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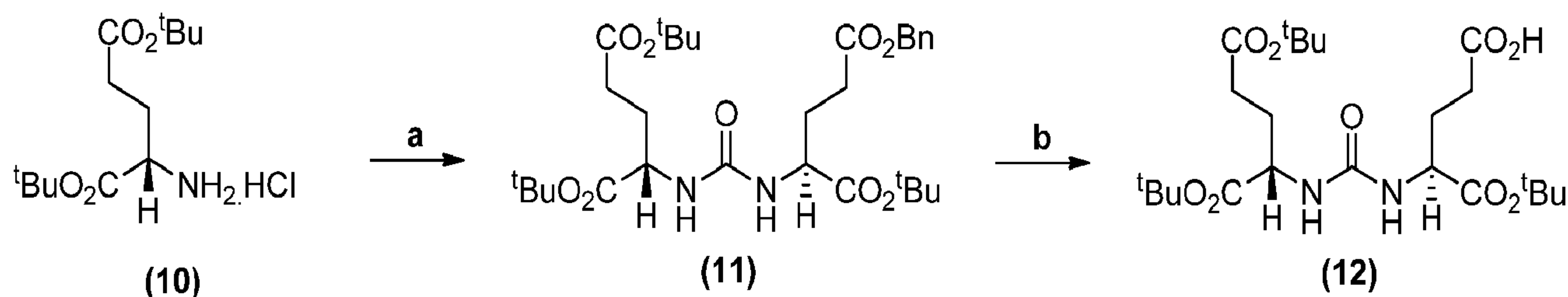
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(54) Title: PSMA-TARGETED NIR DYES AND THEIR USES

Figure 1:

(a) Synthesis of DUPA-Linker-NIR dye conjugates



(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

The present disclosure relates to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA) targeted compounds conjugated to near-infra red (NIR) dyes and methods for their therapeutic and diagnostic use. More specifically, this disclosure provides compounds and methods for diagnosing and treating diseases associated with cells and/or vasculature expressing prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA), such as prostate cancer and related diseases. The disclosure further describes methods and compositions for making and using the compounds, methods incorporating the compounds, and kits incorporating the compounds.

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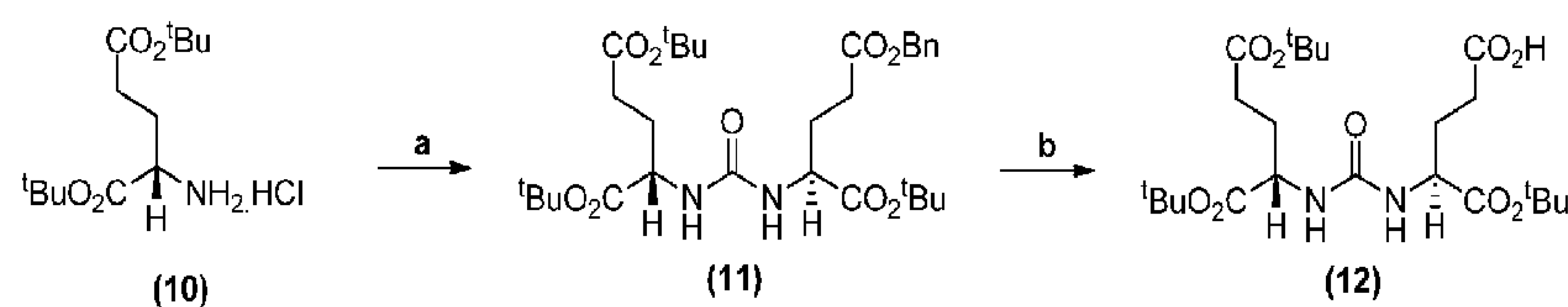
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(54) Title: PSMA-TARGETED NIR DYES AND THEIR USES

Figure 1:

(a) Synthesis of DUPA-Linker-NIR dye conjugates



(57) **Abstract:** The present disclosure relates to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA) targeted compounds conjugated to near-infra red (NIR) dyes and methods for their therapeutic and diagnostic use. More specifically, this disclosure provides compounds and methods for diagnosing and treating diseases associated with cells and/or vasculature expressing prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA), such as prostate cancer and related diseases. The disclosure further describes methods and compositions for making and using the compounds, methods incorporating the compounds, and kits incorporating the compounds.

PSMA-TARGETED NIR DYES AND THEIR USES

RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] The present patent application is related to and claims the priority benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application Ser. No. 62/216,157, filed September 9, 2015 the content of which is hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety into this disclosure.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0002] The present disclosure relates to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA)-targeted near-infra red (NIR) dyes and methods for their therapeutic and diagnostic use. More specifically, this disclosure provides compounds and methods for diagnosing and surgical removal (image-guided surgery) of cells expressing prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA), such as prostate cancer and related diseases. The disclosure further describes methods and compositions for making and using the compounds, methods incorporating the compounds, and kits incorporating the compounds.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] The prostate is one of the male reproductive organs found in the pelvis below the urinary bladder. It functions to produce and store seminal fluid which provides nutrients and fluids that are vital for the survival of sperm introduced into the vagina during reproduction. Like many other tissues, the prostate glands are also prone to develop either malignant (cancerous) or benign (non-cancerous) tumors. The American Cancer Society predicted that over 230,000 men would be diagnosed with prostate cancer and over 30,000 men would die from the disease in year 2005. In fact, prostate cancer is one of the most common male cancers in western societies, and is the second leading form of malignancy among American men. Current treatment methods for prostate cancer include hormonal therapy, radiation therapy, surgery, chemotherapy, photodynamic therapy, and combination therapy. The selection of a treatment generally varies depending on the stage of the cancer. However, many of these treatments affect the quality of life of the patient, especially those men who are diagnosed with prostate cancer over age 50. For example, the use of hormonal drugs is often accompanied by side effects such as osteoporosis

and liver damage. Such side effects might be mitigated by the use of treatments that are more selective or specific to the tissue being responsible for the disease state, and avoid non-target tissues like the bones or the liver. As described herein, prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA) represents a target for such selective or specific treatments.

[0004] Surgical removal of malignant disease constitutes one of the most common and effective therapeutic for primary treatment for cancer. Resection of all detectable malignant lesions results in no detectable return of the disease in approximately 50% of all cancer patients' and may extend life expectancy or reduce morbidity for patients in whom recurrence of the cancer is seen. Not surprisingly, surgical methods for achieving more quantitative cytoreduction are now receiving greater scrutiny.

[0005] Resection of all detectable malignant lesions results in no detectable return of the disease in approximately 50% of all cancer patients and may extend life expectancy or reduce morbidity for patients in whom recurrence of the cancer is seen. Given the importance of total resection of the malignant lesions, it is beneficial to ensure that the malignant lesions are accurately and completely identified. Identification of malignant tissue during surgery is currently accomplished by three methods. First, many tumor masses and nodules can be visually detected based on abnormal color, texture, and/or morphology. Thus, a tumor mass may exhibit variegated color, appear asymmetric with an irregular border, or protrude from the contours of the healthy organ. A malignant mass may also be recognized tactilely due to differences in plasticity, elasticity or solidity from adjacent healthy tissues. Finally, a few cancer foci can be located intraoperatively using fluorescent dyes that flow passively from the primary tumor into draining lymph nodes. In this latter methodology, fluorescent (sentinel) lymph nodes can be visually identified, resected and examined to determine whether cancer cells have metastasized to these lymph nodes.

[0006] PSMA is named largely due to its higher level of expression on prostate cancer cells; however, its particular function on prostate cancer cells remains unresolved. PSMA is over-expressed in the malignant prostate tissues when compared to other organs in the human body such as kidney, proximal small intestine, and salivary glands. PSMA also express in the neo-vasculature of most of the solid tumors. Though PSMA is expressed in brain, that expression is minimal, and most ligands of PSMA are polar and are not capable of penetrating the blood brain barrier. PSMA is a type II cell surface membrane-bound glycoprotein with -110 kD molecular

weight, including an intracellular segment (amino acids 1-18), a transmembrane domain (amino acids 19-43), and an extensive extracellular domain (amino acids 44-750). While the functions of the intracellular segment and the transmembrane domains are currently believed to be insignificant, the extracellular domain is involved in several distinct activities. PSMA plays a role in central nervous system, where it metabolizes N-acetyl-aspartyl glutamate (NAAG) into glutamic and N-acetyl aspartic acid. Accordingly, it is also sometimes referred to as an N-acetyl alpha linked acidic dipeptidase (NAALADase). PSMA is also sometimes referred to as a folate hydrolase I (FOLH I) or glutamate carboxypeptidase (GCP II) due to its role in the proximal small intestine where it removes γ -linked glutamate from poly- γ -glutamated folate and α -linked glutamate from peptides and small molecules.

[0007] PSMA also shares similarities with human transferrin receptor (TfR), because both PSMA and TfR are type II glycoproteins. More specifically, PSMA shows 54% and 60% homology to TfR1 and TfR2, respectively. However, though TfR exists only in dimeric form due to the formation of inter-strand sulfhydryl linkages, PSMA can exist in either dimeric or monomeric form.

[0008] Unlike many other membrane-bound proteins, PSMA undergoes rapid internalization into the cell in a similar fashion to cell surface bound receptors like vitamin receptors. PSMA is internalized through clathrin-coated pits and subsequently can either recycle to the cell surface or go to lysosomes. It has been suggested that the dimer and monomer form of PSMA are interconvertible, though direct evidence of the interconversion is being debated. Even so, only the dimer of PSMA possesses enzymatic activity, and the monomer does not.

[0009] Though the role of the PSMA on the cell surface of the prostate cancer cells remains unknown, it has been recognized that PSMA represents a viable target for the selective and/or specific delivery of biologically active agents, including diagnostic agents, imaging agents, and therapeutic agents to such prostate cancer cells.

[0010] The radio-immunoconjugate of the anti-PSMA monoclonal antibody (mAb) 7E11, known as the PROSTASCINT® scan, is currently being used to diagnose prostate cancer metastasis and recurrence. However, this agent tends to produce images that are challenging to interpret (Lange, P.H. PROSTASCINT scan for staging prostate cancer. *Urology* 2001 , 57, 402-406; Haseman, M.K.; et al. *Cancer Biother Radiopharm* 2000, 15, 131-140; Rosenthal, S.A.; et al. *Tech Urol* 2001 , 7, 27-37). It binds to an intracellular epitope of PSMA in necrotic prostate

cancer cells. More recently, monoclonal antibodies have been developed that bind to the extracellular domain of PSMA and have been radiolabeled and shown to accumulate in PSMA-positive prostate tumor models in animals. However, diagnosis and tumor detection using monoclonal antibodies has been limited by the low permeability due to their large size (150, 000 Da) and slow clearance from non-targeted tissue. Moreover, the selective targeting of radio- or optical imaging agents either for imaging or therapeutic purposes is challenging due to their long half-life (~ 30 days). Especially, patients have to stay in the hospital for longer days and spend more money on medical bills.

[0011] Two promising approaches to fluorescence-guided surgery are currently under intense investigation for use in the clinic. In one method, an activatable NIR fluorescent probe, which is minimally fluorescent in the steady state due to its proximity to an attached quencher, becomes highly fluorescent upon release of the quencher in malignant tissue. One of the most commonly used release mechanisms involves incorporation of a peptide sequence between the dye and the quencher that can be specifically cleaved by a tumor-enriched protease (i.e. cathepsins, caspases and matrix metalloproteinases). A major advantage of this strategy lies in the absence of fluorescence in tissues that lack the activating enzyme, allowing tissues along the excretion pathway (e.g. kidneys, bladder, liver) to remain nonfluorescent unless they fortuitously express the cleaving enzyme. Such tumor-activated NIR dyes can also generate substantial fluorescence in the tumor mass as long as the malignant lesion is enriched in the cleaving protease and the released dye is retained in the tumor. The major disadvantage of this methodology arises from the poor tumor specificities of many of the relevant hydrolases (most of which are also expressed in healthy tissues undergoing natural remodeling or experiencing inflammation). Moreover, the abundance of the desired proteases may vary among tumor masses, leading to slow or no activation of fluorescence in some malignant lesions and rapid development of fluorescence in others. Most of the time, these activatable peptides contain over 20 amino acids linked via peptide bonds that could lead to higher molecular weights, longer lead time (24h), cleavage of peptide bonds by peptidase in the circulation, high false positive results and very high manufacturing costs.

[0012] Other release mechanisms that activatable dyes use are pH difference between circulation and within the tumor or change in redox potential.

[0013] In the second, a fluorescent dye is conjugated to a tumor-specific targeting ligand that causes the attached dye to accumulate in cancers that over-express the ligand's receptor. While PSMA-targeted antibody-NIR dye conjugates have not yet been entered to clinical trials for fluorescence-guided surgery of cancer, several types of NIR dyes have been conjugated to monoclonal antibodies such as Her-2 with the intent of clinical development. Unfortunately, most of these dyes are tethered to antibodies non-specifically via amide, disulfide, or maleimide chemistry using either lysine or cysteine residues in the protein leading to heterogeneous chemical entities which result in variable affinities, efficacies, PK and safety profiles. Moreover, maleimide and disulfide bonds are known to be unstable in the circulation (half-life- ≤ 2 h). On the other hand, lack of precise structural definition may limit progression of these conjugates into the clinical use due to challenges associated with the production process and safety. Moreover, production of these antibodies is highly expensive when compared to small molecular ligands. In contrast, small molecule ligand ($M_r > 0.5$ Da), can penetrate solid tumors rapidly, and clears from PSMA-negative tissues in < 2 h, shows high tumor-to-background ratios, easy of synthesis, and stable during the synthesis and storage.

[0014] Despite all the advantages those small molecular ligands have, development of NIR dye that maintains or enhances the properties of the small molecule is challenging. Recently, a variety of low molecular weight inhibitors of PSMA have been conjugated to visible light wave length dyes (400 – 600 nm) such as fluorescein and rhodamine and tested in in animal models [Kularatne SA, Wang K, Santhapuram HK, Low PS. Mol Pharm. 2009 May-Jun;6(3):780-9] or in cells in culture [Liu T, Nedrow-Byers JR, Hopkins MR, Berkman CE. Bioorg Med Chem Lett. 2011 Dec 1;21(23)] or in human blood samples (He W, Kularatne SA, Kalli KR, Prendergast FG, Amato RJ, Klee GG, Hartmann LC, Low PS. Int J Cancer. 2008 Oct 15;123(8):1968-73).

[0015] The visible light wave length dyes are not optimal for intra-operative image-guided surgery as these dyes are associated with a relatively high level of nonspecific background light due to the presence of collagen in the tissues. Hence the signal to noise ratio from these conventional compounds is low. Moreover, the absorption of visible light by biological chromophores, in particular hemoglobin, limits the penetration depth to a few millimeters. Thus tumors that are buried deeper than a few millimeters in the tissue typically remain undetected. Furthermore ionization equilibrium of fluorescein ($pK_a = 6.4$) leads to pH-dependent absorption

and emission over the range of 5 to 9. Therefore, the fluorescence of fluorescein-based dyes is quenched at low pH (below pH 5).

[0016] Therefore, NIR dyes conjugated to small molecule ligands that target PSMA [(a) Humblet V, Lapidus R, Williams LR, Tsukamoto T, Rojas C, Majer P, Hin B, Ohnishi S, De Grand AM, Zaheer A, Renze JT, Nakayama A, Slusher BS, Frangioni JV. *Mol Imaging*. 2005 Oct-Dec;4(4):448-62.; (b) Thomas M, Kularatne SA, Qi L, Kleindl P, Leamon CP, Hansen MJ, Low PS.; (c) Chen Y, Dhara S, Banerjee SR, Byun Y, Pullambhatla M, Mease RC, Pomper MG. *Biochem Biophys Res Commun*. 2009 Dec 18;390(3):624-9; (d) Nakajima T, Mitsunaga M, Bander NH, Heston WD, Choyke PL, Kobayashi H. *Bioconjug Chem*. 2011 Aug 17;22(8):1700-5.; (e) Chen Y, Pullambhatla M, Banerjee SR, Byun Y, Stathis M, Rojas C, Slusher BS, Mease RC, Pomper MG. *Bioconjug Chem*. 2012 Dec 19;23(12):2377-85.; (f) Laydner H, Huang SS, Heston WD, Autorino R, Wang X, Harsch KM, Magi-Galluzzi C, Isac W, Khanna R, Hu B, Escobar P, Chalikonda S, Rao PK, Haber GP, Kaouk JH, Stein RJ. *Urology*. 2013 Feb;81(2):451-6.; (g) Kelderhouse LE, Chelvam V, Wayua C, Mahalingam S, Poh S, Kularatne SA, Low PS. *Bioconjug Chem*. 2013 Jun 19;24(6):1075-80.] have been tested as imaging agents in murine models of prostate cancer.

[0017] While these PSMA-targeted NIR dyes showed some labeling of prostate cancer cells in culture, they had very weak fluorescence in PSMA- expressing prostate tumor xenograft animal models. For example, the molecules described by, Humblet et al have shown very low tumor accumulation and fluorescence in the tumor xenograft models. It may be due the lack of proper spacer between the ligand the NIR dye may have hindered the binding of ligand to the binding pocket in PSMA. On the other hand, phosphorous based ligands have less affinity for PSMA when compared to DUPA. Moreover, phosphorous based ligands are difficult to synthesize, involve multiple steps, and will be expensive to manufacture.

[0018] PSMA – targeted NIR agent reported in Chen et al has taken over 20 h to reach the tumor and 72 h clear from the non-targeted tissues. Also notably, this PSMA-targeted NIR dye has very slowly skin clearance. While binding epitope of PSMA in transfected cells that they used can be artificial, it had very low uptake and low fluorescence in PSMA transfected prostate cancer cell tumor. Furthermore, there is substantial non-specific uptake of this molecule in all other tissues and there is accumulation and fluorescence in PSMA-negative cells indicating non-specific and non-targeted nature of NIR conjugate reported by Chen et al.

[0019] Chen et al and Laydner et al also have conjugated a small molecule ligand to IR800CW (a NIR dye). IR800CW is asymmetrical dye with activated carboxylic acid with n-hydroxysuccinimide ester (NHS). This is an extremely expensive molecule to synthesize and even more to purchase from commercially available resources (1 g is over \$60,000). IR800CW also has the disadvantage that it is not stable during the synthesis due to two reasons: (a) hydrolysis of NHS ester, (b) hydrolysis of vinyl ether. The lack of stability of IR800CW conjugates during synthesis leads to formation of over 60% of undesired byproducts. This requires complex purification techniques indicating path for higher production cost, higher waiting period for clinical translation, and surgeons and patients will not have access to the drug.

[0020] Laydner et al conjugated a PSMA ligand to IR800CW via a long peptide spacer (6 amino acids) and bifunctional linker with NHS and maleimide. In addition to all the disadvantages caused by IR800CW, this PSMA-targeted IR800CW conjugate has a complicated synthesis scheme requiring synthesis in five stages (synthesis of ligand, conjugation of ligand to bifunctional linker via maleimide functional group, synthesis of peptide linker, conjugation of peptide linker to IR800CW, conjugation of peptide linker-IR800CW to ligand-bifunctional linker via amide bond) in multiple steps. Therefore, the manufacturing costs hamper the effective production of this molecule for clinical purposes. The synthesis scheme for these molecules is further complicated due to multiple chiral centers in the molecule. Peptide spacers, however, possess multiple chiral centers (stereoisomers) typically necessitating the need for production and assessment of all stereoisomers for FDA clearance. For example, a peptide spacer possessing only 3 amino acids (i.e. 3 chiral centers), would require toxicity profiles for 8 different drug products since these heterogeneous mixtures could result in different affinities, efficacies, PK and safety profiles.

[0021] The small molecule ligand used by Laydner et al is GluNHCONHCys-SH. The free thiol moiety in Cys tends to oxidize hence the molecule has to be handled under argon or nitrogen environment and generally leads to an unstable molecule. GluNHCONHCys-SH ligand is conjugated to bifunctional linker via maleimide reaction. It is well reported that reactions between thiols and maleimide are reversible and yield 50% of the desired product. Moreover, maleimide bonds are not stable in circulation in the human body, hence use of maleimide bonds risk the release of the non-targeted dye leading to non-specific uptake thereof.

[0022] Kelderhouse et al conjugated DUPA-linker-Cys to Alexa flour 647 and Dylight 750 to DUPA via maleimide group. Again, these molecules have all the disadvantages associated with maleimide. Moreover, these low wave length NIR dyes, while being commercially available are very expensive. While molecules were tested on experimental metastatic mouse model, images were inconclusive.

[0023] Liu et al also reported PSMA-targeted NIR dye and some in vitro data but no animal data were reported. The lack of a proper spacer between the ligand and the NIR dye may have attributed to the lack of vivo data. Moreover, this dye has many drawbacks as other reported compounds. It is a phosphorous based ligand and asymmetrical dye. So, it has disadvantages described of both phosphorous based ligands as well as asymmetrical NIR dyes.

[0024] Nakajima et al reported anti-PSMA antibody (J591) conjugated to ICG. Unfortunately, this compound took 72 hours to clear from the other healthy tissues such as liver. In addition, the compound remained in circulation for 6 days indicating that it will remain the body for over 30 days in human body. Moreover, ICG was tethered to J591 non-specifically via amide using either lysine residues in the protein leading to heterogeneous chemical entities which result in variable affinities, efficacies, PK and safety profiles. Lack of precise structural definition may limit progression of these conjugates for clinical use due to challenges associated with the production process and safety.

[0025] Higher non-specificity and slow clearance from the skin of reported PSMA-targeted NIR dyes may be due to poor pharmacokinetic (PK) properties of these compounds.

[0026] Thus, there remains a need for a dye substance that can be used to specifically target PSMA expressing cancer cells or neo-vasculature of diseased tissue with increased stability, better PK properties, higher solubility, fast tumor accumulation, high fluorescence, fast skin clearance, and higher tumor-to-background ratios (TBR) for use in vivo tissue imaging and to use in image-guided surgery.

BRIEF SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0027] This disclosure provides PSMA-targeted ligands linked to NIR dyes via different linkers to improve clinical properties (e.g. stability, PK properties, solubility, fast tumor accumulation, higher fluorescence, fast skin clearance, and higher tumor-to-background ratios) of the compounds. The disclosure provides uses of the compounds in image-guided surgery and

methods for synthesizing the same. This disclosure further provides variation of the total charge of the Ligand-Linker-NIR dye conjugate by adding positive charges to the linker or reducing number of negative charges in the dye molecules. This disclosure also provides novel higher affinity ligands to improve in vivo affinity and PK properties of NIR conjugates. This disclosure also provides compounds for use in the targeted imaging of tumors expressing PSMA, including but not limited to prostate cancer, and methods of use, for example, in imaging and surgery involving PSMA positive tissues and tumors.

[0028] In certain embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form: B-X-Y-Z

wherein B is a PSMA-targeted molecule;

X is a spacer;

Y is an amino acid spacer; and

Z is a NIR dye.

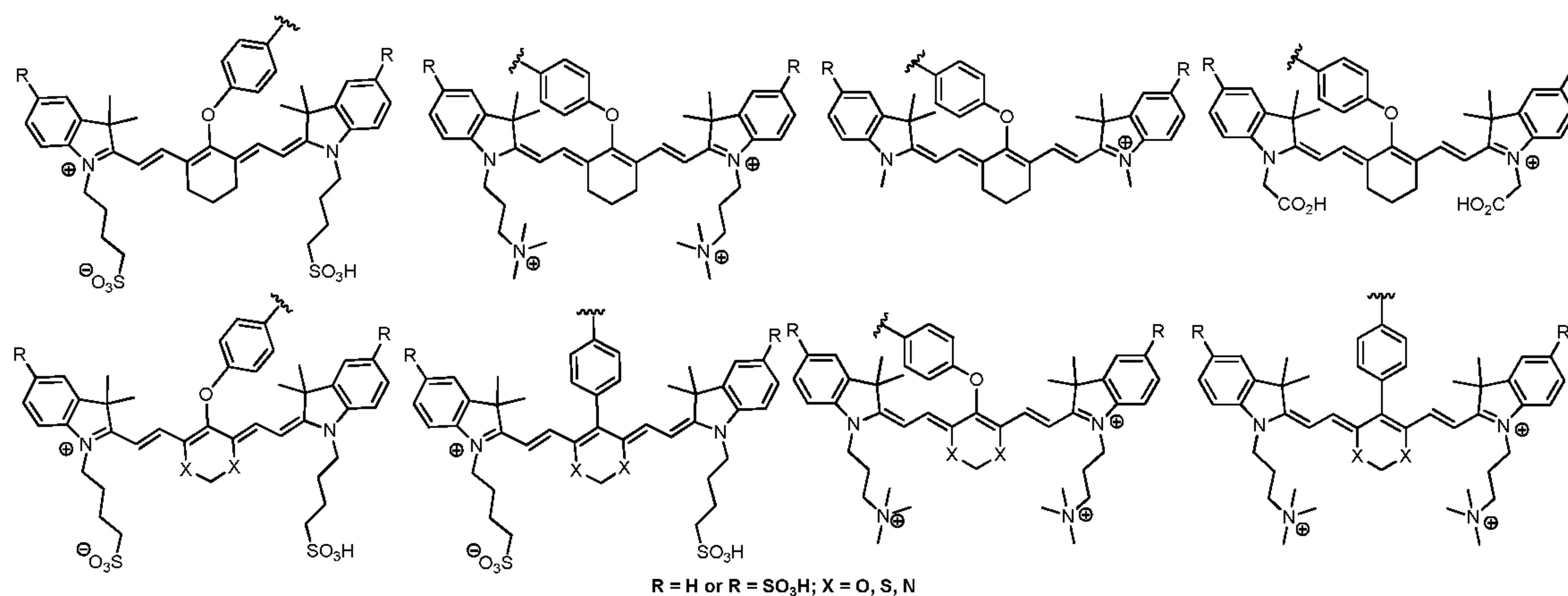
[0029] In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted molecule is chosen from the group consisting of a small molecule, a ligand, an inhibitor, an agonist or a derivative thereof. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is a ligand. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is DUPA. In other embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is a small molecule that binds PSMA.

[0030] In some embodiments, X is a hydrophobic spacer. In some embodiments, X is selected from the group consisting of an eight aminooctanoic acid (EAOA), a chain of 7 atoms, a spacer 7 atoms in length, a chain from 7 to 24 atoms in length; a peptide comprising two aryl or aryl alkyl groups, each of which is optionally substituted, and where one aryl or aryl alkyl group is about 7 to about 11, or about 7 to about 14 atoms, and the other aryl or aryl alkyl group is about 10 to about 14, or about 10 to about 17 atoms. In another embodiment, the spacer comprises about 1 to about 30 atoms, or about 2 to about 20 atoms. In some embodiments, the spacer is 7 atoms in length. In some embodiments, the spacer comprises EAOA. In some embodiments, the spacer is variably charged. In some embodiments, X has a positive charge. In other embodiments, X has a negative charge.

[0031] In some embodiments, Y is selected from the group consisting of: acidic (negatively charged) amino acids, such as aspartic acid and glutamic acid and derivative thereof; basic (positively charged) amino acids such as arginine, histidine, and lysine and derivative thereof; neutral polar amino acids, such as glycine, serine, threonine, cysteine, tyrosine, asparagine, and

glutamine and derivative thereof; neutral nonpolar (hydrophobic) amino acids, such as alanine, leucine, isoleucine, valine, proline, phenylalanine, tryptophan, and methionine; and derivatives thereof. In some embodiments, Y is an aromatic amino acid and derivative thereof. In some embodiments, Y has a positive charge. In other embodiments, Y has a negative charge.

[0032] In some embodiments, Z is selected from the group consisting of near-infra red dyes, including but not limited to, LS288, IR800, SP054, S0121, KODAK, S2076, S0456 and/or the dyes selected from group consisting of:



[0033]

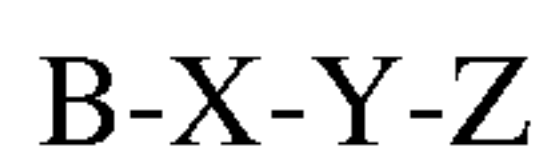
[0034] In certain embodiments, the Z is variably charged. In some embodiments, Z has a positive charge. In other embodiments, Z has a negative charge.

[0035] In certain embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the formula:



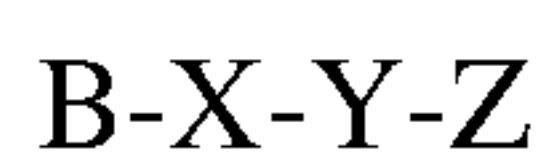
[0036] wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side chain group; and Z is an NIR dye. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is cysteine. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is methionine. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is molecule containing thiophenol moiety.

[0037] In some embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form:



[0038] wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid spacer with a chalcogen-containing side chain group; and Z is an NIR dye.

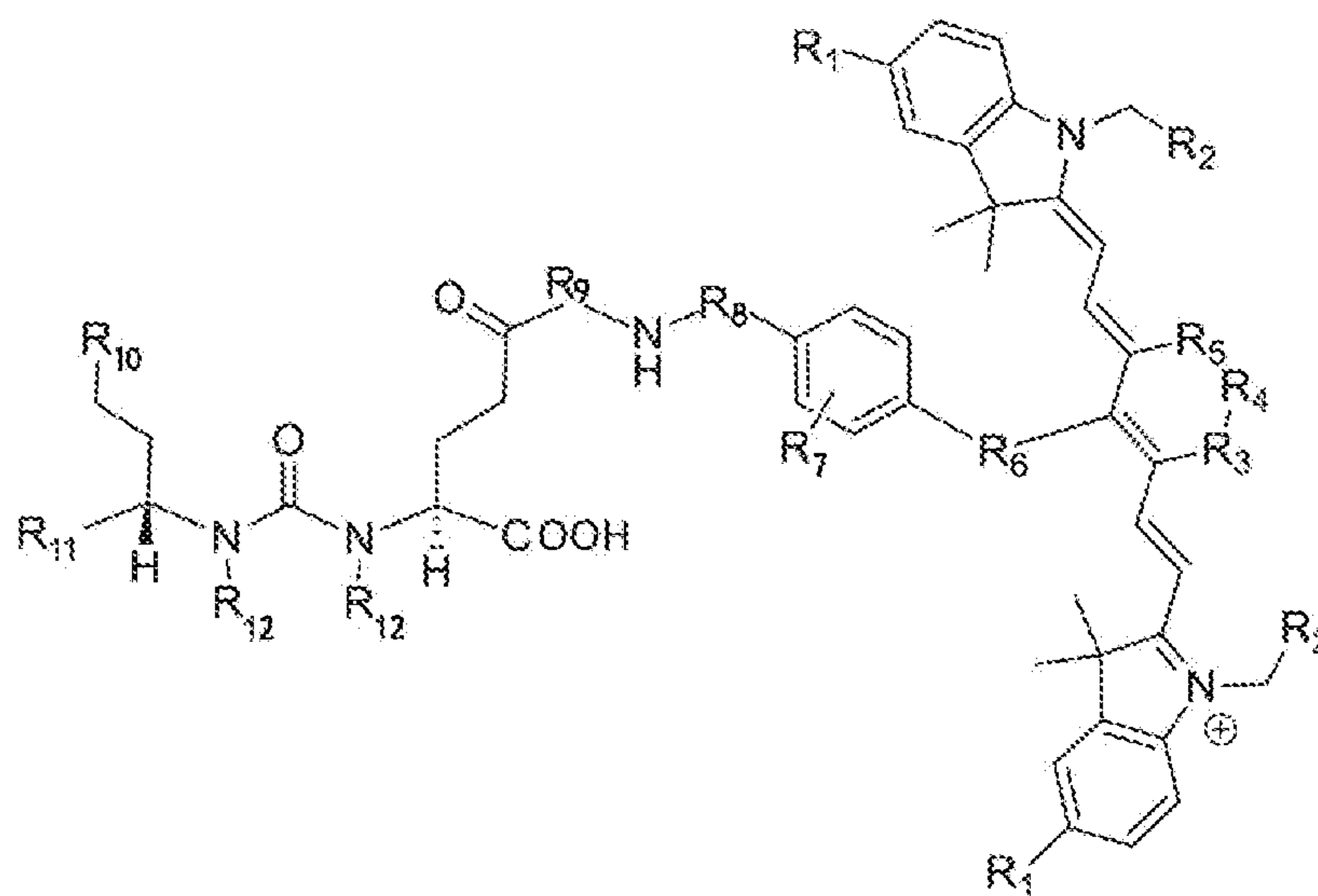
[0039] In some embodiments the present invention provides compounds of the form:



Wherein, B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid chosen from the group consisting of tyrosine, cysteine, lysine, or a derivative thereof; and Z is an NIR dye. In some embodiments, Y comprises a tyrosine or tyrosine derivative. In some embodiments, Y comprises a tyrosine and a carbon isotope is on the aromatic ring of tyrosine. In some embodiments, Y comprises an amino acid with an aromatic ring with a hydrogen isotope.

In some embodiments the invention includes the compound B-X-Y-Z wherein B comprises DUPA or a derivative thereof, X comprises an EAOA, Y comprises tyrosine, and Z comprises S0456.

[0040] The present invention also relates to a compound having the structural formula:



(I)

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or isotopes thereof, wherein:

R₁ represents a hydrogen or SO₃H;

R₂ represents a hydrogen, CH₃, C₃H₆SO₃⁻, C₃H₆SO₃H or C₄H₈SO₃⁻, or C₄H₈SO₃H or C₃H₆N⁺(CH₃)₃;

R₃, and R₅ each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds,

R₄ represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R₆ represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R₇ is optional and when present represents aromatic substitution group to enhance the spectral properties such as increase brightness and stability of the vinyl ether bridge;

R₈ is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, Trp, His or derivative thereof, cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative thereof, anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative thereof;

R₉ is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linker, cationic linker, or derivative thereof;

R₁₀ represents a CO₂H, PO₃H₂, SO₃H, CH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H;

R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

R₁₂ represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

[0041] In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have an absorption and emission maxima between about 600 nm and 800 nm.

[0042] In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are made to fluoresce by subjecting the compounds to excitation light of near infrared wavelength. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have a binding affinity to PSMA that is similar to the binding affinity of DUPA. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are highly selective for targeting to a tumor cell. In particularly preferred embodiments, the compounds of the present invention are targeted to prostate cancer cells.

[0043] In certain embodiments compounds of the present invention are administered to a subject in need thereof and in some embodiments the administered composition comprises, in addition to the compound, a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, excipient or diluent.

[0044] Some embodiments of the present invention provide methods of optical imaging of PSMA-expressing biological tissue, said method comprising:

(a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition comprising a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound,

- (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
- (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and
- (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.

[0045] In some embodiments, these methods are used in detection of diseases associated with high PSMA expression. In some embodiments, further comprising the step of constructing an image from the signal emitted in (d). In some embodiments, the invention provides the aforementioned method wherein step (a) includes two or more fluorescent compounds whose signal properties are distinguishable are contacted with the tissue, and optionally the tissue is in a subject. In some embodiments the present invention provides use of an endoscope, catheter, tomographic system, hand-held optical imaging system, surgical goggles, or intra-operative microscope for the illuminating and/or detecting method steps.

[0046] In some embodiments, compositions and methods of the present invention are used to treat cancer. In some embodiments, the cancer is selected from the group consisting of prostate cancer, lung cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, kidney cancer, sarcoma, breast cancer, brain cancer, neuroendocrine carcinoma, colon cancer, testicular cancer or melanoma. In some embodiments, PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention are used for imaging of PSMA-expressing cells. In certain embodiments those cells are chosen from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells or melanoma cells.

[0047] The present invention also provides methods of targeting a cell type in a biological sample comprising: (a) contacting the biological sample with a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type; and (b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample, wherein presence of the compound in detecting step (b) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample. In some embodiments the present invention provides methods for optical detection of PSMA-expressing cells comprising administering PSMA-targeting NIR dye compounds of the present invention and subjecting the

compound to an excitation light source and detecting fluorescence from the compound. In some embodiments, the excitation light source is near-infrared wavelength light. In some embodiments the excitation light wavelength is within a range from about 600 to 1000 nanometers. In some embodiments the excitation light wavelength is within a range from about 670 to 850 nanometers.

[0048] In certain embodiments the present invention provides methods of performing image guided surgery on a subject comprising:

- a) administering a composition comprising a PSMA-targeting NIR dye compound under conditions and for a time sufficient for the compound to accumulate at a given surgical site;
- b) illuminating the compound to visualize the compound using infrared light; and
- c) performing surgical resection of the areas that fluoresce upon excitation by the infrared light.

[0049] In some embodiments methods of the present invention the infrared light wavelength is within a range from about 600 to 1000 nanometers. In some embodiments methods of the present invention use an infrared light wavelength is within a range from about 670 to 850 nanometers.

[0050] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a method of diagnosing a disease in a subject comprising:

- a) administering to a subject in need of diagnosis an amount of a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one PSMA-expressing cell;
- b) measuring the signal from the compound of present in the biological sample;
- c) comparing the signal measured in b) with at least one control data set, wherein the at least one control data set comprises signals from the compound of claim 1 contacted with a biological sample that does not comprise the target cell type; and
- d) providing a diagnosis of disease wherein the comparison in step c) indicates the presence of the disease.

[0051] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a kit comprising a PSMA-targeting NIR dye compound. In some embodiments, the kit is used for the imaging of PSMA-expressing cells. In some embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are tumor cells. In some

embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are non-prostate cancer cells. In certain embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are prostate tumor cells. In certain embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are cancer cells. In certain embodiments the PSMA-expressing area is neo-vasculature of tumor cells. In some embodiments the present invention is used for detection of metastatic disease. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are used for improved surgical resection and/or improved prognosis. In some embodiments methods of the present invention provide cleaner surgical margins than non-NIR conjugated fluorescing dyes. In some embodiments PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention have an improved tumor-to-background ratio.

[0052] In other embodiments compounds of the present invention are used to image, diagnose, or detect non-prostate cancer cells chosen from the group consisting of bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells or melanoma cells. In other embodiments, the cells being detected are more than 5mm below the skin. In some embodiments, the tissue being detected is more than 5mm below the skin. In other embodiments, the tumor being detected is more than 5mm below the skin. In some embodiments, the cells being detected are more than 6mm, 7mm, 8mm, 9mm, or 10mm below the subject's skin. In some embodiments of the present invention dye probes that are detectable outside of the visible light spectrum. In some embodiments dye probes greater than the visible light spectrum are used. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention comprise dye probes sensitive to wavelengths between 650nm and 900nm. In some embodiments the PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention have maximum light absorption wavelengths in the near infrared region of between about 650 nm and 1000 nm, for example and in one embodiment, at approximately 800 nm.

[0053] In still another embodiment of the methods provided, the non-prostate cancer is bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, kidney cancer, sarcoma, breast cancer, brain cancer, neuroendocrine carcinoma, colon cancer, testicular cancer or melanoma.

[0054] In a further embodiment of the methods provided, the PSMA-expressing cancer cells are of a tumor. In still a further embodiment of the methods provided, the PSMA-expressing cancer is a tumor. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is at least 1000mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 1000mm³. In some embodiments, the volume

of the tumor is less than 950mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 900mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 850mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 800mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 750mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 700mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 650mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 600mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 550mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 500mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 450mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 400mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 350mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 300mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 250mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 200mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 150mm^3 . In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 100mm^3 . In one embodiment, the volume of the tumor is at least 75mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 75mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 70mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 65mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 60mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 55mm^3 . In one embodiment, the volume of the tumor is at least 50mm^3 . In other embodiments, the tumor is less than 50mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 45mm^3 . In other embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 40mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 35mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 30mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 25mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 20mm^3 . In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 15mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 10mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 12mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 9mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 8mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 7mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 6mm^3 . In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 5mm^3 .

[0055] In one embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 5mm prior to surgical recession using a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound of the present invention. In one embodiment, these methods detect tumors less than 5mm. In other embodiments the methods herein detect tumors less than 4mm. In some embodiments, the methods herein detect tumors less than 3mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 6mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 7mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 8mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 9mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 10mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 11mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 12mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 13mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 14mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 15mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 16mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 17mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 18mm. In yet a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 19mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 20mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 21mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 22mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 23mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 24mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 25mm. In yet a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 30mm.

[0056] In some embodiments the present disclosure relates to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA) targeted compounds conjugated to near-infra red (NIR) dyes and methods for their therapeutic and diagnostic use. More specifically, this disclosure provides compounds and methods for diagnosing and treating diseases associated with cells expressing prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA), such as prostate cancer, solid tumors, and related diseases. The disclosure further describes methods and compositions for making and using the compounds, methods incorporating the compounds, and kits incorporating the compounds. It has been discovered that a PSMA-targeted compound, such as DUPA conjugated to an NIR dye via a linker (L) may be useful in the imaging, diagnosis, and/or treatment of prostate cancer, and related diseases that involve pathogenic cell populations expressing or over-expressing PSMA. PSMA is a cell surface protein that is internalized in a process analogous to endocytosis

observed with cell surface receptors, such as vitamin receptors. Accordingly, it has been discovered that certain conjugates that include a linker having a predetermined length, and/or a predetermined diameter, and/or preselected functional groups along its length may be used to treat, image, and/or diagnose such diseases.

[0057] In one illustrative embodiment, the linker L may be a releasable or non-releasable linker. In one aspect, the linker L is at least about 7 atoms in length. In one variation, the linker L is at least about 10 atoms in length. In one variation, the linker L is at least about 14 atoms in length. In another variation, the linker L is between about 7 and about 22, between about 7 and about 20, or between about 7 and about 18 atoms in length. In another variation, the linker L is between about 14 and about 22, between about 15 and about 12, or between about 14 and about 20 atoms in length.

[0058] In an alternative aspect, the linker L is at least about 10 angstroms (Å) in length.

[0059] In one variation, the linker L is at least about 15 Å in length. In another variation, the linker L is at least about 20 Å in length. In another variation, the linker L is in the range from about 10 Å to about 30 Å in length.

[0060] In an alternative aspect, at least a portion of the length of the linker L is about 5 Å in diameter or less at the end connected to the binding ligand B. In one variation, at least a portion of the length of the linker L is about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter at the end connected to the binding ligand B. It is appreciated that the illustrative embodiments that include a diameter requirement of about 5 Å or less, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less may include that requirement for a predetermined length of the linker, thereby defining a cylindrical-like portion of the linker. Illustratively, in another variation, the linker includes a cylindrical portion at the end connected to the binding ligand that is at least about 7 Å in length and about 5 Å or less, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter.

[0061] In another embodiment, the linker L includes one or more hydrophilic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including amino acids that have hydrophilic side chains, such as Ser, Thr, Cys, Arg, Orn, Lys, Asp, Glu, Gln and like residues. In another embodiment, the linker L includes one or more hydrophobic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including amino acids that have hydrophobic side chains, such as Val, Leu, Phe, Tyr, Met, and like residues. It is to be understood that the foregoing embodiments and aspects may be included in the linker L either alone or in combination with

each other. For example, linkers L that are at least about 7 atoms in length and about 5 Å, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter or less are contemplated and described herein, and also include one or more hydrophilic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including Val, Leu, Phe, Tyr, Met, and like residues are contemplated and described herein.

[0062] In another embodiment, one end of the linker is not branched and comprises a chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms. In one embodiment, the linear chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms is at least 5 atoms in length. In one variation, the linear chain is at least 7 atoms, or at least 10 atoms in length. In another embodiment, the chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms are not substituted. In one variation, a portion of the chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms is cyclized with a divalent fragment. For example, a linker (L) comprising the dipeptide Phe-Phe may include a piperazin-1,4-diyl structure by cyclizing two nitrogens with an ethylene fragment, or substituted variation thereof.

[0063] In another embodiment, pharmaceutical compositions are described herein, where the pharmaceutical composition includes the conjugates described herein in amounts effective to treat diseases and disease states, diagnose diseases or disease states, and/or image tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA. Illustratively, the pharmaceutical compositions also include one or more carriers, diluents, and/or excipients.

[0064] In another embodiment, methods for treating diseases and disease states, diagnosing diseases or disease states, and/or imaging tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA are described herein. Such methods include the step of administering the conjugates described herein, and/or pharmaceutical compositions containing the conjugates described herein, in amounts effective to treat diseases and disease states, diagnose diseases or disease states, and/or image tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0065] Figure 1 - Chemical drawings (1) – (9) show the structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with variable length linkers.

[0066] Figure 2(A) - Structure of PSMA-targeted DUPA-FITC (Fluorescein isothiocyanate) conjugate (14).

[0067] Figure 2(B) - PSMA-targeted DUPA-FITC (Fluorescein isothiocyanate) conjugate (14) and its binding affinity (K_D) and specificity on PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells and on PSMA-negative A549 human alveolar basal epithelial cells in culture. DUPA-FITC dissolved in RPMI medium was added at the indicated concentrations to 22Rv1 or A549 cells in RPMI culture media and allowed to incubate for 1 h at 37 °C. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS (phosphate buffered saline). Samples were analyzed using flow cytometry. Error bars represent SD ($n = 3$). s are contained within the antigen recognition site.

[0068] Figure 3 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates 1 – 9 with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0069] Figure 5 – Tumor-to-tissue fluorescence ratio from tissue biodistribution data of PSMA-targeted DUPA-NIR conjugates **1 – 9**. After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[0070] Figure 6 – Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with aromatic amino acid linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye

[0071] Figure 7 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with aromatic amino acids linkers with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0072] Figure 8 – Tissue biodistribution analysis and tumor-to-tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **15 and 23** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of

the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[0073] Figure 9 – Overlay of whole or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **14** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals

[0074] Figure 10 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **23** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0075] Figure 11 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **25** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0076] Figure 12 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **35** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0077] Figure 13 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **36** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0078] Figure 14 – Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with positive charge linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye

[0079] Figure 15 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (**14**). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR

conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0080] Figure 16 – Tumor-to-tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **39 and 41** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22 Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[0081] Figure 17 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of 39 and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0082] Figure 18 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of 40 and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0083] Figure 19 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of 41 and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0084] Figure 20 – Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with negative charge linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye

[0085] Figure 21 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates of 49 and 50 with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0086] Figure 22 – Tissue biodistribution analysis and tumor-to-tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **49 and 50** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor

xenografts (22Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[0087] Figure 23 – Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with variably charged NIR dye molecule

[0088] Figure 24 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0089] Figure 25 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **54** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals..

