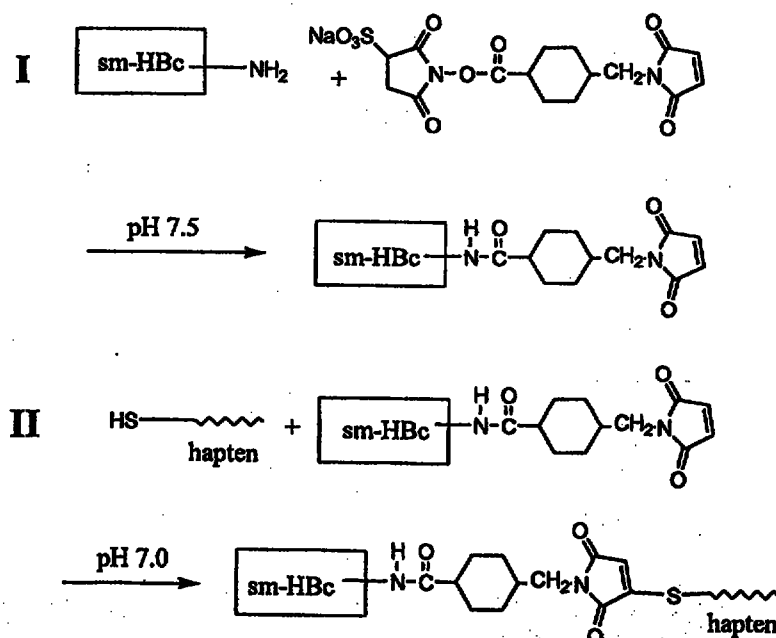




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(54) Title: STRATEGICALLY MODIFIED HEPATITIS B CORE PROTEINS AND THEIR DERIVATIVES

**(57) Abstract**

A strategically modified hepatitis B core protein is described, where an insert is provided, preferably in an immunodominant region of the nucleocapsid protein, containing a chemically reactive amino acid residue. The modified hepatitis B core protein or its aggregated nucleocapsid protein particles can be pendently linked to a haptent to form a modified nucleocapsid conjugate. Such a conjugate is useful in the preparation of vaccines or antibodies. The modified hepatitis B core protein can also be modified to include a T cell epitope.