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1	The biological activity of novel arylimidamides against Trypanosoma
2	cruzi: in vitro and in vivo studies
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4	Running title: AIAs effect against T.cruzi
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25 Abstract

Fifteen novel arylimidamides (AIAs) (6 bis-amidino and 9 mono-amidino analogues) were assayed against *T. cruzi in vitro* and *in vivo*. All bis-AIAs were more effective than mono-AIAs and two of them, DB1967 and DB1989, were further evaluated *in vivo*. Although both reduced parasitemia, protection against mortality was not achieved. Our results show that the number of amidino terminal units affects the efficacy against *T. cruzi*.

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33 Keywords: Trypanosoma cruzi, experimental chemotherapy, arylimidamides

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Chagas disease (CD) is caused by Trypanosoma cruzi, affecting more than 8 35 million people worldwide (1-5). Benznidazole (BZ) and Nifurtimox (NF) are used for 36 treatment of CD but, due to their well-known toxicity and limited efficacy, especially in 37 38 the later chronic phase, new drugs are urgently needed (6-9). Our group has evaluated 39 several classes of natural and synthetic compounds, including arylimidamides (AIAs), aromatic diamidines (AD) derivatives with extraordinary activity against T. cruzi and 40 others trypanosomatids, both in vitro (10-16) and in vivo (17, 18). In AIAs the imino 41 group is linked via an "anilino" nitrogen while in classical amidines it is directly 42 attached to an aryl ring, yielding reduced pK values (14). We report in vitro and in vivo 43 44 activity studies, mutagenicity and selectivity assessment of new AIAs (6 bis-amidino analogues, DB1966, DB1967, DB1968, DB1979, DB1989 and DB1995; 9 mono-amidino 45 analogues, DB1996, DB1997, DB1980, DB2001, DB2002, DB2003, DB2004, DB2006 and 46 DB2007), which provide insight on the relevance of one or two terminal amidino units 47 48 for biological activity.

49 Syntheses of the mono and bis-arylimidamides (Table 1) were performed as reported (19-21). Benznidazole (BZ, Laboratório Farmacêutico do Estado de 50 Pernambuco, LAFEPE, Brazil) and gentian violet (Sigma-Aldrich) were used as reference 51 drugs (22). Primary cultures of cardiac cells (CC) were obtained as reported (18, 23). 52 53 The Y strain of T. cruzi was used and bloodstream trypomastigotes (BT) and intracellular forms were assayed as described (18, 23). Mammalian cell toxicity was 54 evaluated on uninfected CC incubated up to 48 h/ 37°C with each compound (0 to 32 55 56 μ M); morphology, spontaneous contractibility and cell death rates were measured for determination of EC₅₀ values (compound concentration that reduces 50% of cellular 57 viability) (24). For trypanocidal analysis, BT were incubated at 37°C/ 24 h with non-58 toxic concentrations of the compounds to determine the EC₅₀ (drug concentration that 59 reduces 50% of the number of the treated parasites) (24). For analysis with 60 intracellular amastigotes, after 24 h of parasite - host cell interaction, increasing non-61 62 toxic doses of the compounds were added for 48 h and drug activity estimated by 63 calculating the infection index (II) as reported (12,24). The data are means \pm standard deviations from 2-4 experiments run in duplicate. Bacterial reverse mutation test and 64 cytotoxicity assay (AMES) were performed as proposed by Maron and Ames (25) and 65 OECD 471 (26). Statistical analysis was performed by ANOVA test ($p \le 0.05$) (22). 66

Male Swiss Webster mice (18-21 g) (Fundação Oswaldo Cruz animal facilities CECAL/FIOCRUZ, Brazil), were housed six per cage, in a conventional room at 20-24°C under a 12/12h light/dark cycle, with sterilized water and chow *ad libitum*. Infection was achieved by intraperitoneal (ip) injection of 10⁴ BT (Y strain) and mice grouped as (n=6): uninfected (non-infected and non-treated); untreated (infected and treated with vehicle) and treated with different doses of DB1989 and DB1967 (infected and treated with 0.2 mL ip daily doses up to 50 mg/kg). Infected mice were orally treated with 100 mg/kg/day BZ, once a day. Treatment was given at 5th (parasitemia onset) and at 8th dpi (parasitemia peak). Parasitemia levels, body weight and percentage of cumulative mortality were checked until 30 days post treatment as reported (18). All procedures were carried out in accordance with the guidelines established by the FIOCRUZ Committee of Ethics for the Use of Animals (CEUA 0028/09).