[0090] Figure 26 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **55** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0091] Figure 27 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **56** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0092] Figure 28 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **57** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0093] Figure 29 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse

was injected with 20 nmol of **58** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0094] Figure 30 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **60** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0095] Figure 31 – Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with miscellaneous linkers and NIR dyes

[0096] Figure 32 – Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[0097] Figure 33 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **63** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0098] Figure 34 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **63** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[0099] Figure 35 – Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **64** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals

[00100] Figure 36 – Structures of PSMA-targeted NIR imaging agents with different ligands

[00101] **Figure 37:** Relative binding affinities of PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of

DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[00102] **Figure 38:** Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **14** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

DEFINITIONS

[00103] It is to be understood that this invention is not limited to the particular methodology, protocols, cell lines, constructs, and reagents described herein and as such may vary. It is also to be understood that the terminology used herein is for the purpose of describing particular embodiments only, and is not intended to limit the scope of the present invention, which will be limited only by the appended claims.

[00104] As used herein and in the appended claims, the singular forms “a,” “an,” and “the” include plural reference unless the context clearly indicates otherwise. Thus, for example, reference to a “prostate specific membrane antigen ligand” “PSMA ligand” is a reference to one or more such ligands and includes equivalents thereof known to those skilled in the art, and so forth.

[00105] Unless defined otherwise, all technical and scientific terms used herein have the same meaning as commonly understood to one of ordinary skill in the art to which this invention belongs. Although any methods, devices, and materials similar or equivalent to those described herein can be used in the practice or testing of the invention, the preferred methods, devices and materials are now described.

[00106] All publications and patents mentioned herein are incorporated herein by reference for the purpose of describing and disclosing, for example, the constructs and methodologies that are described in the publications, which might be used in connection with the presently described invention. The publications discussed herein are provided solely for their disclosure prior to the filing date of the present application. Nothing herein is to be construed as an admission that the inventors are not entitled to antedate such disclosure by virtue of prior invention or for any other reason.

[00107] With respect to PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates of the present invention, the term "antigenically specific" or "specifically binds" refers to PSMA-targeting compounds that bind to one or more epitopes of PSMA, but which do not substantially recognize and bind other molecules in a sample containing a mixed population of antigens.

[00108] The term "epitope" as used herein refers to a site on PSMA that is recognized by DUPA. An epitope may be a linear or conformationally formed sequence or the shape of amino acids.

[00109] As used herein, "PSMA-targeting compound" or "PSMA-targeted compound" shall include those small molecules, ligands, polypeptides and proteins that have at least the biological activity of specific binding to PSMA or an epitope of PSMA. These compounds include ligands, receptors, peptides, or any amino acid sequence that binds to PSMA or to at least one PSMA epitope.

[00110] Compounds of the present invention comprise a PSMA-targeting compound, they may bind a portion of PSMA itself, or they may bind a cell surface protein or receptor that is associated with PSMA.

[00111] The terms "functional group", "active moiety", "activating group", "leaving group", "reactive site", "chemically reactive group" and "chemically reactive moiety" are used in the art and herein to refer to distinct, definable portions or units of a molecule. The terms are somewhat synonymous in the chemical arts and are used herein to indicate the portions of molecules that perform some function or activity and are reactive with other molecules.

[00112] The term "amino acid" refers to naturally occurring and non-naturally occurring amino acids, as well as amino acid analogs and amino acid mimetics that function in a manner similar to the naturally occurring amino acids. Naturally encoded amino acids are the 20 common amino acids (alanine, arginine, asparagine, aspartic acid, cysteine, glutamine, glutamic acid, glycine, histidine, isoleucine, leucine, lysine, methionine, phenylalanine, proline, serine, threonine, tryptophan, tyrosine, and valine) and pyrrolysine and selenocysteine. Amino acid analogs refers to compounds that have the same basic chemical structure as a naturally occurring amino acid, *i.e.*, an α carbon that is bound to a hydrogen, a carboxyl group, an amino group, and an R group, such as, homoserine, norleucine, methionine sulfoxide, methionine methyl sulfonium. Such analogs have modified R groups (such as, norleucine) or modified peptide backbones, but retain the same basic chemical structure as a naturally occurring amino acid.

[00113] Amino acids may be referred to herein by either their commonly known three letter symbols or by the one-letter symbols recommended by the IUPAC-IUB Biochemical Nomenclature Commission.

[00114] The present invention addresses, among other things, problems associated with the early diagnosis and surgical treatment of PSMA-expressing cells involved in disease and/or cancer, and in particular PSMA-targeted dye conjugates with improved imaging, diagnostic, biological properties including, as non-limiting examples, higher specificity, decreased background signal and increased tumor fluorescence.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[00115] Surgery cures 50% of patients with solid tumors in the US, while chemo- and radiotherapy cure less than 5% of all cancer patients. Over 700,000 patients undergo cancer surgery every year in the US and 40% of surgical patients have a recurrence of locoregional disease within 5 years. Despite major advances in the field of oncology there remains a need for early detection, methods to overcome hurdles to complete surgical resection of the primary tumor with negative margins, and removal of metastatic cancer cells and identification of satellite disease. Achieving these three goals not only improves disease clearance but also guides decisions regarding postoperative chemotherapy and radiation. While non-targeted fluorescent dyes have been shown to passively accumulate in some tumors, the resulting tumor-to-background ratios are often poor and the boundaries between malignant and healthy tissues can be difficult to define. Although ligand targeted fluorescence dyes (e.g., EC17: Folate-EDA-FITC) have been used for imaging a tissue, those dyes have been ineffective as they would not penetrate deep tissue and hence only identified the specific cells on the surface of a tissue rather than deeper within the tissue sample. In addition, fluorescein-based dyes have the disadvantages that of low shelf-life stability. Thiourea bridge formed by Fluorescence isothiocyanate (FITC) compounds easily decomposes making unstable compound. In addition, as EC17 uses fluorescein which has the drawback of a relatively high level of nonspecific background noise from collagen in the tissues surrounding the imaging site. Moreover, the absorption of visible light by biological chromophores, in particular hemoglobin, further limits the usefulness of dyes that incorporate fluorescein. Therefore, conventional dyes cannot readily detect tumors that may

be buried deeper than a few millimeters in the tissue. Furthermore, fluorescence from fluorescein is quenched at low pH (below pH 5).

[00116] In order for a dye material to be useful in detecting and guiding surgery or providing detection of early, metastatic, and other tissue imaging it is important to overcome these drawbacks. The present invention provides PSMA-targeted conjugates of near infrared dyes that are stable, fluoresce in the infrared range, penetrate deep within targeted tissue to produce a specific and bright identification of areas of tissue that express PSMA, fast clearance from tissues that do not express PSMA to obtain high tumor-to-background ratio, and fast skin clearance. More specifically, the PSMA-targeted conjugates are linked to the near infrared dyes through a linker consisting of one or more atomic spacers, amino acids, amino acid derivatives. Even more specifically, it has been found that where the atomic spacer is hydrophobic 7-atom spacer with neutral or charged atoms and amino acid spacer is aromatic amino acid or a derivative of aromatic amino acid, or negative or positive charge amino acid and tyrosine or a derivative of tyrosine. Charge of the linker can be varied to obtain fast skin clearance and fast tumor accumulation to obtain higher tumor-to-background ratio. Moreover, the fluorescence intensity of the NIR dye is maintained or even enhanced by having the aromatic amino acid or tyrosine or derivative of tyrosine and charge of the NIR dye can be varied to accomplish fast skin clearance.

[00117] This disclosure provides PSMA-targeted ligands linked to NIR dyes and methods for synthesizing the same. This disclosure also provides compounds for use in the targeted imaging of tumors expressing PSMA, including but not limited to prostate cancer, and methods of use, for example, in imaging and surgery involving PSMA positive tissues and tumors.

[00118] In certain embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form: B-X-Y-Z
wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound;
X is a spacer;
Y is an amino acid spacer; and
Z is an NIR dye.

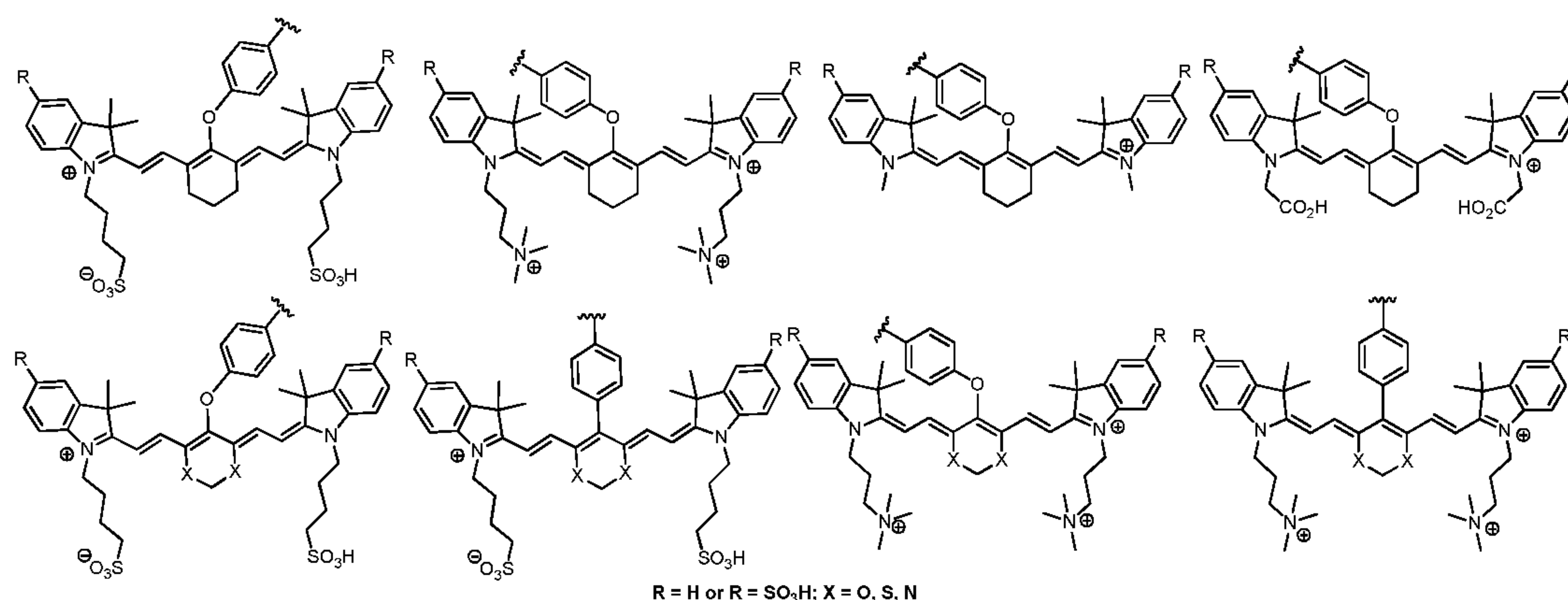
[00119] In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is chosen from the group consisting of a small molecule, a ligand, or a derivative thereof. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is a ligand. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is

DUPA. In other embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound is a small molecule that binds PSMA.

[00120] In some embodiments, X is a hydrophobic spacer. In some embodiments, X is selected from the group consisting of an eight aminooctanoic acid (EAOA), a chain of 7 atoms, polyethylene glycol spacer, a spacer 7 atoms in length, cationic spacer, chain of 7 atoms, a chain from 7 to 24 atoms in length; a peptide comprising two aryl or aryl alkyl groups, each of which is optionally substituted, and where one aryl or aryl alkyl group is about 7 to about 11, or about 7 to about 14 atoms, and the other aryl or aryl alkyl group is about 10 to about 14, or about 10 to about 17 atoms. In another embodiment, the spacer comprises about 1 to about 30 atoms, or about 2 to about 20 atoms. In some embodiments, the spacer is 7 atoms in length. In some embodiments, the spacer comprises EAOA. In some embodiments, the spacer is variably charged. In some embodiments, X has a positive charge. In other embodiments, X has a negative charge.

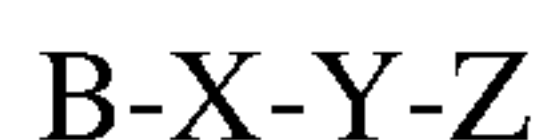
[00121] In some embodiments, Y is selected from the group consisting of: acidic (negatively charged) amino acids, such as aspartic acid and glutamic acid; basic (positively charged) amino acids such as arginine, histidine, and lysine; neutral polar amino acids, such as glycine, serine, threonine, cysteine, tyrosine, asparagine, and glutamine; neutral nonpolar (hydrophobic) amino acids, such as alanine, leucine, isoleucine, valine, proline, phenylalanine, tryptophan, and methionine; and derivatives thereof. In some embodiments, Y is an aromatic amino acid. In some embodiments, Y has a positive charge. In other embodiments, Y has a negative charge.

[00122] In some embodiments, Z is selected from the group consisting of near-infra red dyes, including but not limited to, LS288, IR800, SP054, S0121, KODAK, S2076 S0456 and/or the dyes selected from group consisting of.

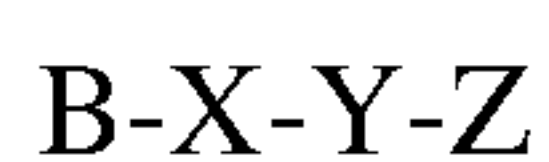


[00123] In certain embodiments, the Z is variably charged. In some embodiments, Z has a positive charge. In other embodiments, Z has a negative charge.

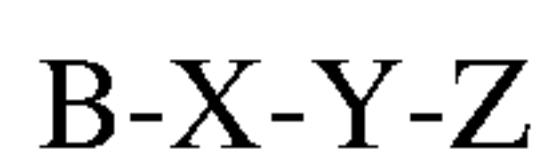
[00124] In certain embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form:



[00125] wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side chain group; and Z is an NIR dye. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is cysteine. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is methionine. In some embodiments, the amino acid spacer with a sulfur-containing side group is molecule containing thiophenol moiety. In some embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form:

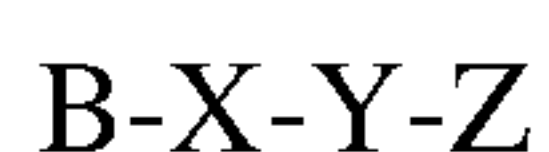


[00126] wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid spacer with a chalcogen-containing side chain group; and Z is an NIR dye. In some embodiments the present invention provides compounds of the form:

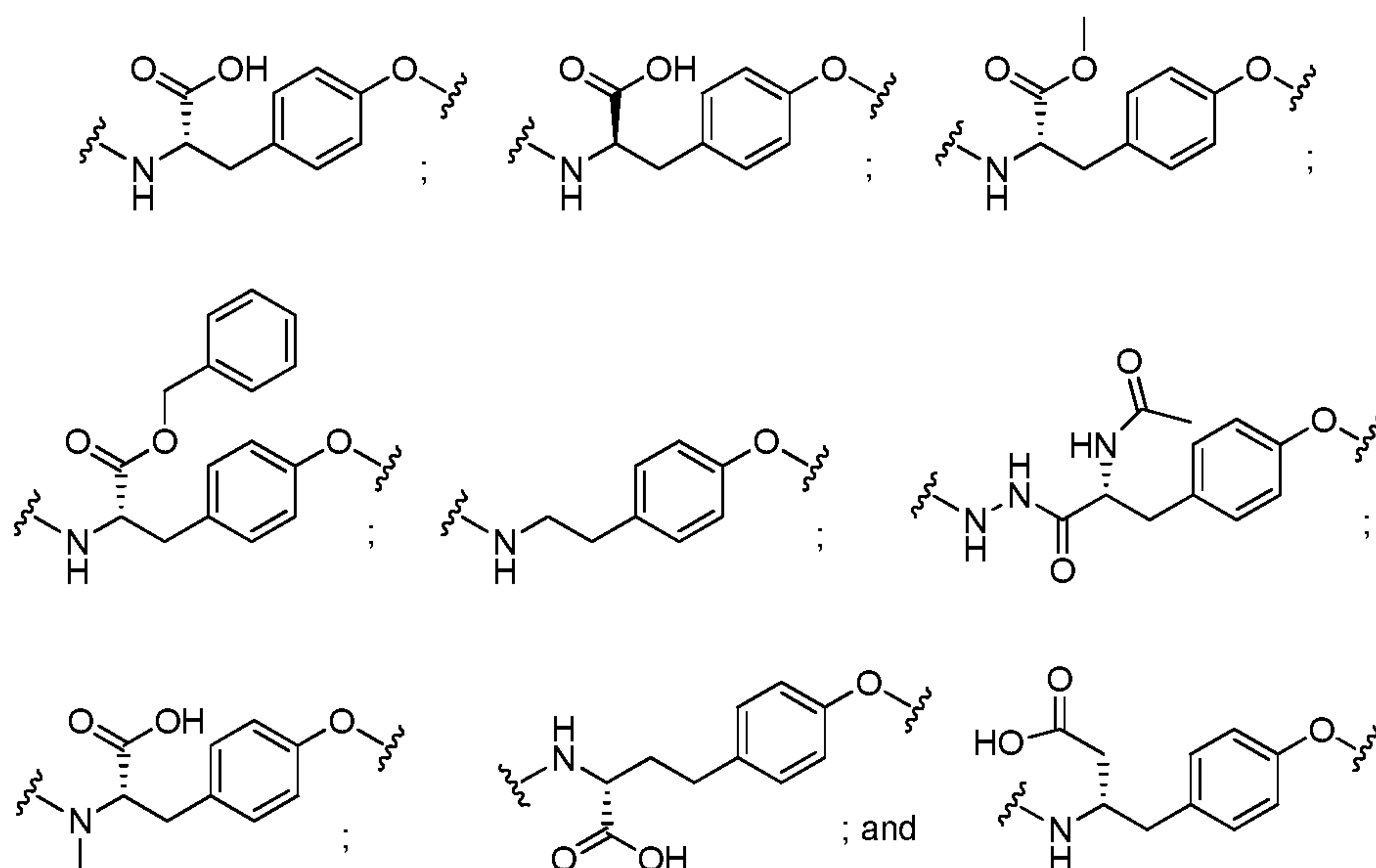


wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Y is an amino acid chosen from the group consisting of tyrosine, cysteine, lysine, or a derivative thereof; and Z is an NIR dye. In some embodiments, Y comprises a tyrosine or tyrosine derivative. In some embodiments, Y comprises a tyrosine and a carbon isotope is on the aromatic ring of tyrosine. In some embodiments, Y comprises an amino acid with an aromatic ring with a hydrogen isotope.

[00127] In some embodiments, compounds of the present invention have the form:



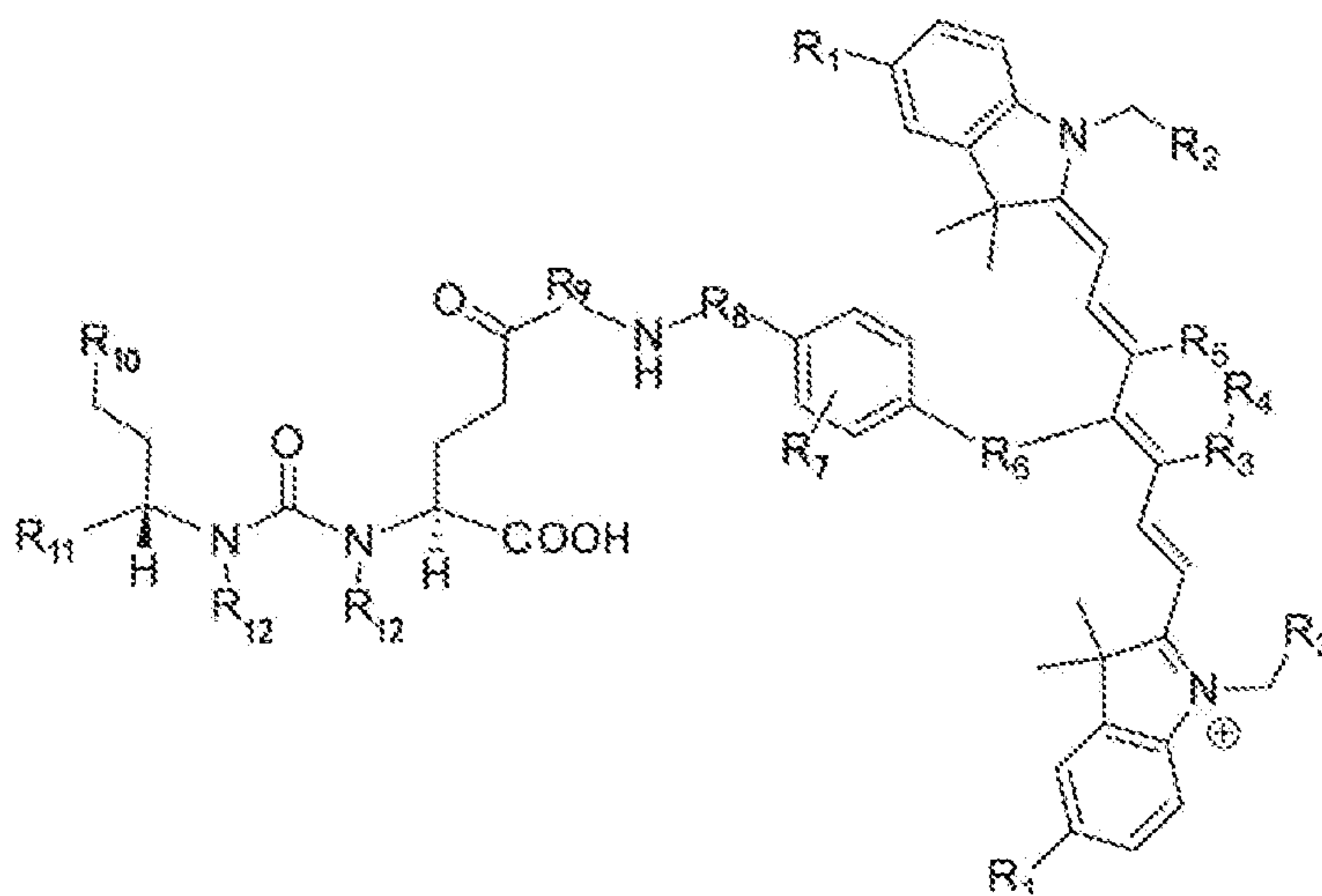
[00128] wherein B is a PSMA-targeted compound; X is a spacer; Z is an NIR dye; and Y comprises a derivative of tyrosine selected from the group consisting of:



or racemic mixtures thereof.

[00129] In some embodiments the invention includes the compound B-X-Y-Z wherein B comprises DUPA or a derivative thereof, X comprises an EAOA, Y comprises tyrosine, and Z comprises S0456.

[00130] A compound having the structural formula:



(I)

or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or isotopes thereof, wherein:

R_1 represents a hydrogen or SO_3H ;

R_2 represents a hydrogen, CH_3 , $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3^-$, $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3^-$, or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{N}^+(\text{CH}_3)_3$;

R₃, and R₅ each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds,

R₄ represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R₆ represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R₇ is optional and when present represents aromatic substitution group to enhance the spectral properties such as increase brightness and stability of the vinyl ether bridge;

R₈ is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, trp, His or derivative of them, cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative of them, anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative;

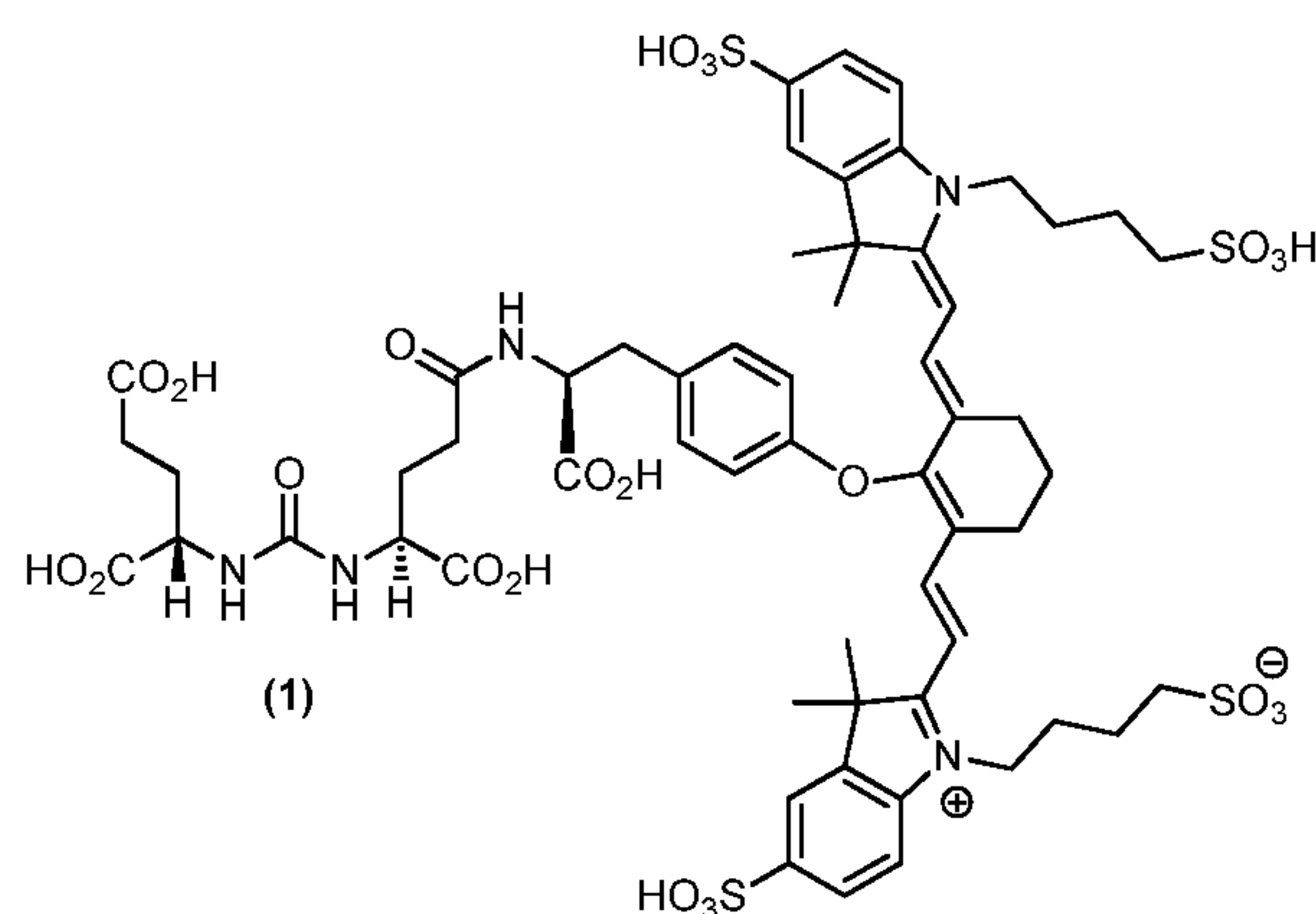
R₉ is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linker, cationic linker, or derivative of them;

R₁₀ represents a CO₂H, PO₃H₂, SO₃H, CH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H;

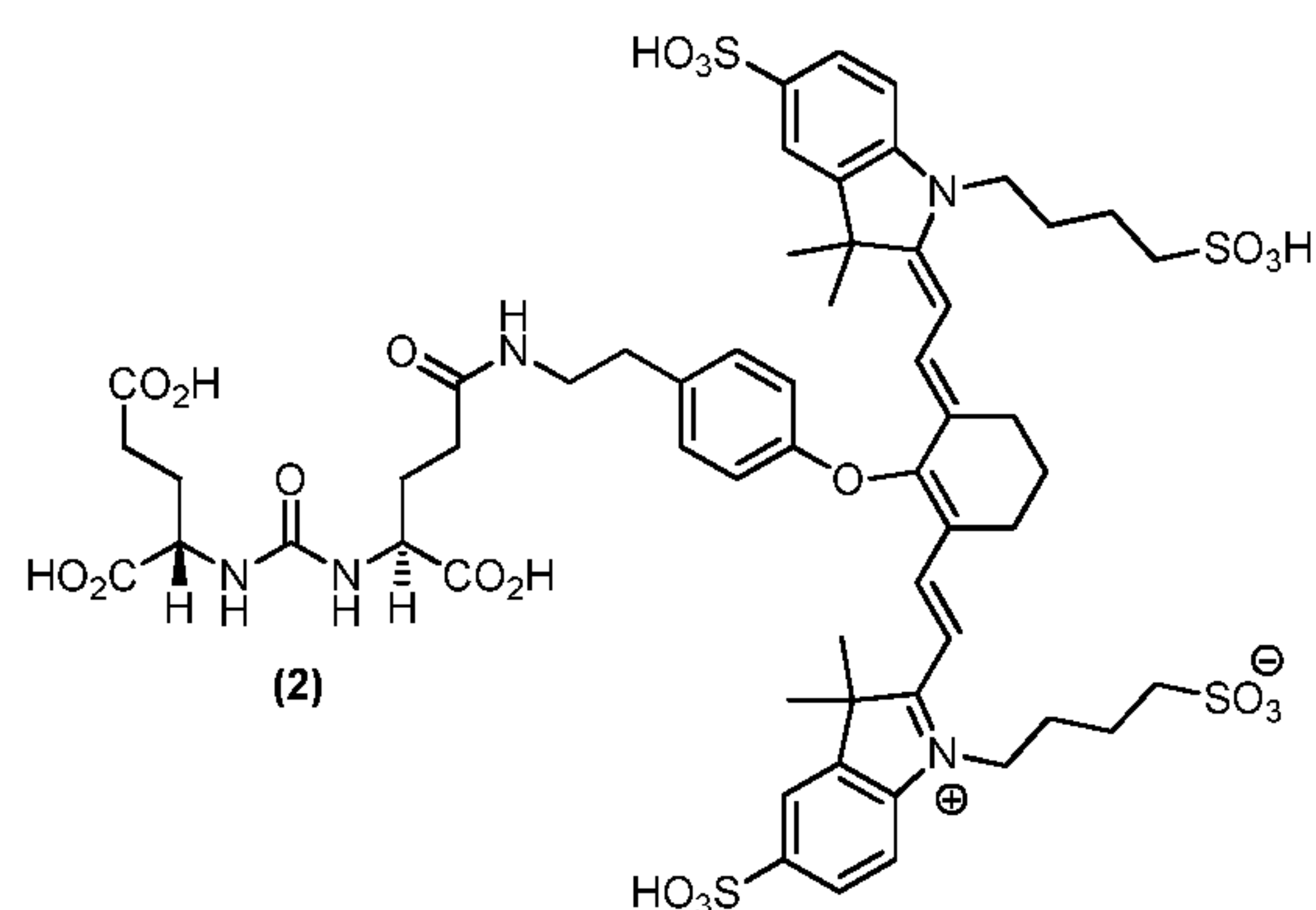
R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

R₁₂ represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

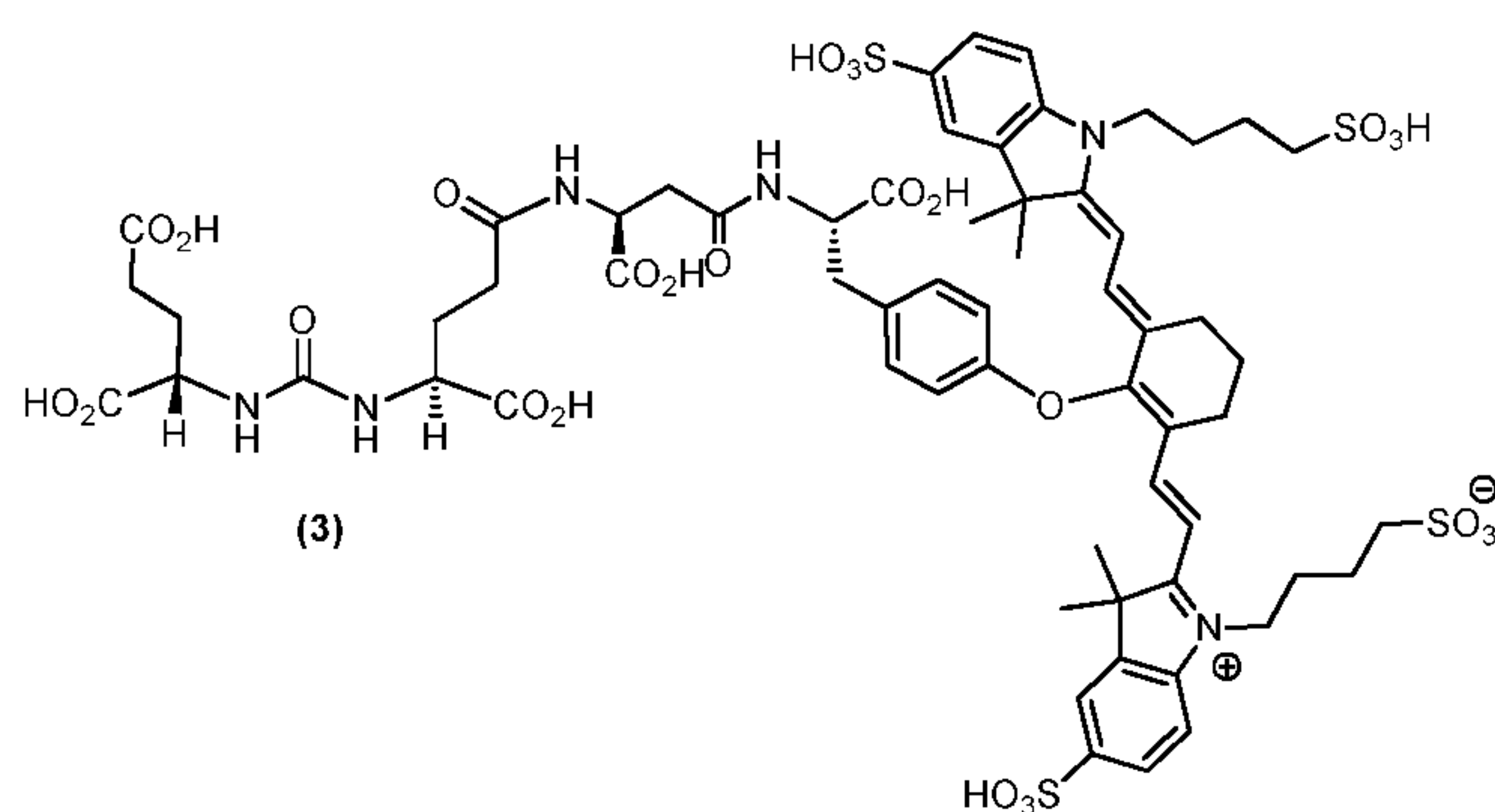
[00131] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



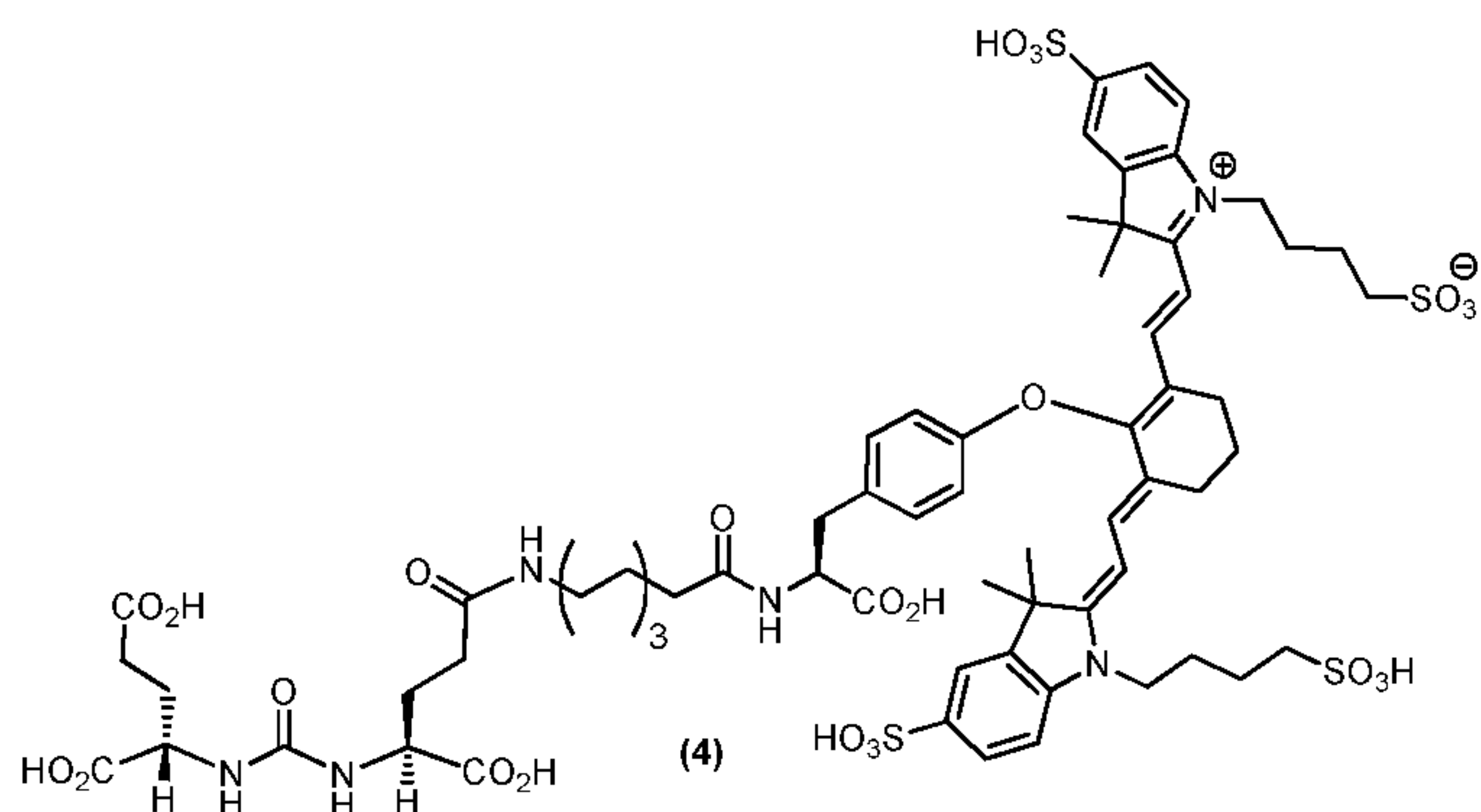
[00132] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



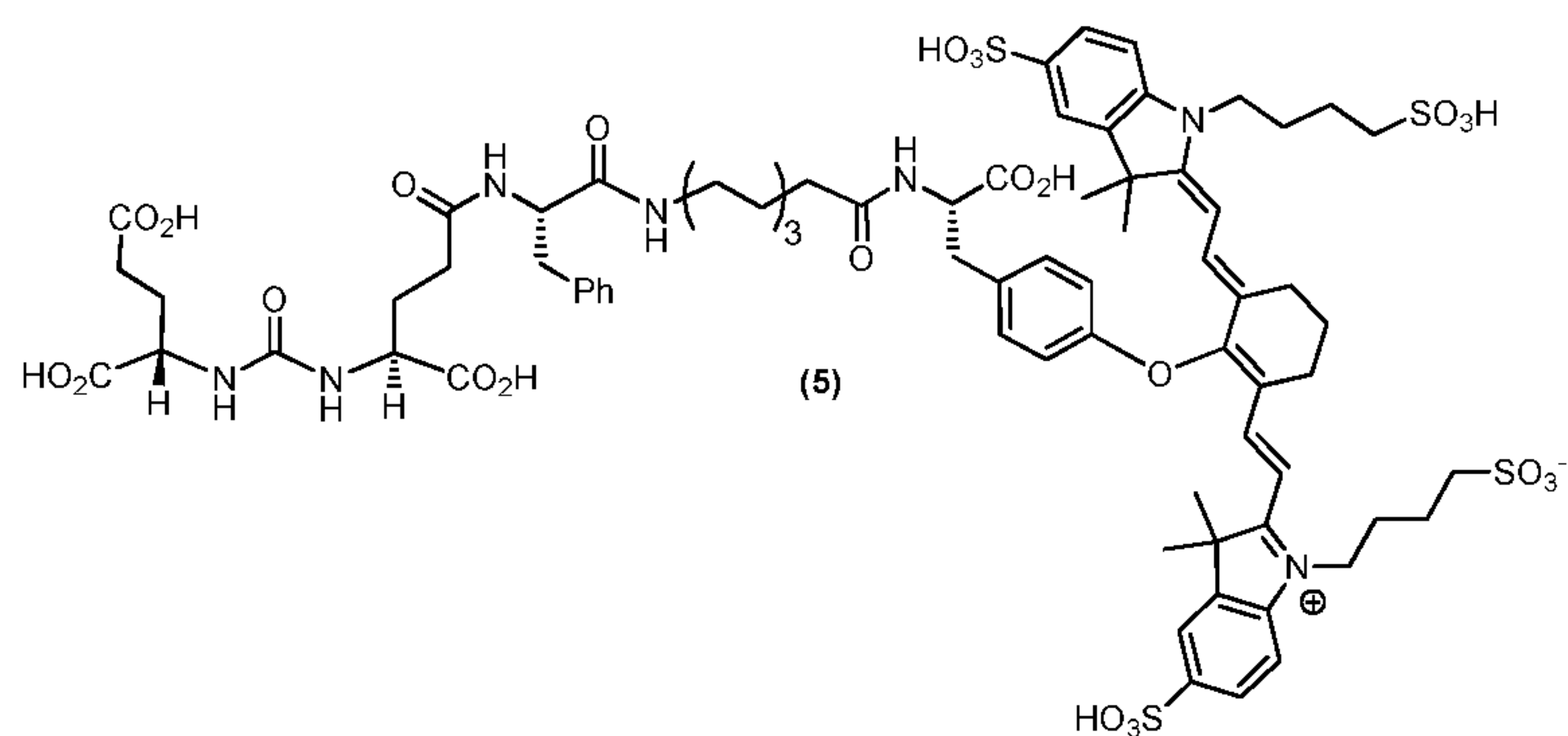
[00133] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



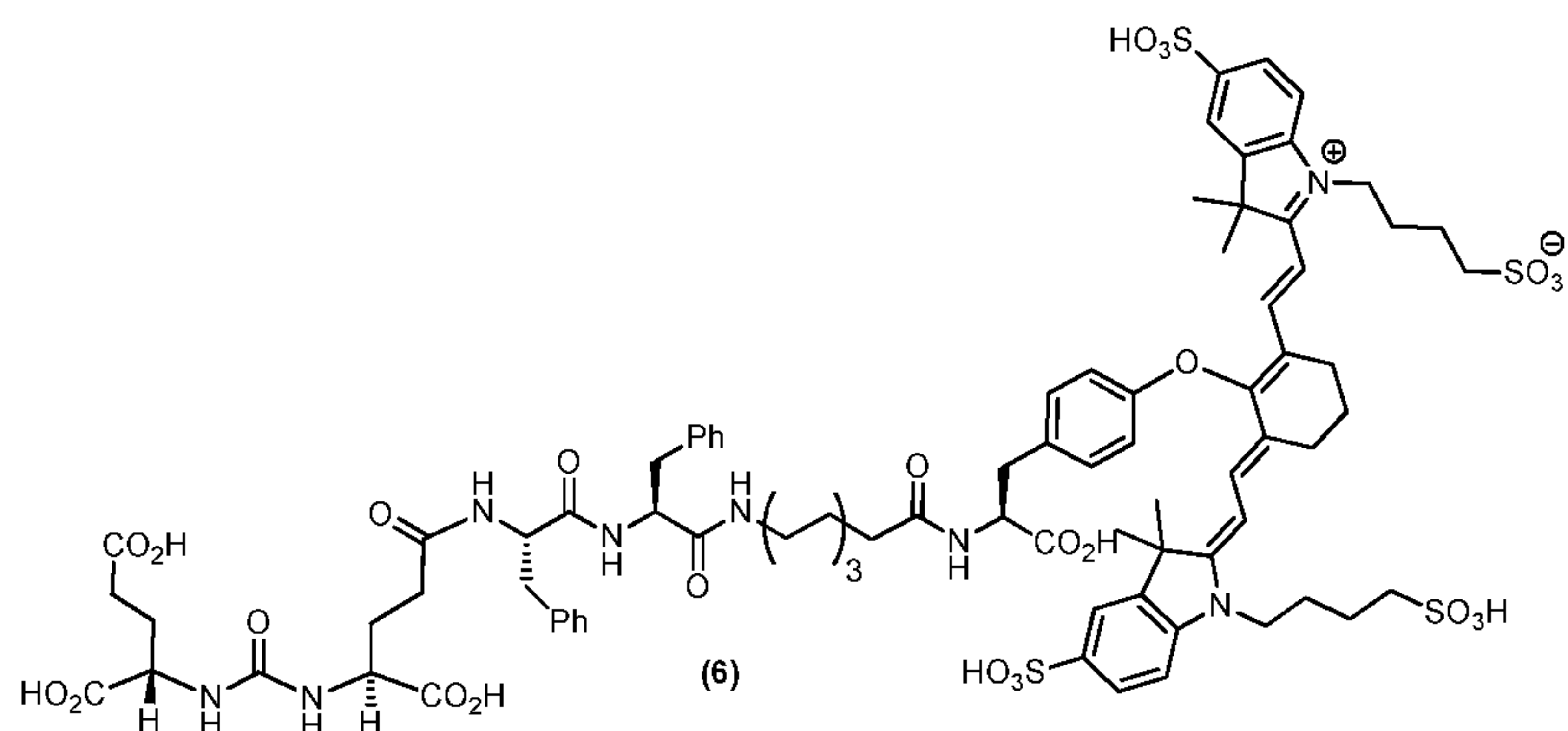
[00134] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



