-(4-chlorophenyl)-2-(2,4-dimethoxypyrimidin-5-yl)-1-isopropyl-5,6-dihydropyrrolo[3,4-d]imidazol-4(1H)-one, 4-((2-(((1R,2R)-2-hydroxycyclohexyl)amino)benzo[d]thiazol-6-yl)oxy)-N-methylpicolinamide, imatinib mesylate, 2-fluoro-N-methyl-4-(7-(quinolin-6-ylmethyl)imidazo[1,2-b][1,2,4]triazin-2-yl)benzamide, ruxolitinib, panobinostat, osilodrostat, (S)-N-((S)-1-cyclohexyl-2-((S)-2-(4-(4-fluorobenzoyl)thiazol-2-yl)pyrrolidin-1-yl)-2-oxoethyl)-2-(methylamino)propanamide, (S)-N-((S)-1-cyclohexyl-2-((S)-2-(4-(4-fluorobenzoyl)thia-
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- 30
- 35

zol-2-yl)pyrrolidin-1-yl)-2-oxoethyl)-2-(methylamino)propanamide, sonidegib phosphate, ceritinib, 7-cyclopentyl-N,N-dimethyl-2-((5-(piperazin-1-yl)pyridin-2-yl)amino)-7H-pyrrolo[2,3-d]pyrimidine-6-carboxamide, N-(4-((1R,3S,5S)-3-amino-5-methylcyclohexyl)pyridin-3-yl)-6-(2,6-difluorophenyl)-5-fluoropicolinamide, 2-(2',3-dimethyl-[2,4'-bipyridin]-5-yl)-N-(5-(pyrazin-2-yl)pyridin-2-yl)acetamide, encorafenib, 7-cyclopentyl-N,N-dimethyl-2-((5-((1R,6S)-9-methyl-4-oxo-3,9-diazabicyclo[4.2.1]-nonan-3-yl)pyridin-2-yl)amino)-7H-pyrrolo[2,3-d]pyrimidine-6-carboxamide, binime-tinib, midostaurin, everolimus, 1-methyl-5-((2-(5-(trifluoromethyl)-1H-imidazol-2-yl)pyridin-4-yl)oxy)-N-(4-(trifluoromethyl)phenyl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-amine, pasi-reotide diaspargate, dovitinib, (R,E)-N-(7-chloro-1-(1-(4-(dimethylamino)but-2-enoyl)azepan-3-yl)-1H-benzo[d]imidazol-2-yl)-2-methylisonicotinamide, N6-(2-isopropoxy-5-methyl-4-(1-methylpiperidin-4-yl)phenyl)-N4-(2-(isopropylsulfonyl)-phenyl)-1H-pyrazolo[3,4-d]pyrimidine-4,6-diamine, 3-(4-(4-((5-chloro-4-((5-methyl-1H-pyrazol-3-yl)amino)pyrimidin-2-yl)amino)-5-fluoro-2-methylphenyl)piperidin-1-yl)thietane 1,1-dioxide, 5-chloro-N2-(2-fluoro-5-methyl-4-(1-(tetrahydro-2H-pyran-4-yl)piperidin-4-yl)phenyl)-N4-(5-methyl-1H-pyrazol-3-yl)pyrimidine-2,4-diamine, 5-chloro-N2-(4-(1-ethylpiperidin-4-yl)-2-fluoro-5-methylphenyl)-N4-(5-methyl-1H-pyrazol-3-yl)pyrimidine-2,4-diamine, valspodar, and vatalanib succinate.

In other embodiments, the compounds of the present invention can be used in combination with a PKC inhibitor, a BCR-ABL inhibitor, an HSP90 inhibitor, an inhibitor of PI3K and/or mTOR, an FGFR inhibitor, a PI3K inhibitor, an FGFR inhibitor, a PI3K inhibitor, an inhibitor of cytochrome P450 (e.g., a CYP17 inhibitor), a HDM2 inhibitor, an aromatase inhibitor, an inhibitor of p53 and/or a p53/Mdm2 interaction, or a CSF-1R tyrosine kinase inhibitor.

Suitable preparations include for example tablets, capsules, suppositories, solutions - particularly solutions for injection (s.c., i.v., i.m.) and infusion - elixirs, emulsions or dispersible powders. The content of the pharmaceutically active compound(s) should be in the range from 0.1 to 90 wt.-%, preferably 0.5 to 50 wt.-% of the composition as a whole, i.e. in amounts which are sufficient to achieve the dosage range specified below. The doses specified may, if necessary, be given several times a day.

The dosage for the combination partners mentioned above is usually 1/5 of the lowest dose normally recommended up to 1/1 of the normally recommended dose.

In yet another aspect the present invention relates a method for treating a disease or condition associated with or modulated by STING in a patient that includes the step of administering to the patient, preferably a human, in need of such treatment a therapeutically effective amount of a compound of the present invention in combination with a therapeutically effective amount of one or more additional therapeutic agents described in hereinbefore.

The use of the compound according to the invention in combination with the additional therapeutic agent may take place simultaneously or at staggered times.

The compound according to the invention and the one or more additional therapeutic agents may both be present together in one formulation or separately in two identical or different formulations, for example as a so-called kit-of-parts.

- 5 Thus, in a further aspect the present invention provides a combination comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent.

A further object of the present invention is to provide a pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent and one or more
10 of pharmaceutically acceptable excipients.

In a further aspect the invention provides a combination comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent for use in therapy.

- 15 In a further aspect the invention provides a combination comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent for use in the treatment of a disease or condition in which modulation of STING is beneficial.

In a further aspect the invention provides a combination comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent for use in the treatment of inflammation, allergic
20 and autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases and cancer

In a further aspect the invention provides a method of treatment of a disease or condition in which modulation of STING is beneficial, in a patient, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of a combination
25 comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent

In a further aspect the invention provides a method of treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer, in a patient, comprising administering a therapeutically effective amount of a
30 combination comprising a compound of formula (I), or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, and at least one further therapeutic agent.

The actual pharmaceutically effective amount or therapeutic dosage will of course depend on factors known by those skilled in the art such as age and weight of the patient, route of administration and severity of disease. In any case
35 the combination will be administered at dosages and in a manner which allows a pharmaceutically effective amount to be delivered based upon patient's unique condition.

In another aspect, this invention relates to a pharmaceutical composition which comprises a compound according to the invention and one or more additional therapeutic agents described hereinbefore and hereinafter, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents.

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Other features and advantages of the present invention will become apparent from the following more detailed Examples which illustrate, by way of example, the principles of the invention.

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Examples and Experimental Data

- 5 The following examples are for the purpose of illustration of the invention only and are not intended in any way to limit the scope of the present invention.

The following abbreviations are used hereinbefore and hereinafter:

aq.	aqueous
Bz	benzoyl
CEP	(2-cyanoethyl)-(N,N-diisopropyl)]-phosphoramidite
DA	diode array
DCM	dichloromethane
DDTT	3-((N,N-dimethyl-aminomethylidene)amino)-3H-1,2,4-dithiazole-3-thione
dmf	N,N-dimethylformamidinyl
DMOCP	2-chloro-5,5-dimethyl-2-oxo-1,3,2-dioxaphosphorinane
DMSO	dimethyl sulfoxide
DMTr	4,4'-dimethoxytrityl
ESI	electrospray ionisation
eq.	molar equivalent
h	hour
HPLC	high performance liquid chromatography
LC	liquid chromatography
LNA	locked nucleic acid
m/z	mass-to-charge ratio
MeOH	methanol
min	minute
MS	mass spectrometry
NH ₄ OH	solution of NH ₃ in water
NMR	nuclear magnetic resonance
ppm	parts per million
s	singlet
Sol	Solvent
TEA	triethyl amine
TEAB	triethylammonium bicarbonate
TEAF	triethylammonium formate
TFA	trifluoroacetic acid

t_{Ret}	retention time in minutes
UV	ultraviolet
Vis	visible

General Technical Remarks

The terms "ambient temperature" and "room temperature" are used interchangeably and designate a temperature of about 20 °C, e.g. 15 to 25 °C.

