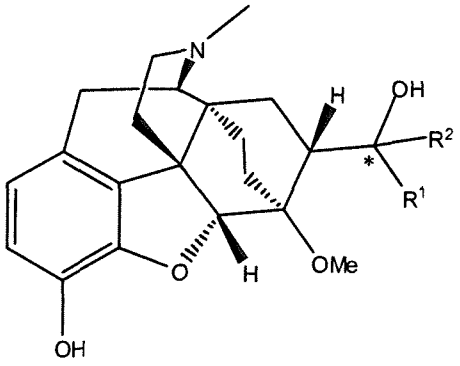
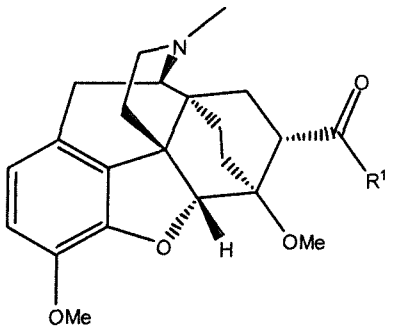
CLAIMS

1. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (VI), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(VI),

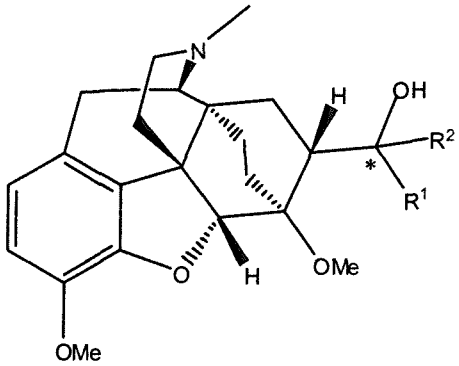
wherein R^1 and R^2 are independently C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl and * represents a (S) stereocentre, comprising reacting a compound of formula (IV)



(IV),

wherein R^1 is as hereinbefore defined,

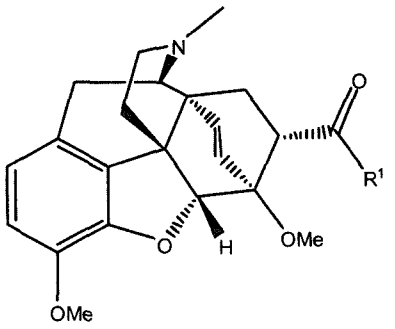
with a compound of formula $R^2M(X)_p$, wherein R^2 is C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl, M is metal, X is halide and p is 1 or 0, to produce a compound of formula (V)



(V),

wherein R^1, R^2 and * are as hereinbefore defined,
and hydrolysing said compound of formula (V) to give a compound of formula (VI).

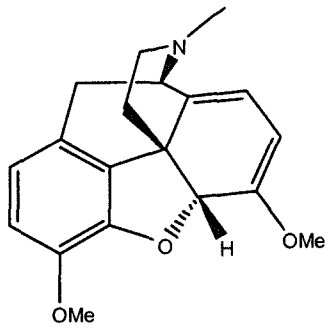
2. A process as claimed in claim 1, wherein said compound of formula (IV) is prepared by reducing a compound of formula (III)



(III),

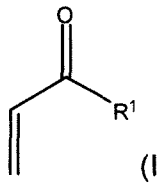
wherein R^1 is as hereinbefore defined.

3. A process as claimed in claim 2, wherein said compound of formula (III) is prepared by reacting a compound of formula (I)



(I)

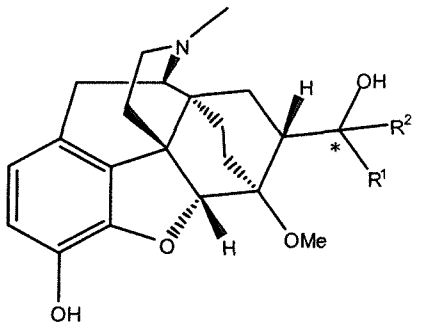
with a compound of formula (II)



(II),

wherein R^1 is C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl.

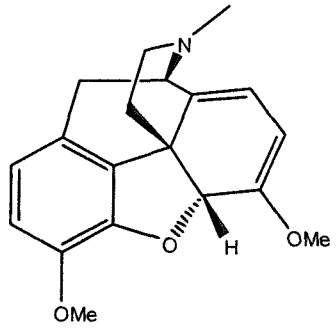
4. A process for the preparation of a compound of formula (VI), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(VI),

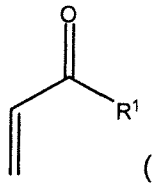
wherein R^1 and R^2 are independently C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl and * represents a (S) stereocentre, comprising:

reacting a compound of formula (I)



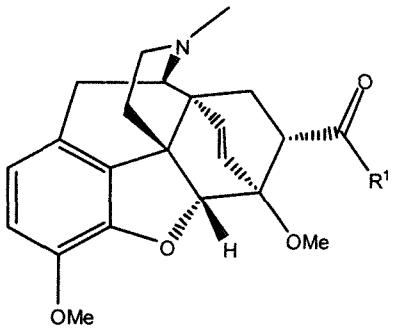
(I)

with a compound of formula (II)