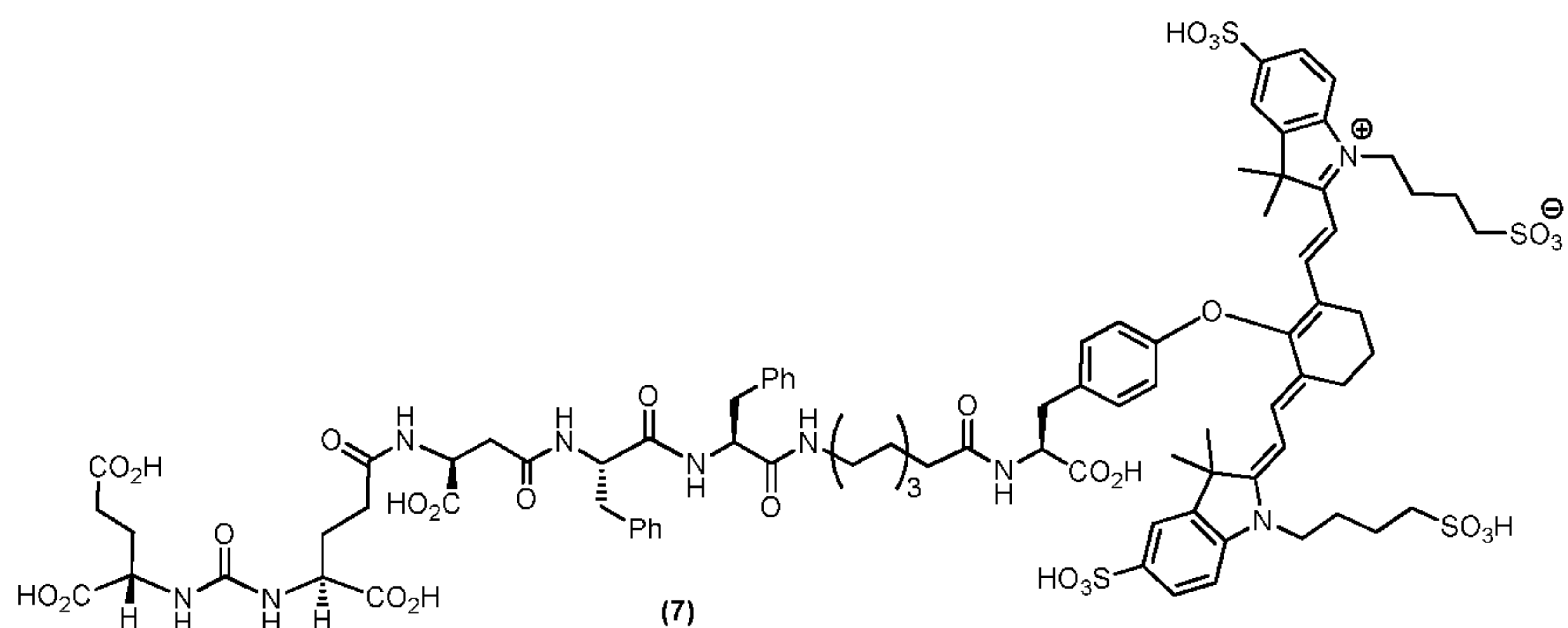
[00135] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



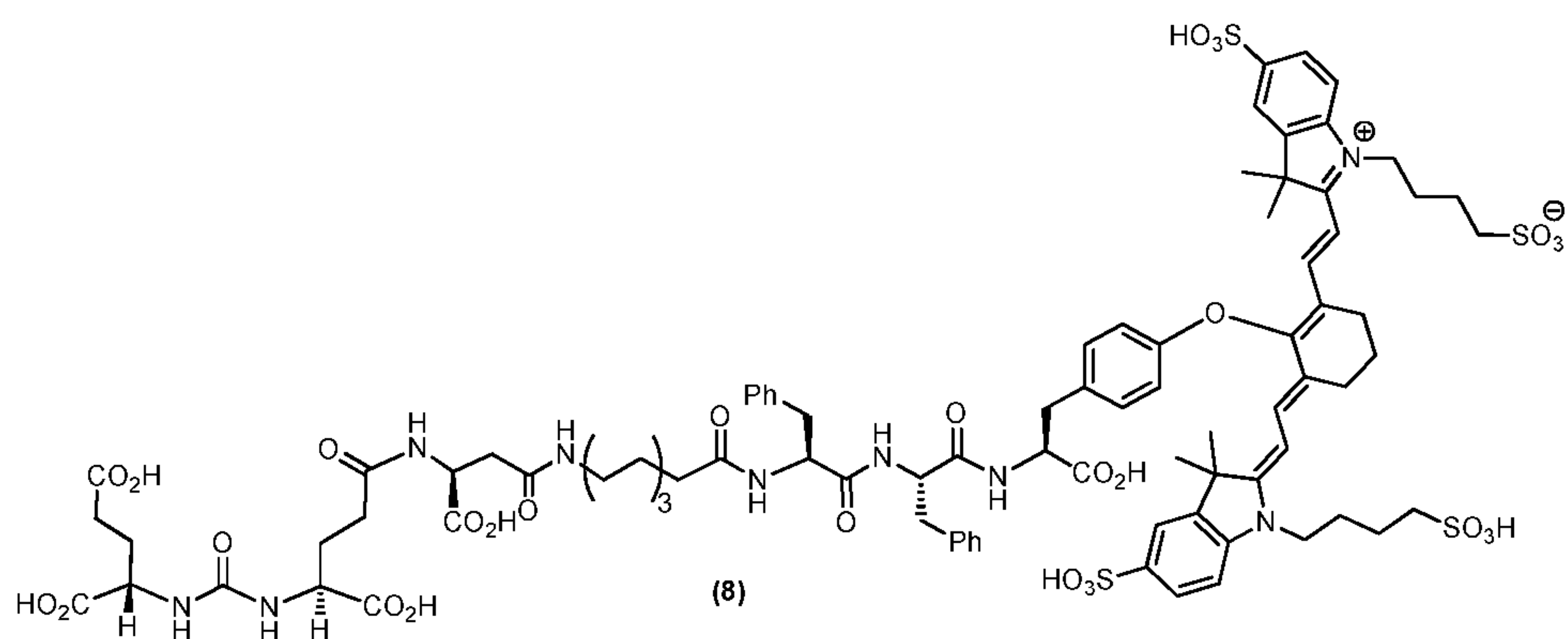
[00136] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



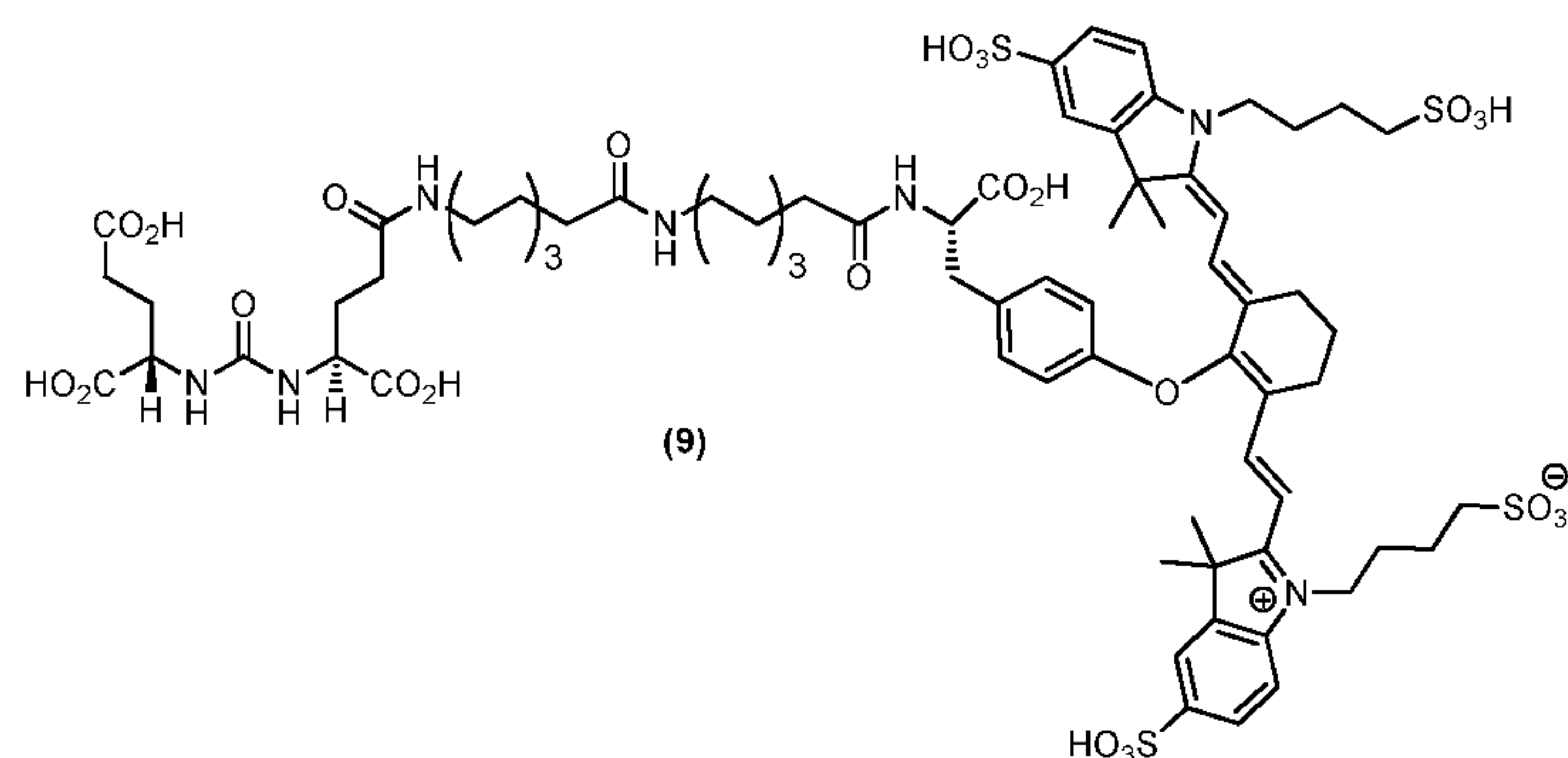
[00137] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



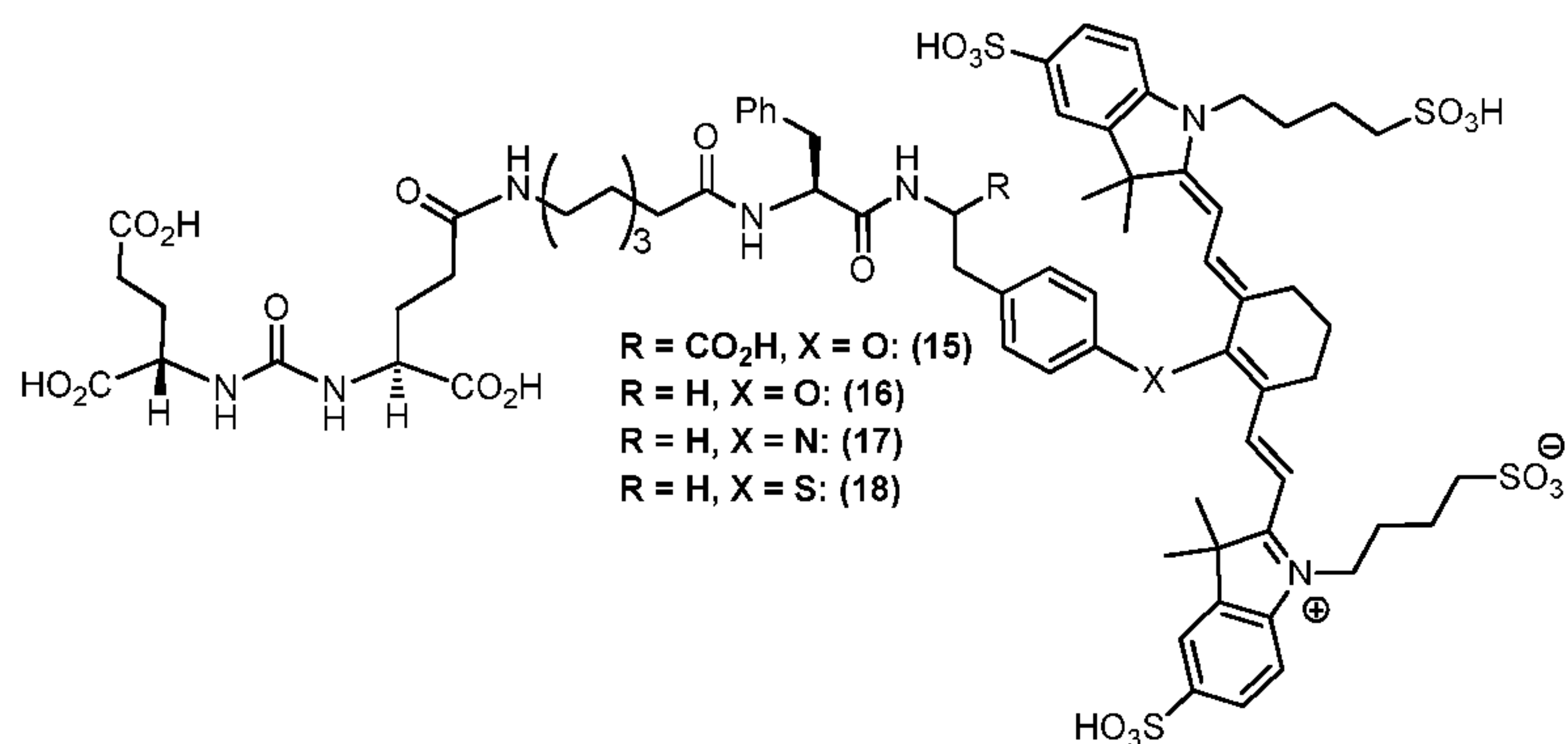
[00138] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



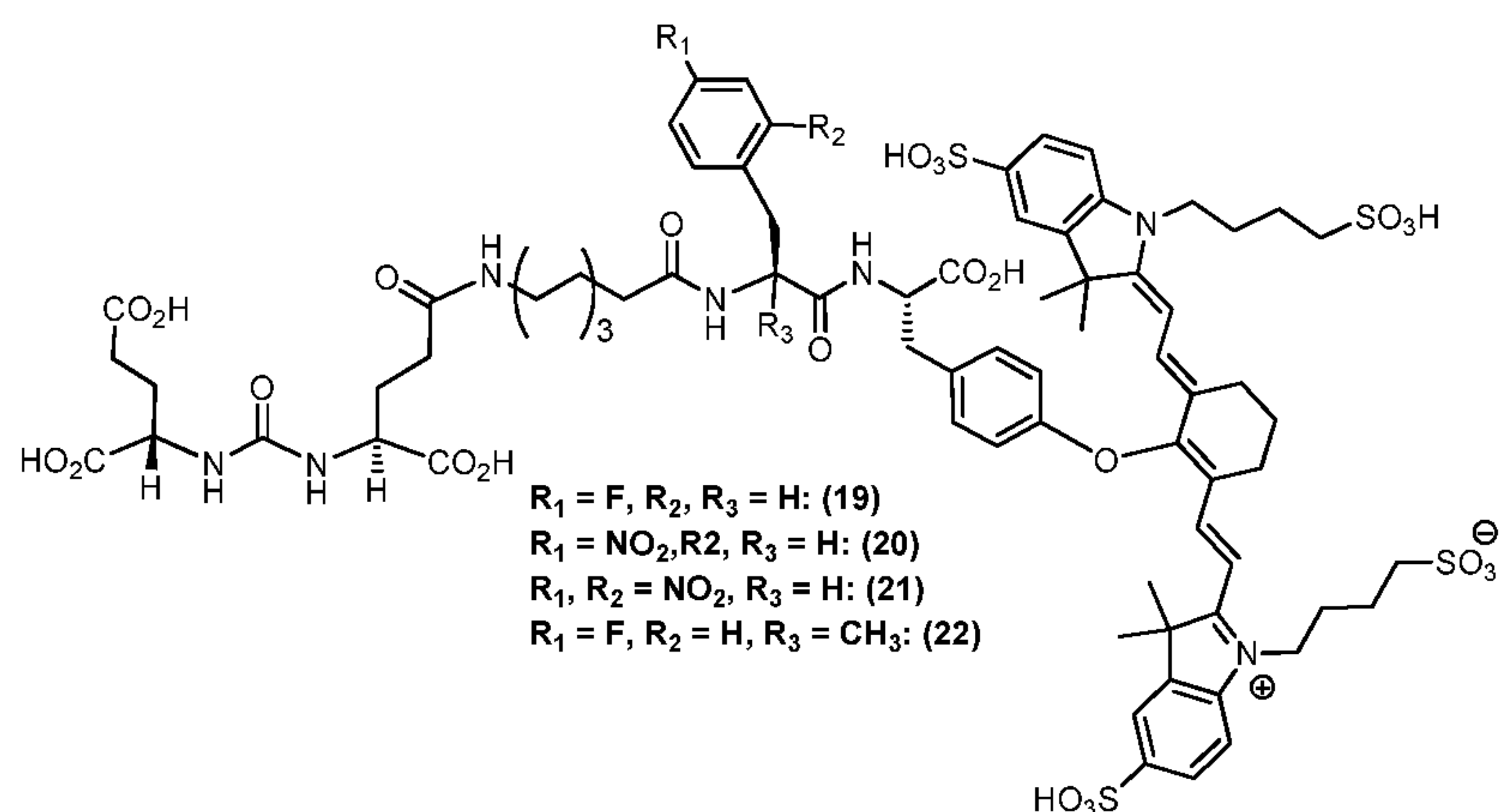
[00139] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



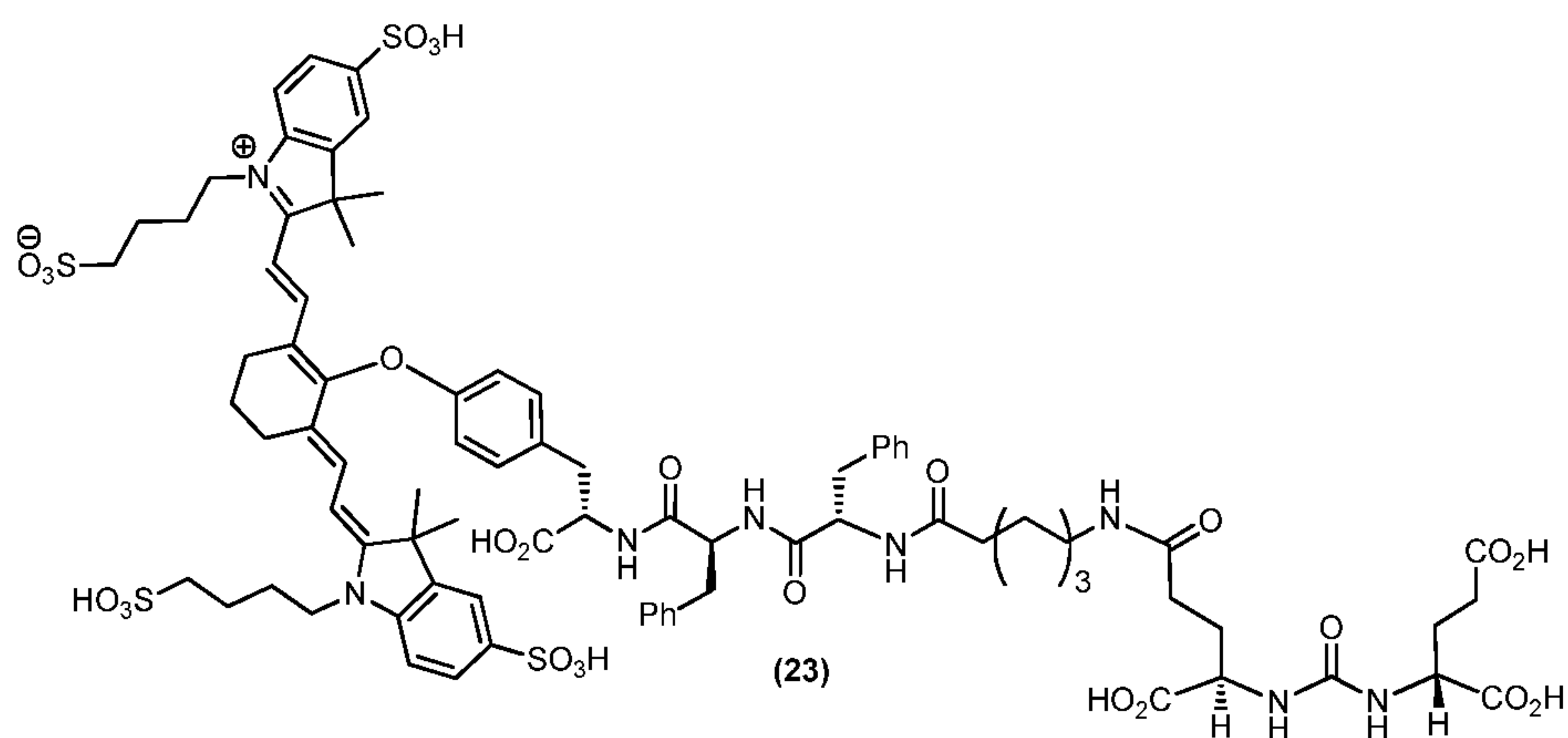
[00140] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



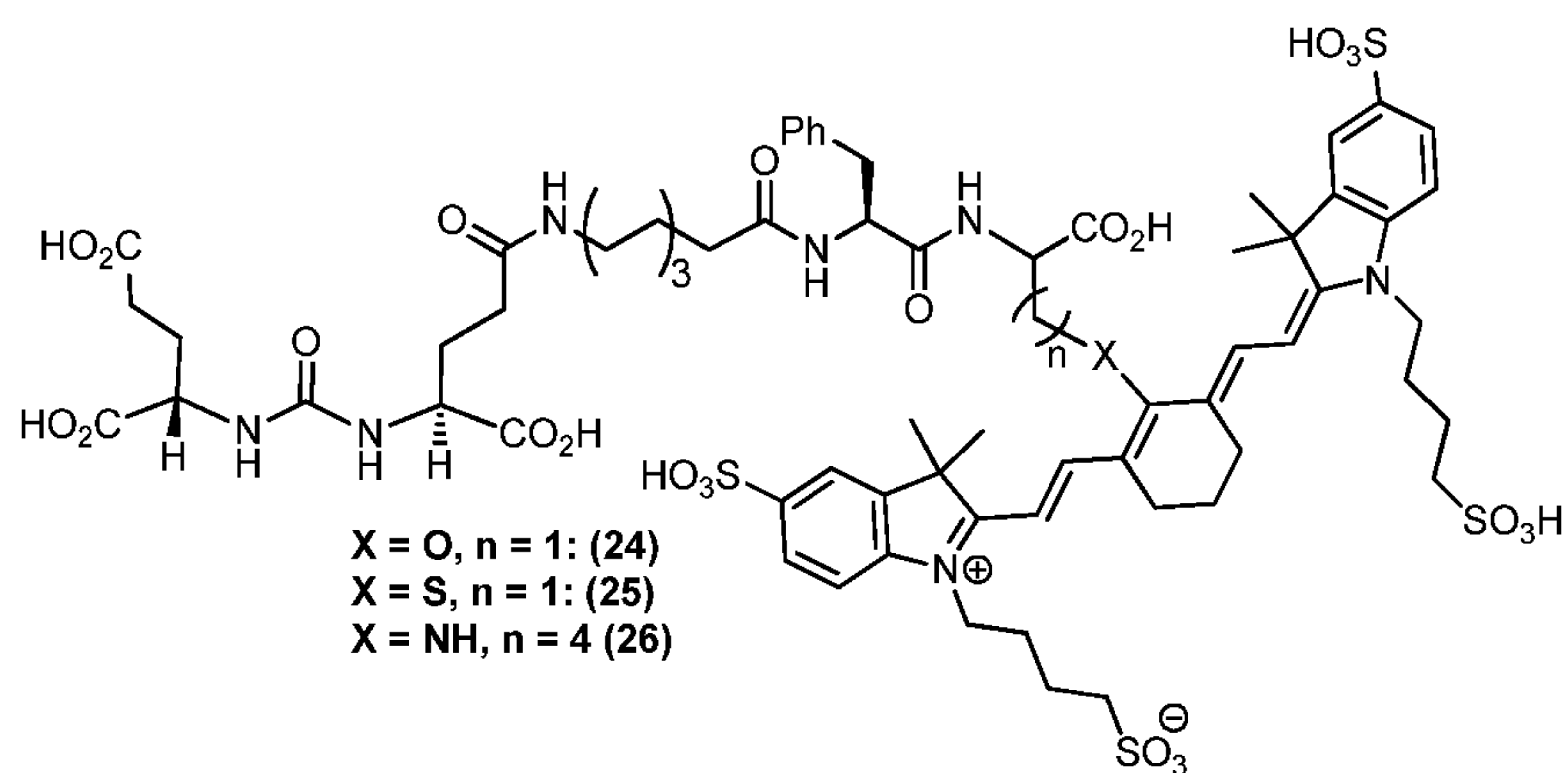
[00141] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



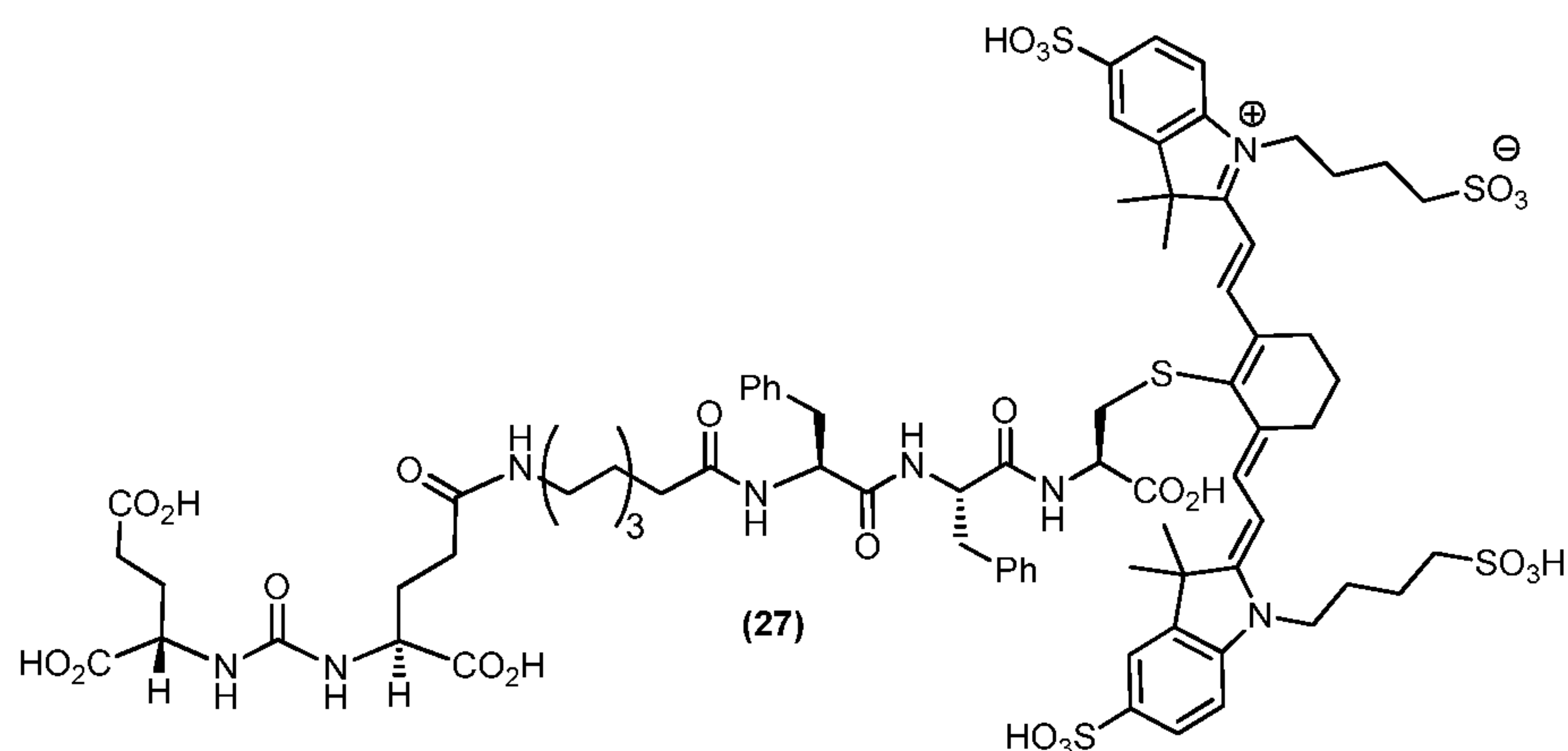
[00142] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



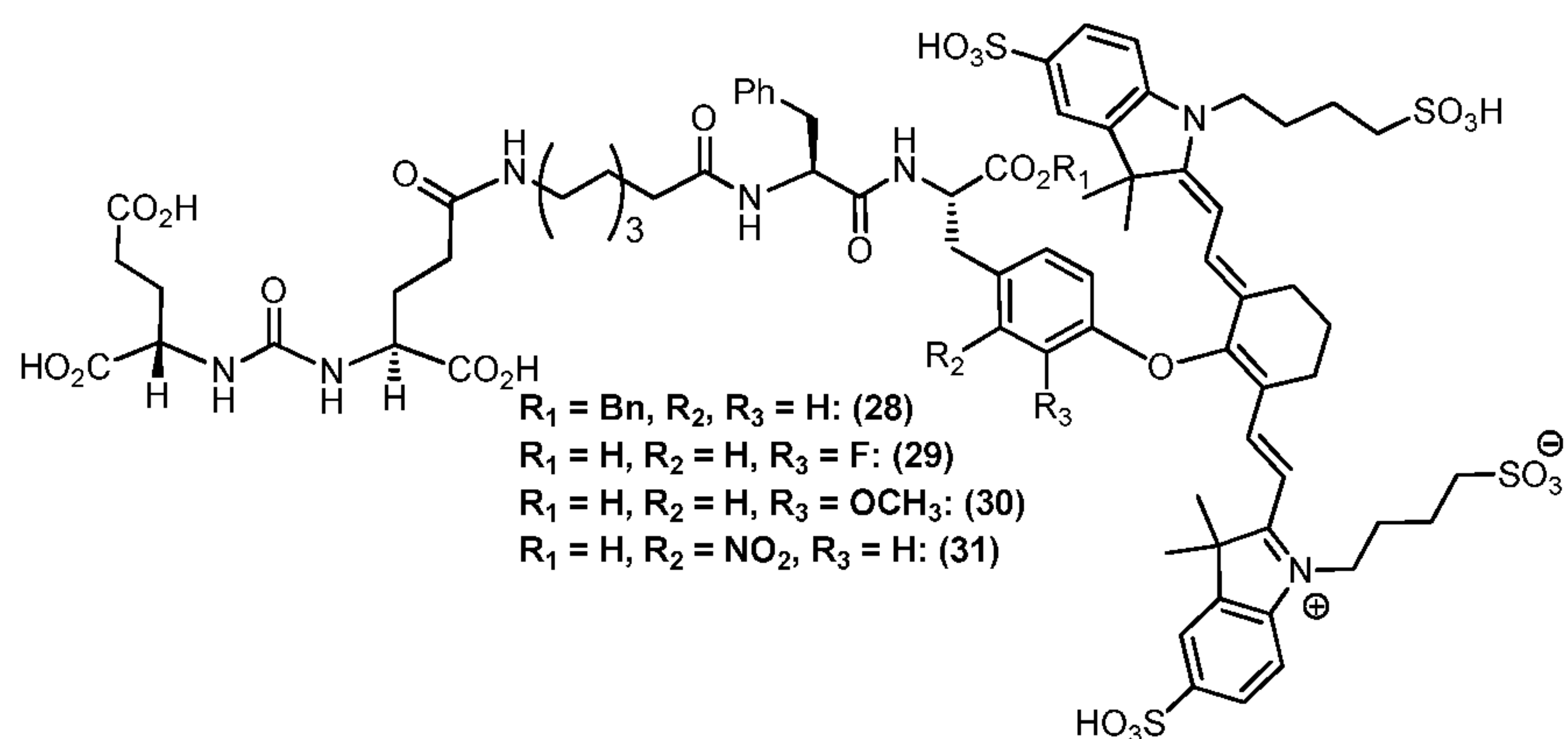
[00143] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



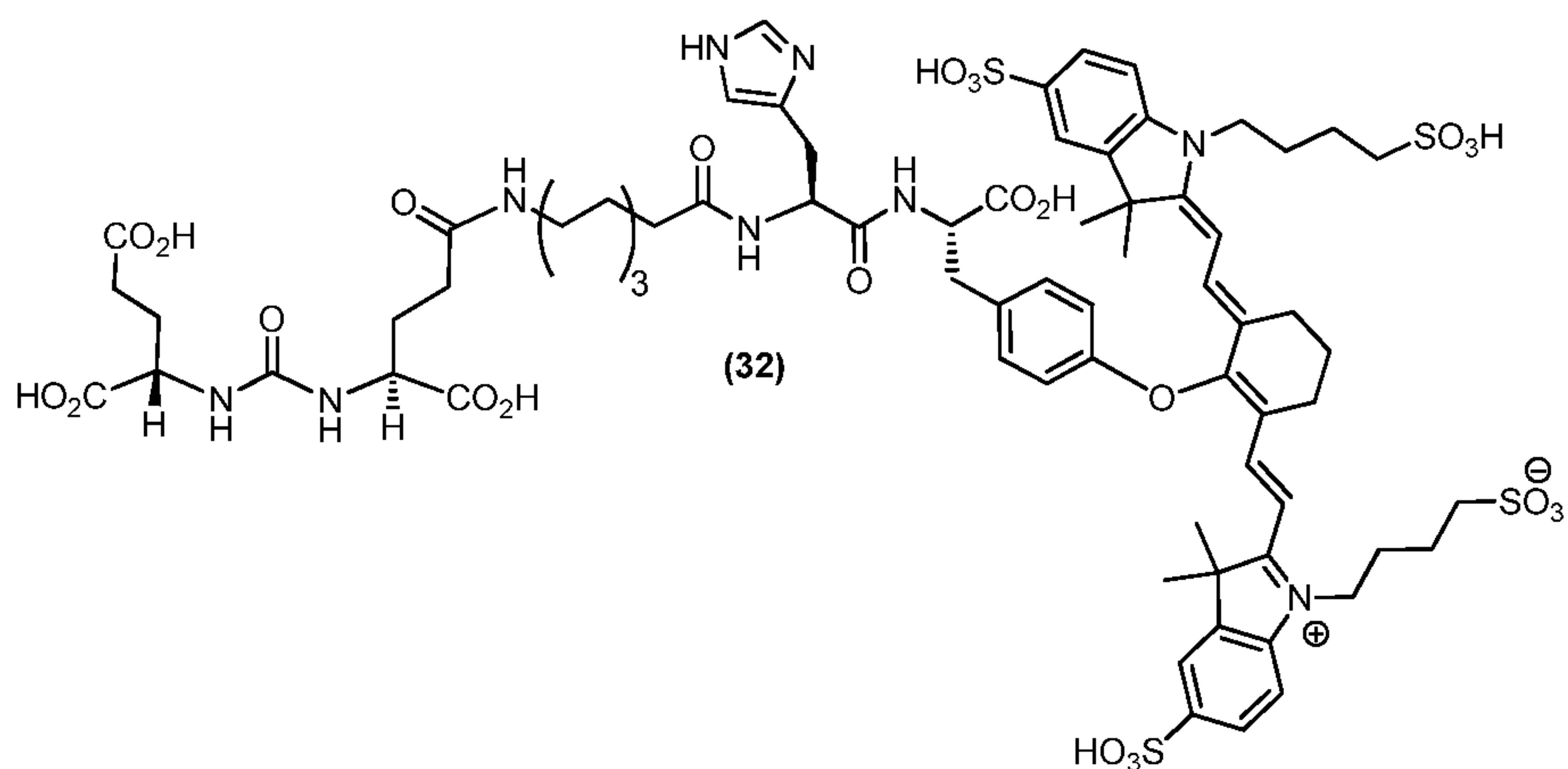
[00144] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



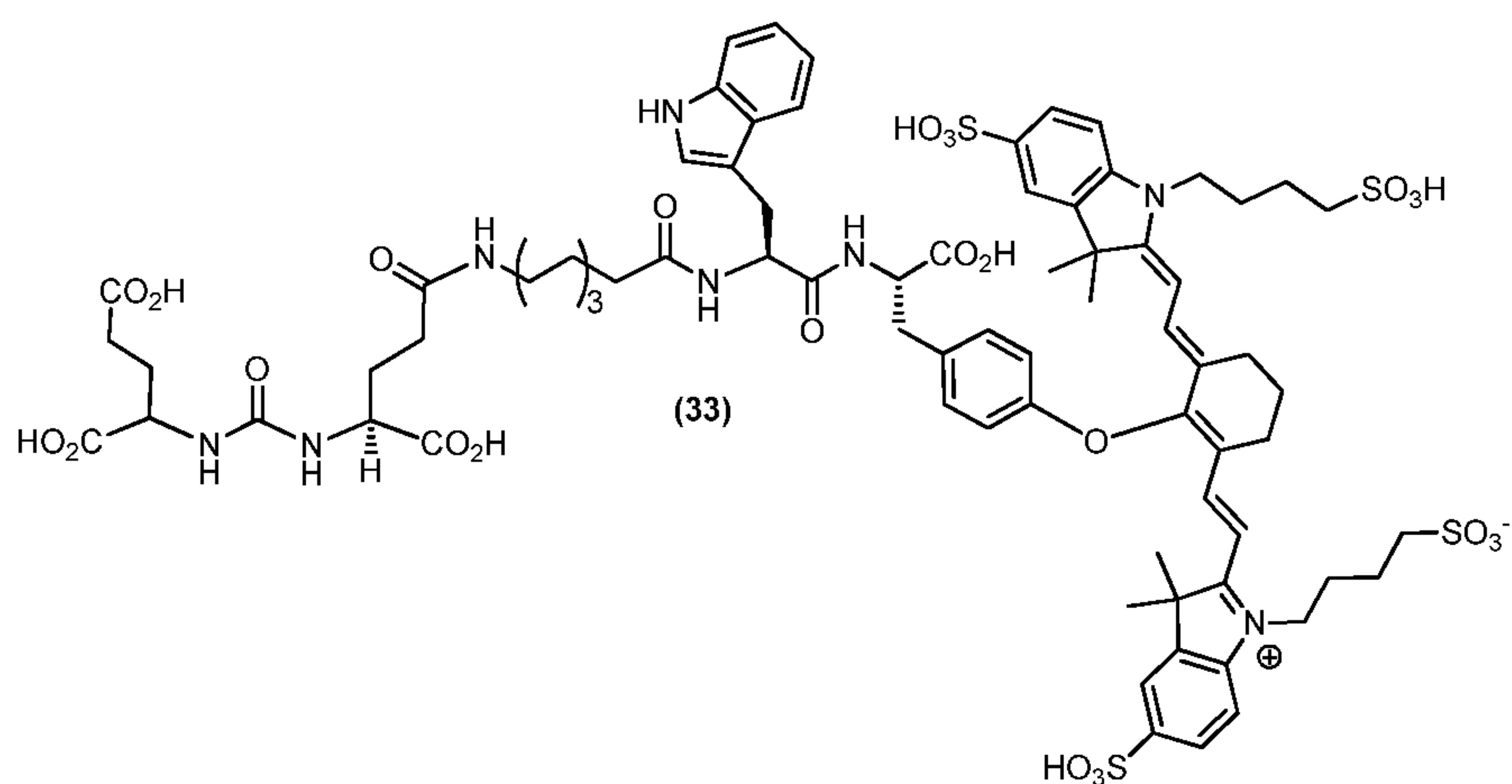
[00145] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



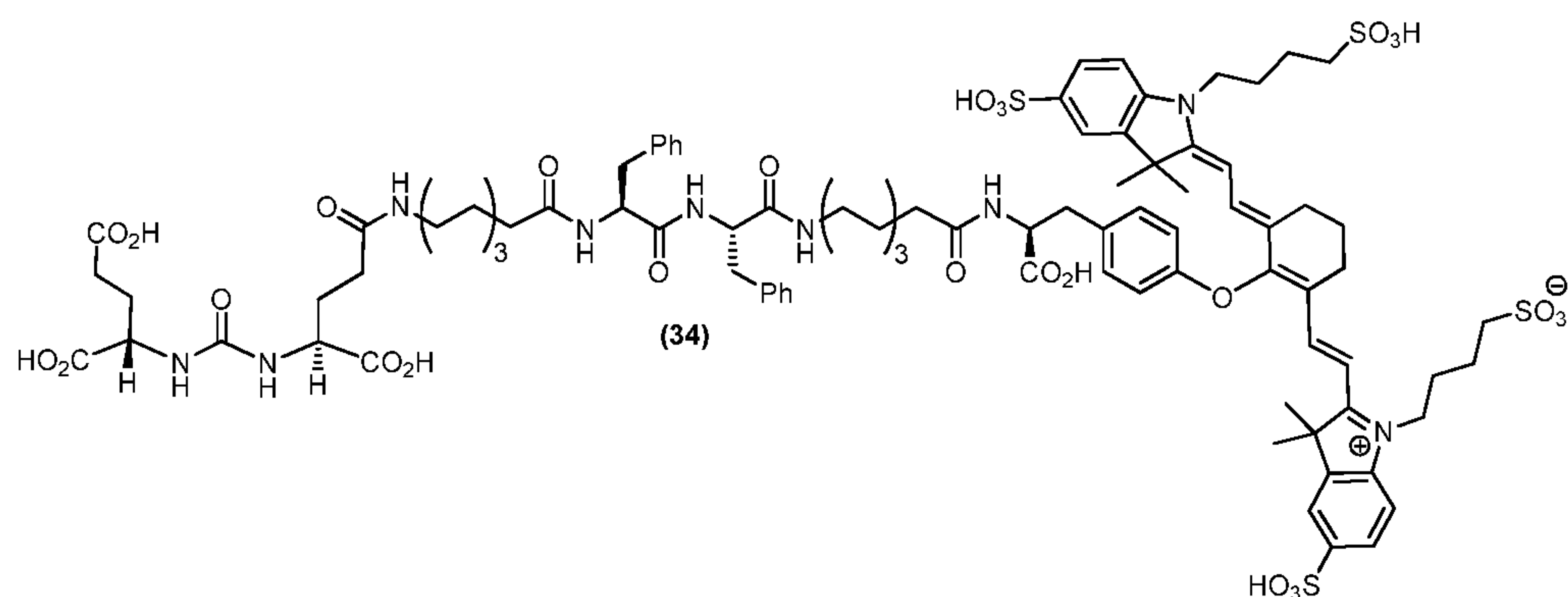
[00146] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



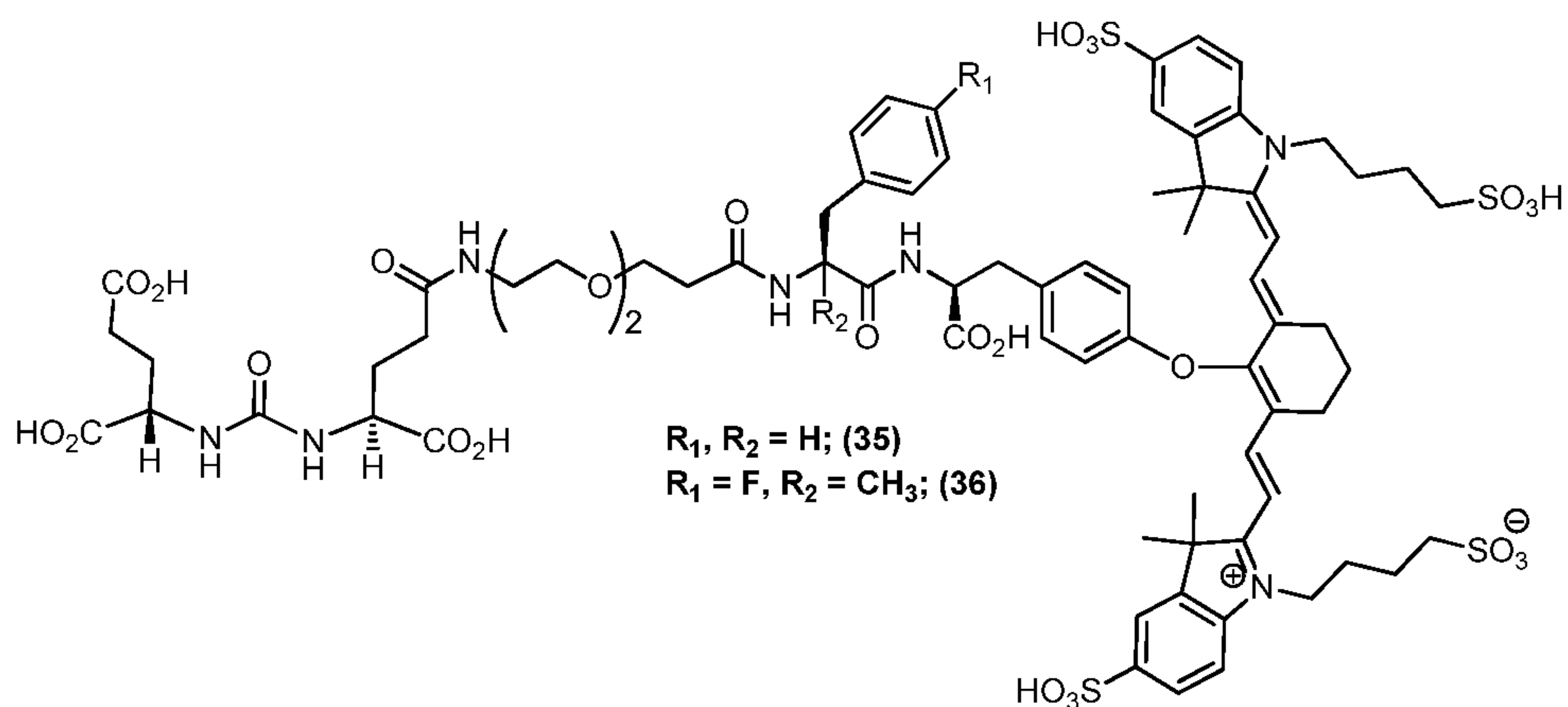
[00147] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