- 5 As a rule, ^1H NMR spectra and/or mass spectra have been obtained of the compounds according to the invention. Unless otherwise stated, all chromatographic operations were performed at room temperature. During cyclic dinucleotide synthesis, evaporation of solvents was typically performed by rotary evaporation under reduced pressure with water bath temperatures not exceeding 35°C. Furthermore, during cyclic dinucleotide synthesis, reactions were typically performed under nitrogen or argon.
- 10 X-ray structures of Example 1.1 (improved binding to human STING as compared to Example 1.2) and Example 2.1 (improved binding to human STING as compared to Example 2.2) in complex with human STING suggest that both phosphor atoms have the R_p configuration. In analogous fashion it is thus assumed that Example 3.1 (improved binding to human STING as compared to other Example 3 diastereomers) and Example 4.1 (improved binding to human STING as compared to Example 4.2) also feature the R_p configuration at both phosphor atoms.

15

A) Analytical Methods

LC-MS-Analytics:

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Method Name: System A

HPLC-System: VWR / Hitachi: L-2130 Pump; VWR / Hitachi: L-2200 Autosampler; VWR / Hitachi: L-2300 Column Oven; VWR / Hitachi: L-2450 Diode Array Detector; Agilent: OpenLab

MS-System: Bruker Esquire LC 6000 spectrometer

- 25 Column: Kromasil 100-5 C₈, 5 μm , 50 mm x 3 mm.

Flow rate: 0.4 mL/min, 35°C, UV-detection range: 220 - 300 nm

Mass spectrum: Recorded on a mass spectrometer using negative and positive ESI

Solvents: A: acetonitrile

B: water

- 30 C: 20 mM NH_4HCO_3 (pH 5.5) in water

Gradient:	Time	A%	B%	C%
	0	2	93	5
	20	60	35	5

23	95	0	5
24	2	93	5
30	2	93	5

Sample preparation: Samples (2 µL – 20 µL) were dissolved in 87.5 µL acetonitrile and 262.5 µL water, injection
 5 volume 2 µL – 5 µL.

Method Name: Z011_S03

Device description: Agilent 1200 with DA- and MS-Detector

Column: XBridge C18_3.0x30 mm, 2.5 µm

10 Column producer: Waters

Description:

Gradient/Solvent	% Sol [H ₂ O	% Sol [Acetonitrile]	Flow [mL/min]	T [°C]
Time [min]	0.1% NH ₄ OH]			
0.0	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
15 0.2	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
1.2	0.0	100.0	2.2	60.0
1.25	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0
1.4	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0

20 Method Name: Z017_S04

Device description: Agilent 1200 with DA- and MS-Detector

Column: StableBond C18_3.0x30 mm, 1.8 µm

Column producer: Agilent

Description:

Gradient/Solvent	% Sol	% Sol [Acetonitrile]	Flow [mL/min]	T [°C]
Time [min]	[H ₂ O 0.1% TFA]			
0.0	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
0.2	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
1.2	0.0	100.0	2.2	60.0
30 1.25	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0
1.4	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0

Method Name: Z018_S04

Device description: Agilent 1200 with DA- and MS-Detector

35 Column: Sunfire C18_3.0x30 mm, 2.5 µm

Column producer: Waters

Description:

Gradient/Solvent	% Sol	% Sol [Acetonitrile]	Flow [mL/min]	T [°C]
Time [min]	[H ₂ O 0.1% TFA]			
0.0	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
5 0.2	97.0	3.0	2.2	60.0
1.2	0.0	100.0	2.2	60.0
1.25	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0
1.4	0.0	100.0	3.0	60.0

10 **Method Name: Z035_001**

Device description: Agilent 1200 with DA- and MS-Detector

Column: Atlantis T3, 4,6 x 50 mm, 3 µm

Column producer: Waters

15 Description:

Gradient/Solvent	% Sol [H ₂ O]	% Sol [Acetonitrile]	Flow [mL/min]	T [°C]
Time [min]	0.02 mol/L TEAF]			
0.0	98.0	2.0	1.0	25.0
3.0	98.0	2.0	1.0	25.0
20 12.0	80.0	20.0	1.0	25.0
14.0	0.0	100.0	1.0	25.0
16.0	0.0	100.0	1.0	25.0

Analytical HPLC-configurations:25 **Method Name: Configuration A** (gradient HPLC)

VWR / Hitachi: L-2130 Pump; VWR / Hitachi: L-2200 Autosampler; VWR / Hitachi: L-2350 Column Oven (set at 30°C); VWR / Hitachi: L-2400 variable wavelength UV/Vis detector; EZChrom software version 3.3.1 SP1.

YMC*GEL ODS-A 12 nm (10 µm; 250 x 4 mm) channel A= 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water; channel B= 100 % acetonitrile, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8). Gradient: 0 min 100 % A; 30 min 100 % B; 40 min 100 % B, 30°C; flow rate:

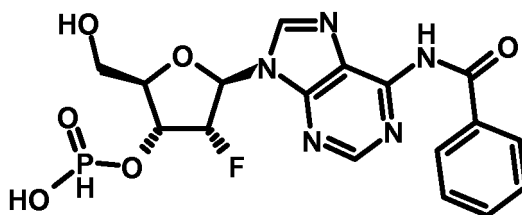
30 1.0 mL/min; UV 262 nm;

NMR spectroscopy:Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectra: For ¹H spectra, chemical shifts were referenced to the DMSO solvent signal (2.50 ppm) or, for measurements in D₂O, to DSS (4,4-dimethyl-4-silapentane-1-sulfonic acid). The ³¹P NMR35 spectra were indirectly referenced by comparison of the absolute frequencies of ¹H/³¹P (Bruker BioSpin GmbH, Software: TopSpin, au program: xsi). All ³¹P NMR spectra were recorded with proton decoupling.

B) Syntheses of Intermediates

5 INTERMEDIATE 1.1

5'-OH-2'-F-3'-H-phosphonate-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine



5'-DMTr-2'-F-3'-CEP-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine (obtained from ChemGenes, 0.654 g, 0.747 mmol) was dissolved in acetonitrile (10 mL) and water (0.033 mL, 1.50 mmol, 2 eq.) at room temperature. Pyridinium trifluoroacetate (0.173 g, 0.896 mmol, 1.2 eq.) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 10 minutes. Afterwards, *tert*-butylamine (10 mL, 95.7 mmol) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. The reaction mixture was evaporated under reduced pressure, re-dissolved in anhydrous acetonitrile (25 mL) and evaporated under reduced pressure. The residue was dissolved in dichloromethane (25 mL) and water (0.134 mL, 7.44 mmol, 10 eq.). Dichloroacetic acid (0.555 mL, 6.73 mmol, 9 eq.) in dichloromethane (25 mL) was added and the resulting orange solution was stirred at room temperature for 10 minutes. Pyridine (1.31 mL, 13.6 mmol, 18 eq.) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 minutes.

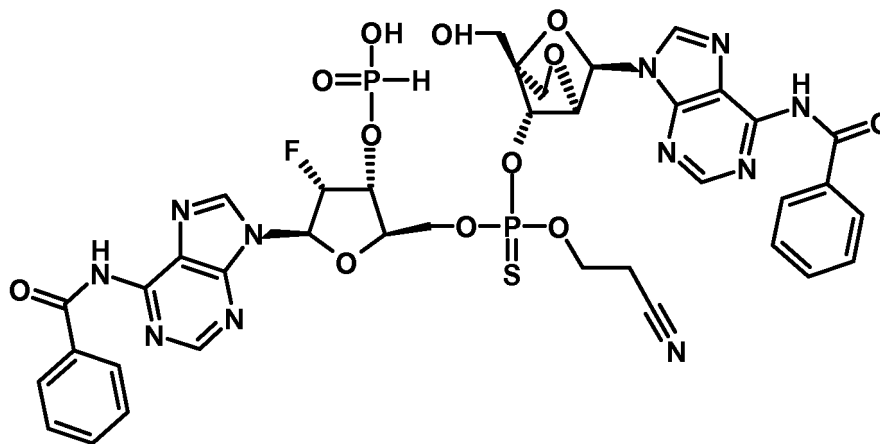
LC-MS analytics of the reaction mixture confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 1.1.

