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(54) Title: INHIBITORS OF SERINE PROTEASES, PARTICULARLY HCV NS3-NS4A PROTEASE

(57) Abstract: The present invention relates to compounds of formula I or formula Ia or pharmaceutically acceptable salts thereof, that inhibit serine protease activity, particularly the activity of hepatitis C virus NS3-NS4A protease. As such, they act by interfering with the life cycle of the hepatitis C virus and are useful as antiviral agents. The invention further relates to pharmaceutically acceptable compositions comprising said compounds either for *ex vivo* use or for administration to a patient suffering from HCV infection and processes for preparing the compounds. The invention also relates to methods of treating an HCV infection in a patient by15 administering a pharmaceutical composition comprising a compound of this invention.

WO 2005/007681 A3