(II)

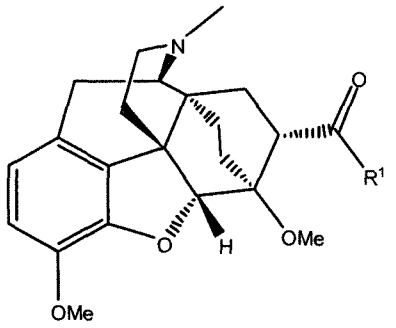
wherein R^1 is C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl, to give a compound of formula (III)



(III),

wherein R^1 is as hereinbefore defined;

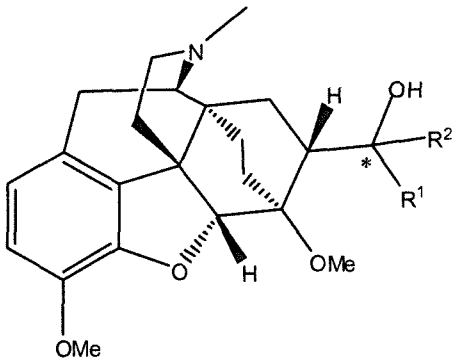
reducing said compound of formula (III) to produce a compound of formula (IV)



(IV),

wherein R^1 is as hereinbefore defined;

reacting said compound of formula (IV) with a compound of formula $R^2M(X)_p$, wherein R^2 is C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl, M is metal, X is halide and p is 1 or 0, to give a compound of formula (V)



(V),

wherein R^1, R^2 and * are as hereinbefore defined;

and hydrolysing said compound of formula (V) to give a compound of formula (VI).

5. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, wherein M is magnesium or lithium.

6. A process as claimed in claim 5, wherein $R^2M(X)_p$ is R^2MgCl, R^2MgBr, R^2MgI or R^2Li.

7. A process as claimed any one of claims 1 to 6, further comprising the step of crystallising said compound of formula (VI).

8. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 7, wherein R^1 is C_{3-5} alkyl.

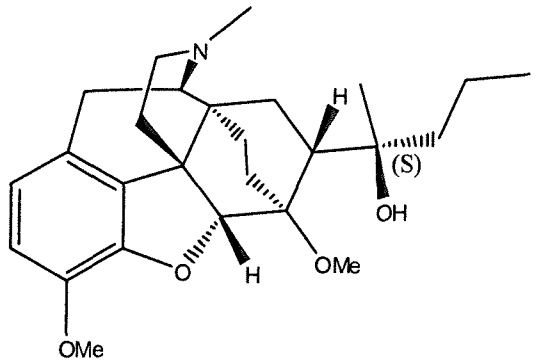
9. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 8, wherein R^1 is *n*-propyl.

10. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 9, wherein R^2 is C_{1-2} alkyl.

11. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 10, wherein R^2 is methyl.

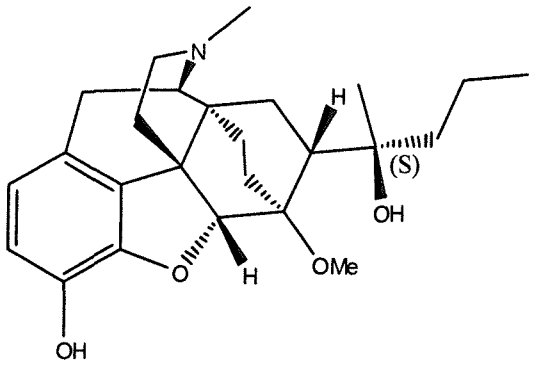
12. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 11, wherein the compound of formula (V) is produced in a diastereomeric excess of at least 90%.

13. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 12, wherein the compound of formula (V) is:



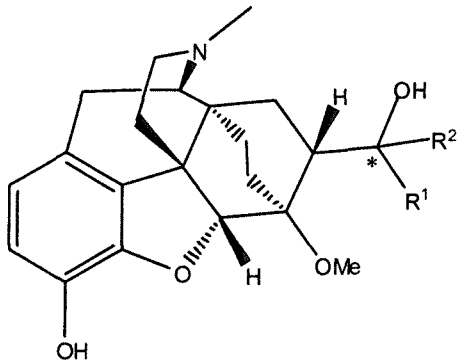
(Va).

14. A process as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 13, wherein the compound of formula (VI) is:



(VIa).

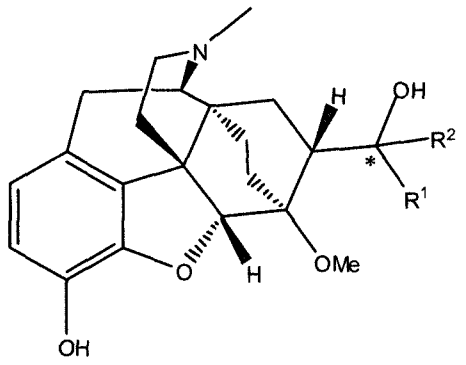
15. A compound of formula (VI), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(VI),

prepared by the process of any one of claims 1 to 14.