LC-MS (system A): t_{Ret} 4.22 min; ESI-MS: 438 [M+H]⁺

The solvents were evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was azeotroped with anhydrous acetonitrile (4 x 15 mL). During the last evaporation procedure the solution was concentrated to ca. 4 mL of final azeotrope. The resulting anhydrous solution of INTERMEDIATE 1.1 was immediately used in the next sequence of reactions.

INTERMEDIATE 1.2

Linear dimer 5'-OH-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-2'-F-3'-H-phosphonate-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine



- 5 5'-DMTr-3'-CEP-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine (obtained from Exiqon, 0.998 g, 1.27 mmol, 1.7 eq.) was azeotroped with anhydrous acetonitrile (4 x 15 mL). During the last evaporation procedure the solution was concentrated to ca. 4 mL of the final azeotrope. The resulting solution was added to INTERMEDIATE 1.1 (maximum theoretical amount: 0.747 mmol) dissolved in ca. 4 mL anhydrous acetonitrile at room temperature. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 20 min. ((*N,N*-dimethylamino-methylidene)amino)-3*H*-1,2,4-dithiazoline-3-thione (DDTT)
- 10 (0.203 g, 0.823 mmol, 1.1 eq.) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. The volatiles were evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was dissolved in dichloromethane (25 mL) and water (0.134 mL, 7.44 mmol, 10 eq.). Dichloroacetic acid (1.11 mL, 13.5 mmol, 18 eq.) in dichloromethane (25 mL) was added and the orange solution was stirred at room temperature for 20 minutes. Pyridine (10 mL) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 5 minutes.
- 15 LC-MS analytics of the reaction mixture confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 1.2 as a mixture of diastereomers.

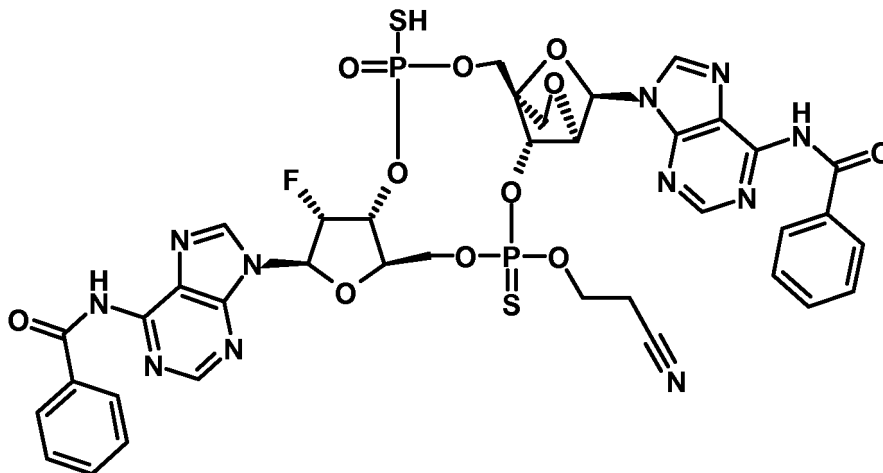
LC-MS (system A): t_{Ret} 8.32, 8.53 min; ESI-MS: 952 $[M+H]^+$ for each diastereomer.

The flask was stoppered, carefully sealed and stored at -70°C for 16 hours. The mixture was evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was co-evaporated with anhydrous pyridine (2 x 20 mL) under reduced pressure.

- 20 Another portion of 40 mL anhydrous pyridine was added and the residue was concentrated under reduced pressure to ca. 20 mL total volume. The resulting anhydrous solution of INTERMEDIATE 1.2 was immediately used in the next sequence of reactions.

INTERMEDIATE 1.3

Cyclic dimer LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-2'-F-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate

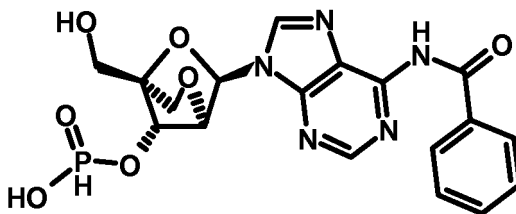


- 5 2-Chloro-5,5-dimethyl-1,3,2-dioxaphosphorinane 2-oxide (DMOCP) (0.483 g, 2.62 mmol, 3.5 eq.) was added to crude INTERMEDIATE 1.2 (maximum theoretical amount: 0.747 mmol) in anhydrous pyridine in a total volume of ca. 20 mL. The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. Water (0.470 mL, 26.1 mmol, 35 eq.) and 3*H*-1,2-benzodithiol-3-one (0.189 g, 1.12 mmol, 1.5 eq.) were added and stirring was continued at room temperature. After 30 minutes, the reaction mixture was poured into a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate
- 10 (4.500 g, 53.6 mmol) in 150 mL water and was shaken at room temperature for 5 minutes, followed by the addition of a mixture of ethyl acetate / methyl-*tert*-butylether (150 mL, 1:1). The organic phase was separated and the aqueous phase was further extracted with ethyl acetate / methyl-*tert*-butylether (2 x 80 mL, 1:1). The combined organic phases were dried with anhydrous magnesium sulfate, followed by evaporation of solvents under reduced pressure and co-evaporation with 100 mL anhydrous toluene. The remaining residue was further dried *in vacuo*. The crude
- 15 product was purified by preparative flash chromatography (160 g silica gel, gradient of 0–16.7% MeOH in dichloromethane) to yield INTERMEDIATE 1.3 as a crude mixture of diastereomers.

LC-MS (system A): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 9.91, 10.08$ min; ESI-MS: 966 $[M+H]^+$ for each diastereomer.

INTERMEDIATE 2.1

- 20 5'-OH-3'-H-phosphonate-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine



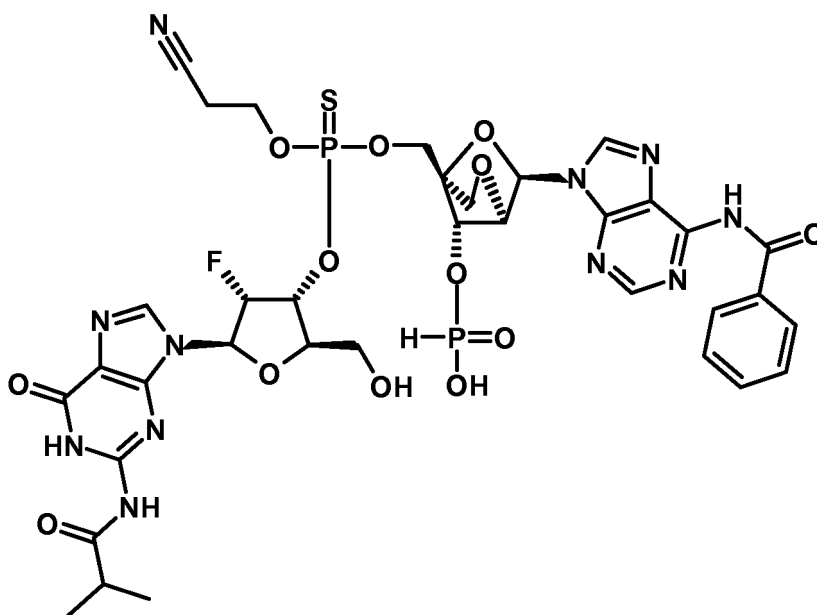
INTERMEDIATE 2.1 was prepared in analogous fashion as described for INTERMEDIATE 1.1 starting from 5'-DMTr-3'-CEP-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine ("LNA-A amidite", EQ-0063-1000, obtained from Exiqon). LC-MS analytics of the crude product confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 2.1.