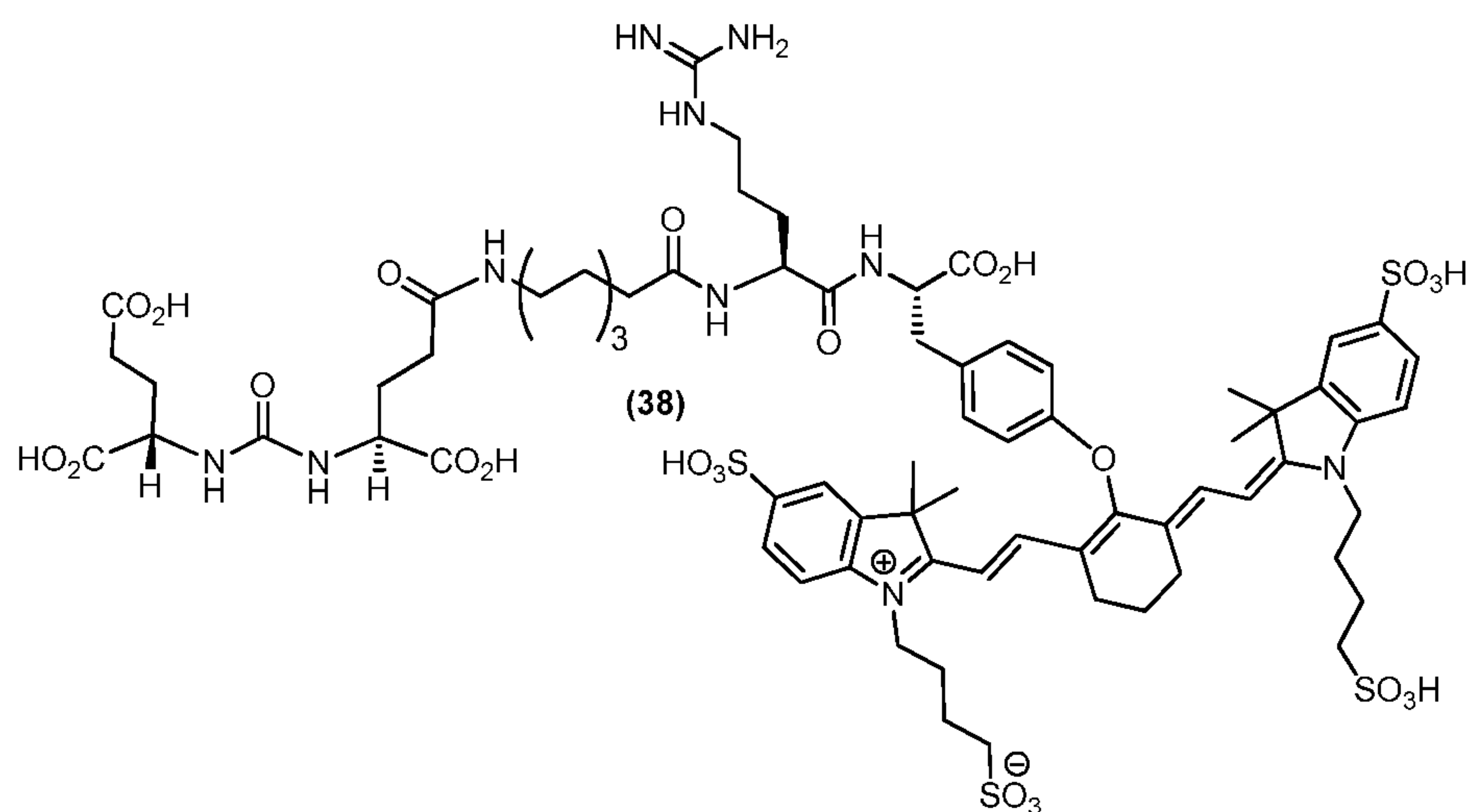
[00148] In some embodiments the present invention a compound that has the structural formula:



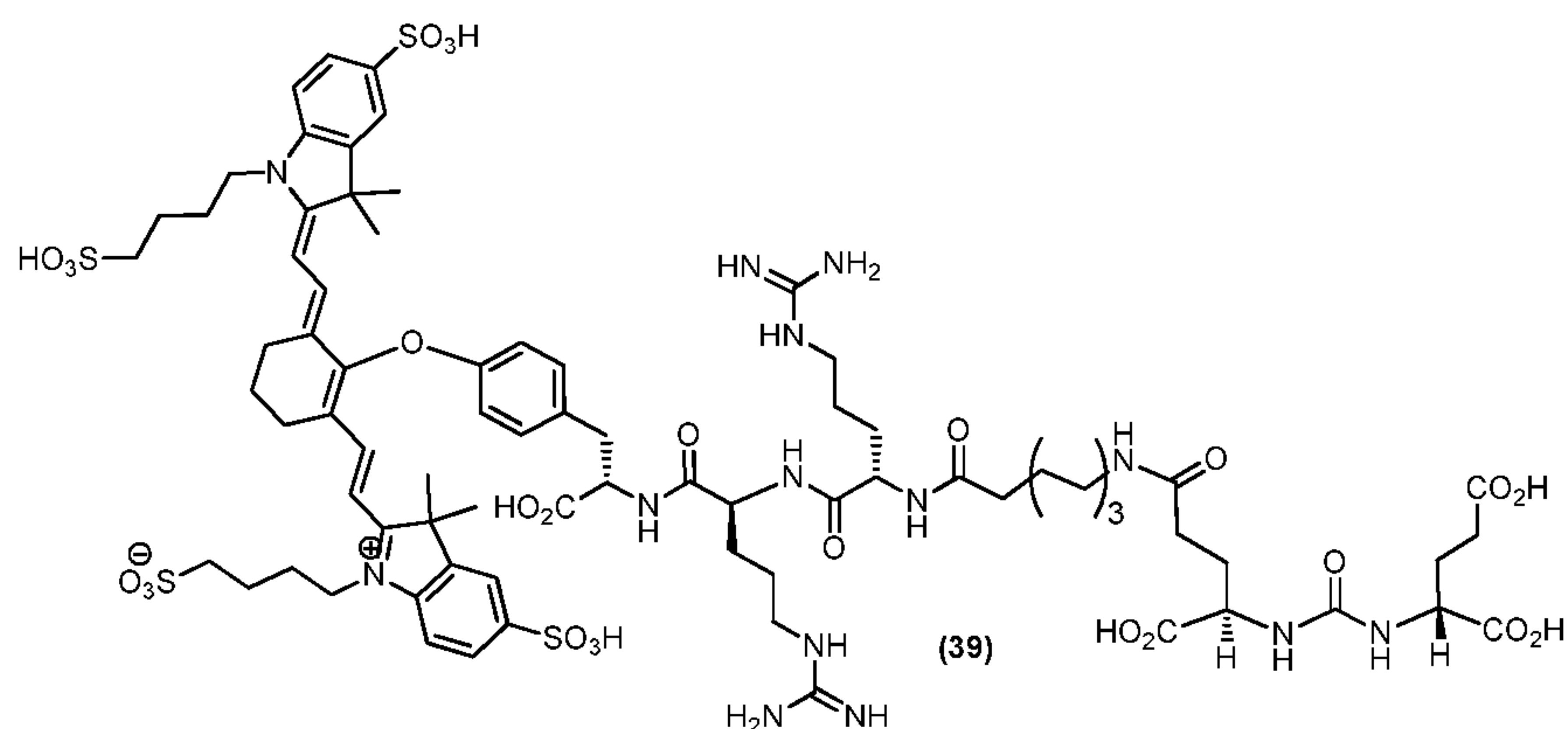
[00149] In some embodiments the present invention a compound that has the structural formula:



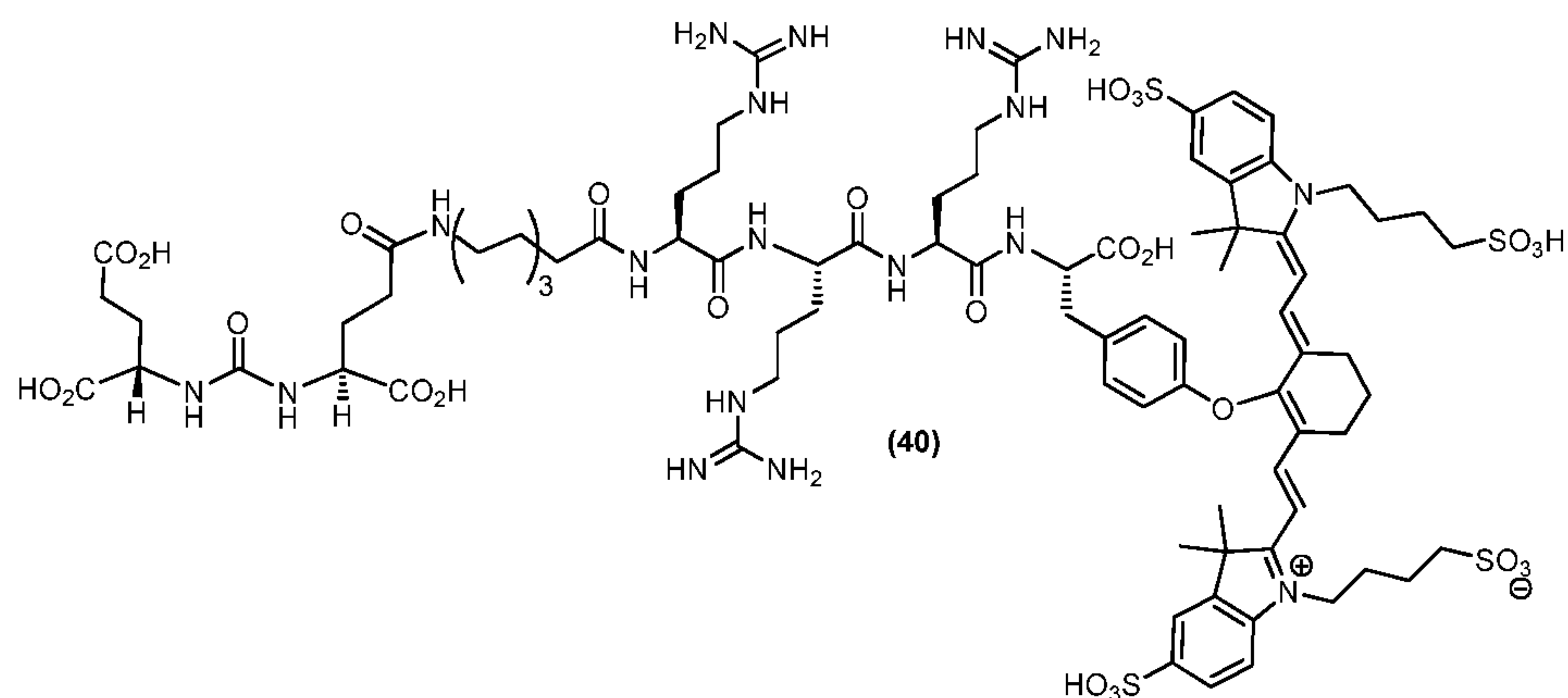
[00150] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



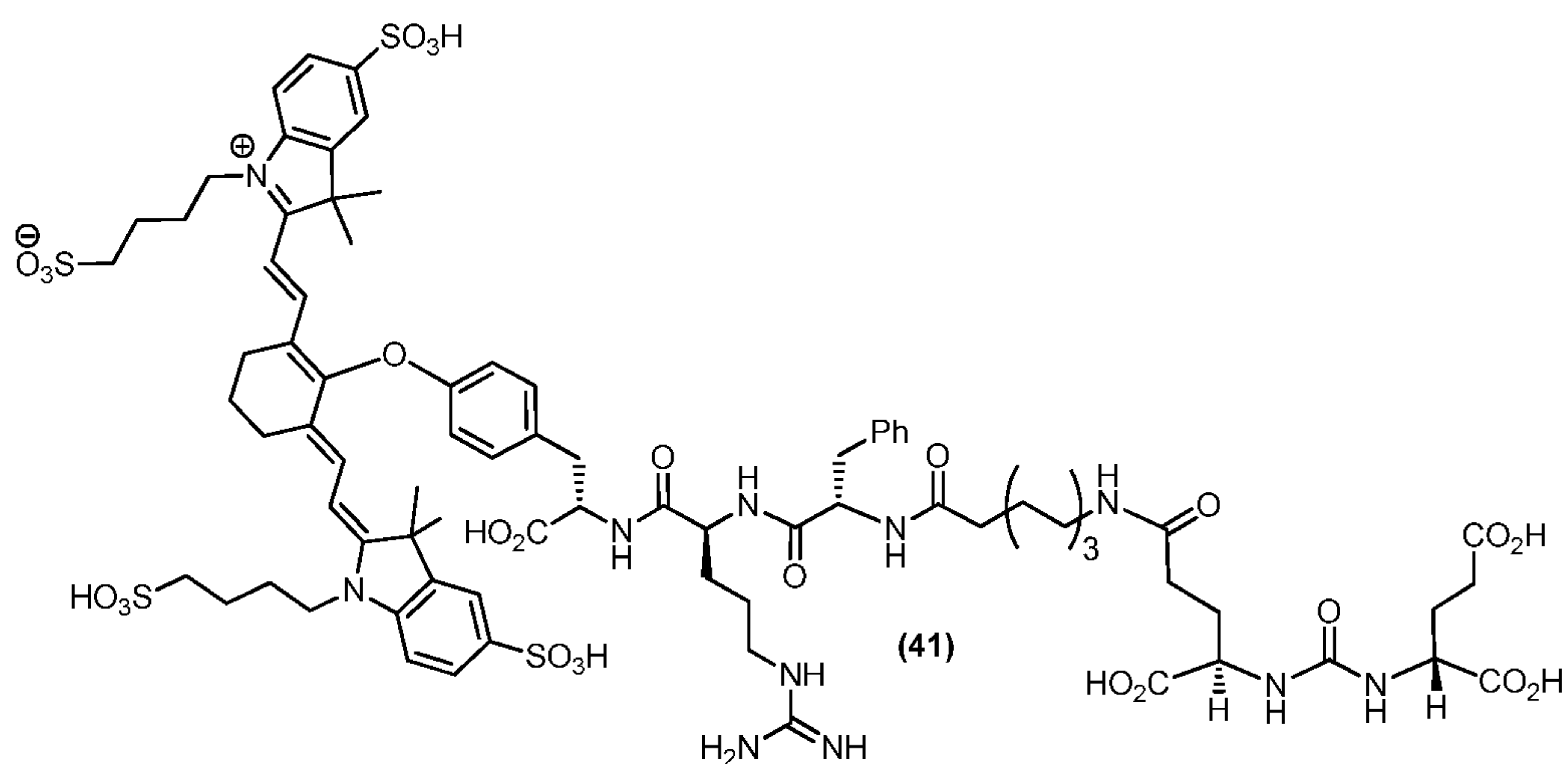
[00151] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



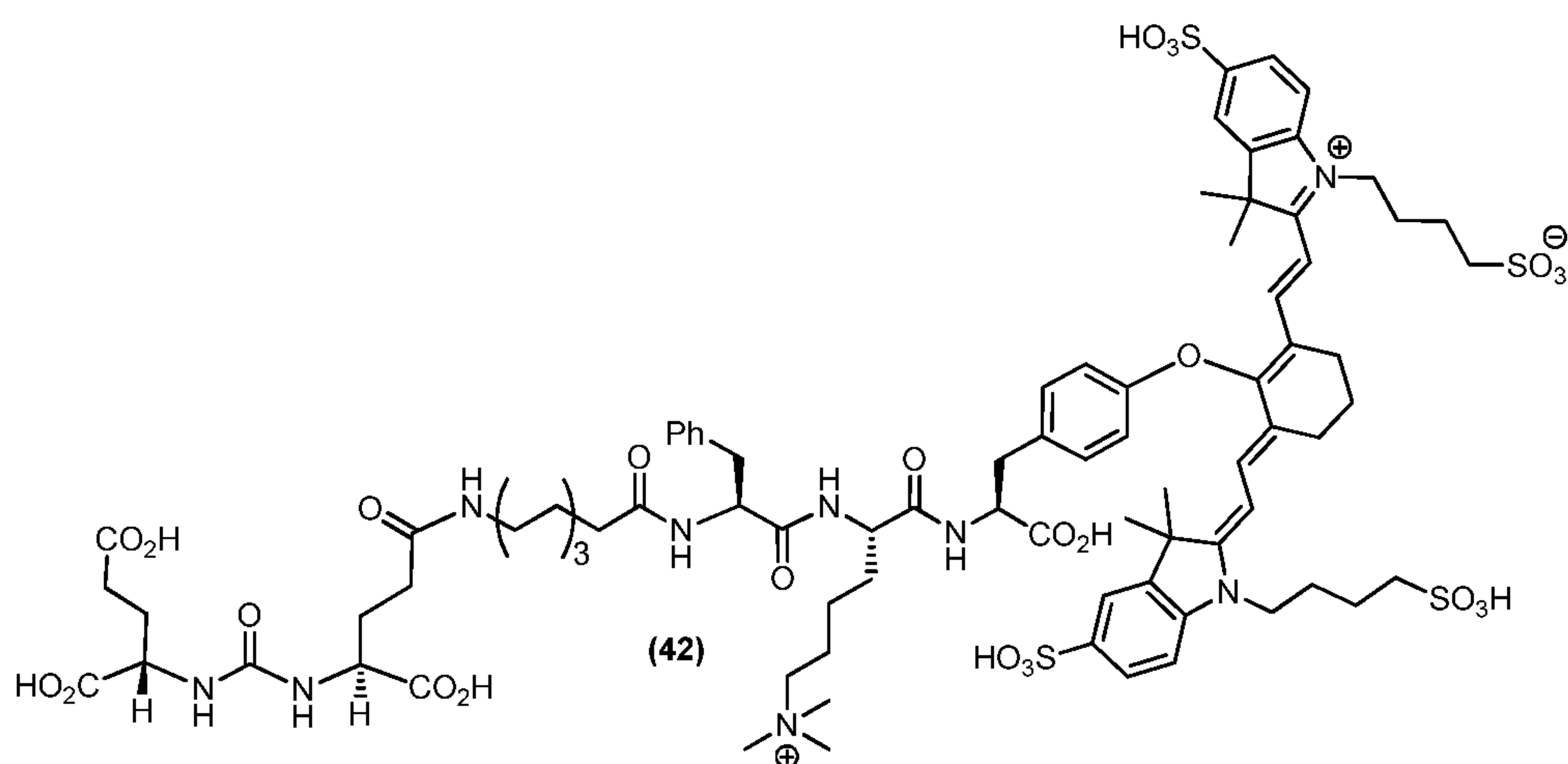
[00152] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



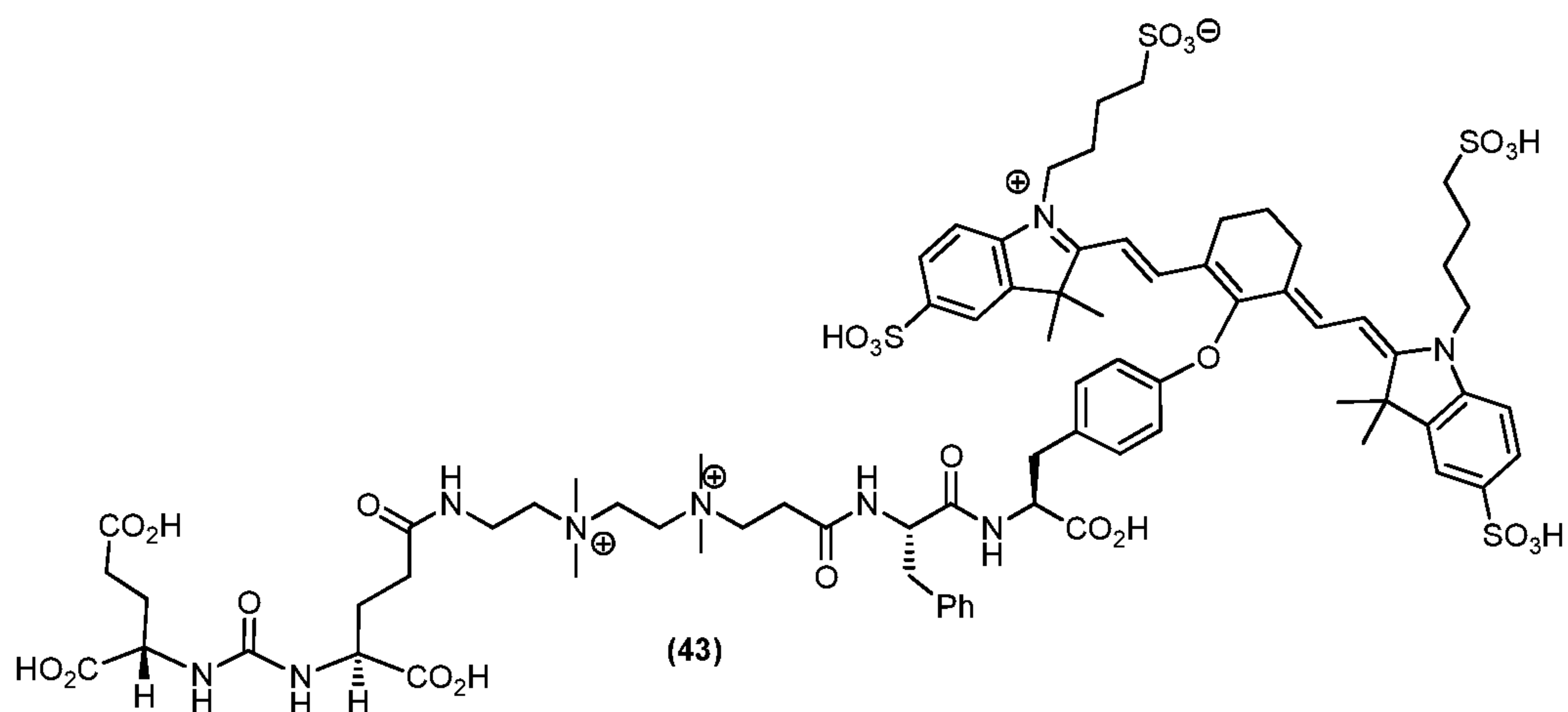
[00153] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



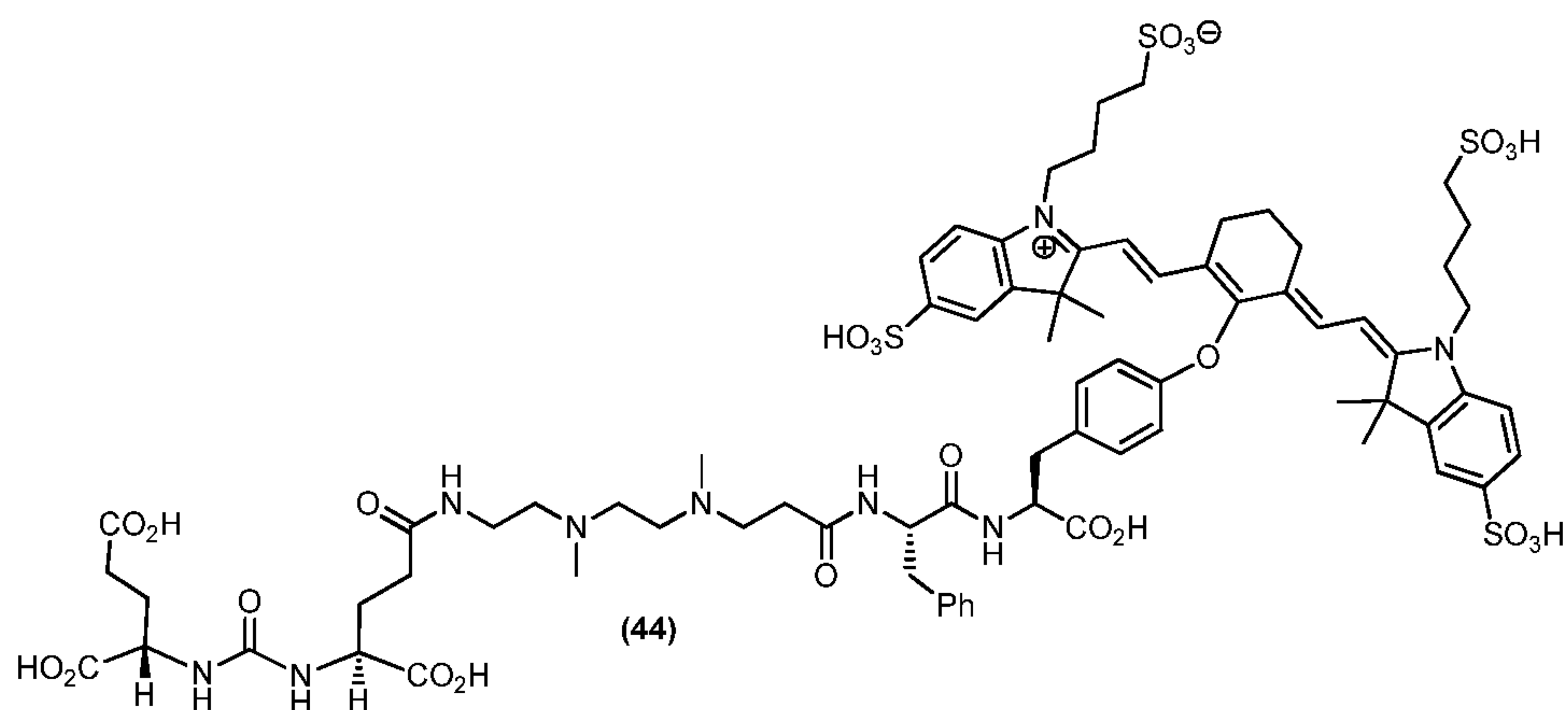
[00154] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



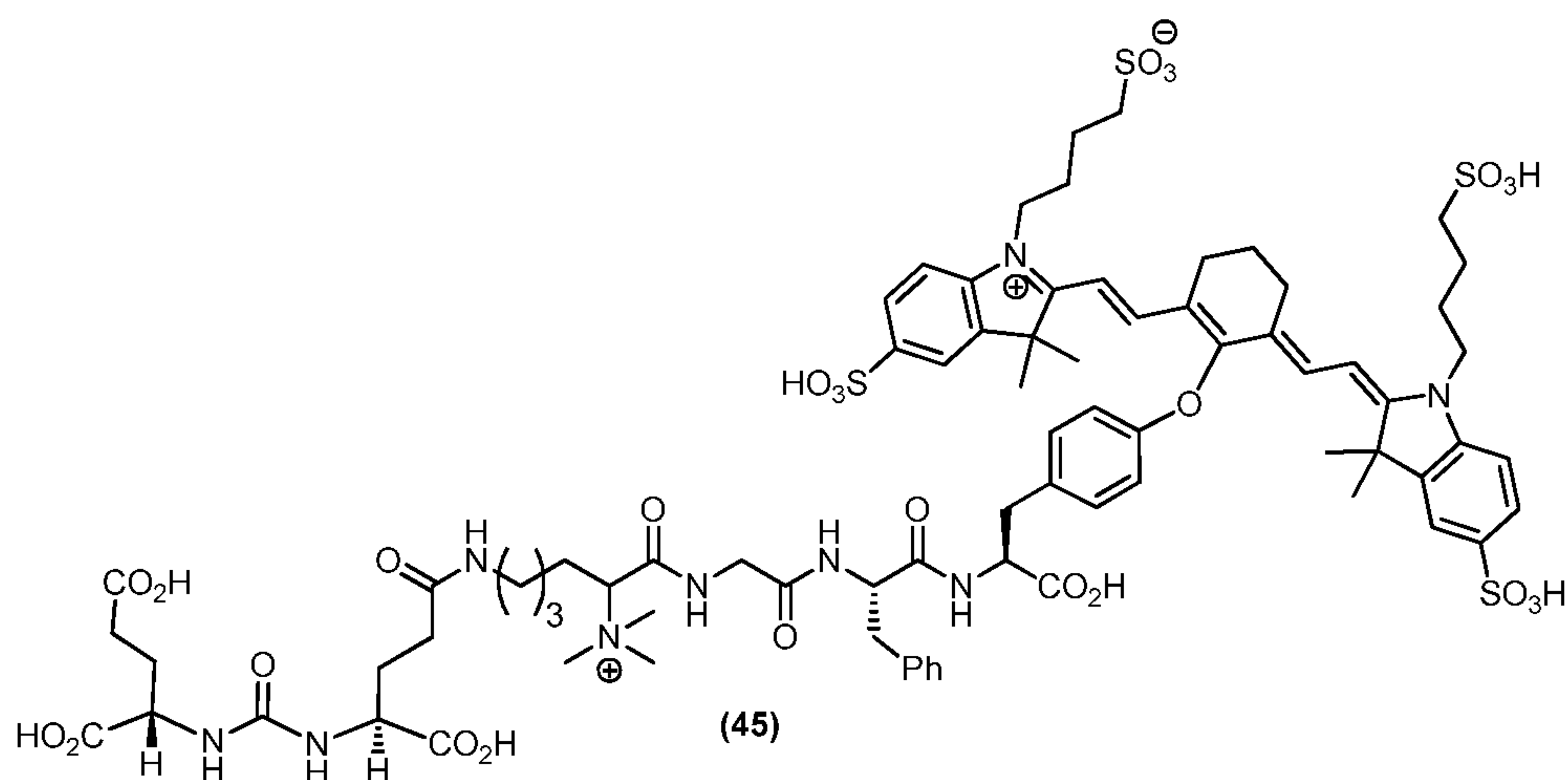
[00155] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



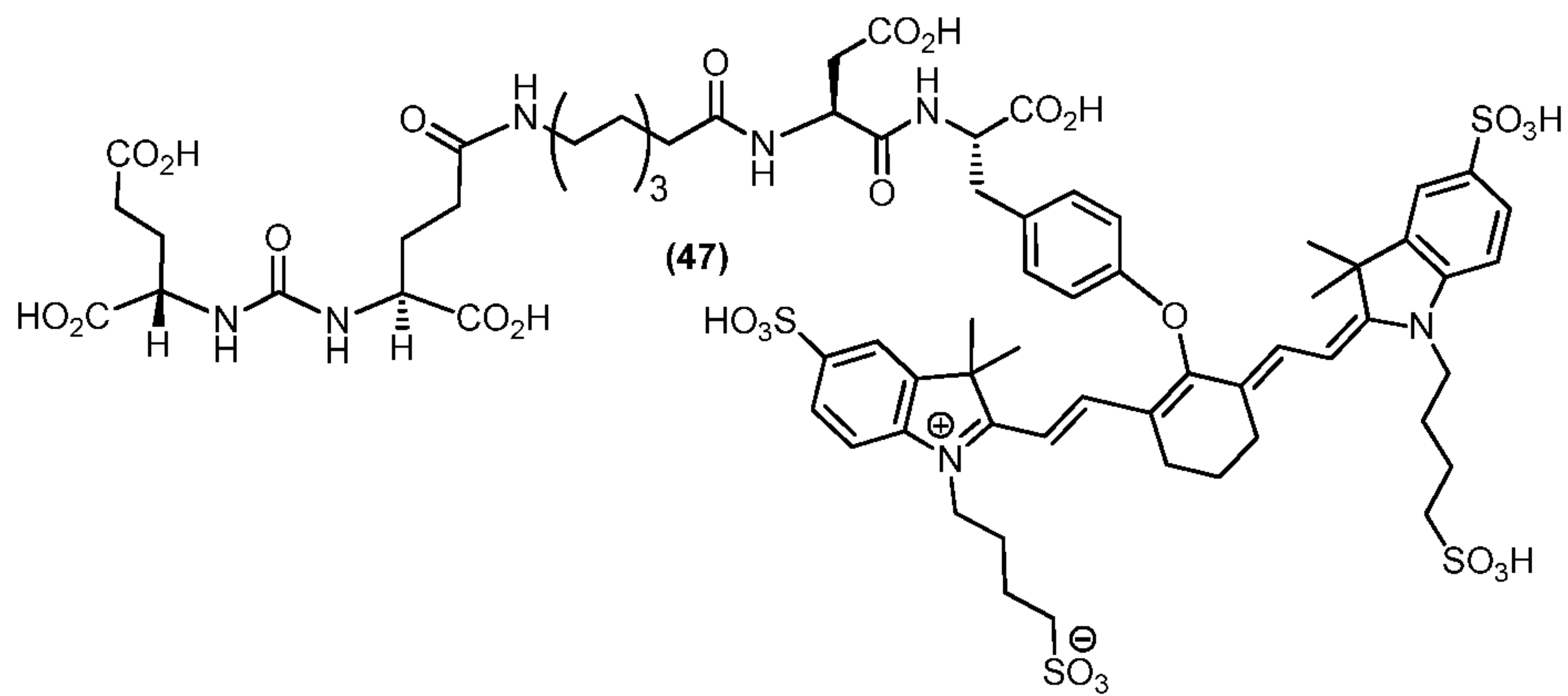
[00156] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



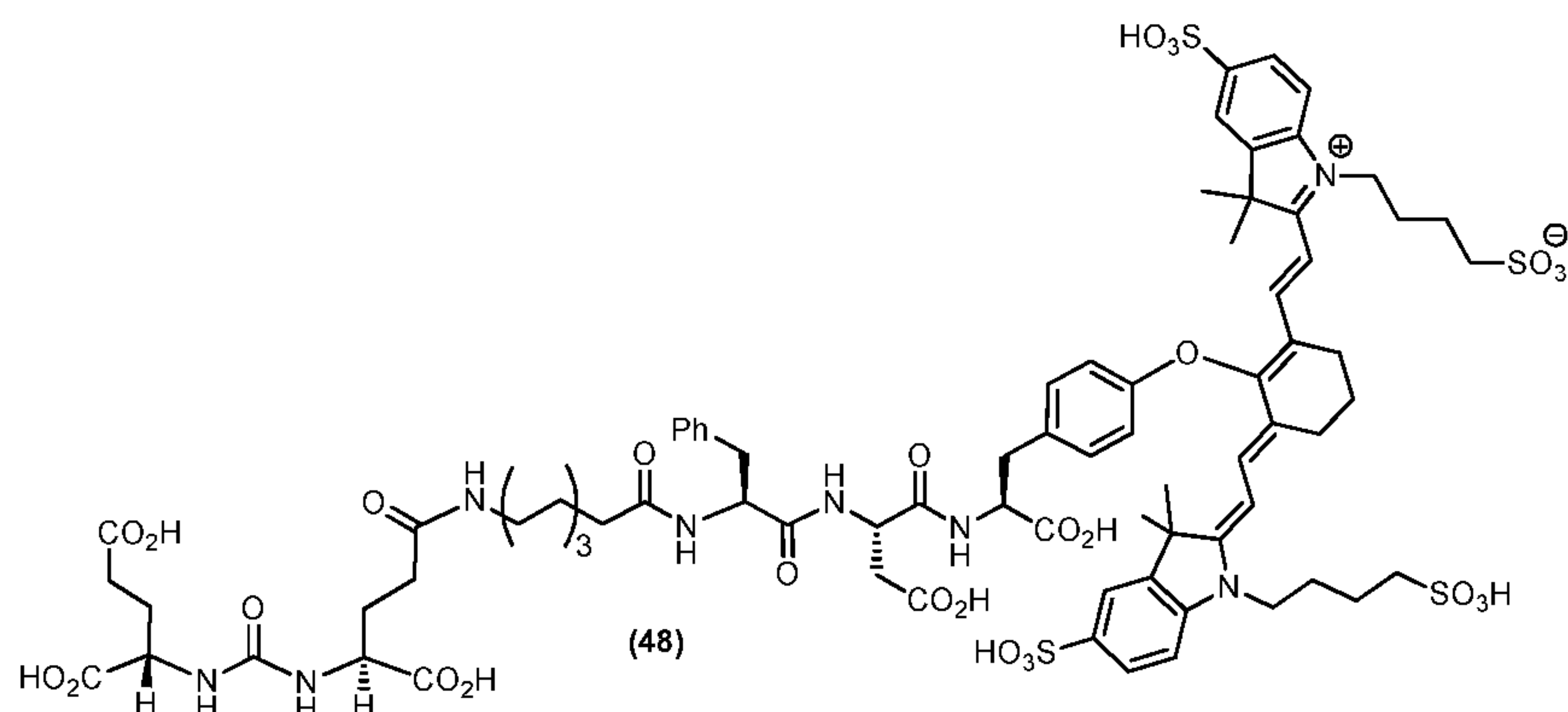
[00157] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



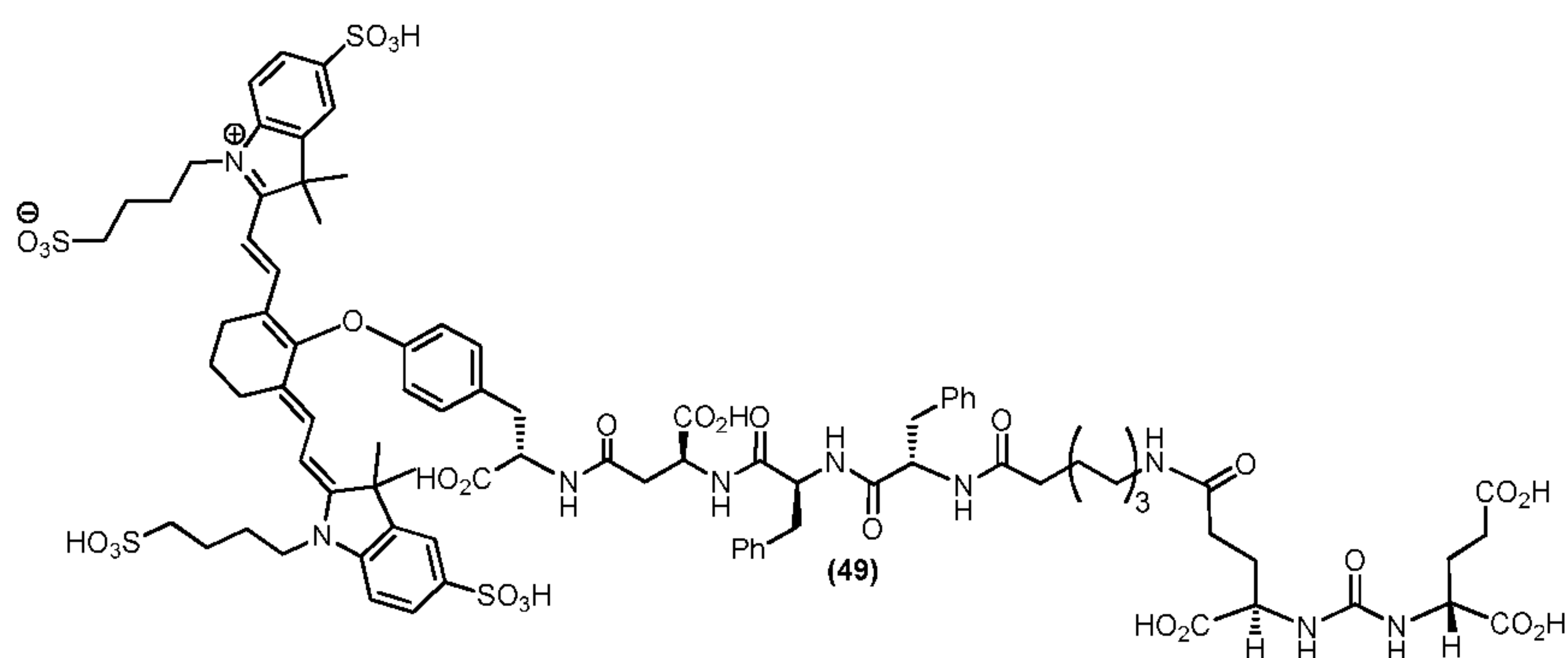
[00158] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



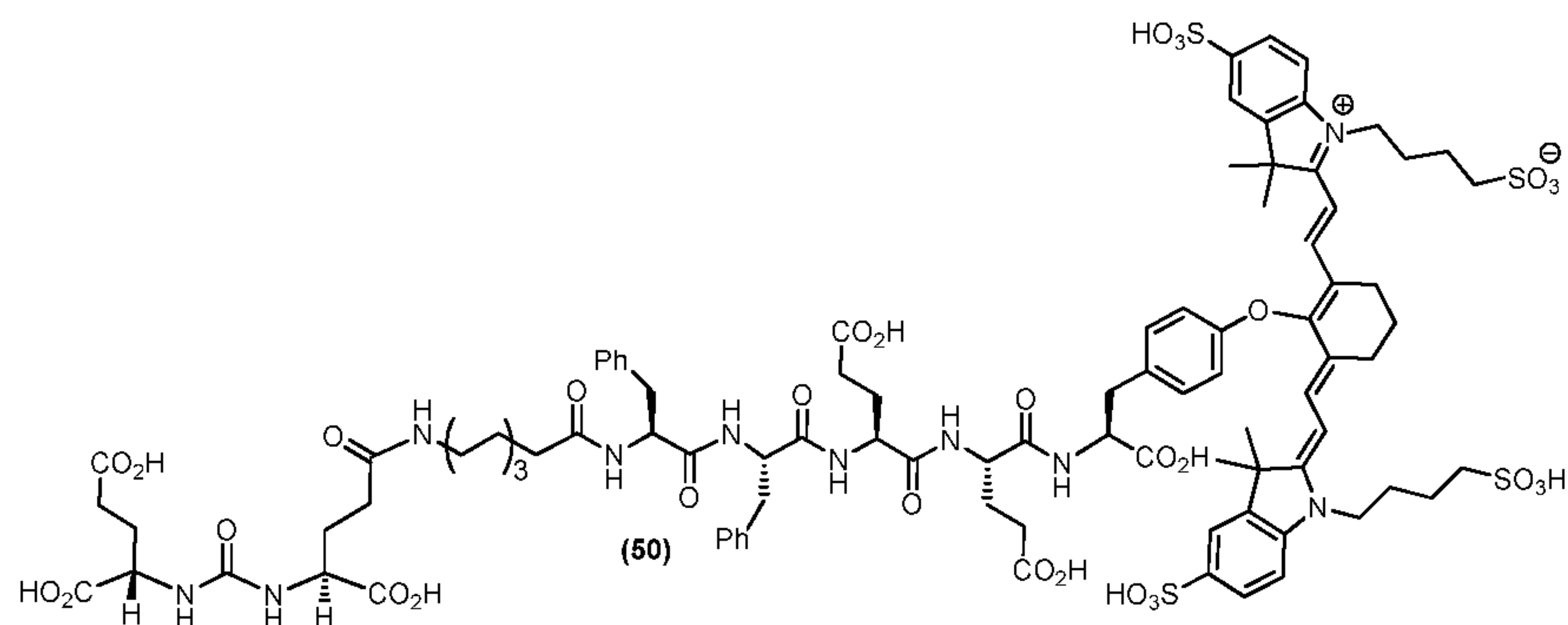
[00159] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



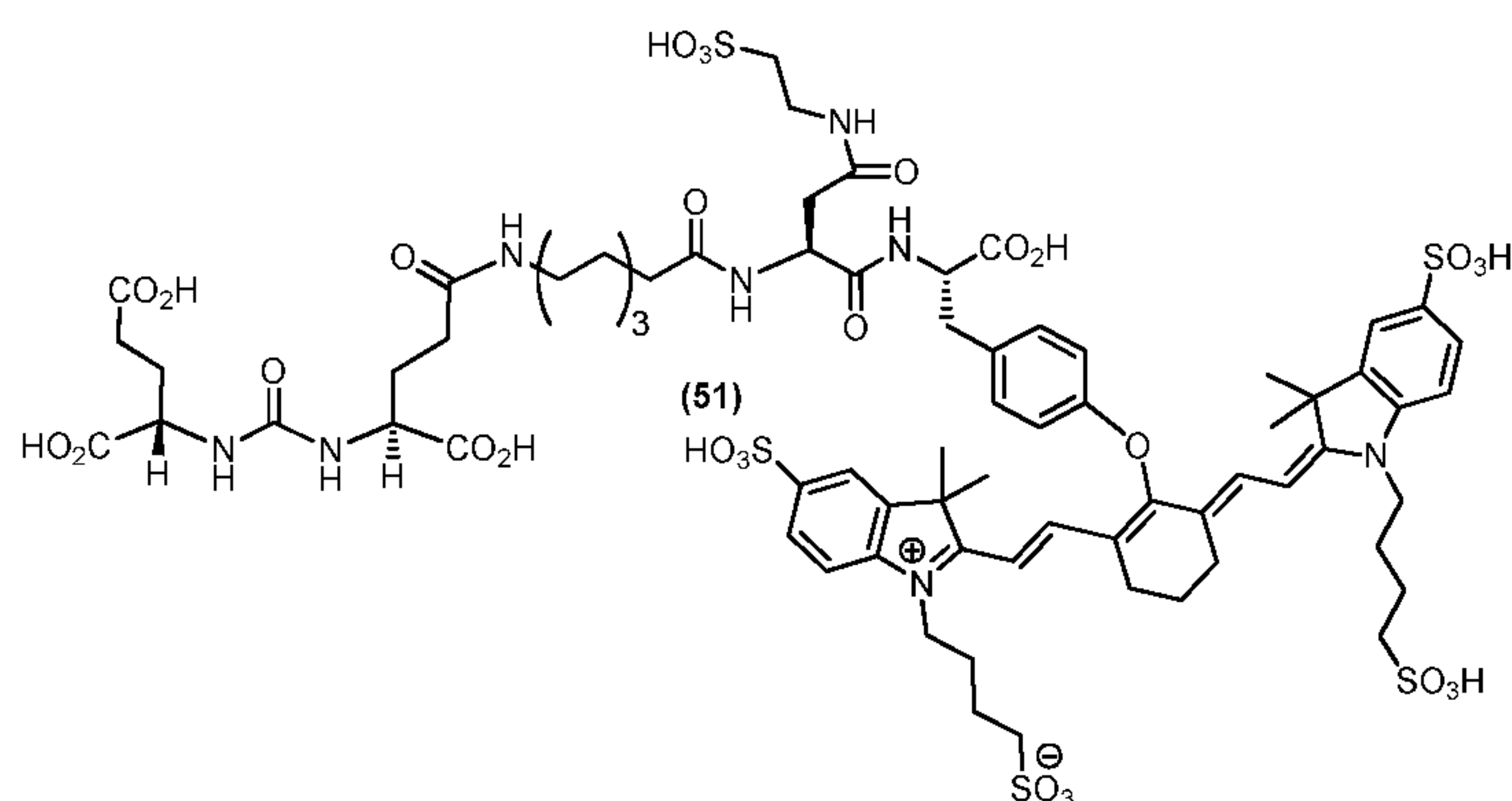
[00160] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