79 BT incubated for 24 h at 37°C showed that 12 of the 15 compounds (all but 80 DB1996, DB1997, DB2002) gave superior trypanocidal activity ($p \le 0.05$) compared to BZ (EC₅₀ = 13 μM). Five of the bis-AIAs (DB1966, DB1967, DB1968, DB1979 and DB1989) 81 yielded EC₅₀ values ≤0.1 µM. The bis-AIA DB1989, the fastest acting trypanocidal 82 compound, provided an EC_{50} value of 2.7 μ M after 2 h (Table 1). Bis-AIAs also 83 displayed the best effect under blood bank conditions (in blood, at 4 °C): DB1967, 84 DB1968 and DB1989 showed EC_{50} values ranging from 2.9-3.9 μ M, while BZ was 85 86 ineffective up to 250 μ M (Table 1). The most selective compounds against BT were: 87 DB1967 (SI = 88) and DB1989 (SI = 70) (Table 1). The mono-AIAs DB1980, DB2001 and DB2004 were the most toxic against cardiac cell cultures at 48 h. Mono-AIAs were 88 ineffective after 48 h/37°C on T.cruzi-infected cultures (Table 1). Similar to BT, four bis-89 AIAs (DB1966, DB1967, DB1968, and DB1989) were the most effective against 90 intracellular parasites (EC₅₀ values of $\leq 0.1 \mu$ M - Table 1). Mono-AIAs displayed very 91 92 low selectivity, while the bis-AIAs DB1989 and DB1967 exhibited the highest SI levels 93 (20 and 40, respectively) against the intracellular parasites (Table 1). Bacterial reverse mutation test (Ames test) gave no major mutagenic potential (MI <2) using DB1989 94 (S1) or BZ (data not shown). Due to excellent in vitro activity against both parasite 95 forms and reasonable selectivity both DB1967 and DB1989 were evaluated in vivo. At 96

97 8dpi (parasitemia peak), DB1989 reduced parasitemia (40, 76, 75% with 12.5, 25 and 50 mg/kg/day doses, respectively) while BZ suppressed parasitemia (Fig. 1A). BZ gave 98 100% survival of mice, but no dose of DB1989 prevented mortality triggered by the 99 infection (Fig. 1B): the highest dose (50mg/kg/day) produced higher mortality rates 100 101 compared to untreated group, possibly due to compound toxicity (ponderal curve 102 shows higher weight-loss; Fig. 1C). DB1967 produced dose-response suppression (67 103 up to 87%) of parasitemia, but an earlier and higher mortality rate (100% for all 104 DB1967 treated groups likely due to toxicity, data not shown).

105 AlAs like DB766 are effective *in vitro* and *in vivo* against intracellular pathogens 106 that cause human and animal pathologies (24, 27-29), exhibiting stronger activity than 107 classical diamidines possibly due to their lower pKa values, better bioavailability and 108 improved cell membrane permeability (28). Similar to *Leishmania*, bis-AlAs are highly 109 active against *T. cruzi*, (12,15,22). DB766 showed a selective effect against intracellular 110 amastigotes and upon a large panel of *T.cruzi* including naturally resistant strains, with 111 higher efficacy than reference drugs (18).

112 This work explores the correlation between the trypanocidal activity /selectivity of AIAs with one or two terminal amidino groups. Bis-AIAs were most potent against 113 both parasite forms relevant to mammalian infection (bloodstream and intracellular 114 forms), demonstrating that two terminal amidino centers confer higher parasiticidal 115 116 effect than those bearing only one. The importance of the second amidino center is 117 seen by comparing the results for DB1967 with that for DB2002 (500-fold activity difference; Table 1) which differ only by the absence of the second amidino group in 118 119 DB1967. These results corroborate previous findings for classical diamidines, 120 confirming the requirement of a diamidino unit for effectiveness against T.cruzi (15).

Bis-AIAs DB1967, DB1968 and DB1989 maintained good trypanocidal activity at 4°C
with 96% mouse blood, similar to other bis-AIAs including DB766 (18), DB745 (31) and
DB1831 (22).