LC-MS (Z017_S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.62$ min; ESI-MS: 448 [M+H]⁺.

5

INTERMEDIATE 2.2

Linear dimer 5'-OH-2'-F-N²-isobutyryl-2'-deoxyguanosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-3'-H-phosphonate-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine



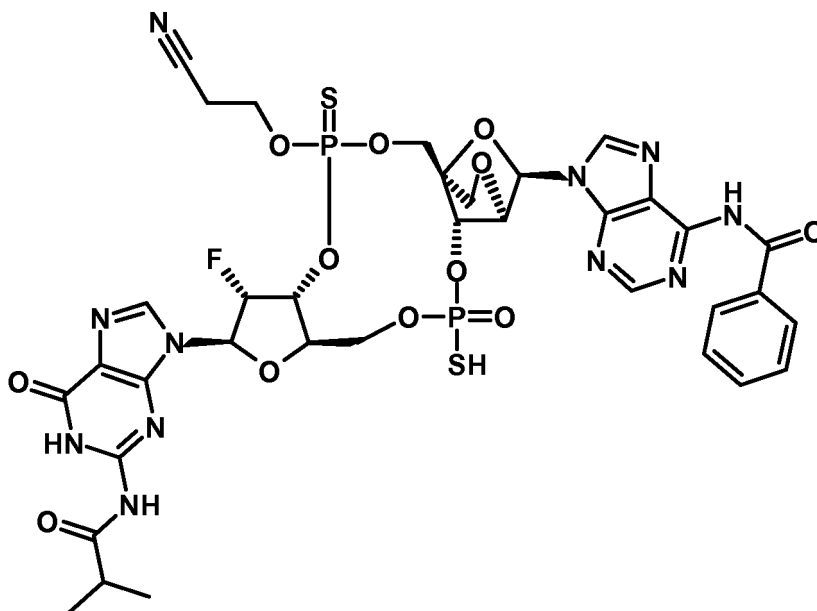
- 10 5'-DMTr-2'-F-3'-CEP-N²-isobutyryl-2'-deoxyguanosine (ABCR AB350793, 1.85 g, 2.16 mmol, 1.3 eq.) was azeotroped with anhydrous acetonitrile (2 x 10 mL). The residue was dissolved in anhydrous acetonitrile (10 mL) and concentrated to ca. 5 mL under reduced pressure. 10 pieces of molecular sieve (3 Å) were added and the resulting mixture was added to INTERMEDIATE 2.1 (maximum theoretical amount: 1.65 mmol) dissolved in ca. 3 mL anhydrous acetonitrile at room temperature. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 42 minutes.
- 15 ((N,N-dimethylamino-methylidene)amino)-3H-1,2,4-dithiazoline-3-thione (DDTT) (381 mg, 1.85 mmol, 1.1 eq.) was added and the reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes. The volatiles were evaporated *in vacuo* and the residue was dissolved in dichloromethane (20 mL) and water (0.299 mL, 16.6 mmol, 10 eq.). Dichloroacetic acid in dichloromethane (6%, 20 mL) was added and the resulting orange solution was stirred at room temperature for 10 minutes. Afterwards, pyridine (15 mL) was added and the reaction mixture was evaporated *in vacuo*.
- 20

LC-MS analytics of the crude product confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 2.2.

LC-MS (Z011_S03): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.60$ min; ESI-MS: 934 [M+H]⁺

INTERMEDIATE 2.3

Cyclic dimer 2'-F-N²-isobutyryl-2'-deoxyguanosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate

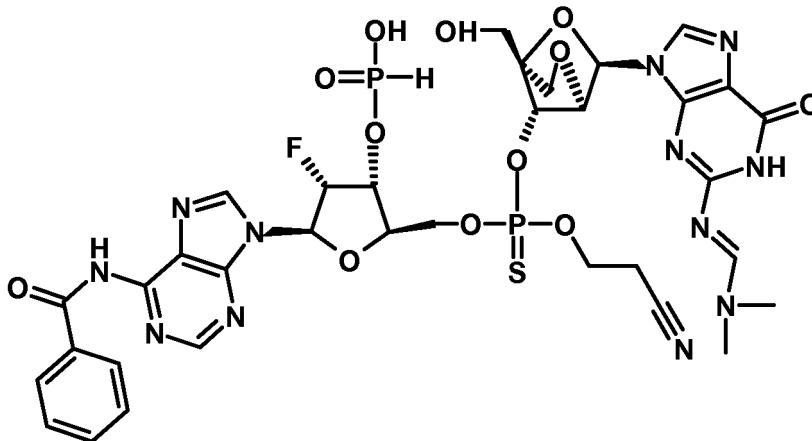


- 5 Crude INTERMEDIATE 2.2 (maximum theoretical amount: 1.65 mmol) was dissolved in pyridine (36 mL) and the solution concentrated to ca. 20 mL *in vacuo*. 2-Chloro-5,5-dimethyl-1,3,2-dioxaphosphorinane 2-oxide (DMOCP) (1134 mg, 6.15 mmol, 3.7 eq.) was added and the resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 15 min. Water (1.03 mL, 57.1 mmol, 34 eq.) and 3*H*-1,2-benzodithiol-3-one (428 mg, 2.54 mmol, 1.5 eq.) were added and stirring was continued at room temperature. After 5 minutes, the reaction mixture was poured into a solution of
- 10 sodium hydrogen carbonate (4.00 g, 47.6 mmol) in 140 mL water and was stirred at room temperature for 5 minutes, followed by the addition of a mixture of ethyl acetate / methyl-*tert*-butylether (140 mL, 1:1). The organic phase was separated and the aqueous phase was further extracted with ethyl acetate / methyl-*tert*-butylether (1:1) and several times with dichloromethane. The organic phases were combined, dried with anhydrous magnesium sulfate and the volatiles were removed *in vacuo*.
- 15 The remaining residue was dissolved in a minimum volume of dichloromethane and purified by preparative flash chromatography (silica gel, DCM/MeOH: gradient 100/0 → 70/30). Fractions were analyzed by HPLC-MS. Product-containing fractions were combined and the solvent removed *in vacuo* to yield INTERMEDIATE 2.3 as crude mixture of diastereomers.

LC-MS (Z017_S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.86 - 0.88$ min; ESI-MS: 948 $[M+H]^+$

INTERMEDIATE 3.1

Linear dimer 5'-OH-LNA-N²-dmf-guanosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-2'-F-3'-H-phosphonate-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine