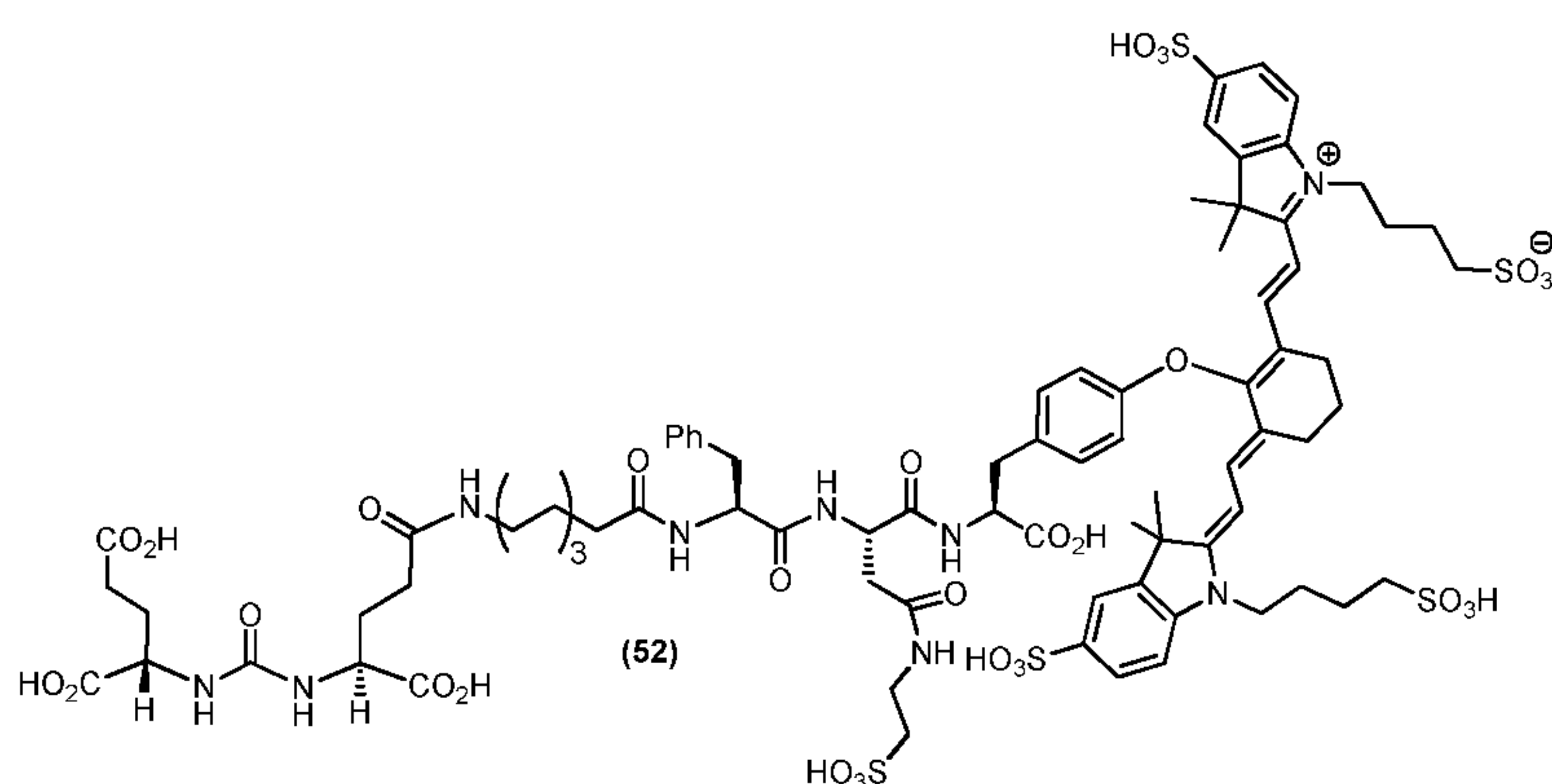
[00161] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



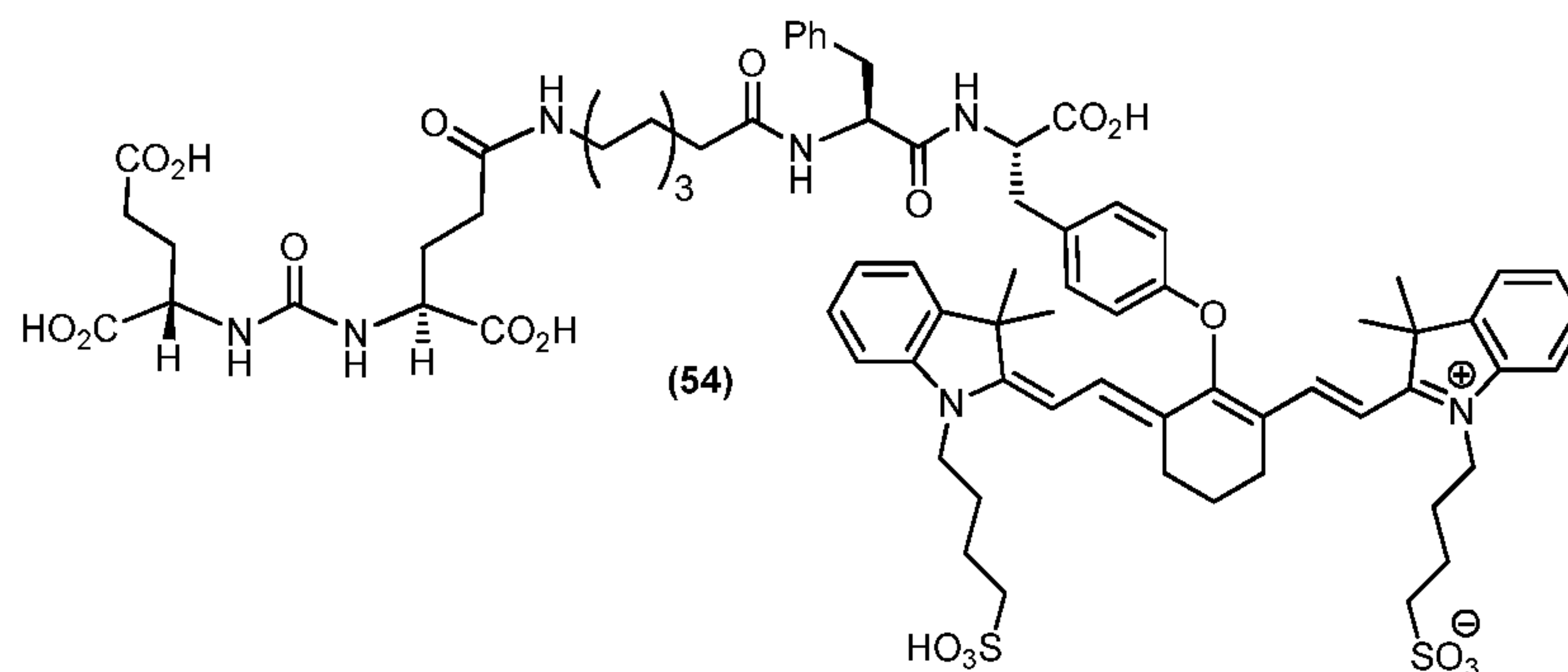
[00162] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



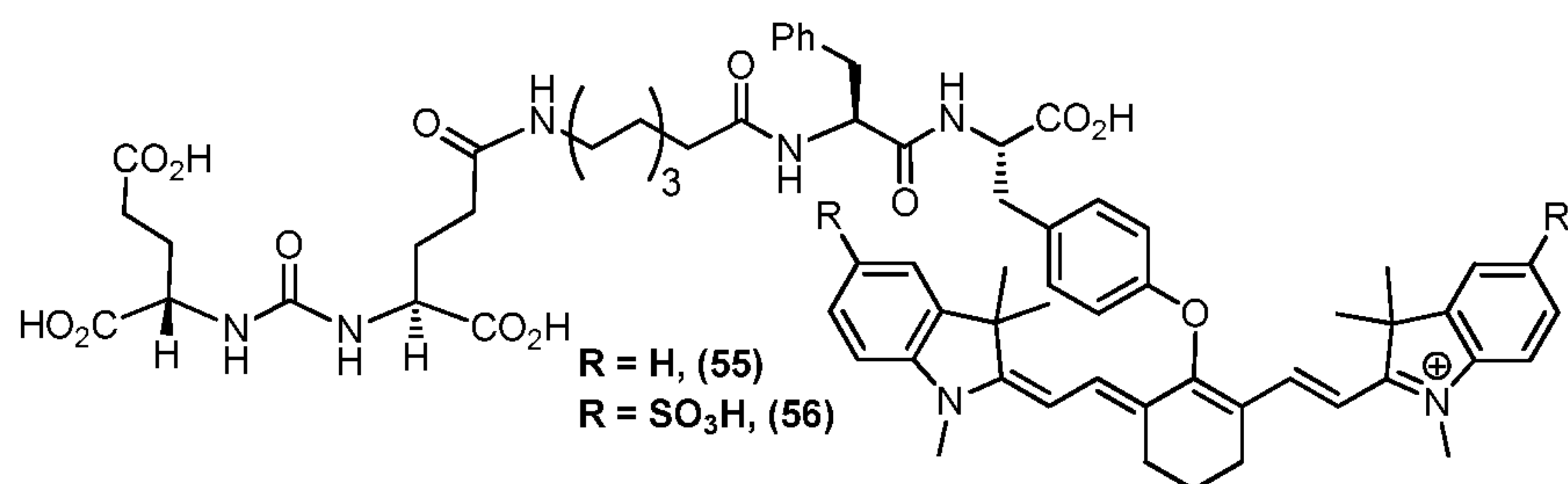
[00163] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



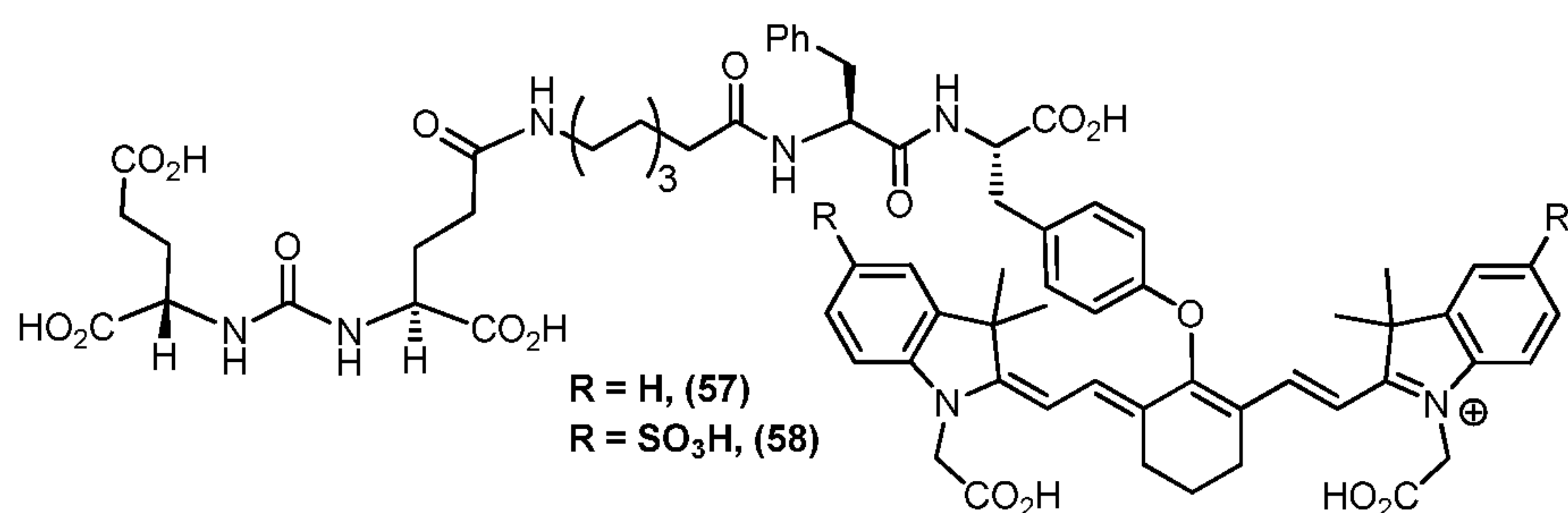
[00164] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



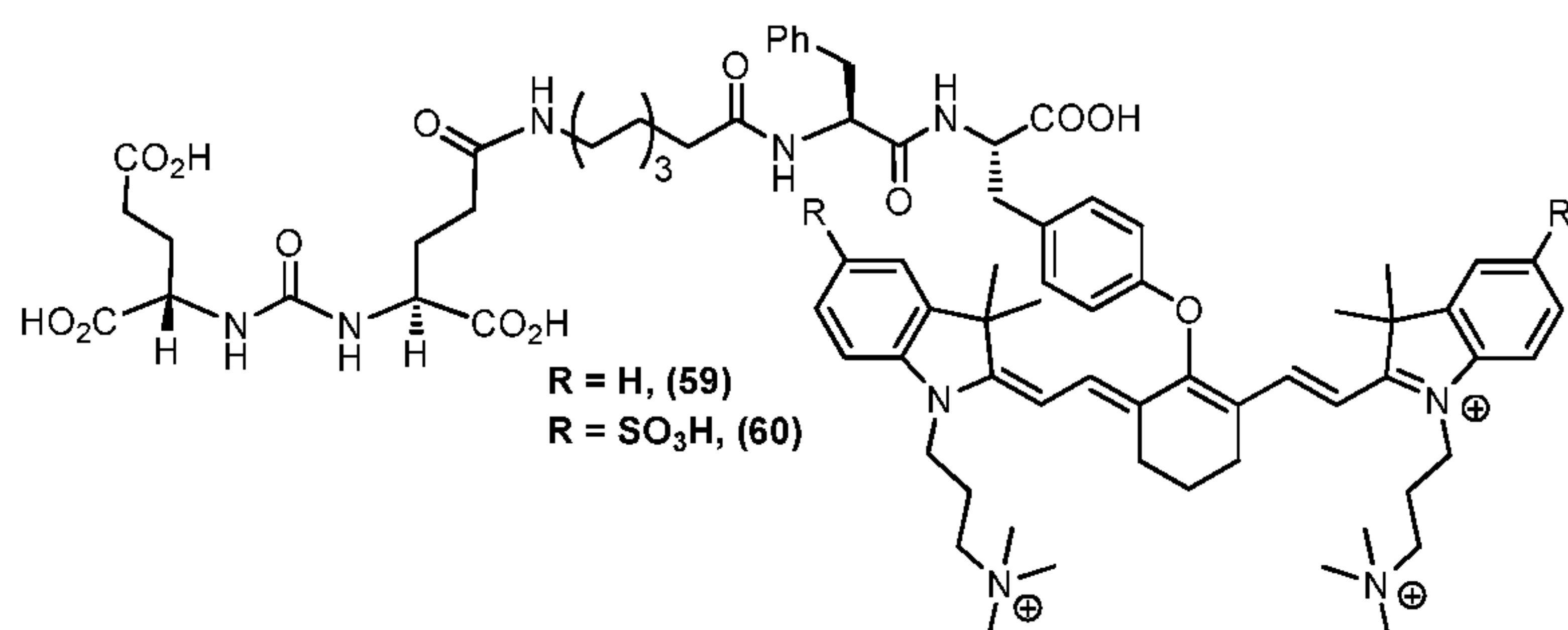
[00165] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



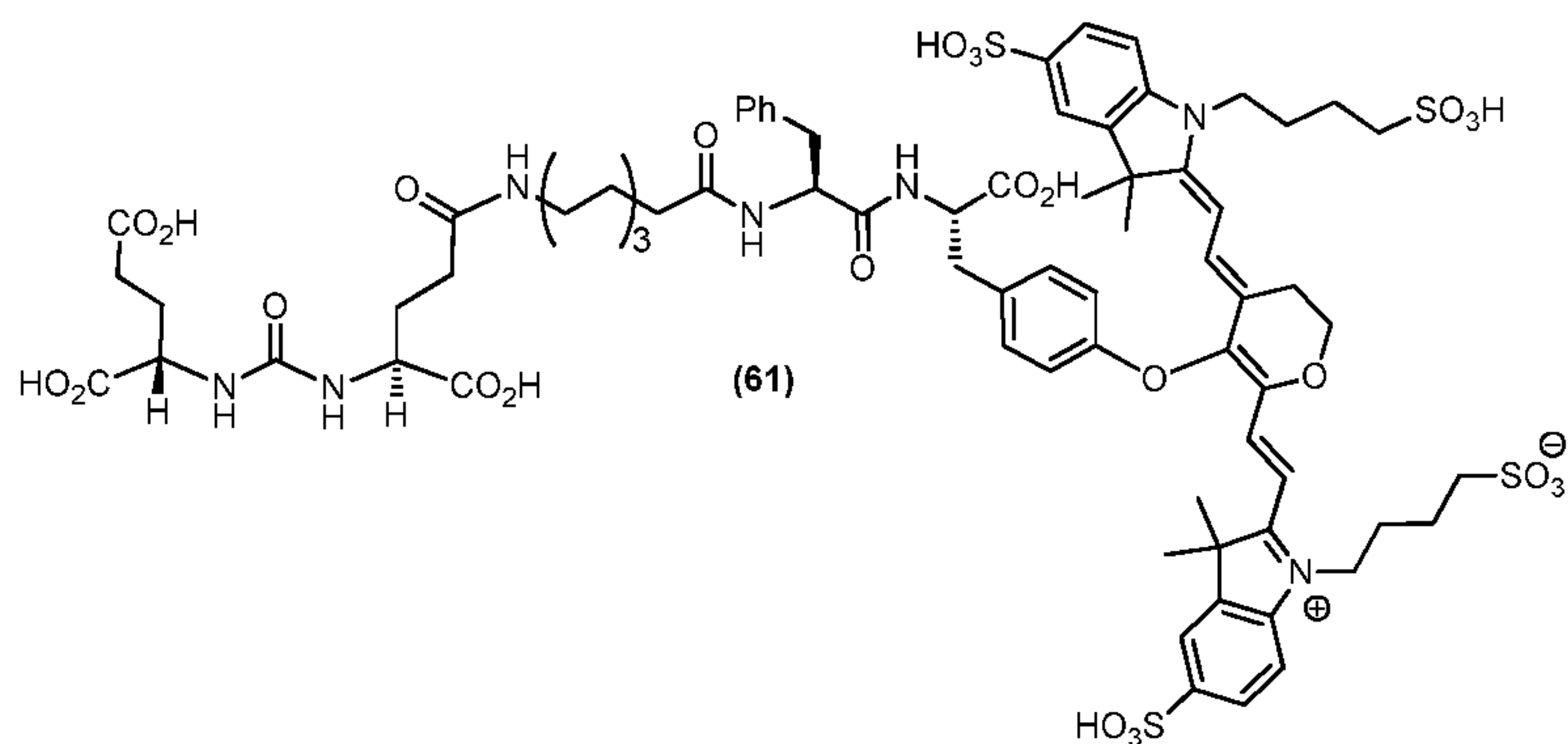
[00166] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



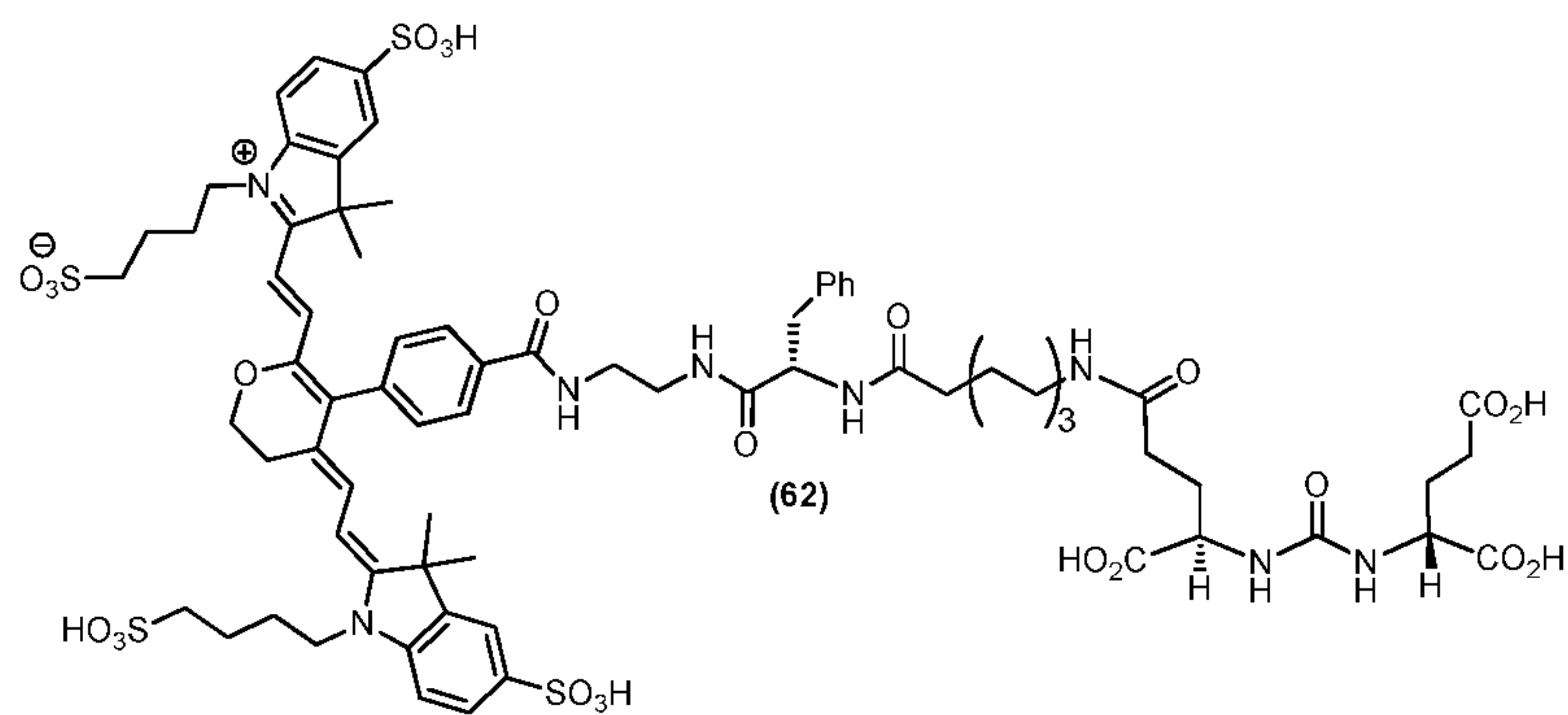
[00167] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



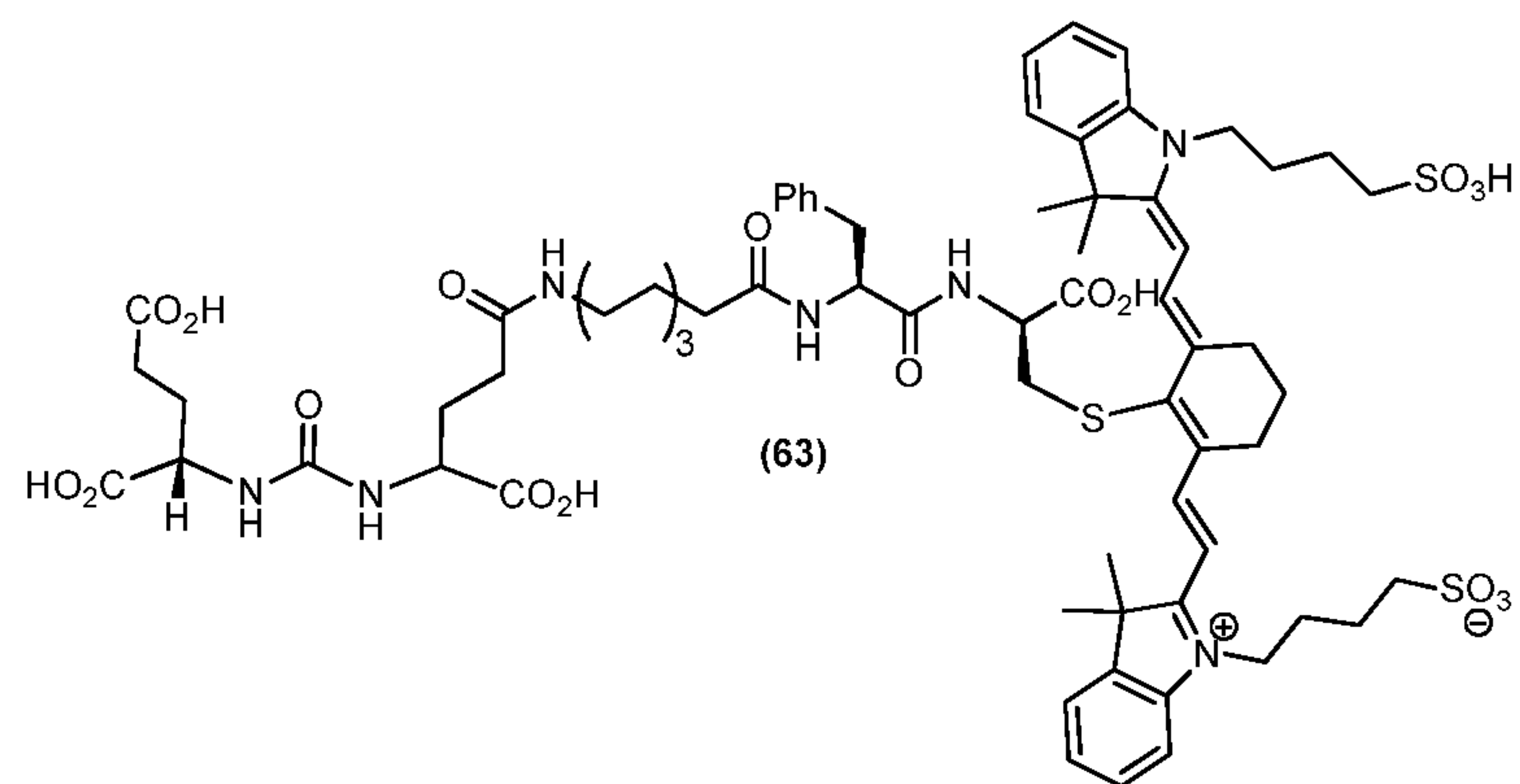
[00168] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



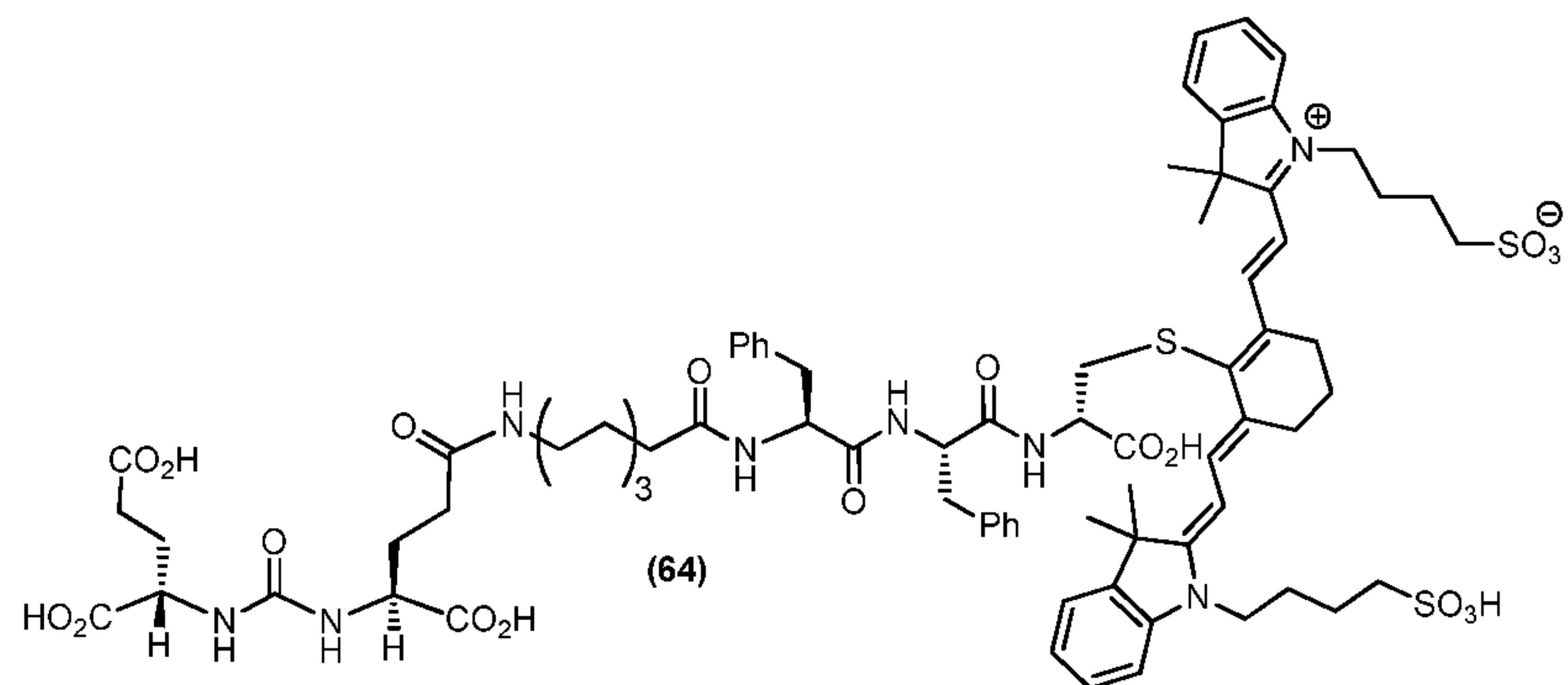
[00169] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



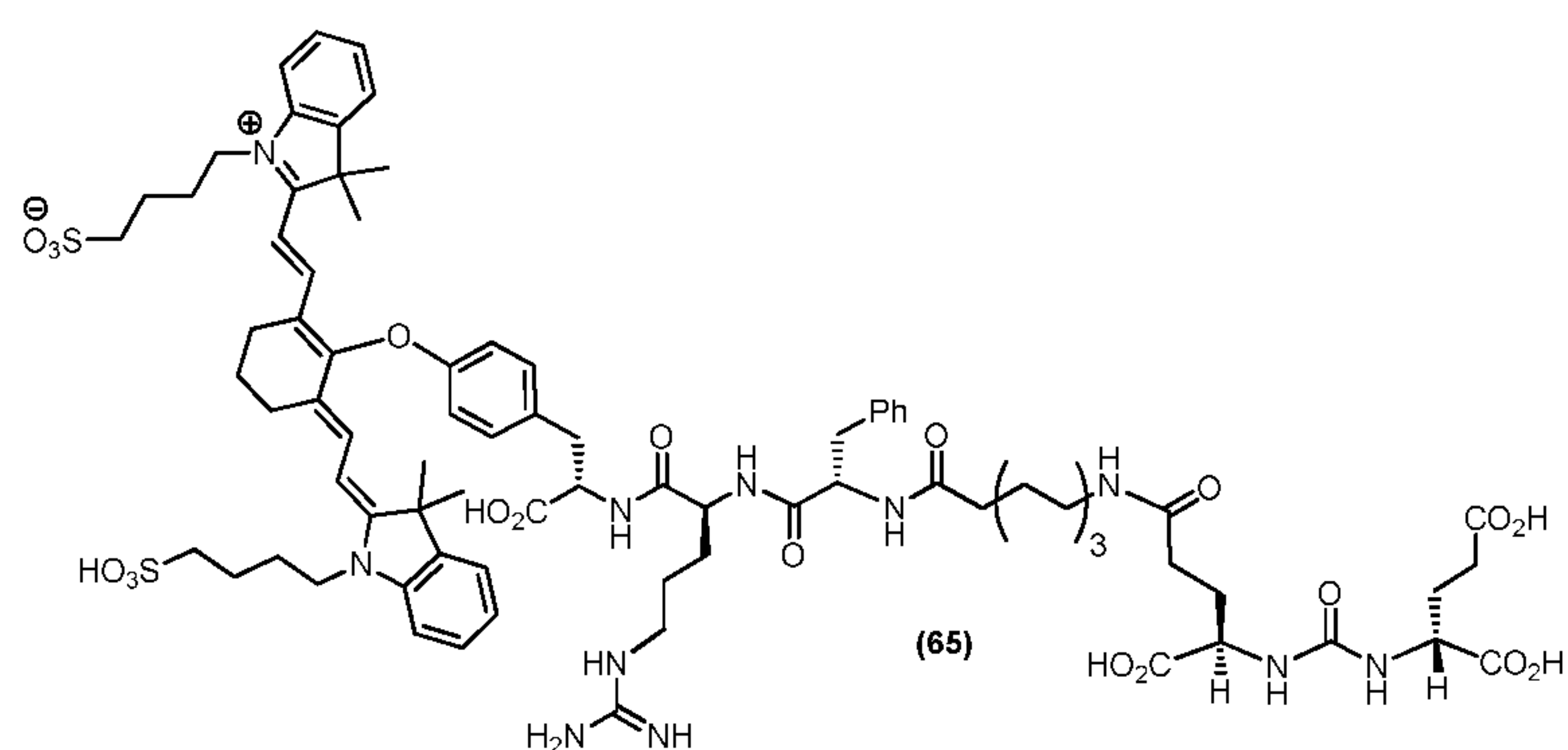
[00170] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



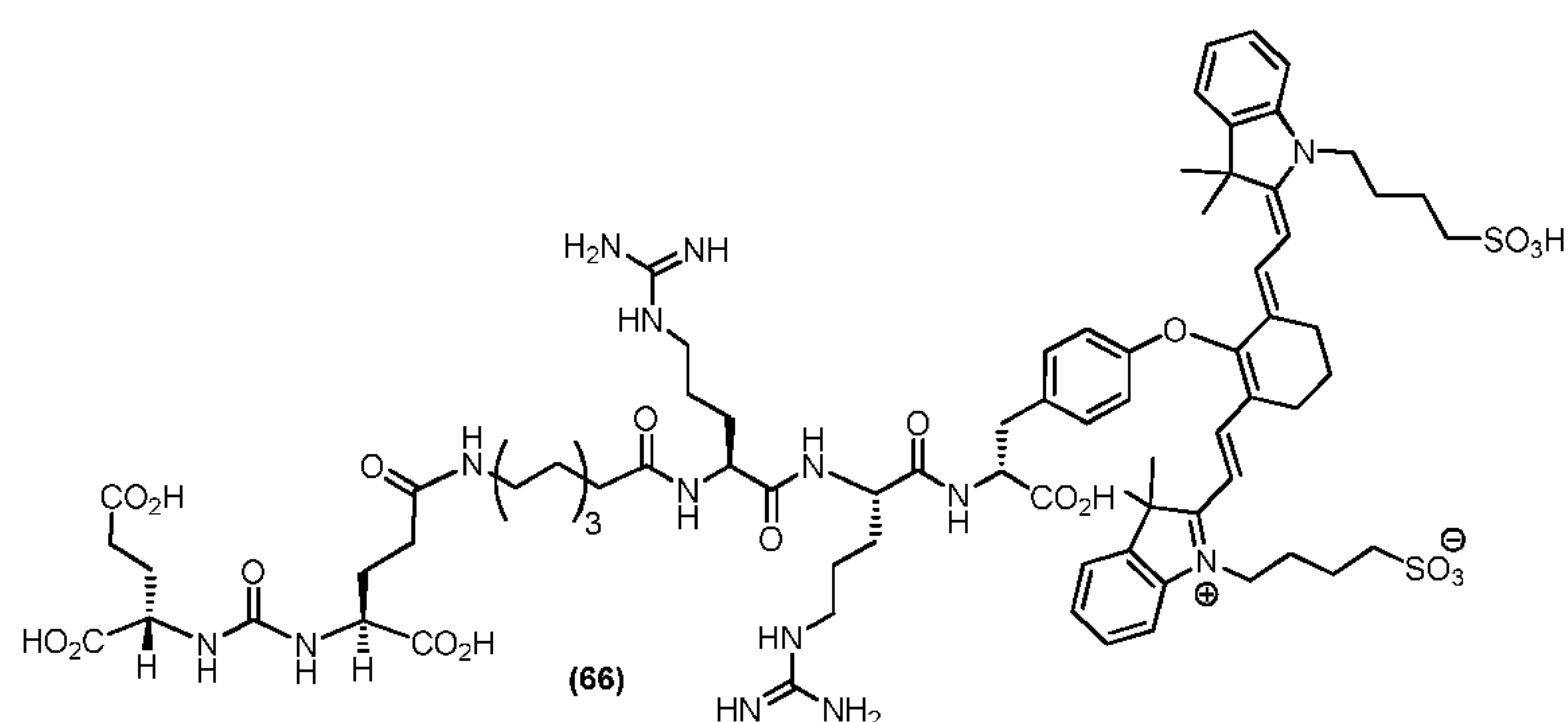
[00171] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



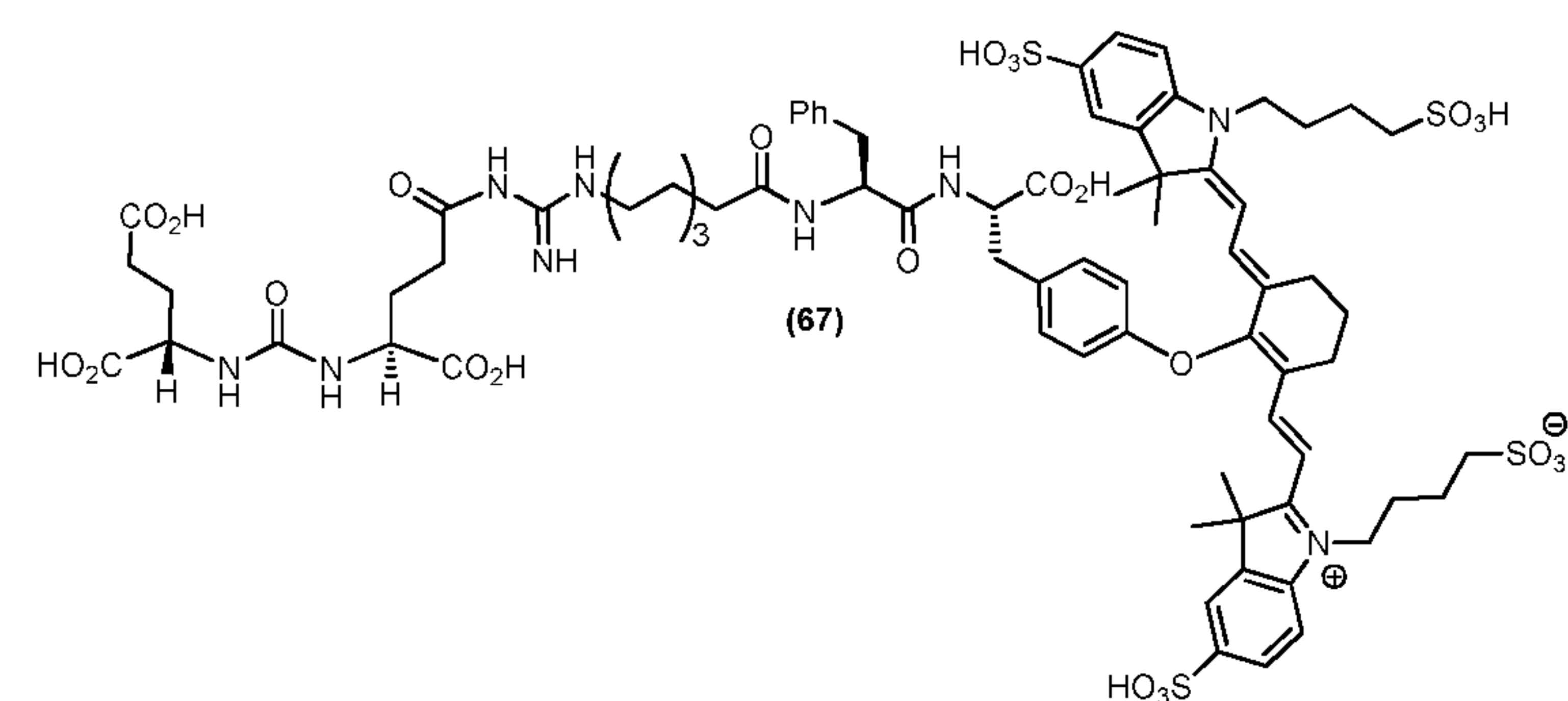
[00172] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



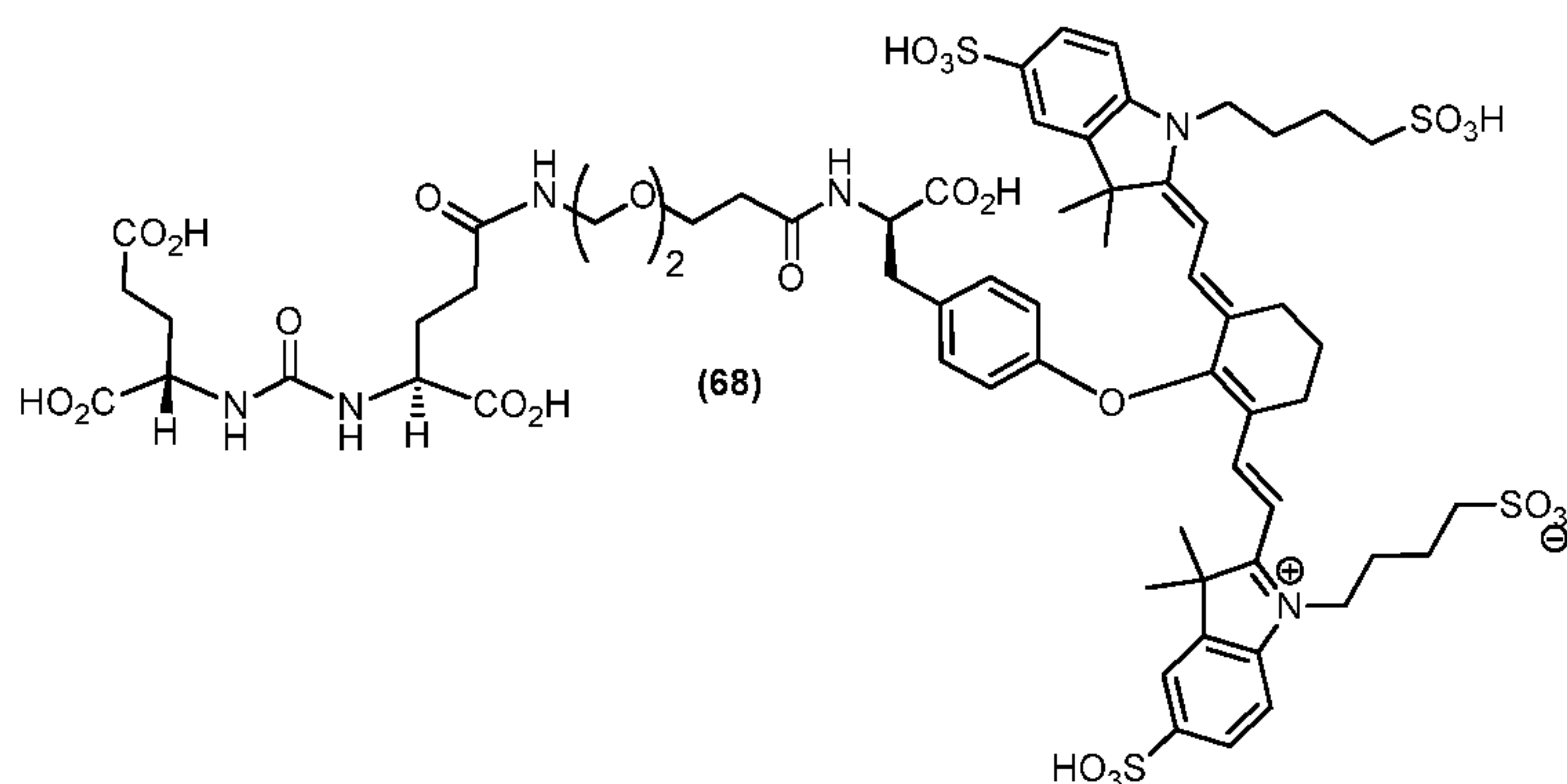
[00173] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