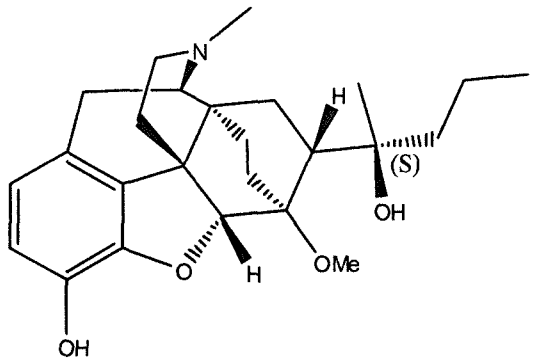
16. A compound of formula (VI), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(VI),

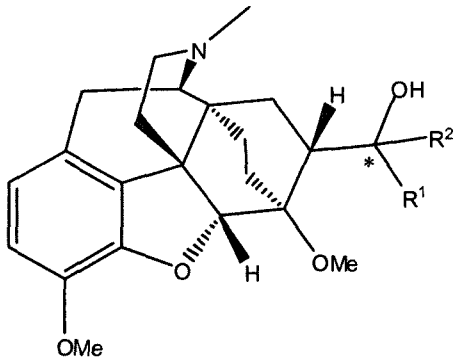
wherein R^1 and R^2 are independently C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl and the * represents a (S) stereocentre.

17. A compound as claimed in claim 16 of formula (VIa), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(VIa).

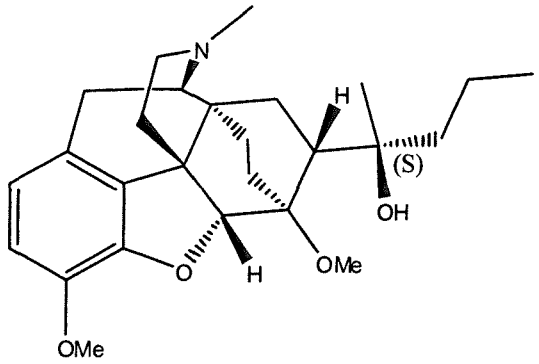
18. A compound of formula (V), or a salt or derivative thereof,



(V)

wherein R^1 and R^2 are independently C_{1-8} straight-chain alkyl and the * represents a (S) stereocentre.

19. A compound as claimed in claim 18 of formula (Va), or a salt or derivative thereof,



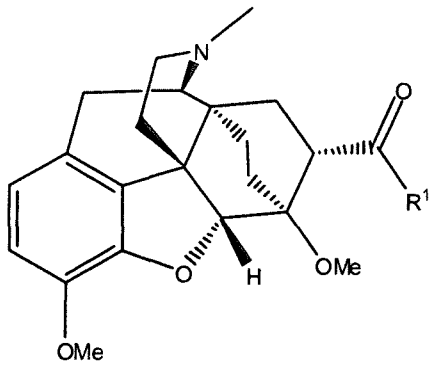
(Va).

20. A compound as claimed in any one of claims 16 to 19 in free base form.

21. A compound as claimed in any one of claims 16 to 19 as a pharmaceutically acceptable salt.

22. A compound as claimed in claim 21 as a hydrochloric acid salt.

23. A compound of formula (IV)



(IV),

wherein R^1 is *n*-propyl.

24. A pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 23.

25. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 24 in a dosage form suitable for transdermal administration.

26. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 25, wherein said dosage form suitable for transdermal administration is a reservoir type patch.

27. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 25, wherein said dosage form suitable for transdermal administration is a matrix type patch.

28. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 27, wherein said dosage form suitable for transdermal administration comprises a suitable excipient selected from water, acetone, ethanol, ethylene glycol, propylene glycol, butane-1,3-diol, isopropyl myristate, isopropyl palmitate, mineral oil, and mixtures thereof.

29. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 28, wherein said dosage form suitable for transdermal administration comprises a moisturizer or humectant.

30. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in any one of claims 25 to 29, wherein said dosage form suitable for transdermal administration comprises a penetration enhancer.

31. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 30, wherein said penetration enhancer is selected from acetone; alcohols such as ethanol, oleyl, and tetrahydrofuryl; alkyl sulfoxides such as dimethyl sulfoxide; dimethyl acetamide; dimethyl formamide; polyethylene glycol; pyrrolidones such as polyvinylpyrrolidone; Kollidon® grades (povidone, polyvidone); urea; and water-soluble or insoluble sugar esters such as Tween® 80 (polysorbate 80) and Span® 60 (sorbitan monostearate).

32. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 24, wherein said composition is prepared in a dosage form suitable for parenteral administration.

33. A pharmaceutical composition as claimed in claim 32, wherein said dosage form is suitable for intravenous administration and is a solution, emulsion or suspension.

34. A compound as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 23 for use in medicine.

35. A compound as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 23 for use as an analgesic.

36. Use of a compound as claimed in any one of claims 15 to 23 in the manufacture of a medicament for the treatment of pain.