124 All tested bis-AIAs have alkoxy groups of approximately the same size and 125 similar in vitro activity (EC₅₀ values $\leq 0.1 \, \mu$ M). DB1967 with only one 2-propoxy group 126 has essentially the same antitrypanosomal activity as DB766 (18), which has two such 127 groups; yet DB1967 is more toxic to animals than DB766 suggesting that two moderate 128 sized alkoxy groups reduce animal toxicity. Generally, the activity of the mono-AIAs 129 does not vary significantly with structure (Table 1). Most bis-AIAs were also less toxic 130 towards cardiac cells than mono-AIAs. Presently, up to the maximum dose tested, 131 genotoxicity was absent and only a mild mutagenicity profile was observed when DB1989 was assayed against Salmonella enterica Typhimurium TA98 strain (S1), which 132 is suggestive of a frameshift mutation, probably during the DNA repair process or 133 134 duplication process, adding GC pairs into the genome. Although OECD471 guidelines 135 recommend going up to 5 mg of a tested compound, the high activity of DB1989 136 towards the bacteria strains impaired assaying higher AIA concentrations that may mask mutagenic aspects, demanding then, additional toxicological studies. 137

DB1989 and DB1967 were moved to *T.cruzi in vivo* models due to their high in vitro activity and reasonable selectivity. Although parasitemia reduced, neither DB1967 nor DB1989 protected against mortality. This is in contrast to results with DB766 (18) and DB1965, a mesylate salt form of DB 1831 (22) which showed in *vivo* efficacy comparable to that of BZ. The reduction of parasitemia observed with DB1967 correlates with the *in vitro* data obtained with both bloodstream and intracellular parasites (EC₅₀ = 30-40 nM). As low toxicity was observed *in vitro*, the higher mortality

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of DB1967-treated mice is likely due to an organ-specific toxicity (e.g. hepatotoxicity)
or arises from metabolic products of the bis-AIA.

Our data confirm the importance of two amidino centers for the trypanocidal 147 efficacy of arylimidamides against T.cruzi and demonstrated that mono-AIAs are both 148 149 less effect and selective. Although very active in vitro, DB1989 and DB1967 failed to 150 protect against T.cruzi infection in vivo, possibly due to toxicity. Since previous studies 151 demonstrated in vivo efficacy comparable to that of BZ for other bis-AIAs, e.g. DB766 152 (18) and DB1965 (22), the synthesis of novel AIAs bearing bis terminal pyrimidines or pyridines merits further investigation as an approach for identification of new anti-T. 153 154 cruzi agents.

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166 Figure Legends

Figure 1: *In vivo* effect of DB1989 (A-C) on acute mouse model of infection with Y strain of *T-cruzi*: Parasitaemia (A), mortality rates (B) and ponderal curve (C) are shown. The effects of DB1989 (ip) and BZ (p.o.) were followed using doses (up to 50 mg/kg/day for DB1989 and 100 mg/kg/day for BZ) administrated at the 5th and 8th dpi.

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Compou	nds	Bloodstream Trypomastigotes					Amastigotes	
		EC ₅₀ : 37ºC / RPMI		SI 37ºC	EC ₅₀ 4ºC / Blood		EC ₅₀ 37ºC /RPMI SI	
Structure	Name	2 h	24 h	24 h	2 h	24 h	48 h	48 h
	DB1966*	>3.5	0.04±0	30	>32	1.2	0.09±0.08	13
	DB1967*	>3.5	0.04±0.02	88	>32	1.2	0.03±0.006	40
$r \rightarrow 0$	DB1968*	>3.5	0.08±0.02	15	>32	3.5	0.1±0.1	12
	DB1979*	3.5	0.1±0.04	30	>32	1.2	1±1.4	3
F F R C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C C	DB1989*	2.7±1.6	0.05±0.01	70	>32	1.1	0.06±0.03	20
	DB1995*	>32	1.0±0.8	3	>32	0.15	0.9±0.35	1.2
	DB1980	>32	5.8±4	0.2	>32	1.17	>0.39	>0.39
	DB1996	>32	13±12	0.09	>32	1.17	>0.39	3
	DB1967	>32	15±5	0.08	>32	0.09	>0.39	3
	DB2001	>32	4.8±1.5	0.2	>32	1.17	>0.39	0.25
	DB2002	>32	20±10	0.15	>32	3.5	>0.39	3
R	DB2003	13±3	4.3±1.9	0.9	>32	0.97	>0.39	9
R	DB2004	12±3.9	2.9±1.5	0.35	>32	3.5	>0.39	2.5
R	DB2006	12±60	5.9±10	0.5	>32	1.17	>0.39	9
	DB2007	11±60	1.2±10	1	>32	1000	>0.39	3
ayer	BZ	>50	13 ± 2	77	>250	>250	3.6±1.7	> 277

Table I: AIAs activity (μ M) against bloodstream and intracellular (amastigotes) forms of T.
cruzi (Y strain) (EC _{50 -} μ M) and the corresponding Selectivity Indexes (SI)

* Bis-AIAs