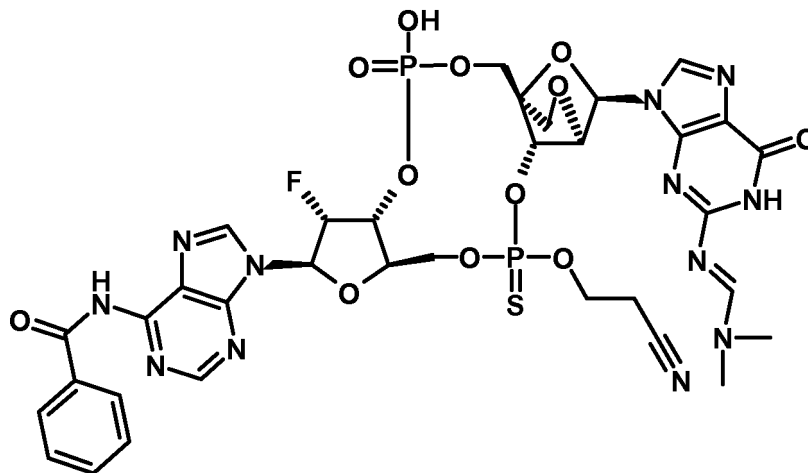
- 5 To a solution of INTERMEDIATE 1.1 (600 mg, 1.17 mmol) was added a solution of Activator 42 (0.1 M in acetonitrile, 24 mL, 2.4 mmol, 2.1 eq.). After several minutes, 5'-DMTr-3'-CEP- LNA-N²-dmf-guanosine-("LNA-G(dmf)-amidite", EQ-0082-1000, obtained from Exiqon, 1.69 g, 1.98 mmol, 1.7 eq.) was added and the mixture was stirred for 45 min at room temperature. A solution of phenylacetyl disulfide ("PADS", 710 mg, 2.35 mmol, 2.0 eq.) in pyridine (10 mL) was added and the mixture was stirred for 30 min at room temperature. The volatiles were evaporated *in vacuo* and
- 10 the residue was azeotroped twice with acetonitrile. The residue was dissolved in dichloromethane (14 mL) and water (0.21 mL, 11.7 mmol, 10 eq.). Dichloroacetic acid in dichloromethane (6%, 1.14 mL) was added and the resulting orange solution was stirred at room temperature for 20 minutes. Afterwards, a mixture of pyridine (8 mL) and methanol (8 mL) was added and the reaction mixture was evaporated *in vacuo*. The remaining residue was dissolved in a minimum volume of dichloromethane and purified by preparative flash chromatography (silica gel, DCM/MeOH: gradient 95/5 → 0/100). Fractions were analyzed by HPLC-MS. Product-containing fractions were combined and the solvent removed *in vacuo* to yield crude INTERMEDIATE 3.1.

LC-MS analytics of the crude material confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 3.1.

LC-MS (Z017_S04): t_{Ret} = 0.71 min; ESI-MS: 919 [M+H]⁺

INTERMEDIATE 3.2

Cyclic dimer LNA-N²-dmf-guanosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-2'-F-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate



5

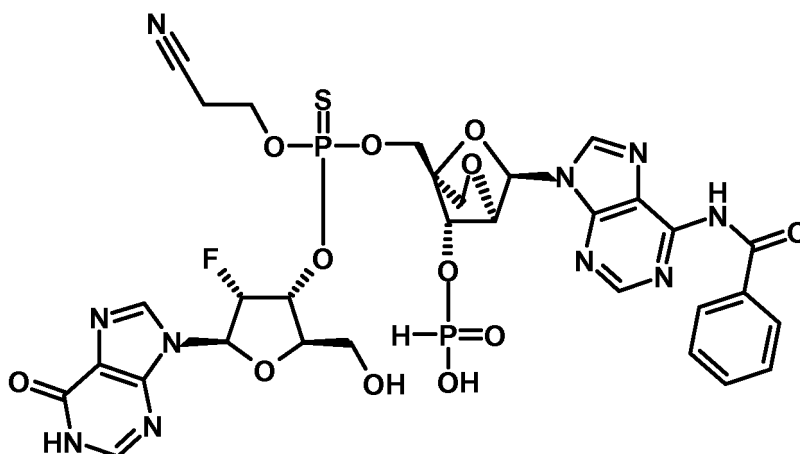
Crude INTERMEDIATE 3.1 (maximum theoretical amount: 0.109 mmol) was azeotroped twice with pyridine and dissolved in pyridine (4 mL). Pivaloyl chloride (0.050 mL, 0.41 mmol, 3.7 eq.) was added and the resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 45 minutes. Elemental sulfur (12 mg, 0.38 mmol, 3.5 eq.) was added and stirring was continued at room temperature for 45 min. The volatiles were evaporated *in vacuo* and the residue azeotroped
 10 twice with toluene. The remaining residue was triturated with acetonitrile and filtered. The filtrate was concentrated under reduced pressure and dried *in vacuo* to yield INTERMEDIATE 3.2 as a crude mixture of diastereomers.

LC-MS analytics of the material confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 3.2.

LC-MS (Z017_S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.78$ min; ESI-MS: 933 [M+H]⁺

15 **INTERMEDIATE 4.1**

Linear dimer 5'-OH-2'-F-2'-deoxyinosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-3'-H-phosphonate-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine



5'-DMTr-2'-F-3'-CEP-2'-deoxyinosine (MFCD22374068, Astatech, 2 g, 2.59 mmol, 1.7 eq.) was azeotroped with anhydrous acetonitrile (3 x 15 mL). During the last evaporation procedure the solution was concentrated to ca. 5 mL of the final azeotrope. The resulting solution was added to INTERMEDIATE 2.1 (maximum theoretical amount: 1.53 mmol) dissolved in ca. 5 mL anhydrous acetonitrile at room temperature. The reaction mixture was stirred at room temperature for 15 minutes. Further operations for the preparation of INTERMEDIATE 4.1 were performed in analogous fashion as described for INTERMEDIATE 1.2.

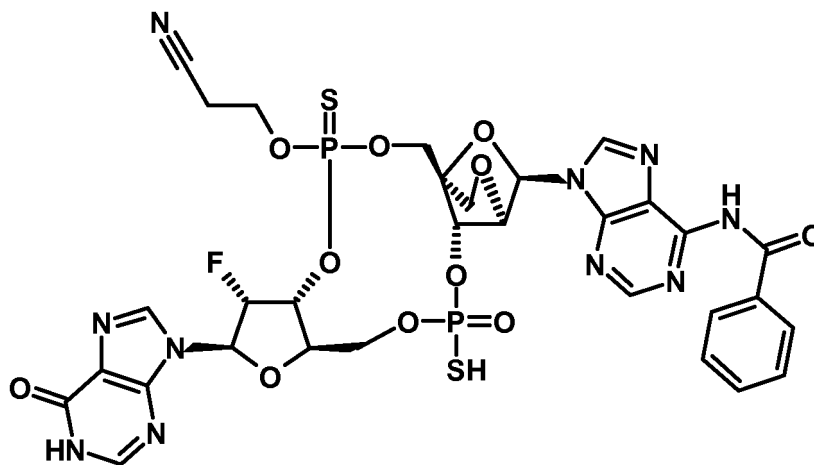
LC-MS analytics of the crude material confirmed the presence of INTERMEDIATE 4.1.

LC-MS (system A): t_{Ret} 7.67 min; ESI-MS: 849 [M+H]

The flask was stoppered, carefully sealed and stored at -70°C for 16 hours. The mixture was evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was co-evaporated with anhydrous pyridine (2 x 20 mL) under reduced pressure. A further portion of 40 mL anhydrous pyridine was added and the residue was concentrated under reduced pressure to ca. 20 mL total volume. The resulting anhydrous solution of INTERMEDIATE 4.1 was immediately used in the next sequence of reactions.

INTERMEDIATE 4.2

Cyclic dimer 2'-F-2'-deoxyinosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate



Synthesis of INTERMEDIATE 4.2 was performed in analogous fashion as described for INTERMEDIATE 1.3. The crude reaction mixture was poured into a solution of sodium hydrogen carbonate (6.7 g, 79.8 mmol) in 200 mL water and was shaken at room temperature for 5 minutes. During this period a product-containing precipitate was formed and was separated by filtration. Ethyl acetate (200 mL) was added to the filtrate and the organic phase was separated. The aqueous phase was further extracted three times with ethyl acetate (3 x 200 mL). The combined organic phases were dried with anhydrous magnesium sulfate, followed by evaporation of solvents under reduced pressure. The initial product-containing precipitate was added followed by a final co-evaporation with 200 mL anhydrous toluene. After completion of these operations the crude material was further dried *in vacuo*. The crude

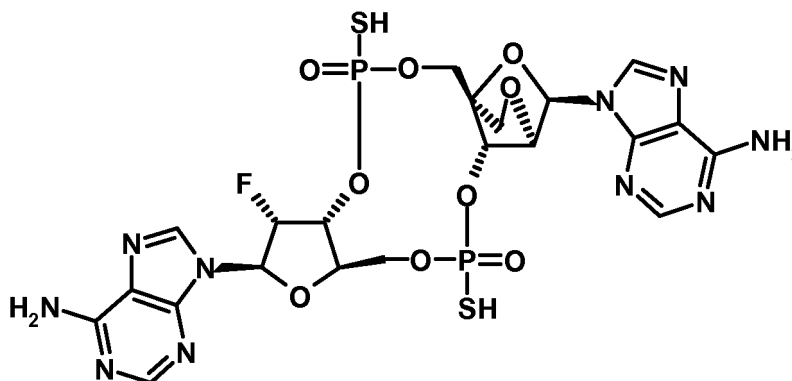
material was purified by preparative flash chromatography (160 g silica gel, gradient of 0–16.7% MeOH in DCM) to yield crude INTERMEDIATE 4.2 as a mixture of diastereomers.