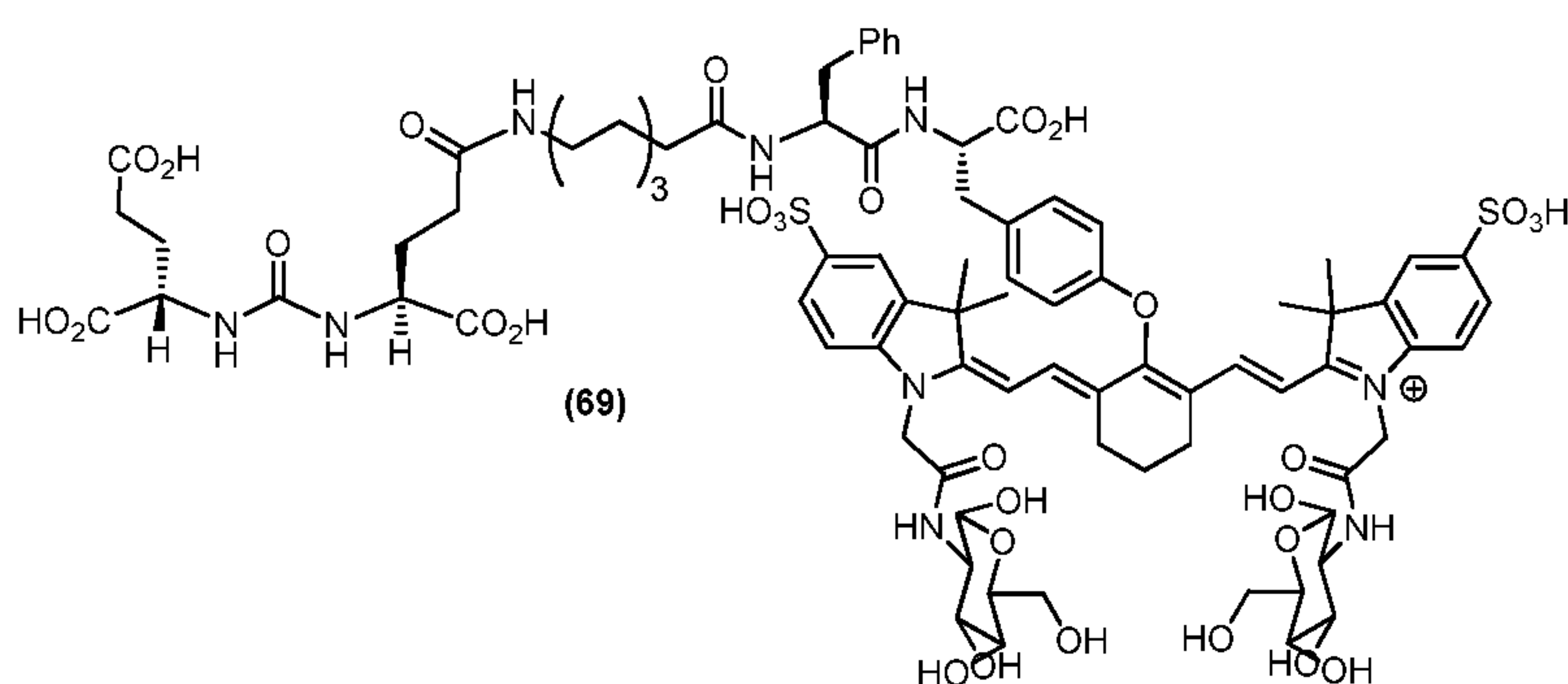
[00174] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



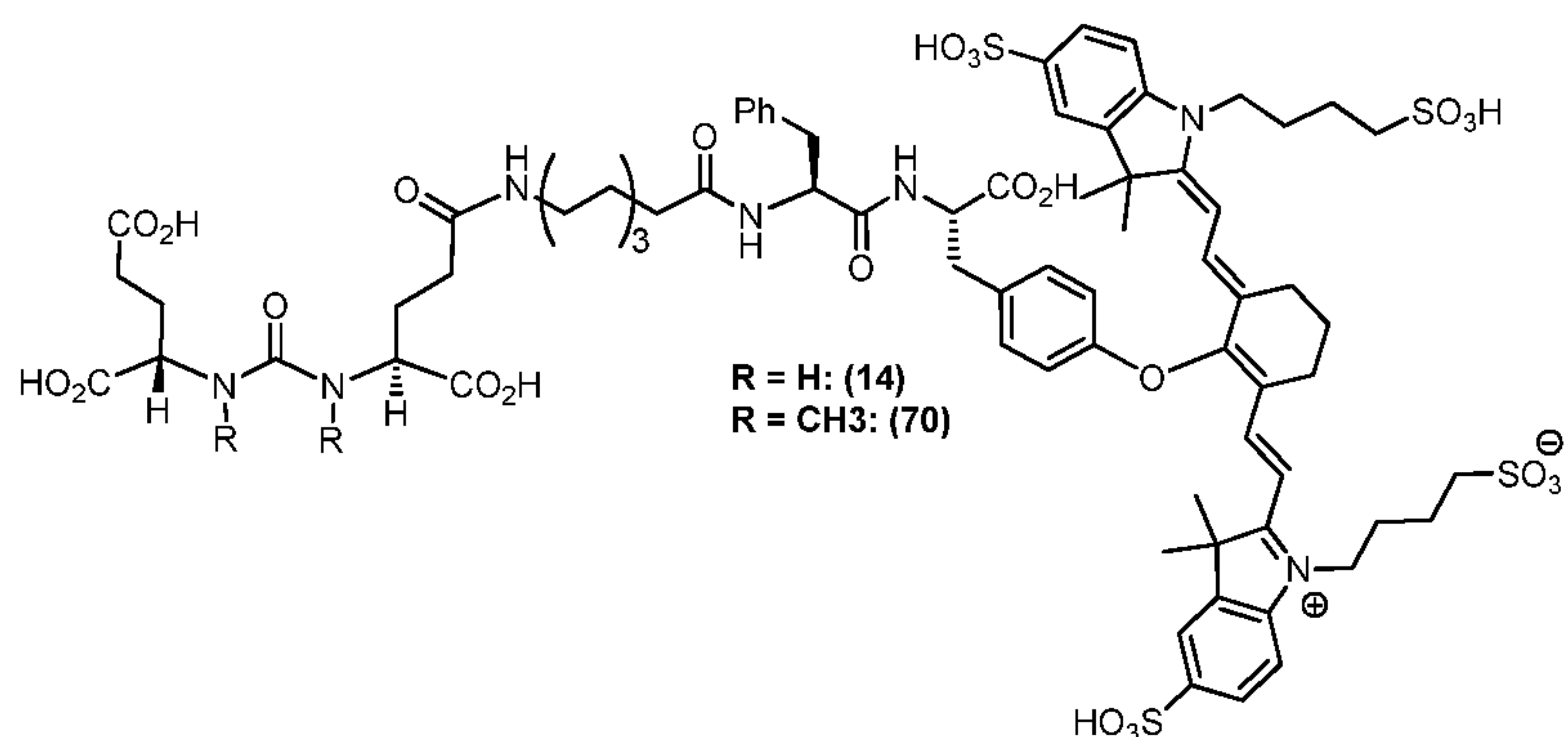
[00175] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



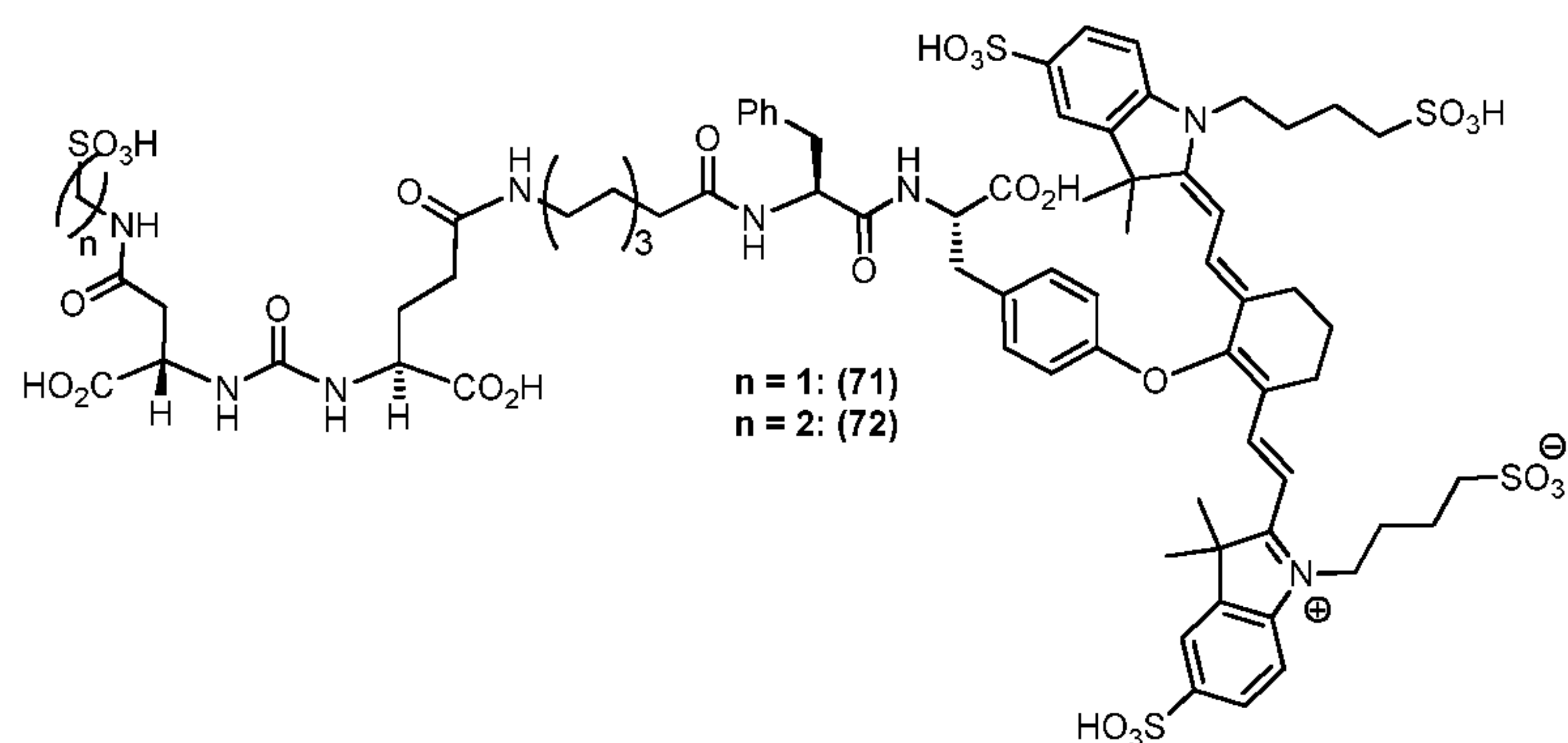
[00176] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



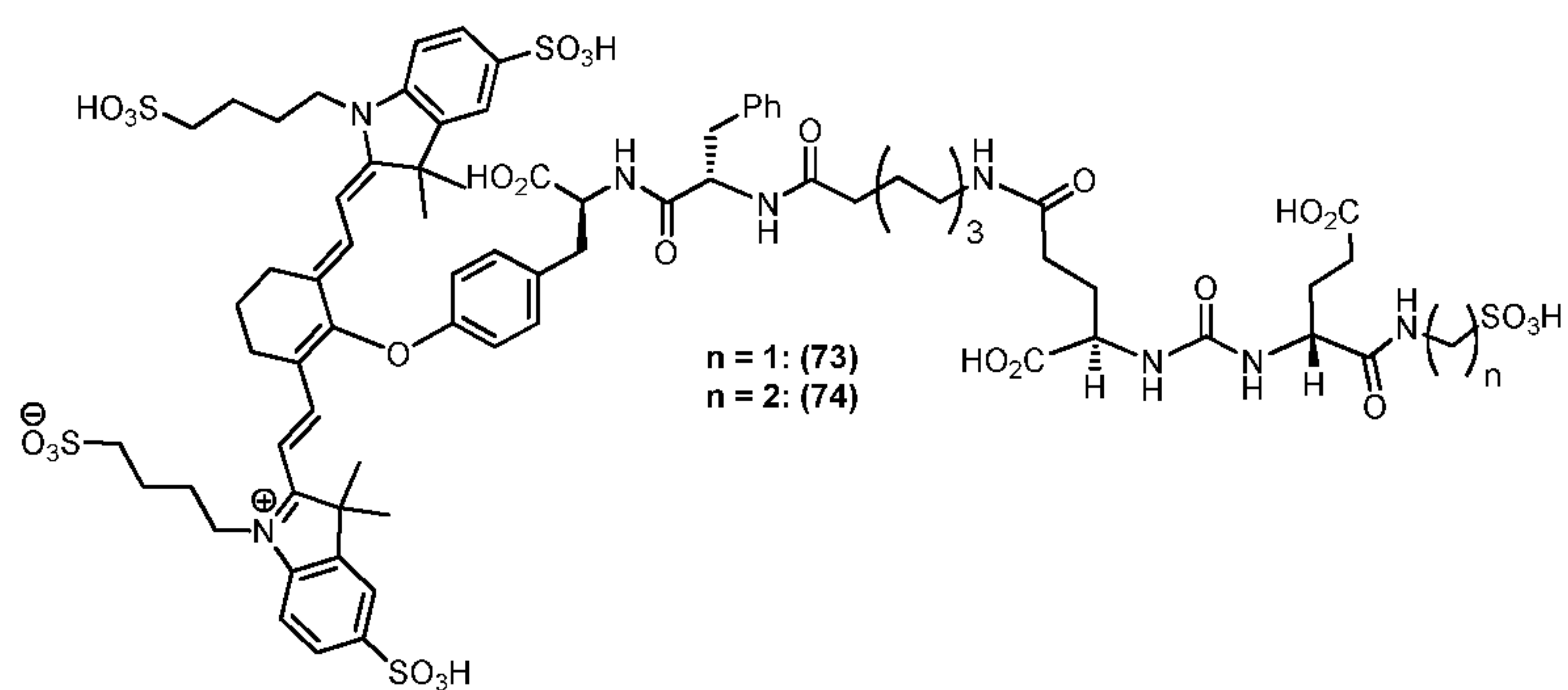
[00177] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



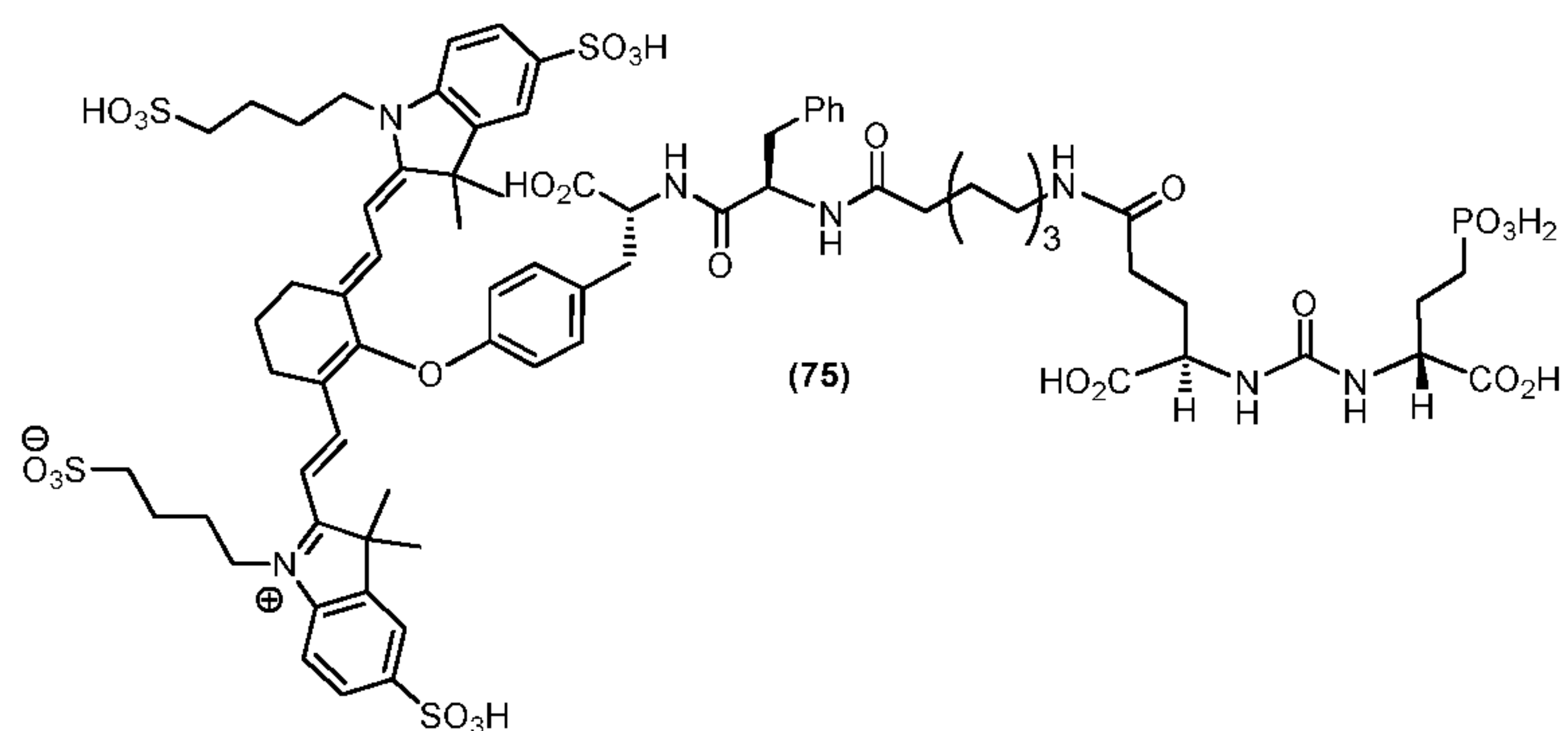
[00178] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



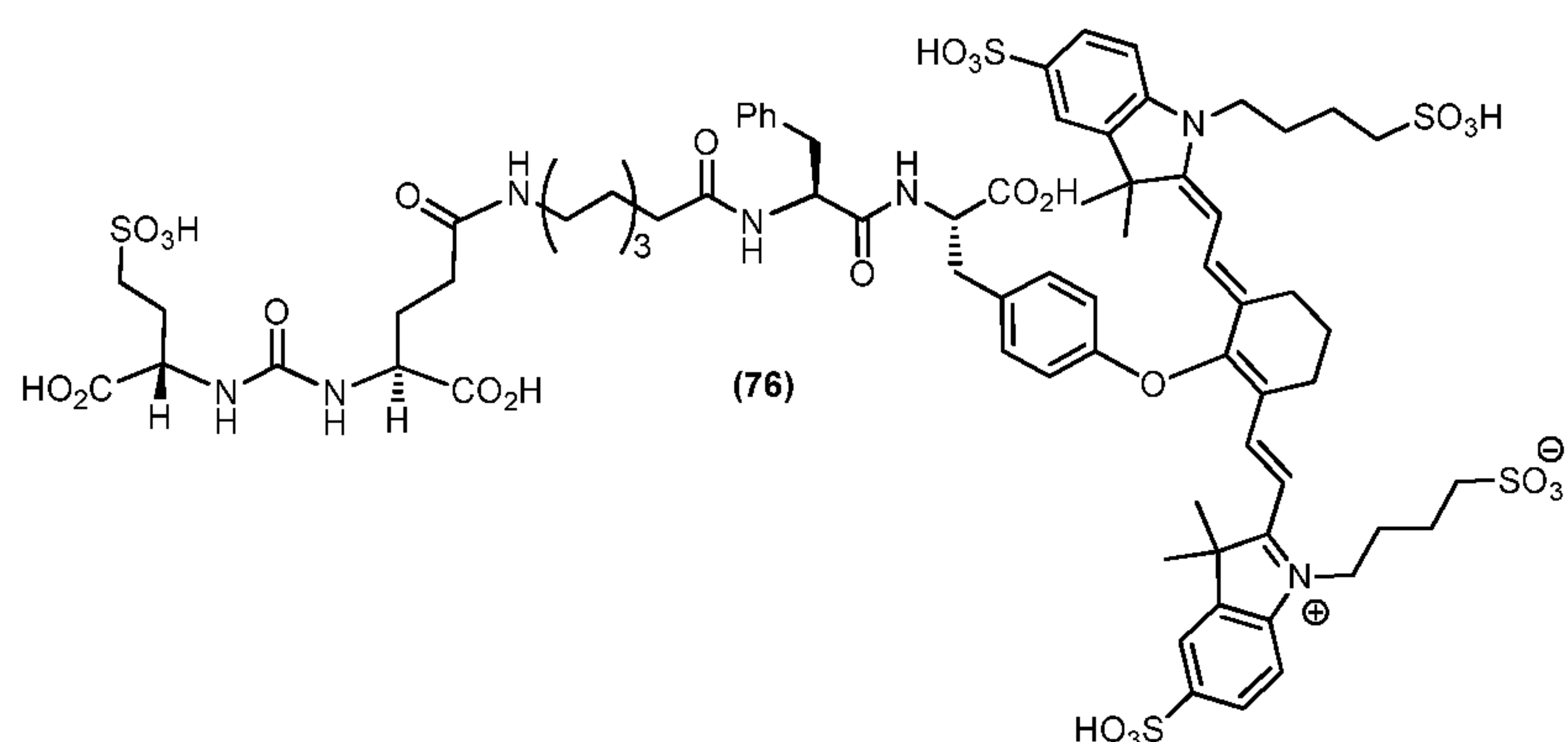
[00179] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



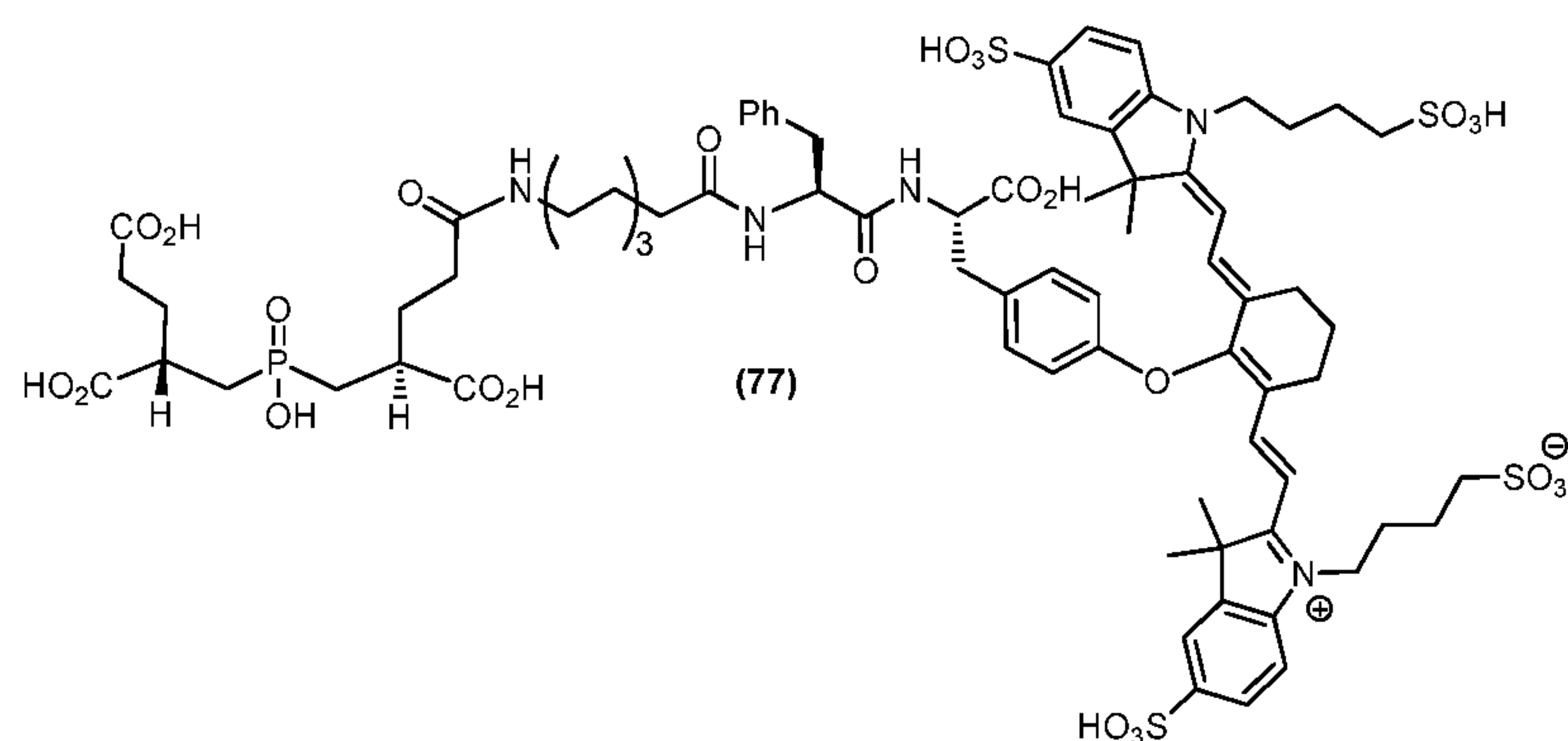
[00180] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



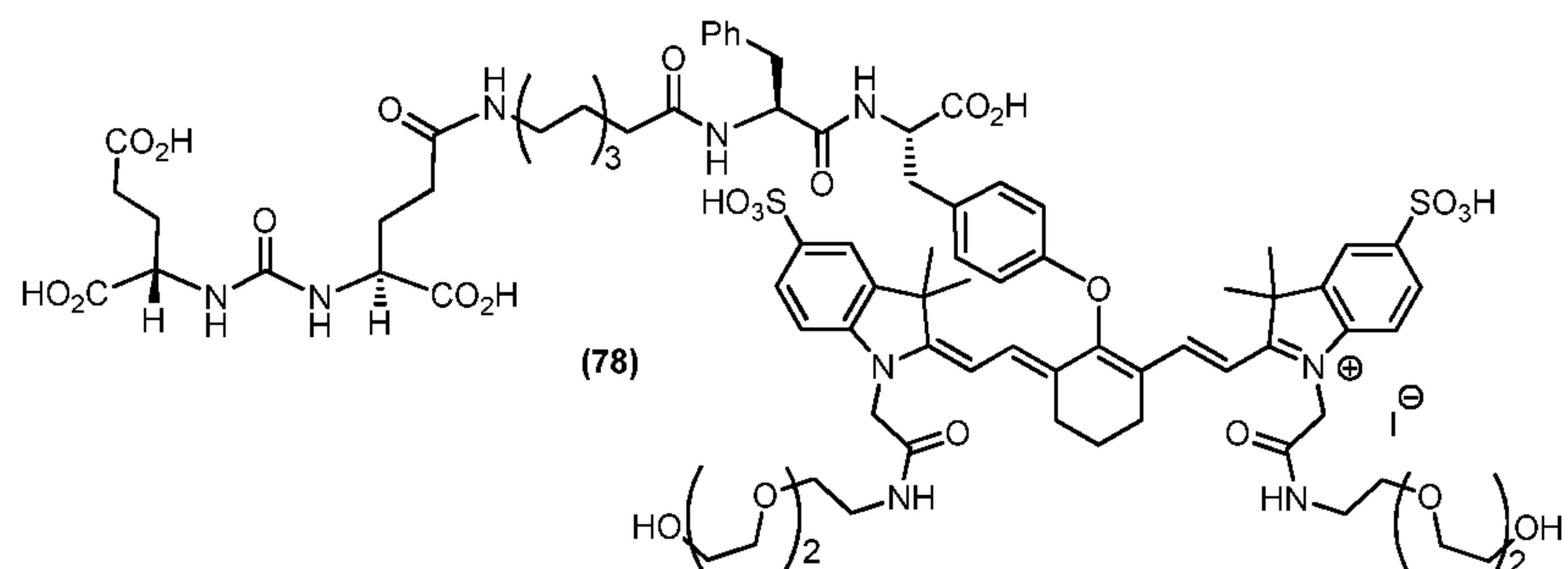
[00181] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



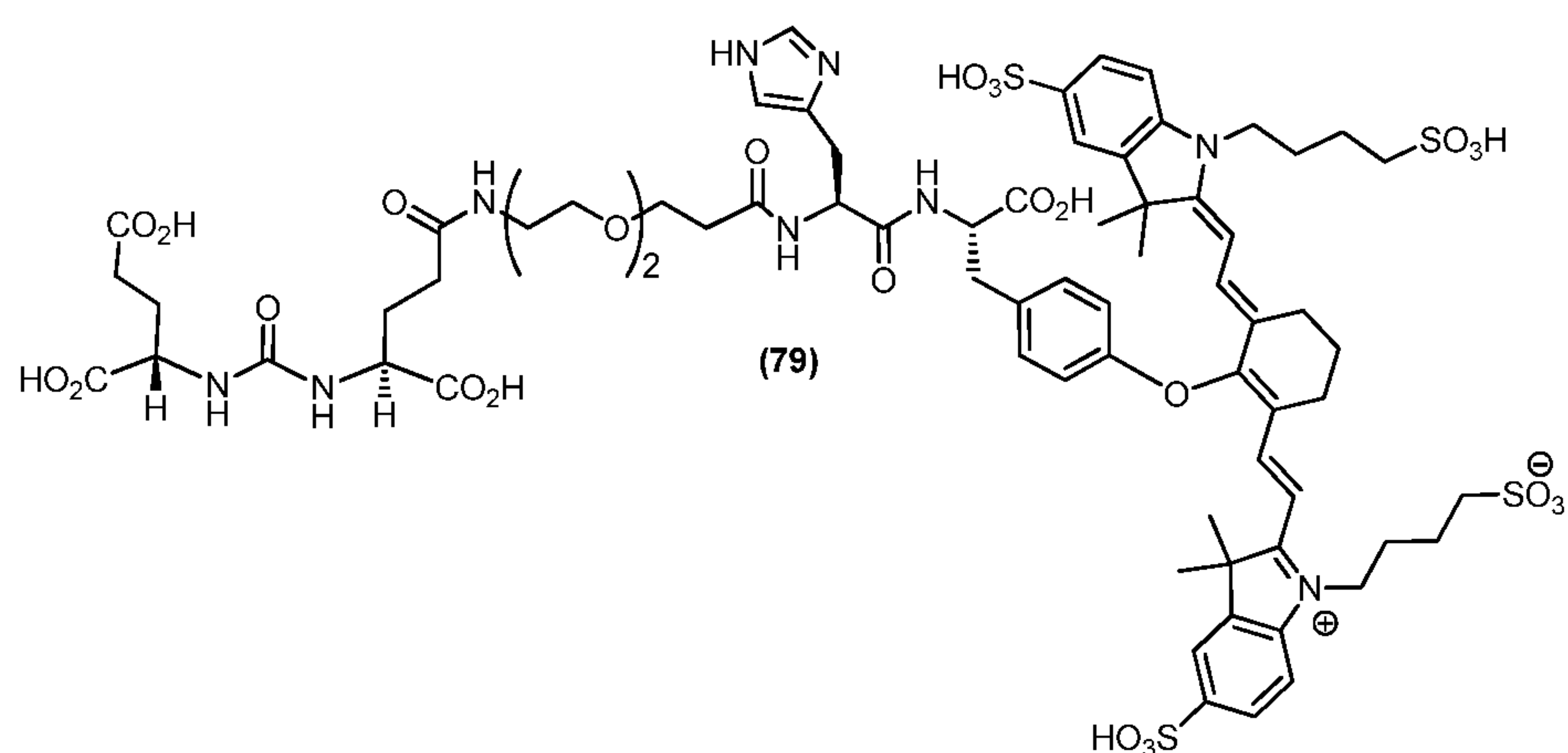
[00182] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



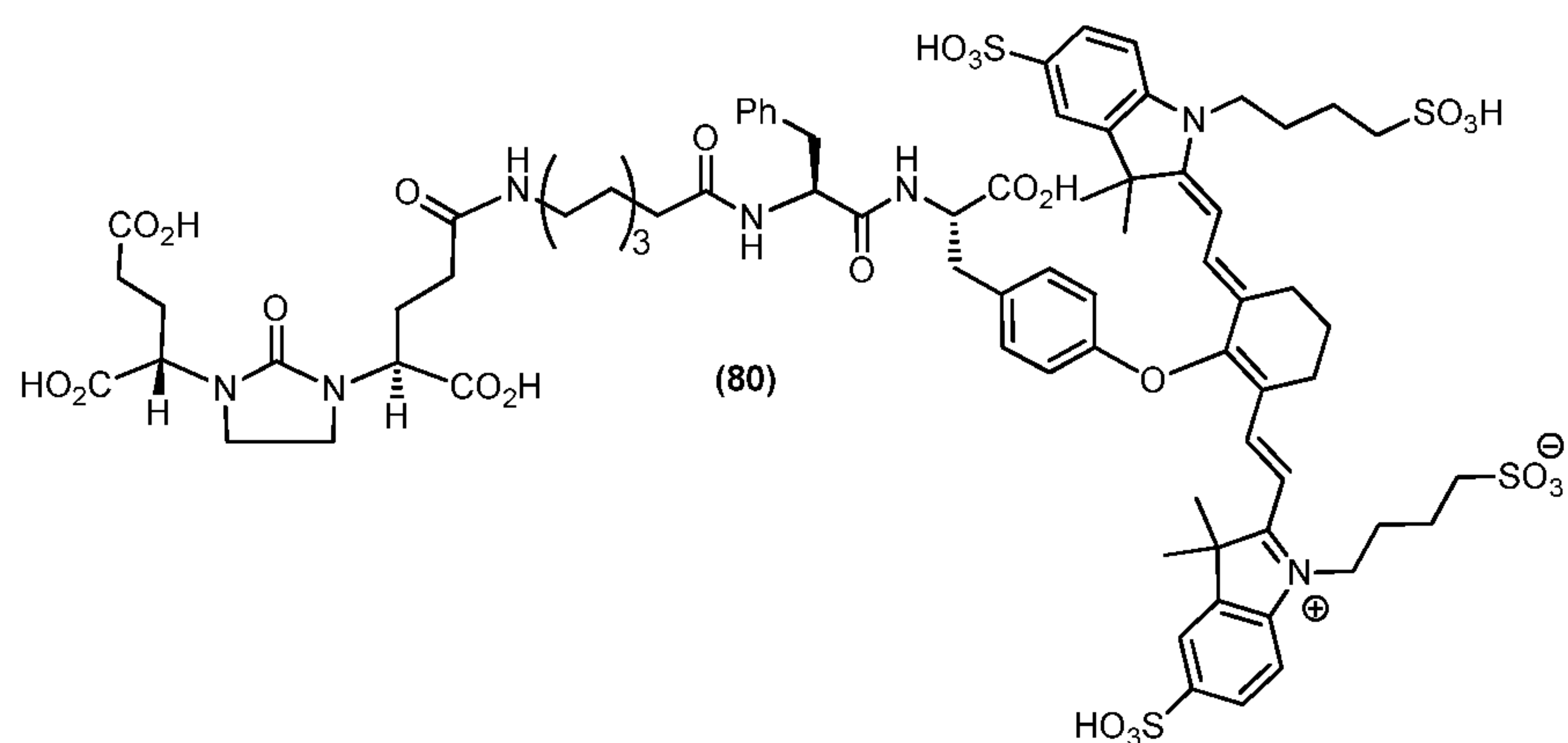
[00183] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



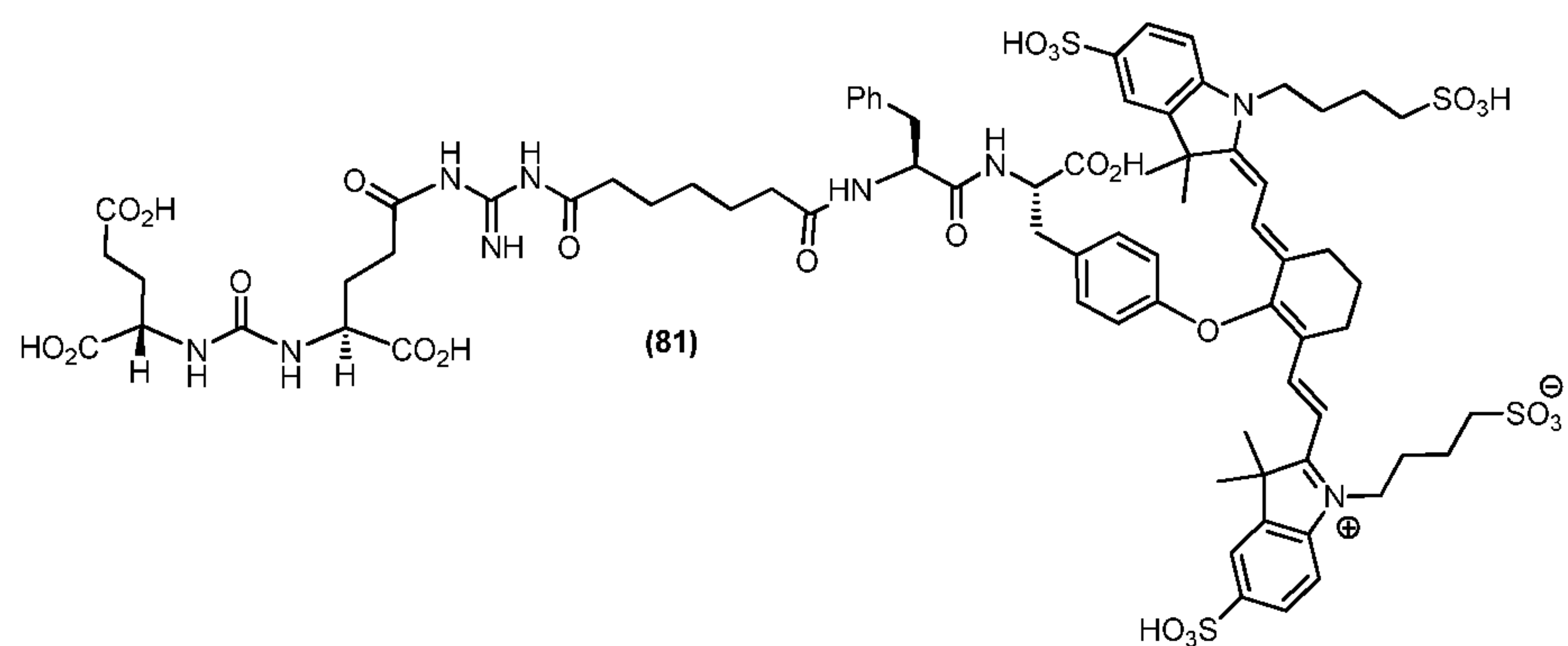
[00184] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



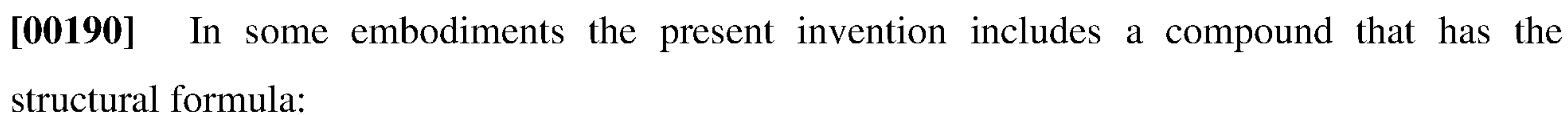
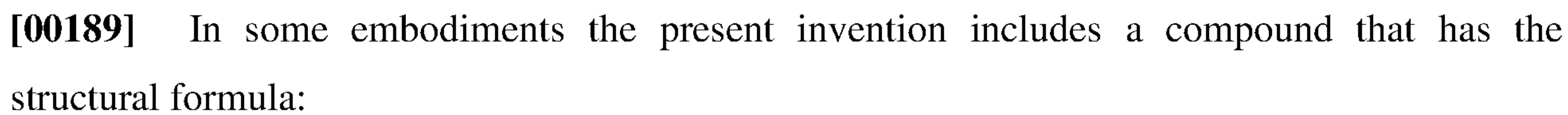
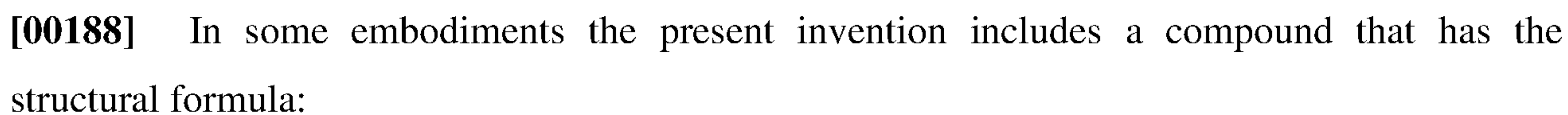
[00185] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:

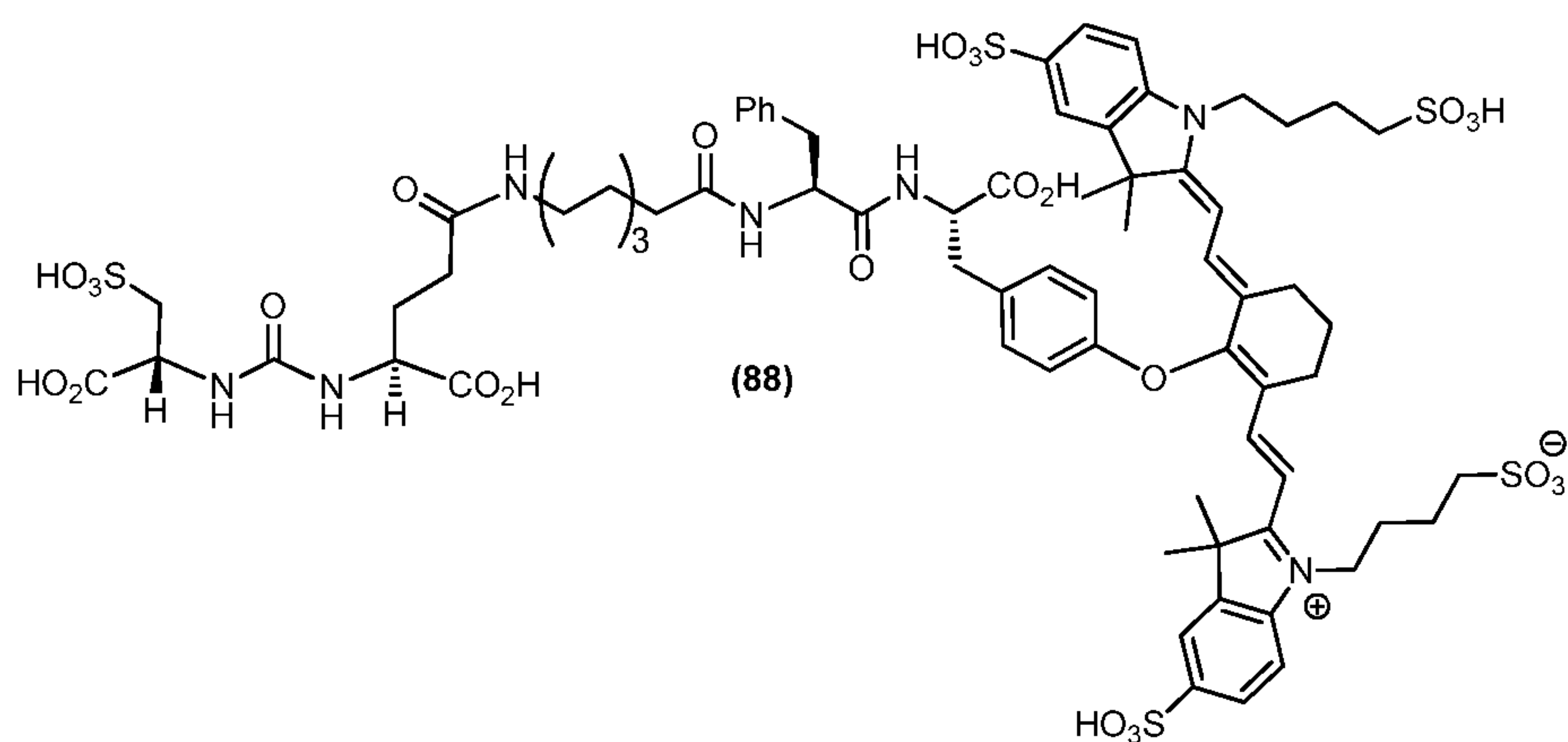


[00186] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:

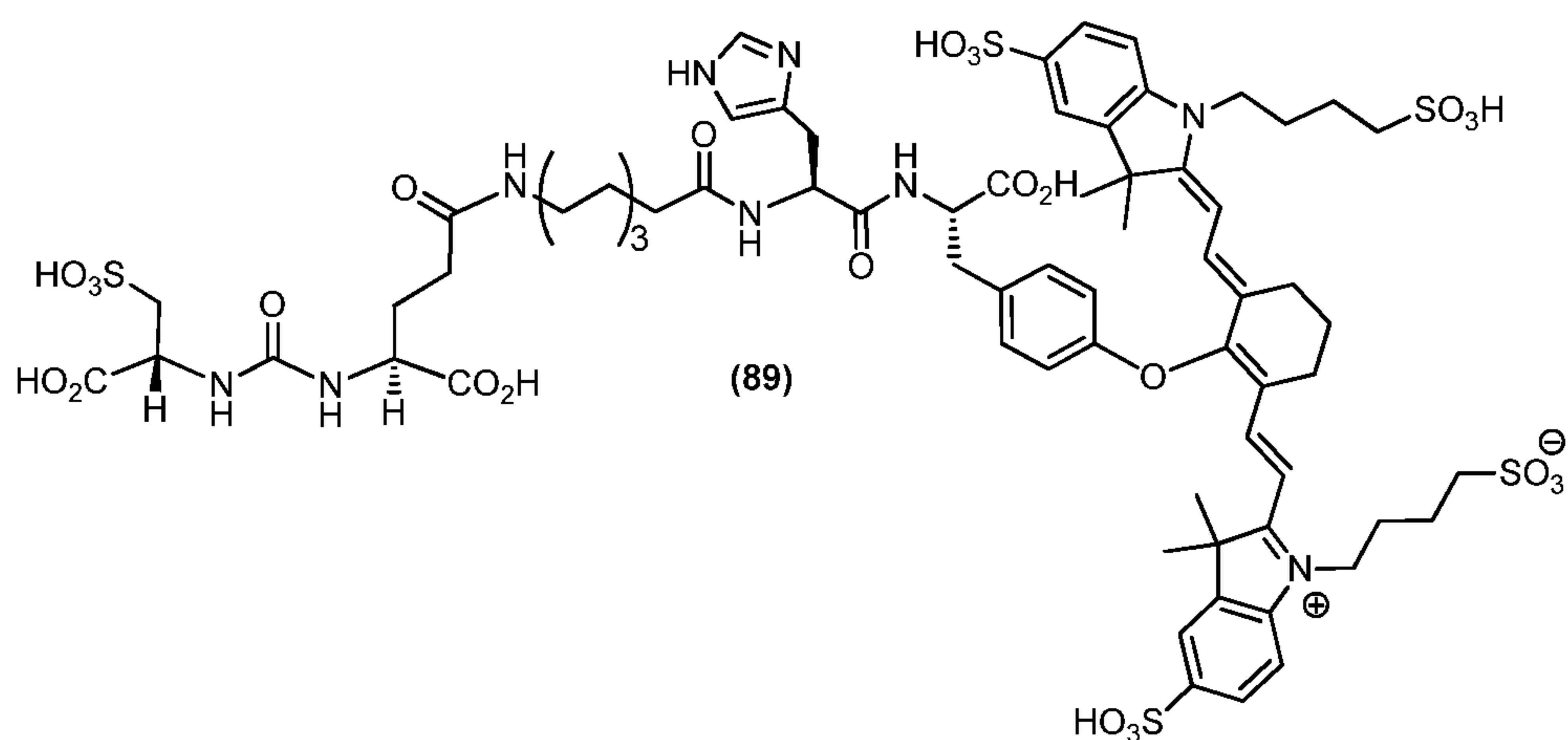


[00187] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:

