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(54) Title: ASPARTYL PROTEASE INHIBITORS**(57) Abstract**

This invention relates to a novel class of compounds of formula (I) that are aspartyl protease inhibitors. In one embodiment, this invention relates to a novel class of aspartyl protease inhibitors characterized by specific structural and physicochemical features. This invention also relates to pharmaceutical compositions comprising these compounds. The compounds and pharmaceutical compositions of this invention are particularly well suited for inhibiting HIV-1 and HIV-2 protease activity and

consequently, may be advantageously used as anti-viral agents against the HIV-1 and HIV-2 viruses. This invention also relates to methods for inhibiting aspartyl protease activity and methods for treating viral infections using the compounds and compositions of this invention. A compound according to formula (I) wherein each Z is (a) or (b) or (c) wherein any Z may be optionally fused with R⁶; each X and X' is independently selected from the group consisting of -C-C(O)-, -C(O)C(O)-, -S(O)- and -S(O)₂; each Y and Y' is independently selected from the group consisting of -(C(R²)₂)_p-, -NR²-, -(C(CR²)₂)_p-M-, C=C(R²)₂, and -N(R²)-CH₂-.