LC-MS (system A): t_{Ret} = 9.14 min, 9.28 min; ESI-MS: 863 $[M+H]^+$ for each diastereomer.

5 C) Syntheses of Compounds According to the Invention

EXAMPLE 1.1 and EXAMPLE 1.2

Cyclic (LNA-adenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate-2'-F-2'-deoxyadenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate)



- 33 % methylamine in absolute ethanol (150 mL) was added to crude cyclic dimer LNA-N⁶-Bz-adenosine-(3'→5')-cyanoethyl-phosphorothioate-2'-F-N⁶-Bz-2'-deoxyadenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate (INTERMEDIATE 1.3; 0.36 g) and the resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 4 hours. All volatiles were evaporated under reduced pressure and the remaining residue was dried *in vacuo*. 125 mL water was added and the resulting suspension was placed in an ultrasonic bath at room temperature. After 15 minutes, this suspension was poured into 100 mL chloroform and the organic phase was separated. This extraction was repeated two more times with chloroform (2 x 100 mL). The combined organic phases were extracted with 100 mL water and the combined product-containing aqueous phase was filtered with a 0.45 μm Rotilabo®-CME-syringe filter (outer diameter: 33 mm). The product solution was diluted with water to 245 mL and applied to a Q Sepharose™ Fast Flow anion exchange column (40 – 165 μm ; 125 x 35 mm; ~120 mL) Cl⁻-form, previously regenerated with 2 M sodium chloride and washed with water. The column was washed with water (2 column volumes), followed by a gradient of 0 - 1 M triethylammonium bicarbonate buffer (TEAB, pH 7) in water over 16.7 column volumes, followed by a step-gradient with 2 M TEAB, pH 7 over 8.3 column volumes (detection wavelength 254 nm). EXAMPLE 1.1 and EXAMPLE 1.2 eluted with ~ 0.6 M TEAB - ~ 2.0 M TEAB. Product-containing fractions were carefully concentrated under reduced pressure. Separation of EXAMPLE 1.1 (second-eluting) and EXAMPLE 1.2 (first-eluting) was accomplished by repeated semi-preparative reversed phase HPLC purifications. The product solution was applied to a YMC®GEL ODS-A 12 nm column (10 μm ; 250 x 16 mm; ~50 mL), previously equilibrated with 10 % acetonitrile, 20 mM triethylammonium formate (TEAF, pH 6.8) in water. Elution was performed with a step-gradient of 10 %, 12 % and 16 % acetonitrile, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water.

Preparation of EXAMPLE 1.1, sodium salt ("second eluting diastereomer")

Desalting of EXAMPLE 1.1, TEA-salt, was performed by preparative reversed phase medium pressure liquid chromatography (MPLC). The product solution (~50 mL) was applied to a Merck LiChrorep®RP-18 column (15 – 25 µm; 450 x 25 mm; ~220 mL), previously equilibrated with water. The column was washed with water to remove excess TEAF buffer. Afterwards, 2 % 2-propanol in water was used to elute the desalted EXAMPLE 1.1. Product-containing fractions were partially concentrated under reduced pressure and subsequently applied to a SP Sepharose™ Fast Flow cation exchange column (45 – 165 µm; 125 x 35 mm; ~120 mL) Na⁺-form, previously regenerated with 2 M sodium chloride and washed with water. The column was washed with water until no UV-absorbance was detectable anymore (detection wavelength 254 nm). Product-containing fractions were carefully evaporated under reduced pressure and additionally dried *in vacuo* to yield EXAMPLE 1.1 as sodium salt.

HPLC (configuration A): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 10.51$ min; ESI-MS: 705 [M+H]⁺

³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.5 (s, 1P), 55.0 (s, 1P) ppm.

Preparation of EXAMPLE 1.2, sodium salt ("first eluting diastereomer")

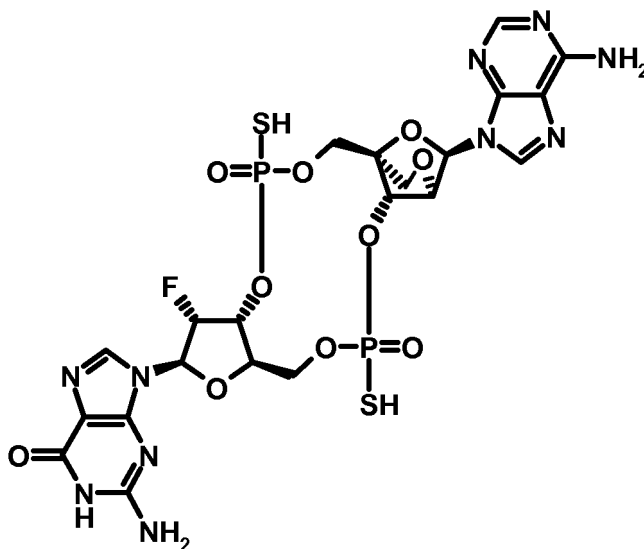
Desalting and salt change from triethylammonium to sodium of EXAMPLE 1.2, TEA salt was performed in similar fashion as described for EXAMPLE 1.1, TEA salt.

HPLC (configuration A): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 9.25$ min; ESI-MS: 705 [M+H]⁺

³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.8 (s, 1P), 55.7 (s, 1P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 2.1 and EXAMPLE 2.2

Cyclic (LNA-adenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate-2'-F-2'-deoxyguanosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate), sodium salt



To INTERMEDIATE 2.3 (1300 mg, maximum theoretical amount: 1.37 mmol) was added a 33% solution of methylamine in ethanol (50 mL) and the mixture was stirred for 2 h at room temperature. The volatiles were removed *in vacuo*. The residue was triturated with acetonitrile, filtered, washed with acetonitrile and dried *in vacuo*. The residue was purified by prep. HPLC (Atlantis C18; 20 mM aq. NH₄OAc / acetonitrile = 98/2 → 70/30). Product-

containing fractions were combined and lyophilized. Two diastereomers were obtained this way which were further purified by prep. HPLC (Bonus; 20 mM aq. triethylammonium formate) / acetonitrile = 98/2 → 70/30). Pure product-containing fractions were combined and lyophilized twice. The triethylammonium salts of the two diastereomers were converted to the respective sodium salts, respectively, by dissolving in 1 mL water, running through a Bio-Rad Spin column (filled with 250 mg BT AG 50W-2 resin 100-200 mesh hydrogen form, conditioned with 3 mL 1M aq. NaOH and afterwards washed neutral with water), eluting with water and lyophilization of product-containing fractions.