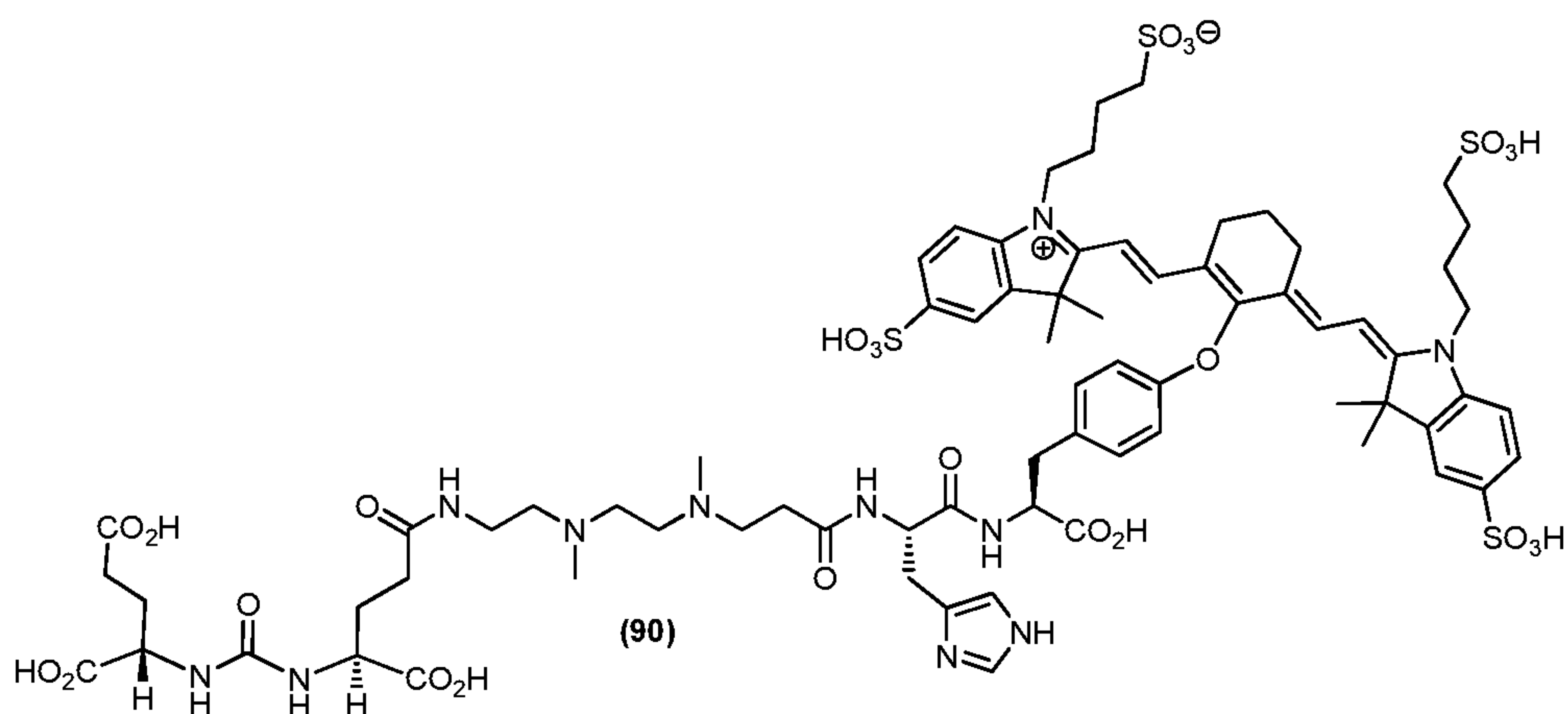




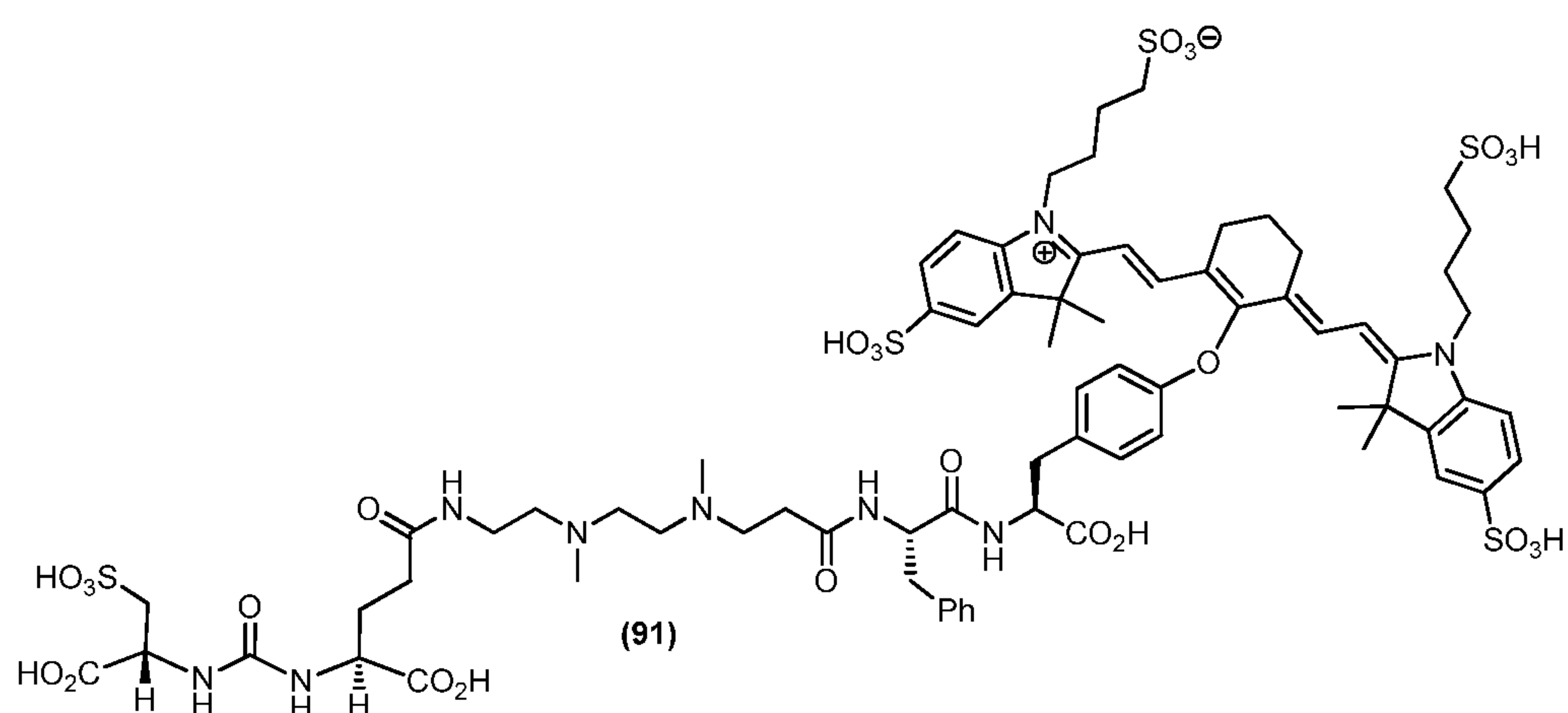
[00191] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



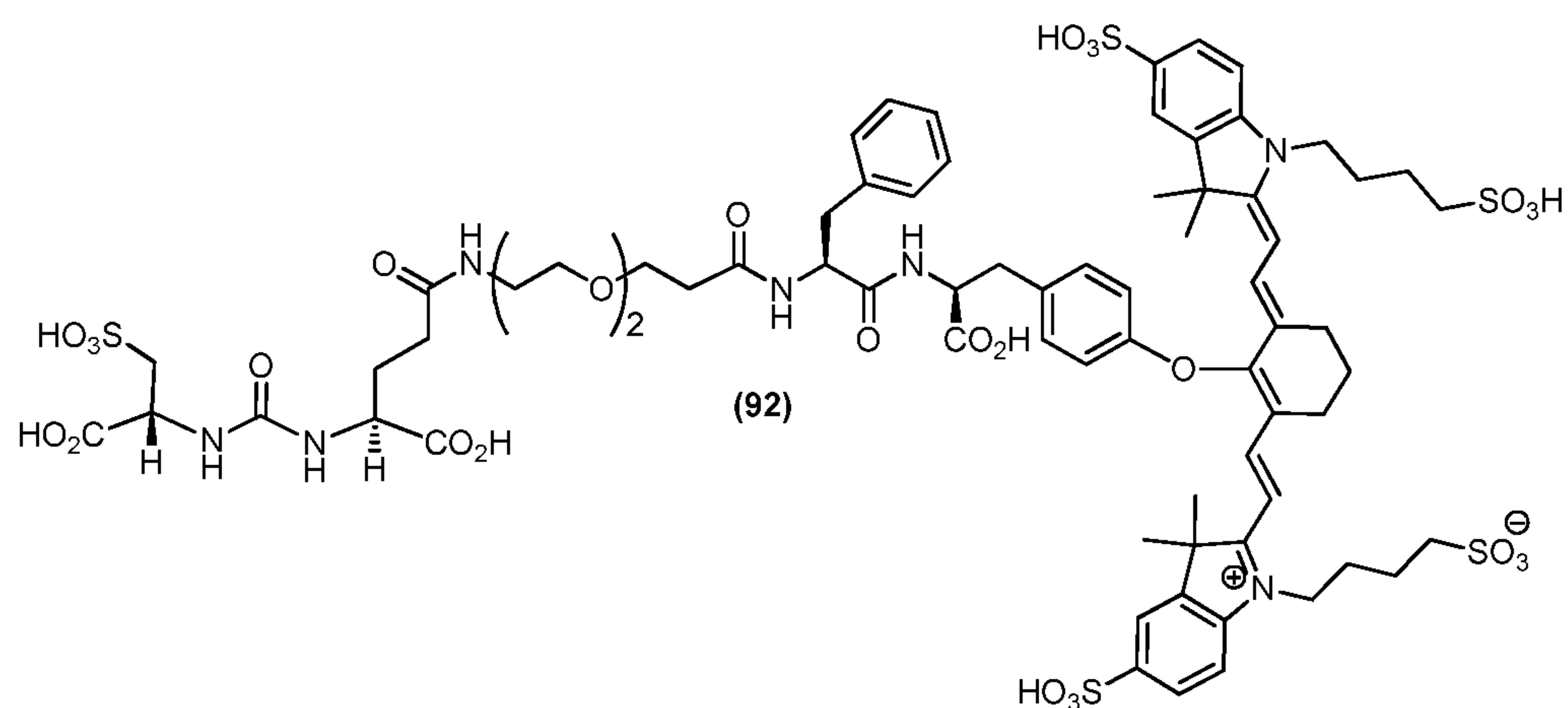
[00192] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:



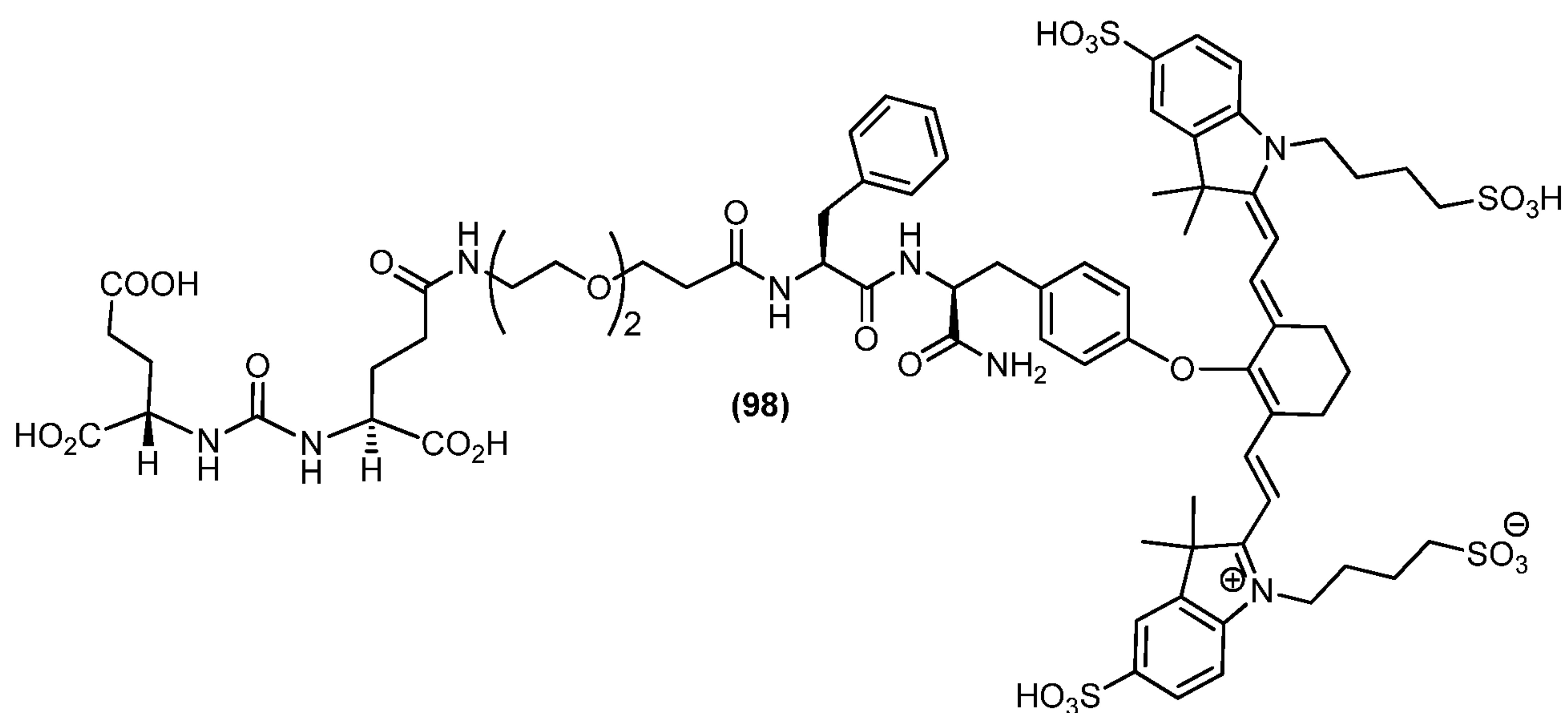
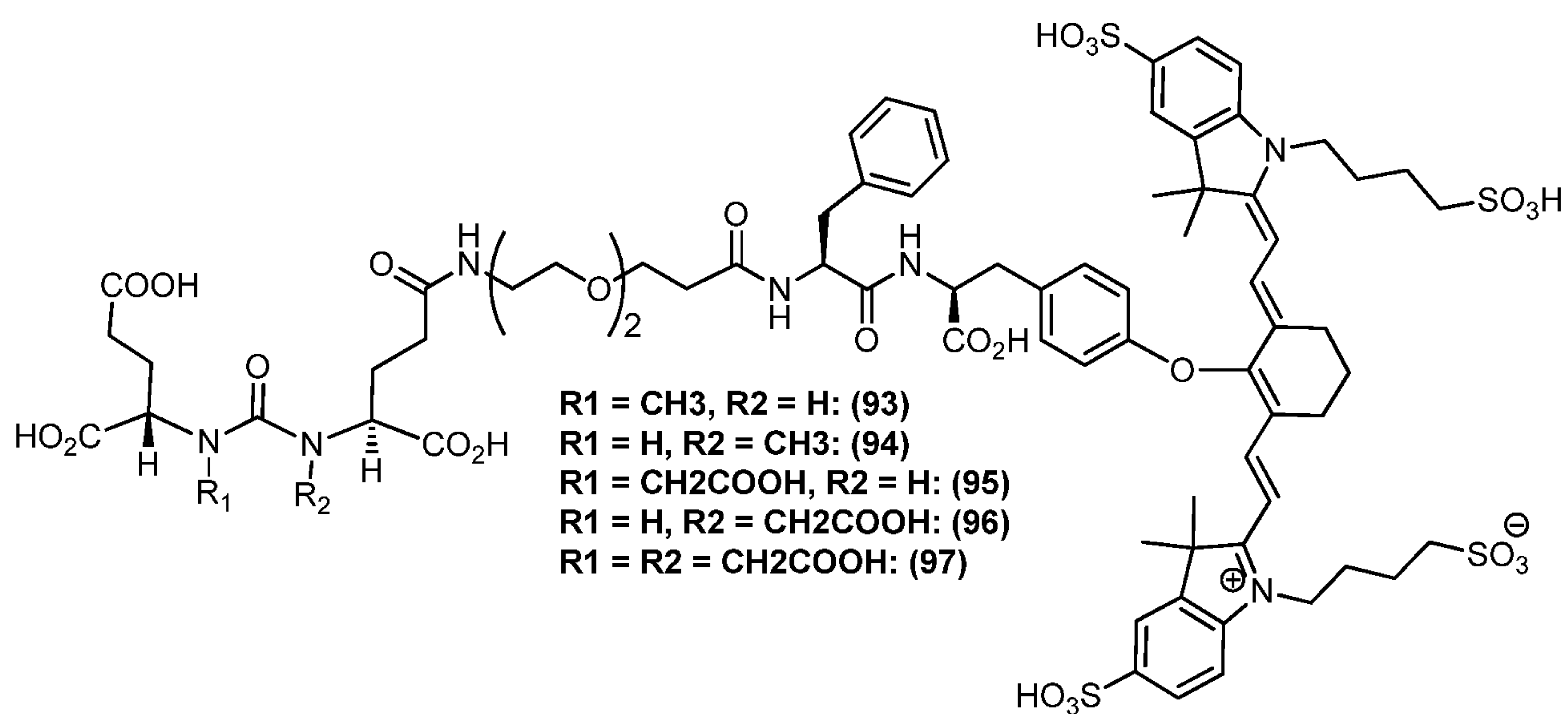
[00193] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:

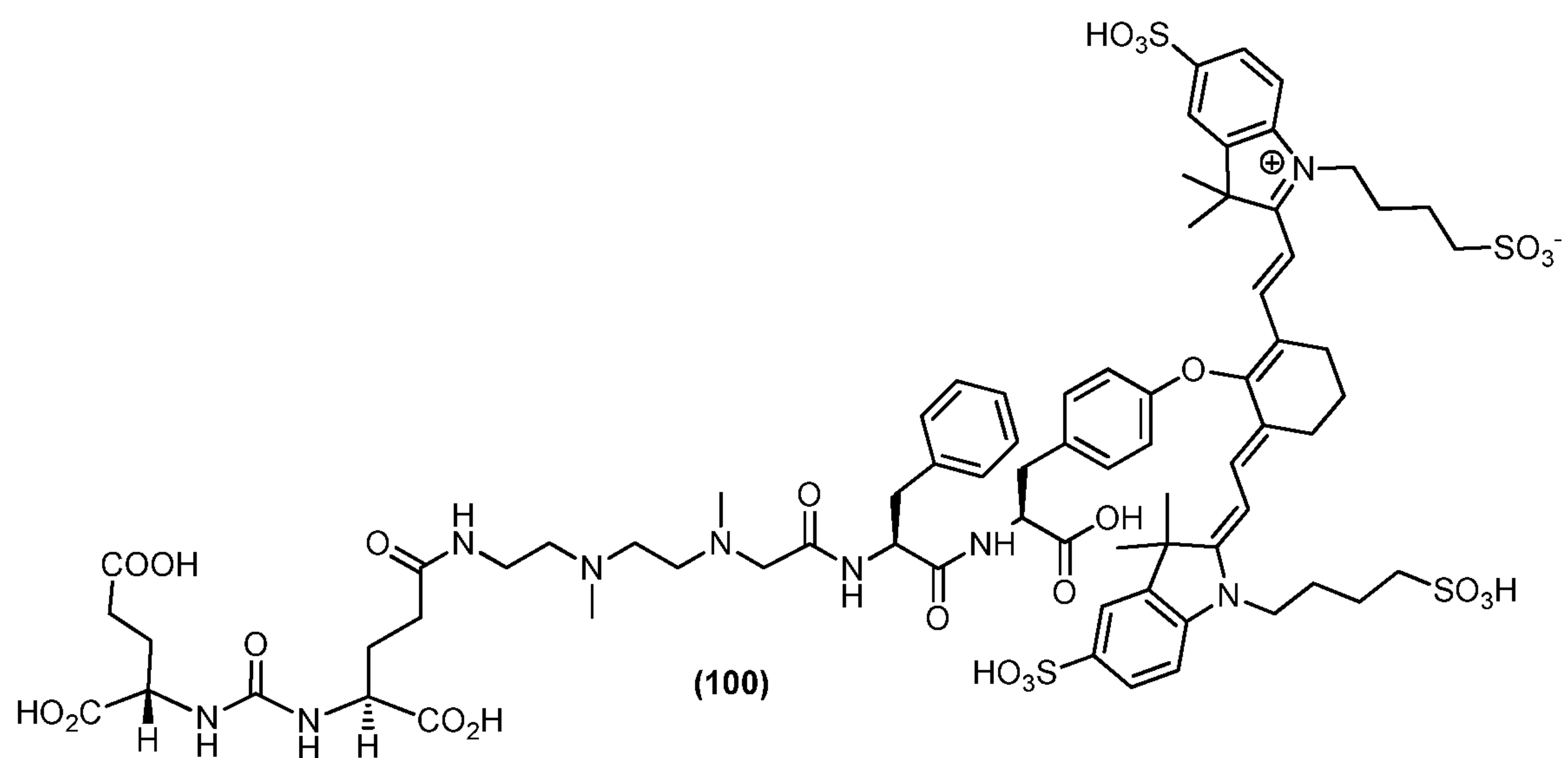
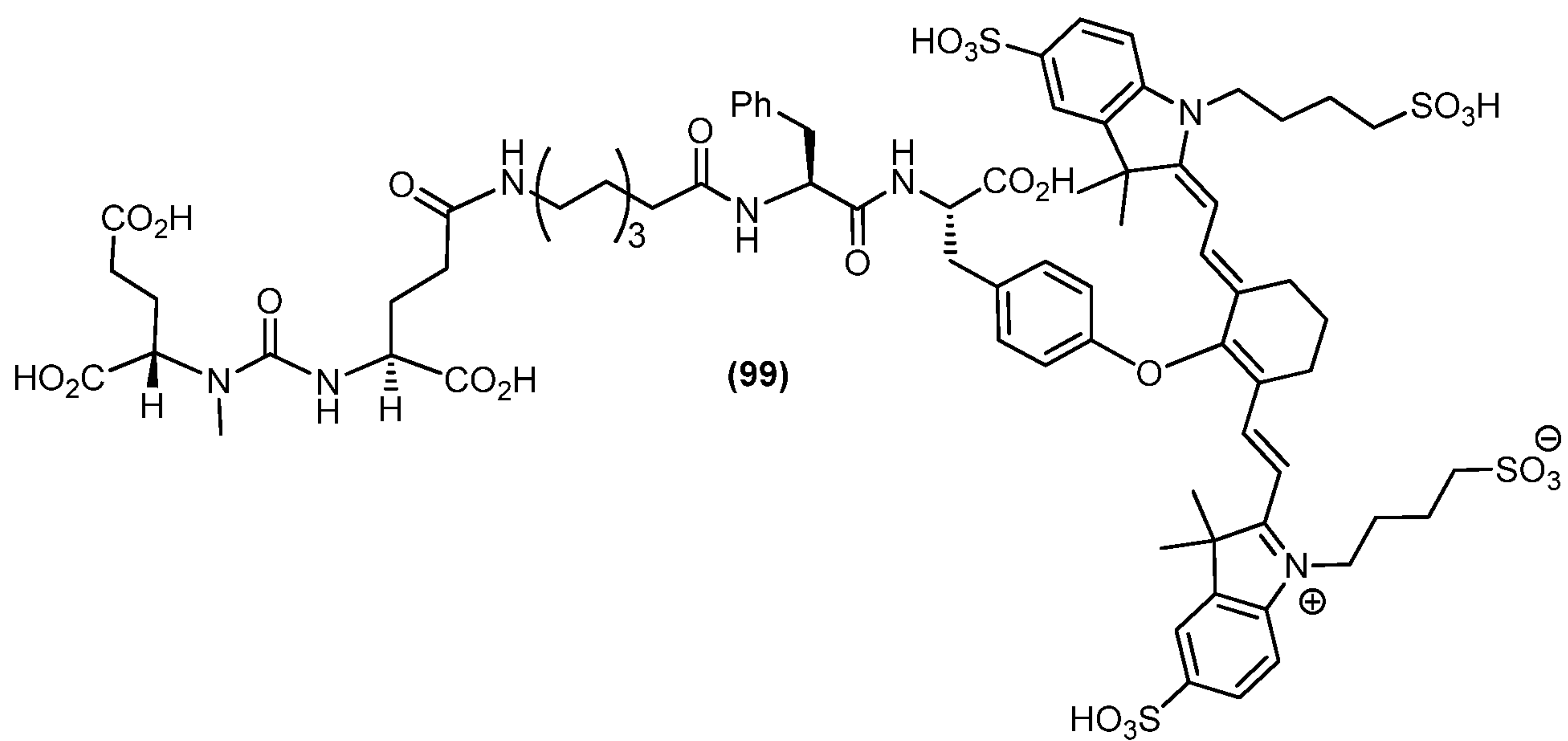


[00194] In some embodiments the present invention includes a compound that has the structural formula:

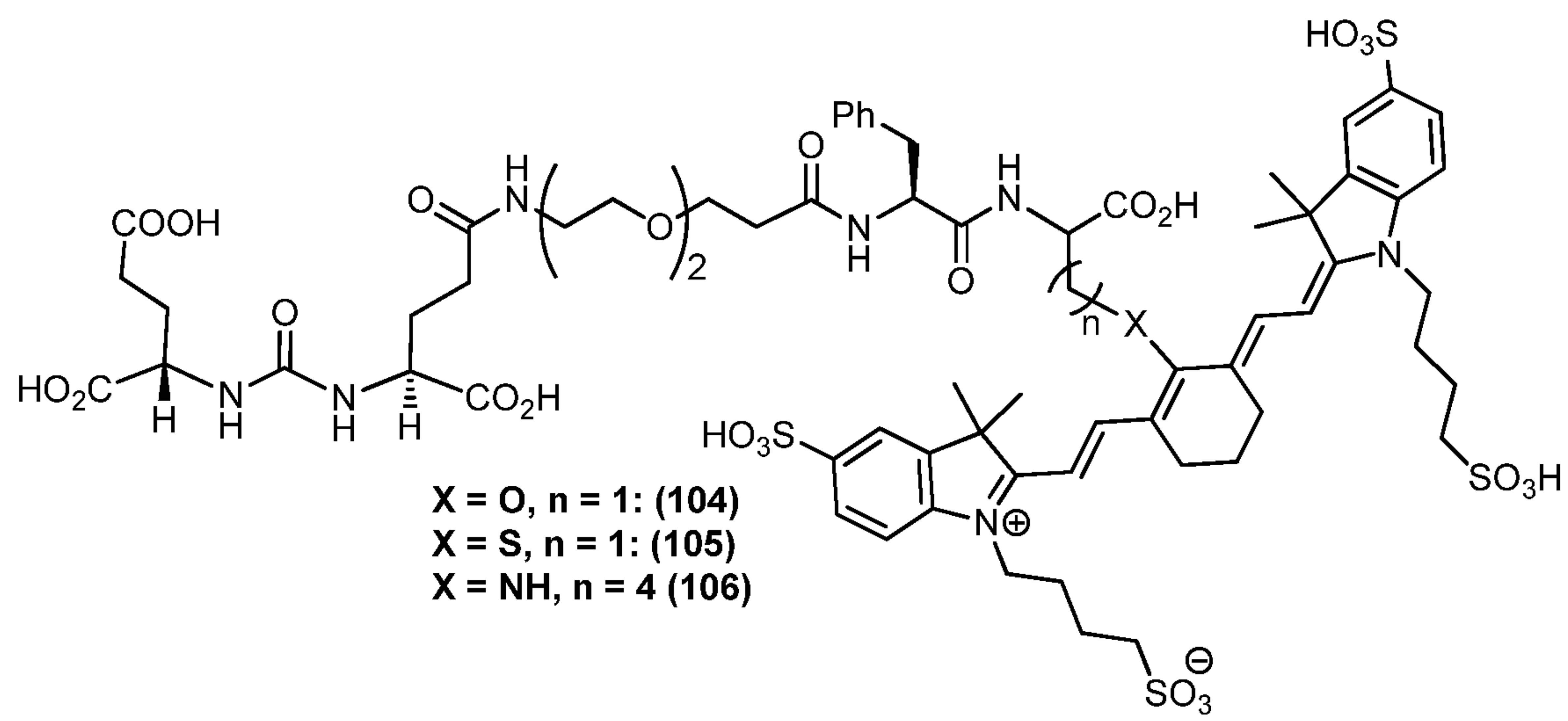
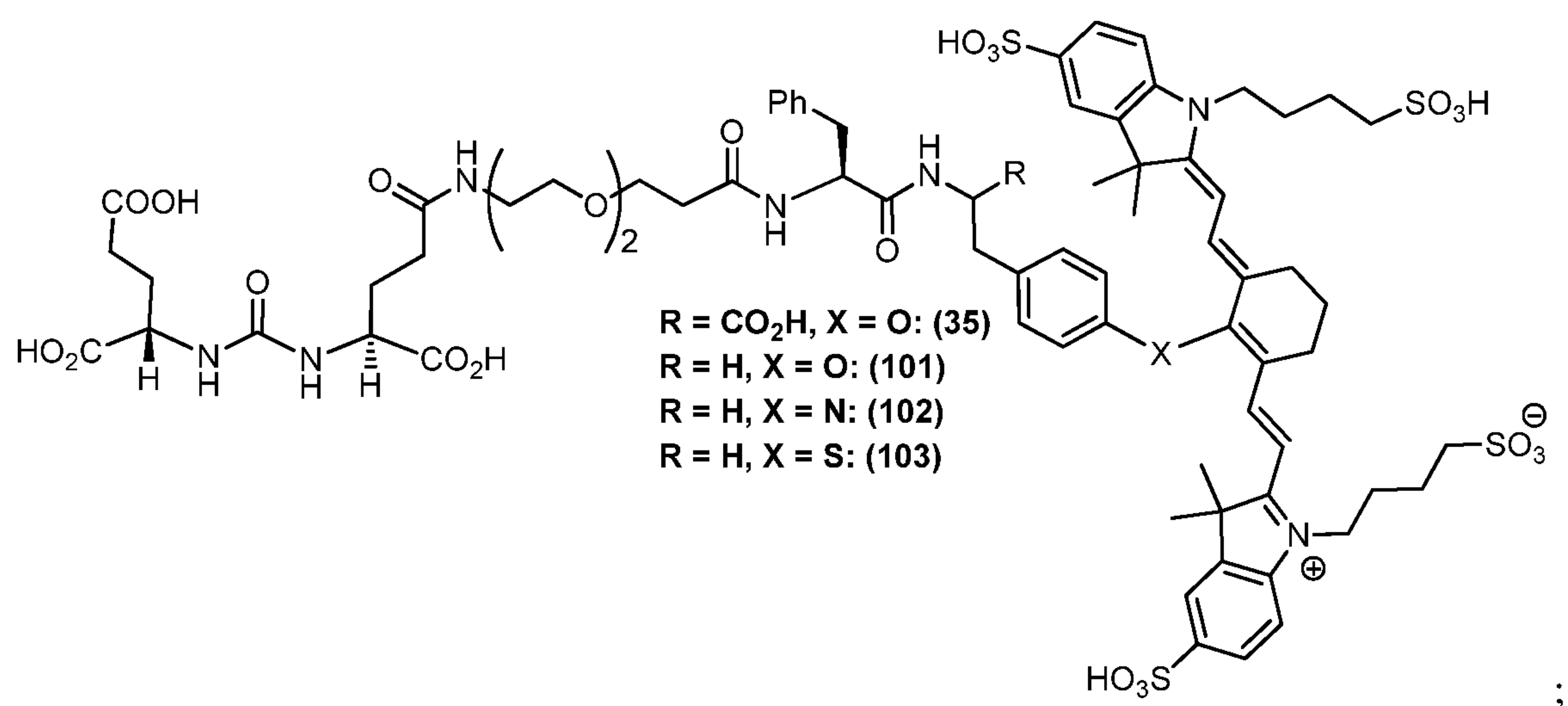


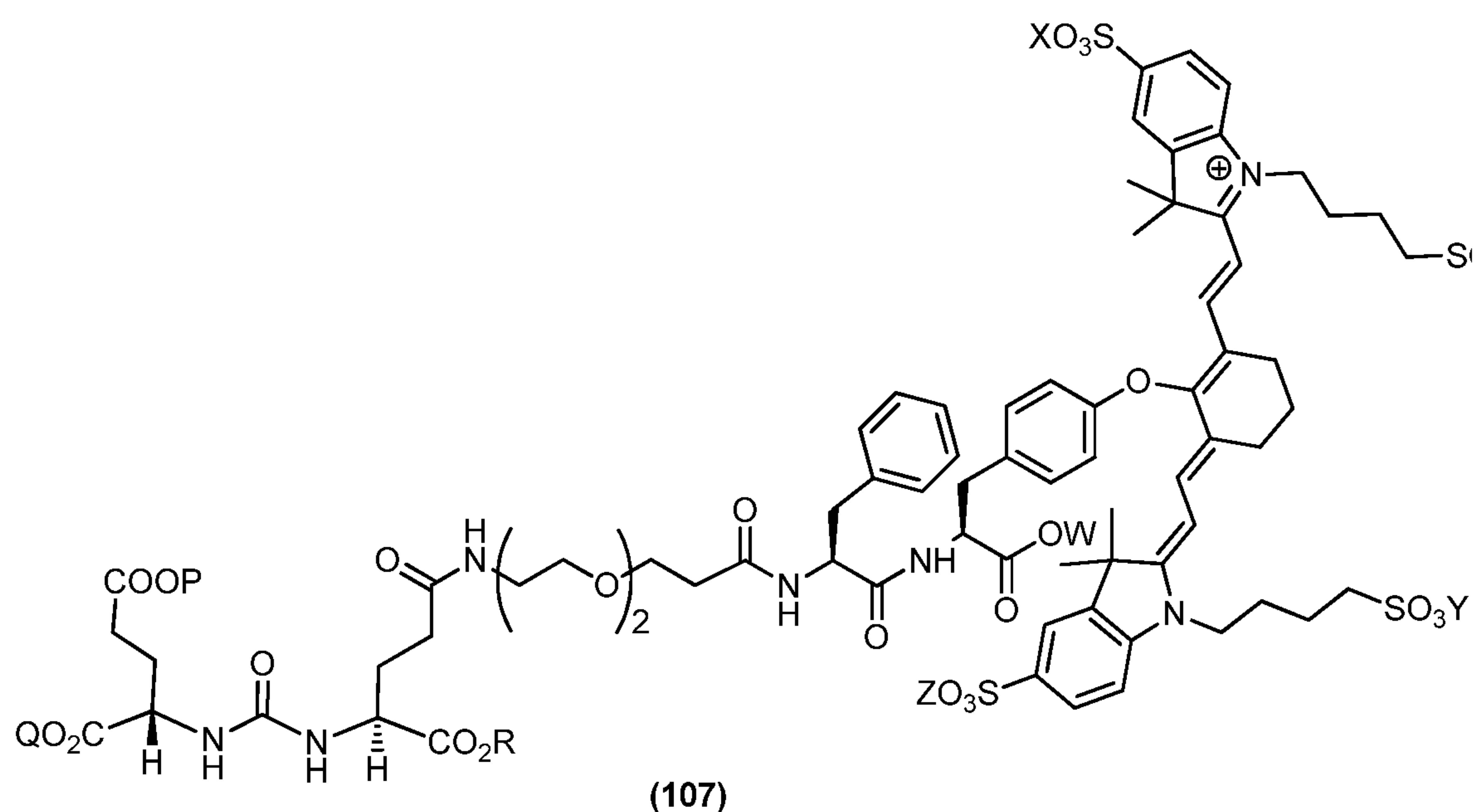
[00195] Additional preferred compounds of the invention include the following:





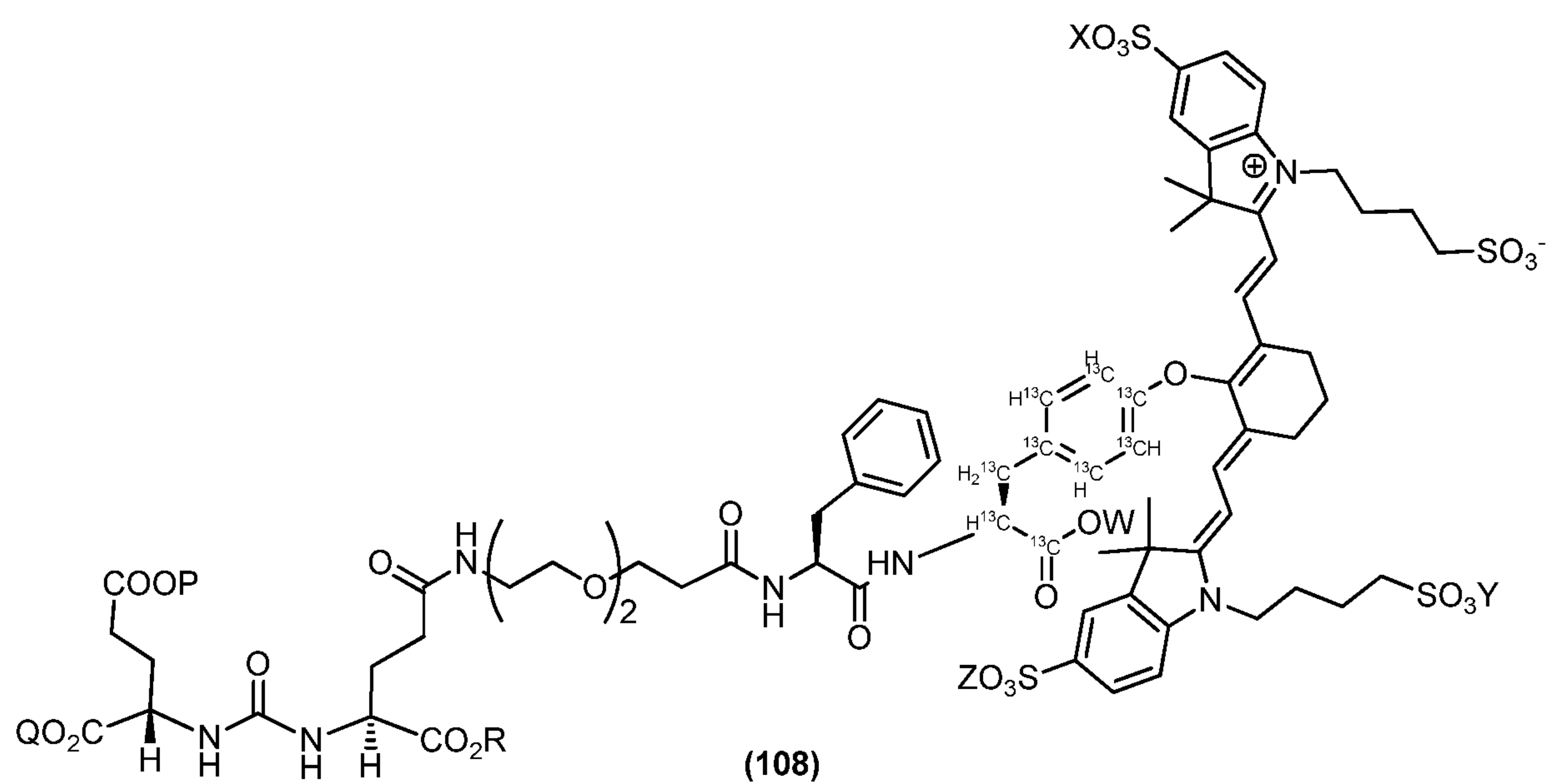
;





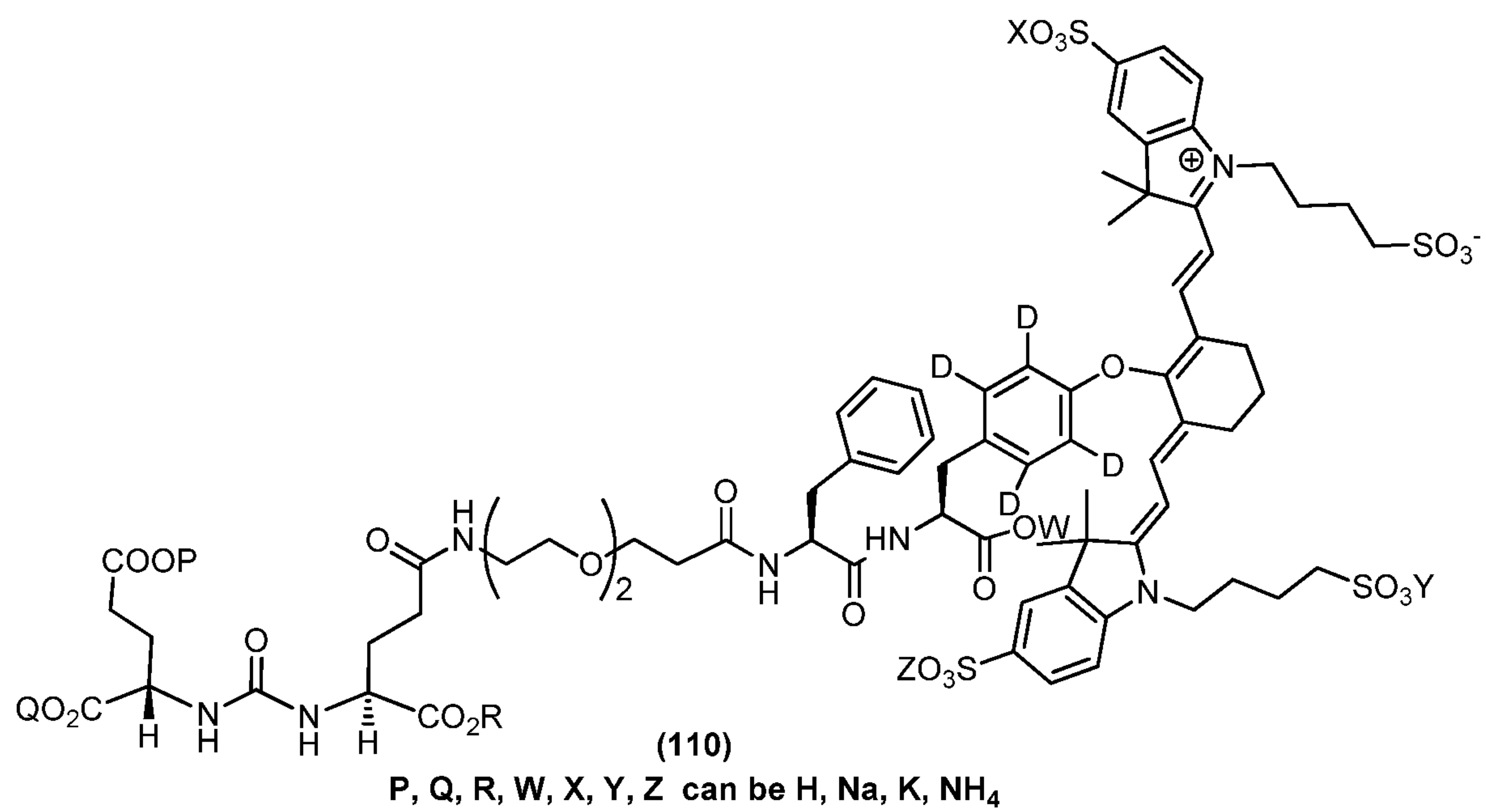
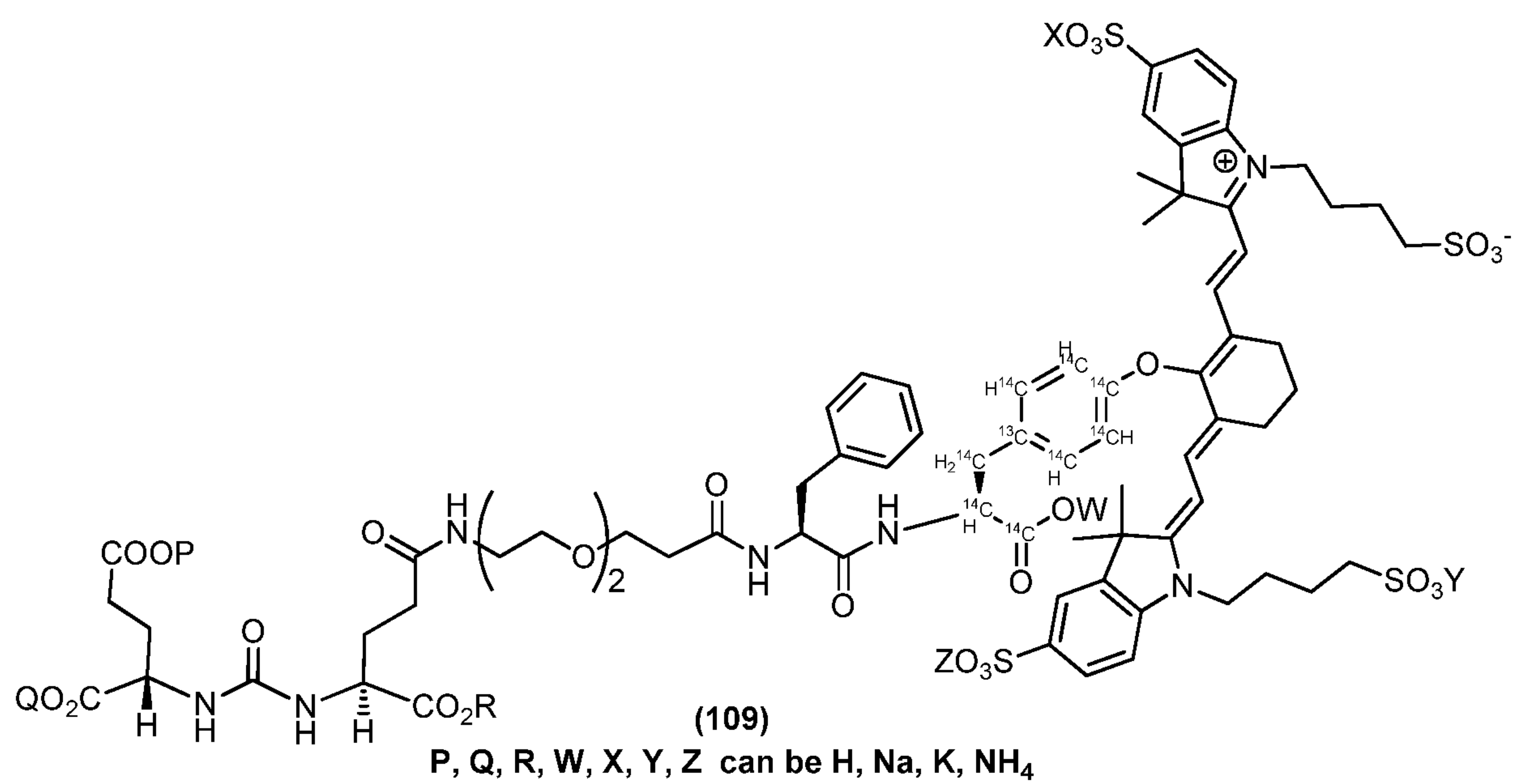
P, Q, R, W, X, Y, Z can be H (35), Na, K, NH₄