EXAMPLE 2.1 ("second eluting diastereomer"):

LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 10.73$ min; ESI-MS: 721 [M+H]⁺

LC-MS (Z018_S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.60$ min; ESI-MS: 721 [M+H]⁺

10 ³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.7 (s, 2P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 2.2 ("first eluting diastereomer"):

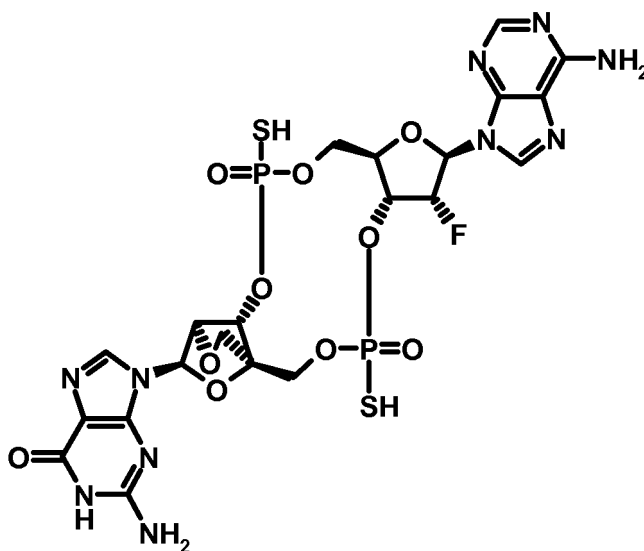
LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 9.09$ min; ESI-MS: 721 [M+H]⁺

LC-MS (Z018_S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.39$ min; ESI-MS: 721 [M+H]⁺

15 ³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.7 (s, 1P); 55.0 (s, 1P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 3.1, EXAMPLE 3.2, EXAMPLE 3.3 and EXAMPLE 3.4

Cyclic (LNA-guanosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate-2'-F-2'-deoxyadenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate), sodium salt



20 To INTERMEDIATE 3.2 (330 mg, maximum theoretical amount: 0.35 mmol) was added a 33% solution of methylamine in ethanol (16 mL) and the mixture was stirred for 1 h at room temperature. The volatiles were removed *in vacuo*. The residue was triturated with acetonitrile, filtered, washed with acetonitrile and dried *in vacuo*. The residue was purified by prep. HPLC (Atlantis C18; 20 mM aq. NH₄OAc / acetonitrile, gradient 98/2 → 80/20). Pure product-containing fractions were combined and lyophilized. Four diastereomers could be isolated this way. The

25 triethylammonium salts of the four diastereomers were converted to the respective sodium salts, respectively, by dissolving in 1 mL water, running through a Bio-Rad Spin column (filled with 250 mg BT AG 50W-2 resin 100-200

mesh hydrogen form, conditioned with 1M aq. NaOH and afterwards washed neutral with water), eluting with water and lyophilization of product-containing fractions.

EXAMPLE 3.1 ("fourth eluting diastereomer"):

LC-MS (Z018S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.60$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

5 LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 11.05$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

^{31}P NMR (162 MHz, D_2O , 303 K): δ 54.4 (s, 1P), 54.7 (s, 1P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 3.2 ("third eluting diastereomer"):

LC-MS (Z018S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.42$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

10 LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 9.62$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

^{31}P NMR (162 MHz, D_2O , 303 K): δ 54.4 (s, 2P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 3.3 ("second eluting diastereomer"):

LC-MS (Z018S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.26$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

15 LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 8.76$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

^{31}P NMR (162 MHz, D_2O , 303 K): δ 54.8 (s, 1P), 55.9 (s, 1P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 3.4 ("first eluting diastereomer"):

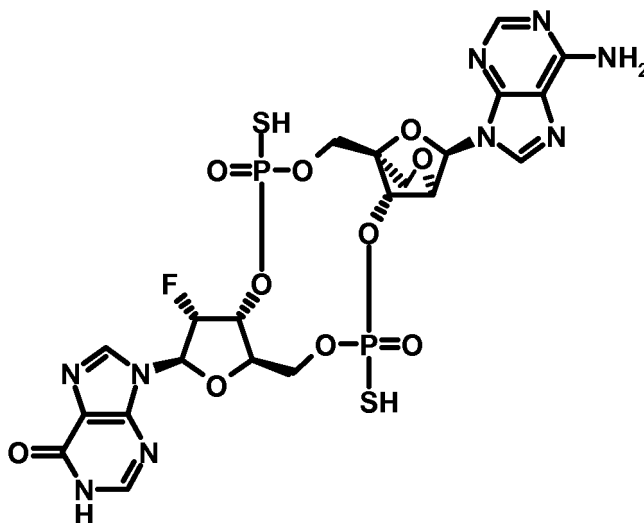
LC-MS (Z018S04): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 0.16$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

20 LC-MS (Z035_001): $t_{\text{Ret}} = 8.06$ min; ESI-MS: 721 $[M+H]^+$

^{31}P NMR (162 MHz, D_2O , 303 K): δ 54.8 (s, 1P), 56.0 (s, 1P) ppm.

EXAMPLE 4.1 and EXAMPLE 4.2

Cyclic (LNA-adenosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate-2'-F-2'-deoxyinosine-(3'→5')-phosphorothioate), sodium salt



250 mL 33 % methylamine in absolute ethanol was added to crude INTERMEDIATE 4.2 (0.43 g) and the resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 5 hours. All volatiles were evaporated under reduced pressure and the residue was further dried *in vacuo* to yield the crude mixture containing EXAMPLE 4.1 and EXAMPLE 4.2. 250 mL water was added and the resulting suspension was placed in an ultrasonic bath at room temperature. After 5 15 minutes, this suspension was poured into 125 mL chloroform and the organic phase was separated. This extraction was repeated another two times with chloroform (2 x 125 mL). The combined organic phases were extracted with 150 mL water and the combined product-containing aqueous phase was filtered with a 0.45 µm regenerated cellulose (RC) filter (Sartorius Stedim Biotech, outer diameter: 50 mm) to remove particulate components. The product solution was diluted with water to 1100 mL and applied to a Q Sepharose™ Fast Flow 10 anion exchange column (40 – 165 µm; 125 x 35 mm; ~120 mL) Cl-form, previously regenerated with 2 M sodium chloride and washed with water. The column was washed with water (2 column volumes), followed by a gradient of 0 - 1 M triethylammonium bicarbonate buffer (TEAB, pH 7) in water over 16.7 column volumes, followed by 1 M TEAB, pH 7 over 4.2 column volumes (detection wavelength 254 nm). EXAMPLE 4.1 and EXAMPLE 4.2 eluted with ~ 0.4 M TEAB - ~ 0.8 M TEAB. Product-containing fractions were carefully concentrated under reduced pressure.

15 Separation of EXAMPLE 4.1 (second eluting) and EXAMPLE 4.2 (first eluting) was accomplished by preparative reversed phase medium pressure liquid chromatography (MPLC). The product solution (~65 mL) was applied to a Merck LiChroprep®RP-18 column (15 - 25 µm; 435 x 25 mm; ~215 mL), previously equilibrated with 100 mM triethylammonium formate (TEAF) in water. Elution was performed with a step-gradient of 2 %, 3 % and 4 % 2-propanol, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water. Product-containing fractions were carefully concentrated under reduced 20 pressure.

Further purifications of EXAMPLE 4.1 and EXAMPLE 4.2 were accomplished by repeated semi-preparative reversed phase HPLC purifications. The product solutions were applied to a YMC*GEL ODS-A 12 nm column (10 µm; 250 x 16 mm; ~50 mL), previously equilibrated with 9 - 12 % acetonitrile, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water. Elution was performed with a step-gradient of 9 % and 12 % acetonitrile, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water (EXAMPLE 4.2) or with 25 12 % acetonitrile, 20 mM TEAF (pH 6.8) in water (EXAMPLE 4.1). Product-containing fractions were carefully concentrated under reduced pressure.

Preparation of EXAMPLE 4.1, sodium salt ("second eluting diastereomer")

Desalting of EXAMPLE 4.1, TEA-salt, was performed by preparative reversed phase medium pressure liquid 30 chromatography (MPLC). The product solution (~15 mL) was applied to a Merck LiChroprep®RP-18 column (15 – 25 µm; 450 x 25 mm; ~220 mL), previously equilibrated with water. The column was washed with water to remove excess TEAF buffer. Afterwards, 2 % 2-propanol in water was used to elute the desalted EXAMPLE 2.1. Product-containing fractions were partially concentrated under reduced pressure and subsequently applied to a SP Sepharose™ Fast Flow cation exchange column (45 – 165 µm; 125 x 35 mm; ~120 mL) Na⁺-form, previously 35 regenerated with 2 M sodium chloride and washed with water. The column was washed with water until no UV-

absorbance was detectable anymore (detection wavelength 254 nm). Product-containing fractions were carefully evaporated under reduced pressure and additionally dried *in vacuo* to yield EXAMPLE 4.1 as sodium salt.

HPLC (configuration A, UV 250 nm): t_{Ret} = 10.43 min; ESI-MS: 706 [M+H]⁺

³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.4 (s, 1P), 54.9 (s, 1P) ppm.

5

Preparation of EXAMPLE 4.2, sodium salt ("first eluting diastereomer")

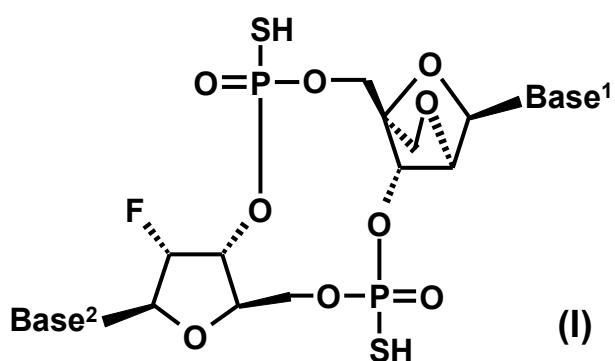
Desalting and salt change from TEA to sodium of EXAMPLE 4.2, TEA salt was performed in similar fashion as described for EXAMPLE 4.1, TEA salt.

HPLC (configuration A, UV 250 nm): t_{Ret} = 9.37 min; ESI-MS: 706 [M+H]⁺

10 ³¹P NMR (162 MHz, D₂O, 303 K): δ 54.4 (s, 1P), 54.9 (s, 1P) ppm.

Claims

- 5 1. A compound of formula (I)



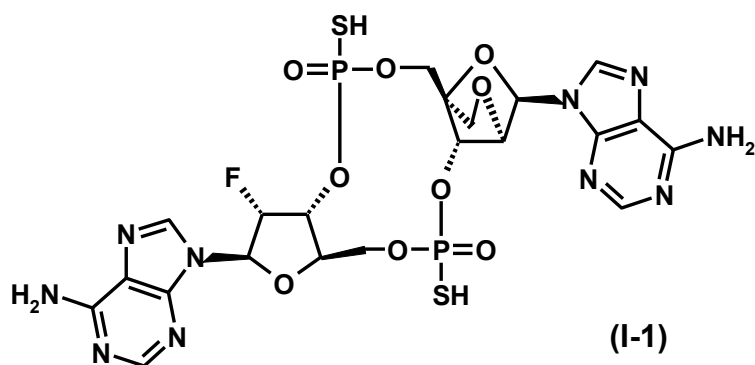
wherein

Base¹ and Base² are independently selected from the group consisting of purine, adenine, guanine, xanthine, and hypoxanthine, connected through their N⁹ nitrogen atoms,

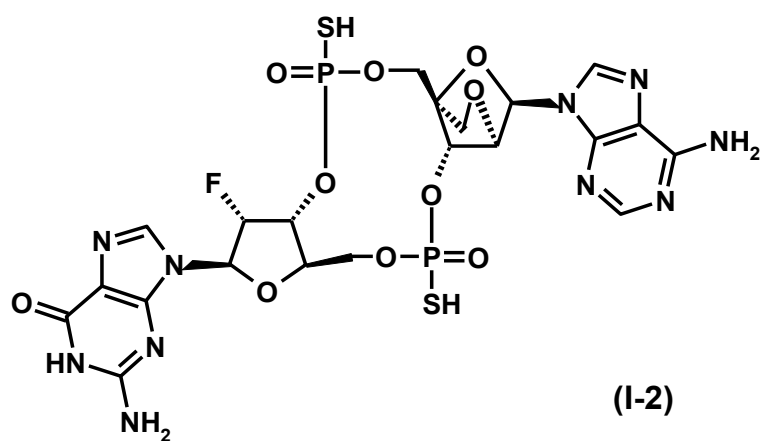
10

or a salt thereof.

2. The compound according to claim 1 wherein Base¹ and Base² are adenine, possessing the structure of
15 formula (I-1):

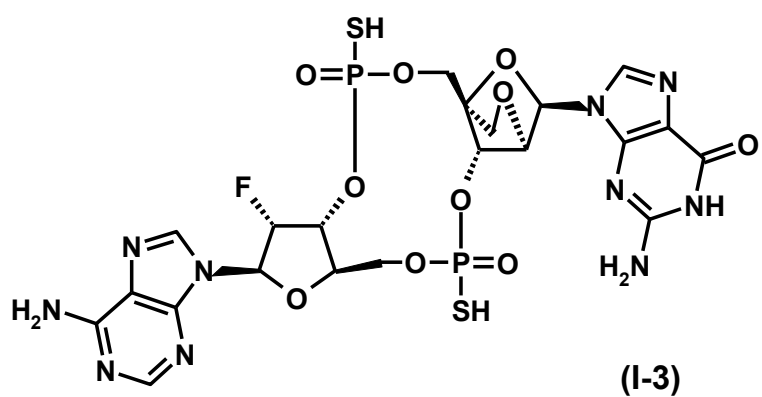


3. The compound according to claim 1 wherein Base¹ is adenine and Base² is guanine, possessing the structure
20 of formula (I-2):



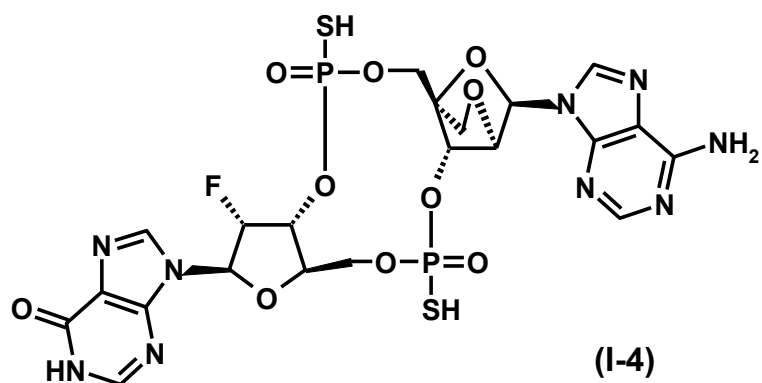
4. The compound according to claim 1 wherein Base¹ is guanine and Base² is adenine, possessing the structure of formula (I-3):

5



5. The compound according to claim 1 wherein Base¹ is adenine and Base² is hypoxanthine, possessing the structure of formula (I-4):

10



6. The compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 5, wherein the compound is a substantially pure (Sp,Sp), (Rp,Rp), (Sp,Rp), or (Rp,Sp) stereoisomer.
7. The compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 6, wherein the compound is a pharmaceutically acceptable salt.
8. A pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more compounds according to one or more of claims 1 to 6, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents.
9. A vaccine comprising a compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 7.
10. A pharmaceutical composition comprising one or more compounds according to one or more of claims 1 to 6, or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, and one or more additional therapeutic agents, optionally together with one or more inert carriers and/or diluents.
11. A pharmaceutical composition according to claim 10 comprising one compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 6 and one or more additional therapeutic agents.
12. A compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 7 for use as a medicament.
13. A compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 7 for use as a vaccine adjuvant.
14. Use of a compound according to one or more of claims 1 to 7 in the preparation of a medicament for the treatment of inflammation, allergic or autoimmune diseases, infectious diseases or cancer in a patient in need thereof.