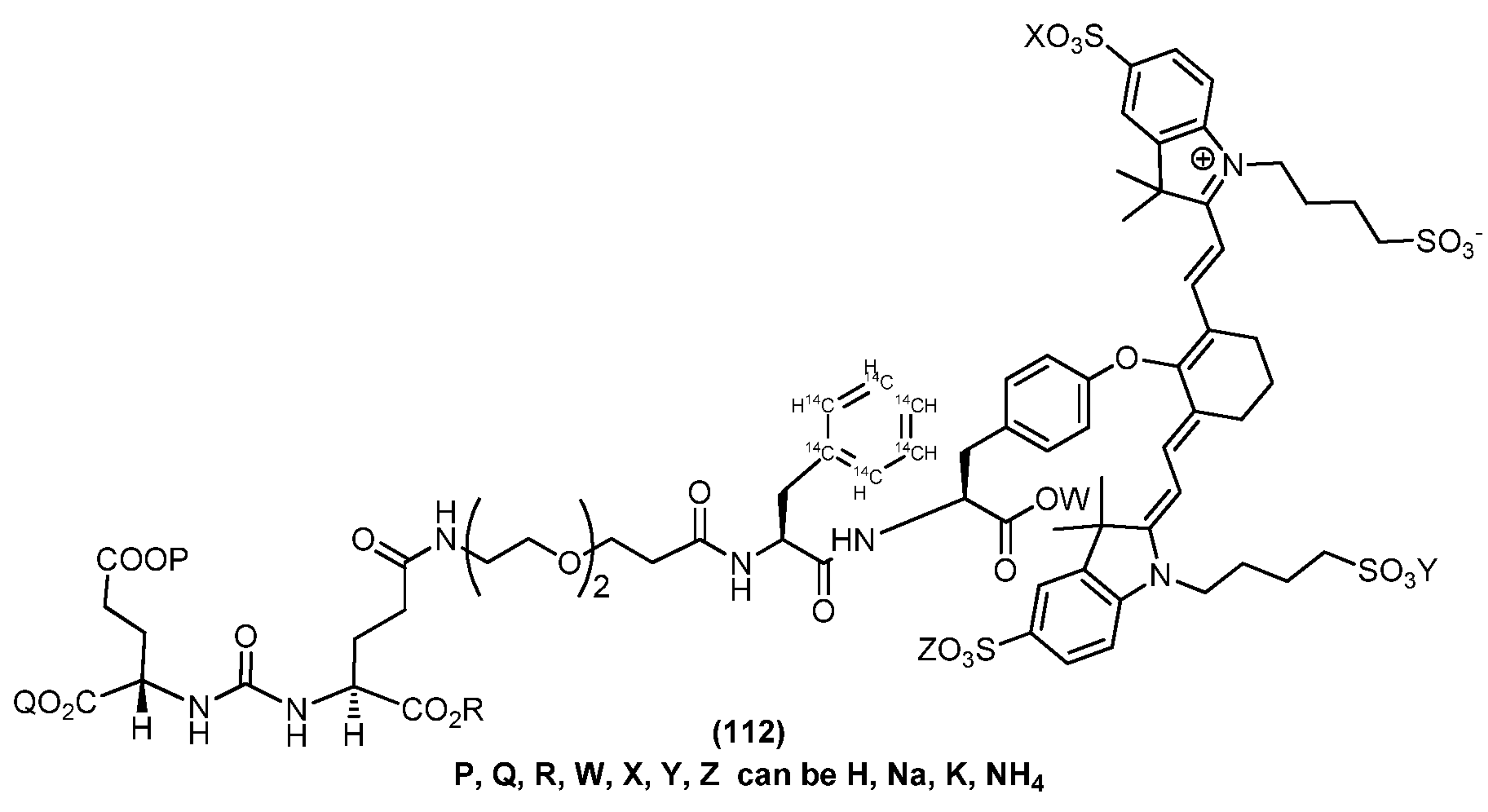
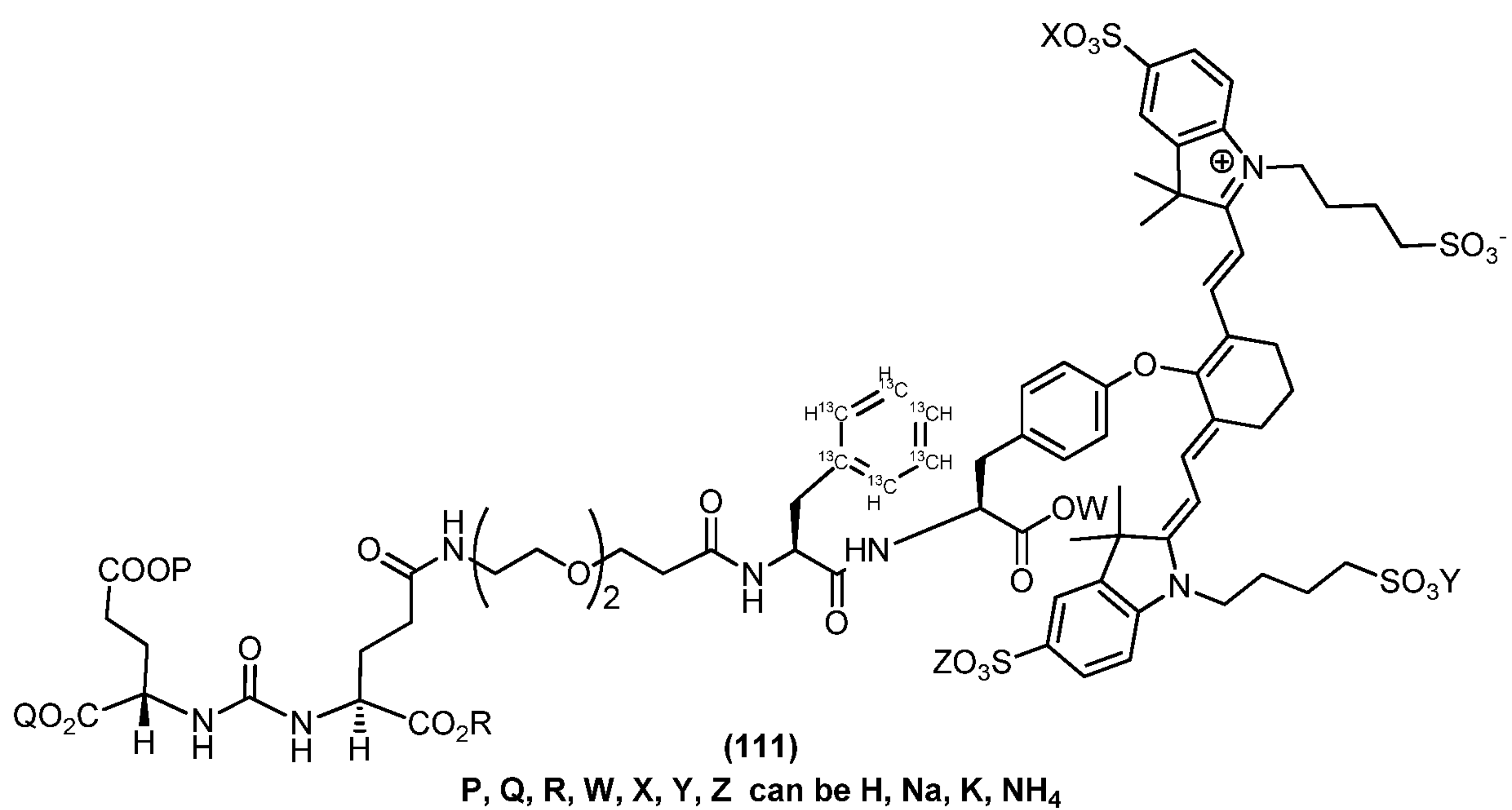
;

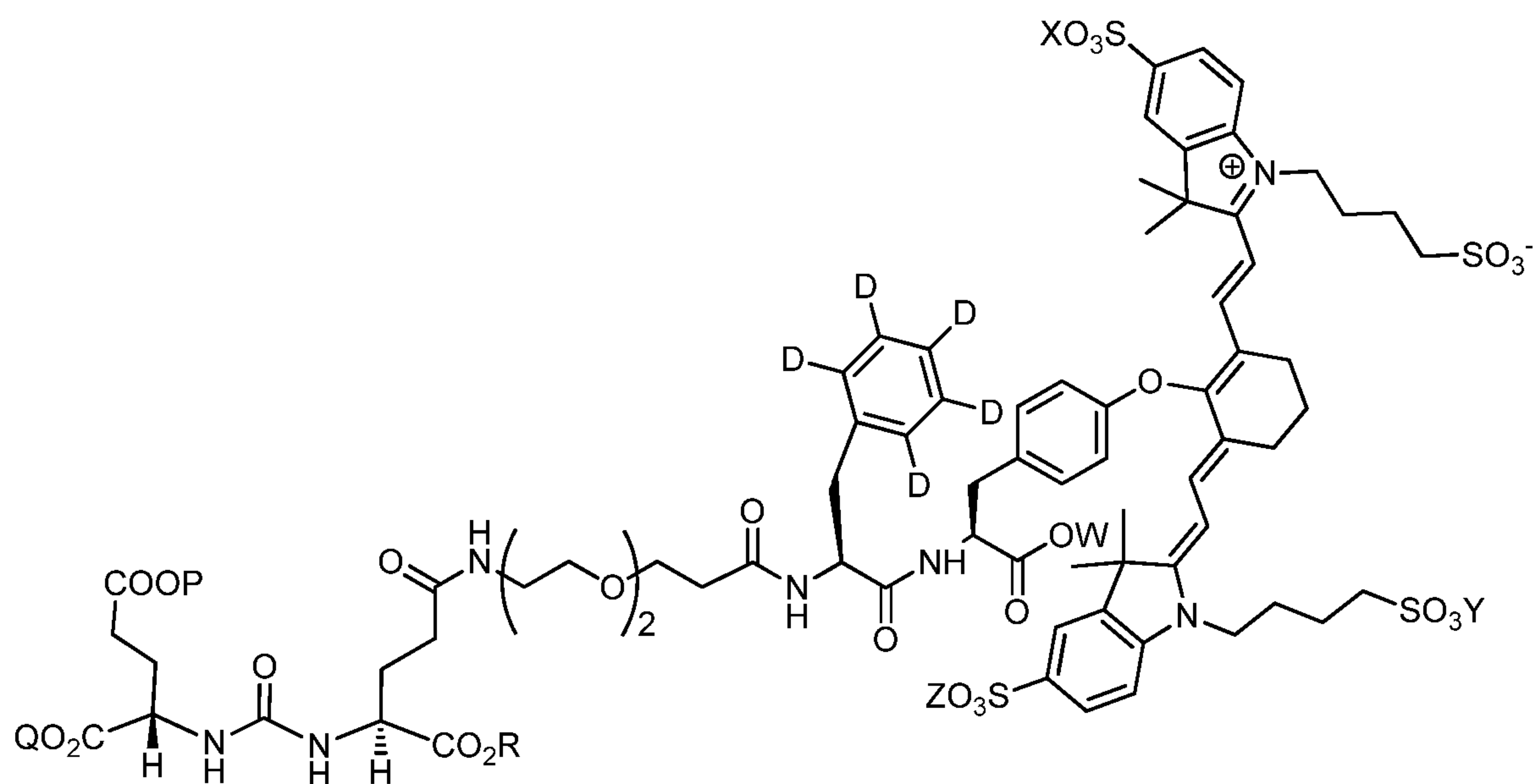


P, Q, R, W, X, Y, Z can be H, Na, K, NH₄

;





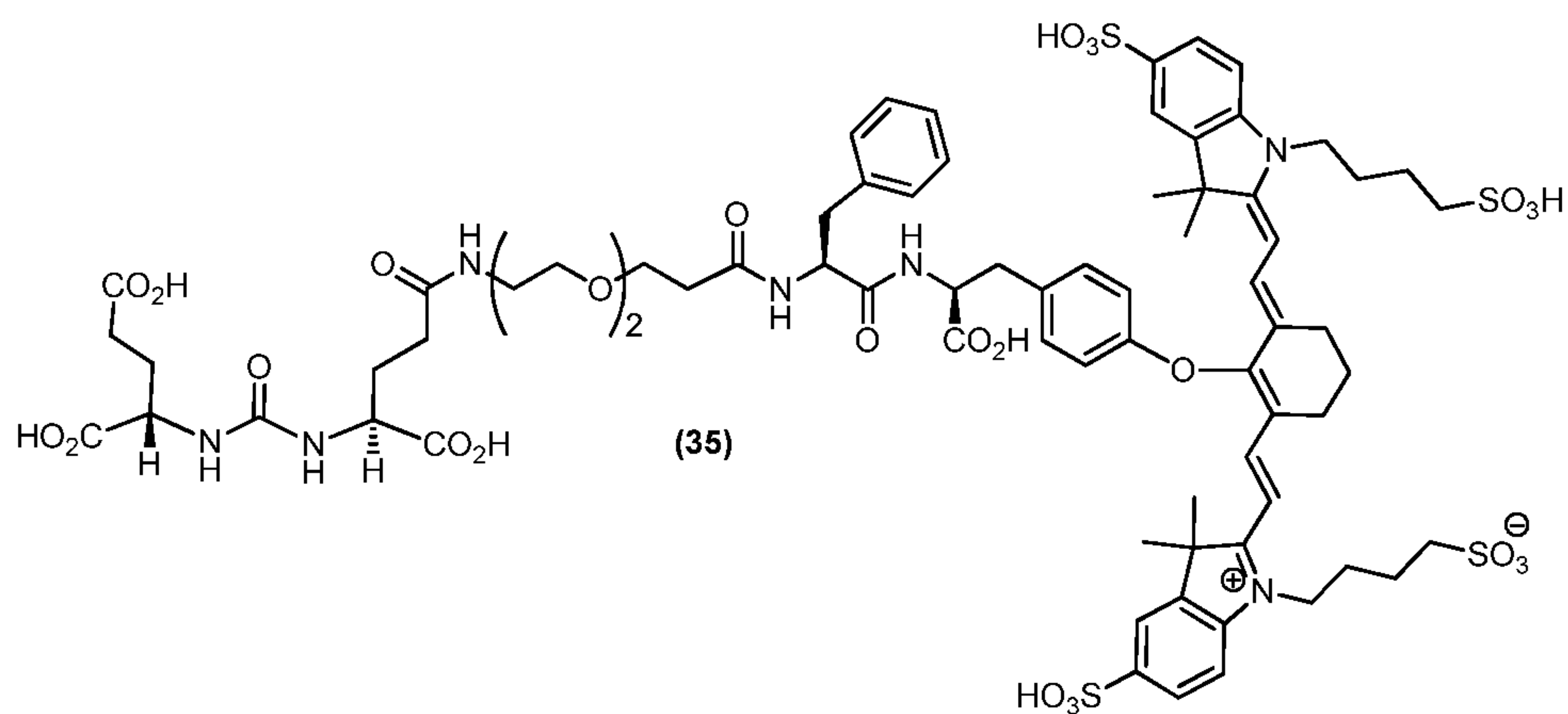


(113)

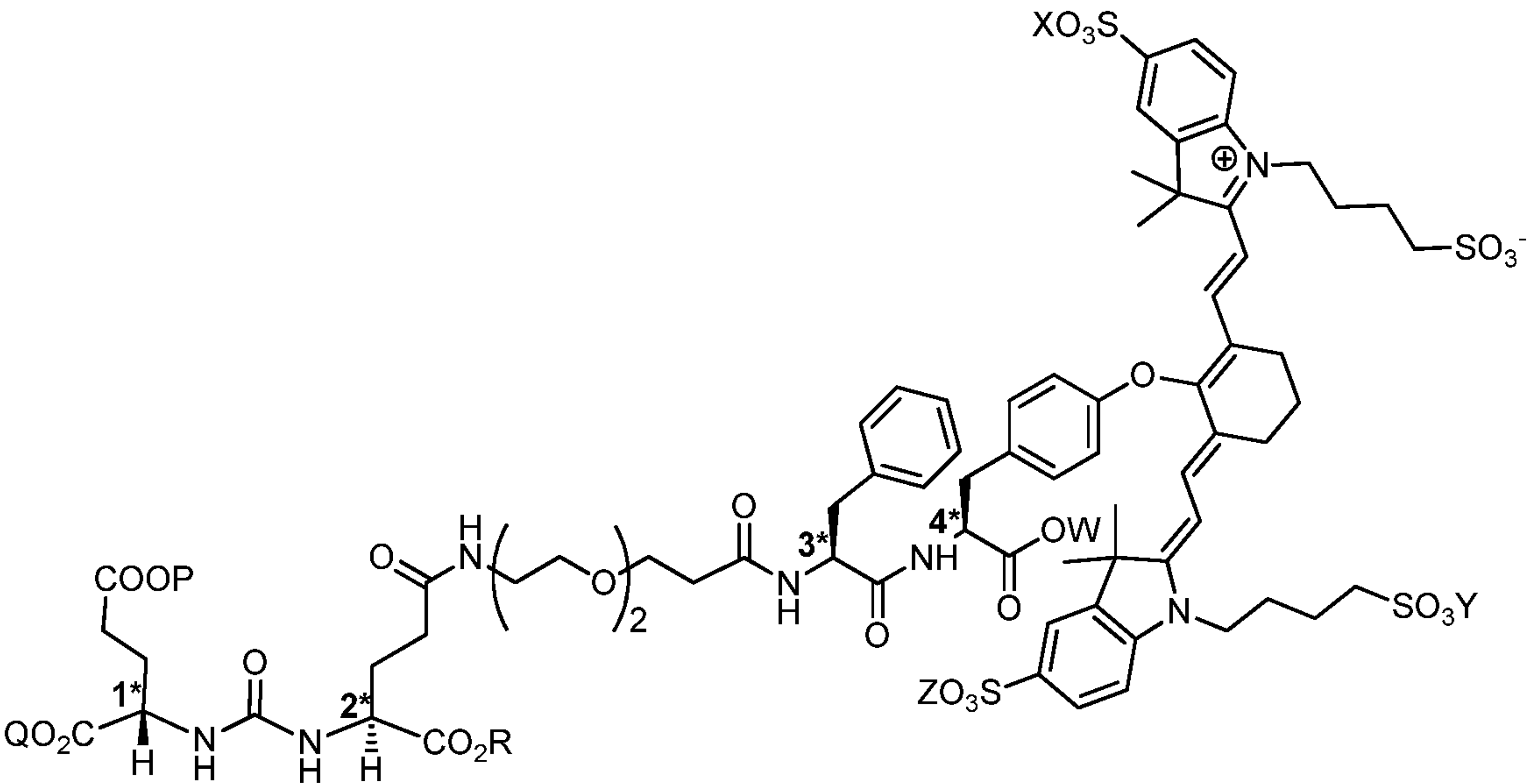
P, Q, R, W, X, Y, Z can be H (35), Na, K, NH₄

; and

[00196] A compound of structure 35 is particularly preferred in the present invention.



[00197] In addition, stereoisomers of compound 35 such as those shown in the following table also are contemplated to be useful PSMA- targeted near-infra red (NIR) dyes for use in the methods of the present invention.



Chiral Center Compound	1*	2*	3*	4*
35	L	L	L	L
114	L	L	L	D
115	L	L	D	L
116	L	L	D	D
117	L	D	L	L
118	L	D	L	D
119	L	D	D	L
120	L	D	D	D
121	D	L	L	L
122	D	L	L	D
123	D	L	D	L
124	D	L	D	D
125	D	D	L	L
126	D	D	L	D
127	D	D	D	L
128	D	D	D	D

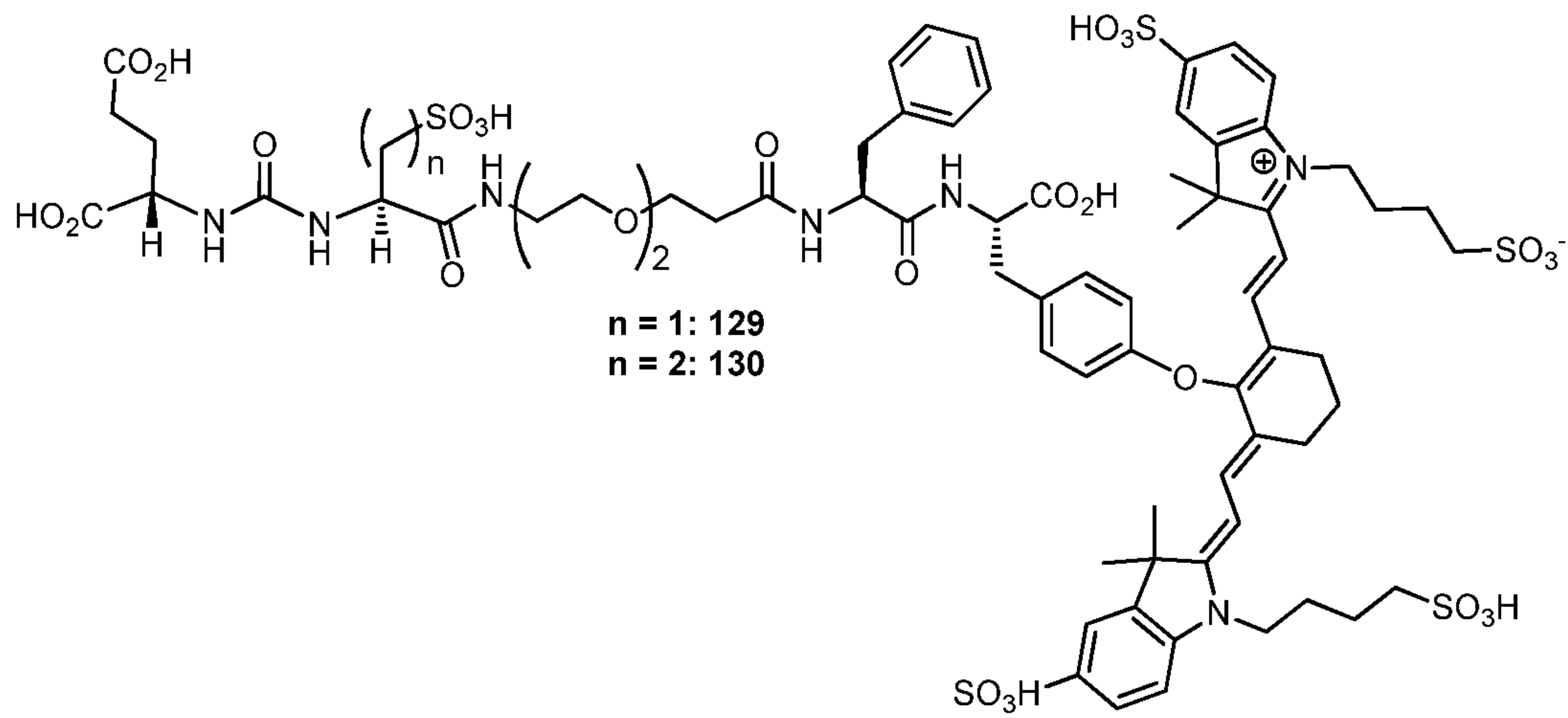
Note: Chiral center is indicated as *

62

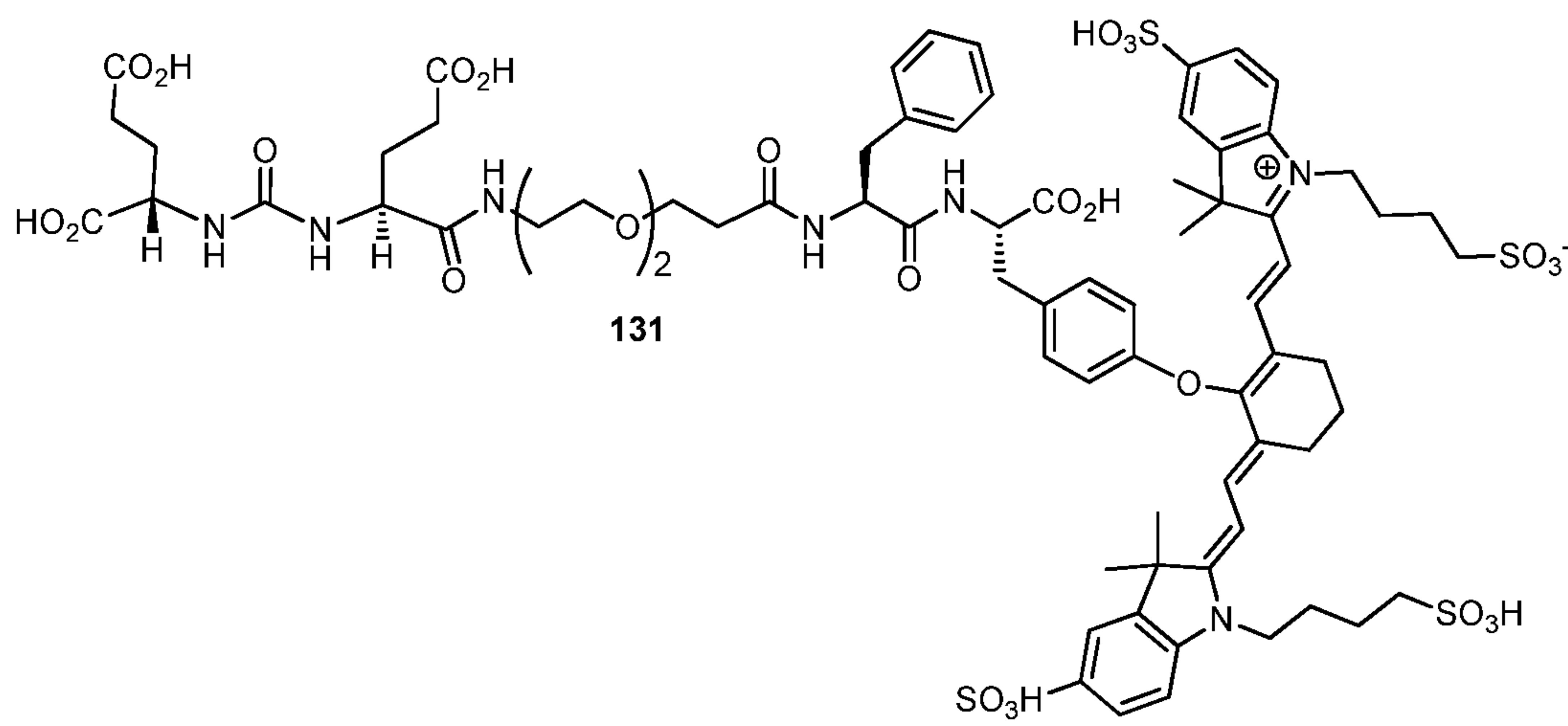
R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

R₁₂ represents independently represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, CH₂COOH, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

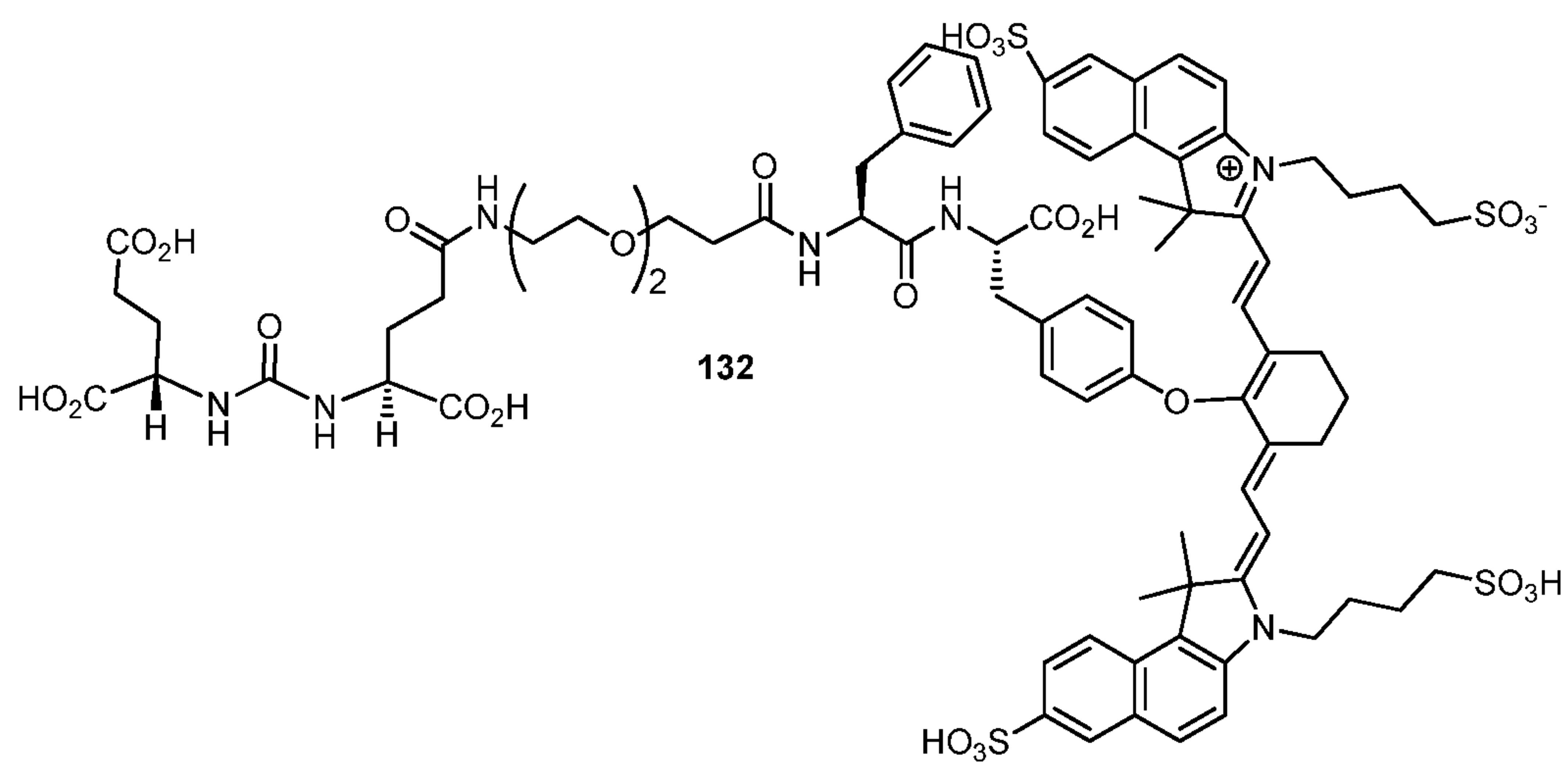
[00199] Additional preferred compounds of the invention include the following:



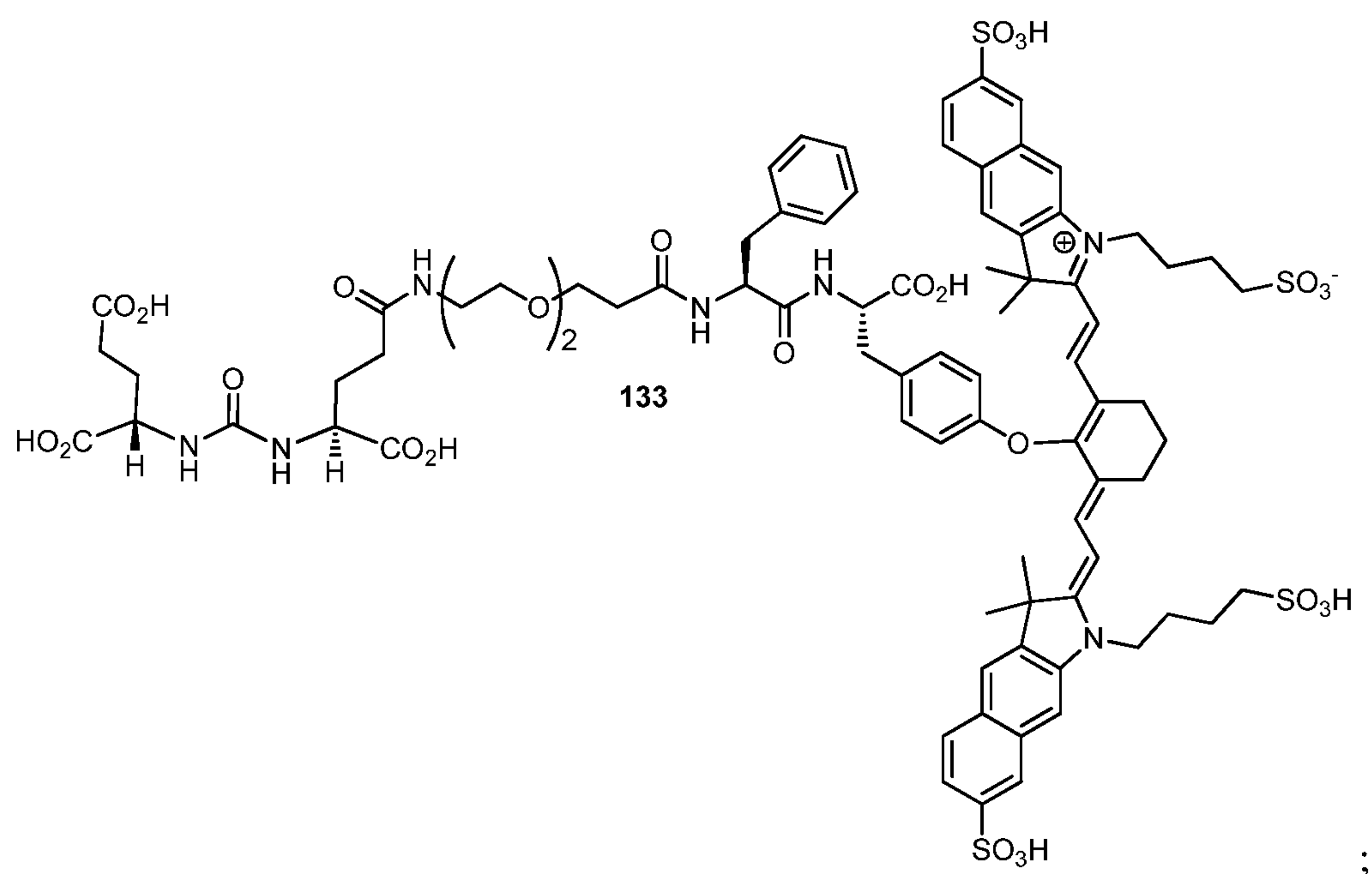
[00200]



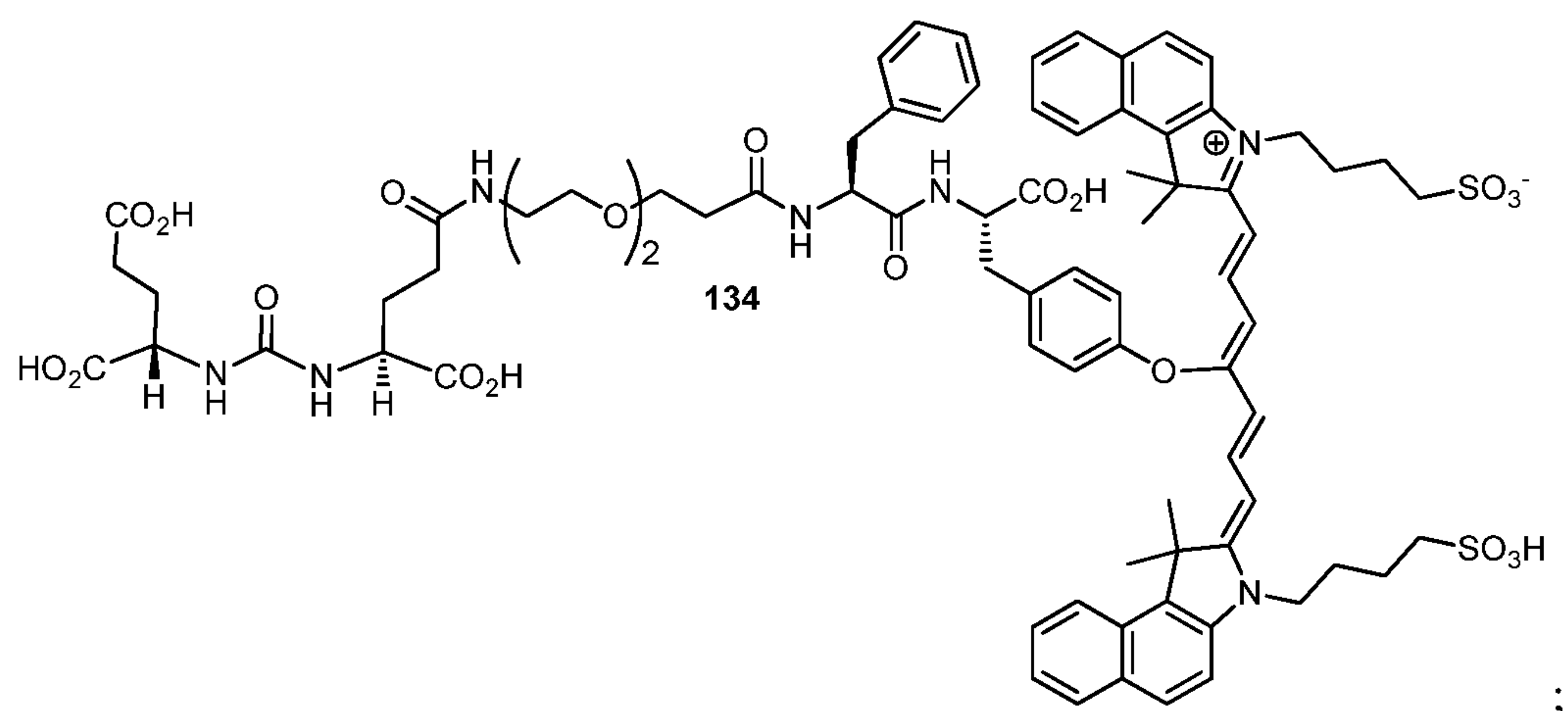
[00201]



[00202]

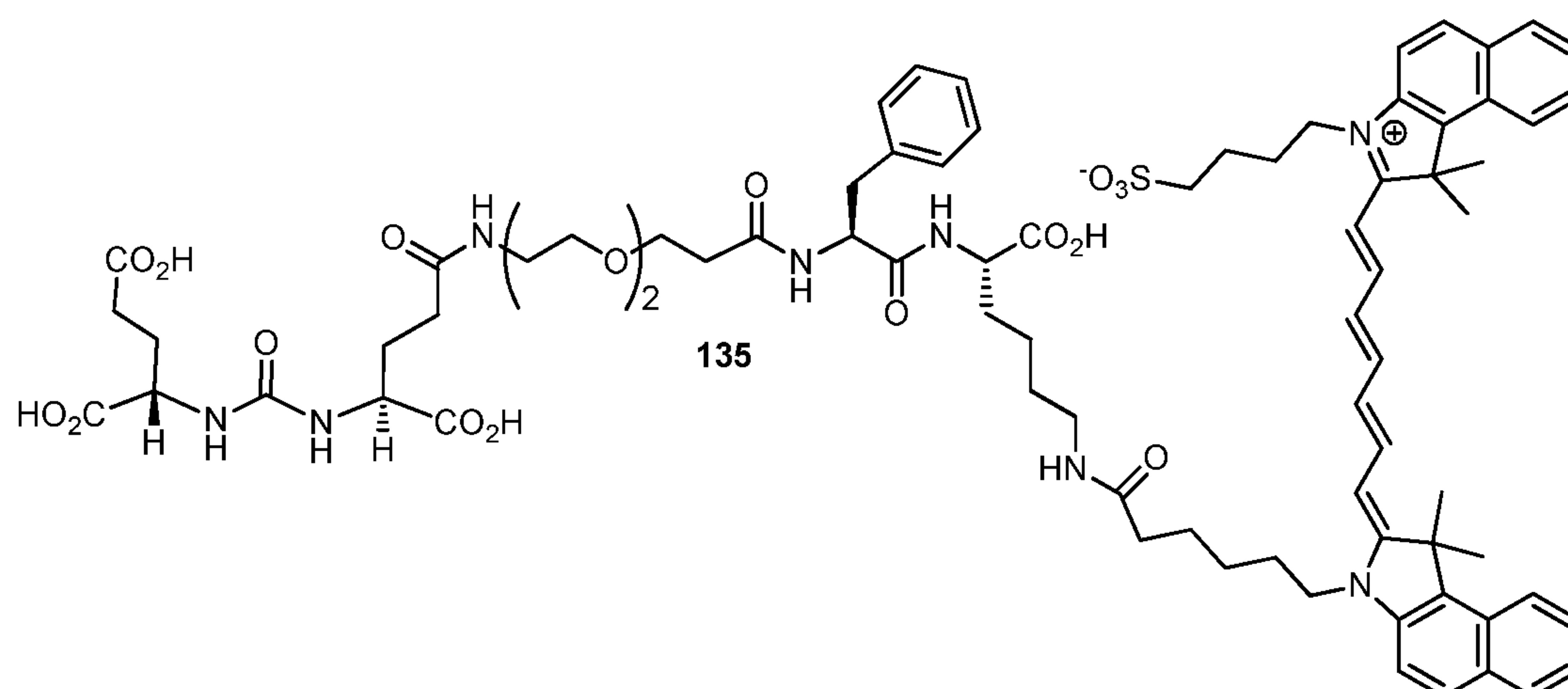


[00203]

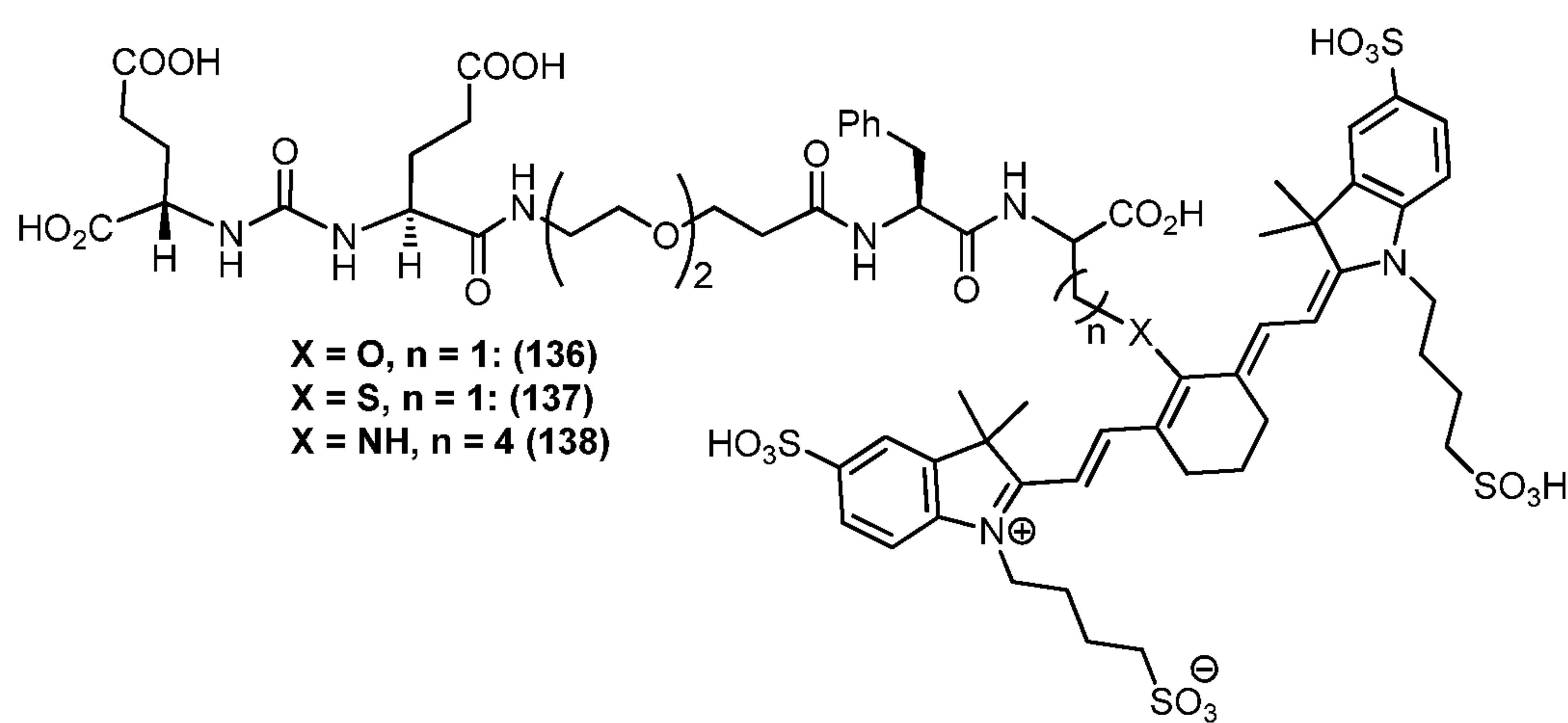


[00204]

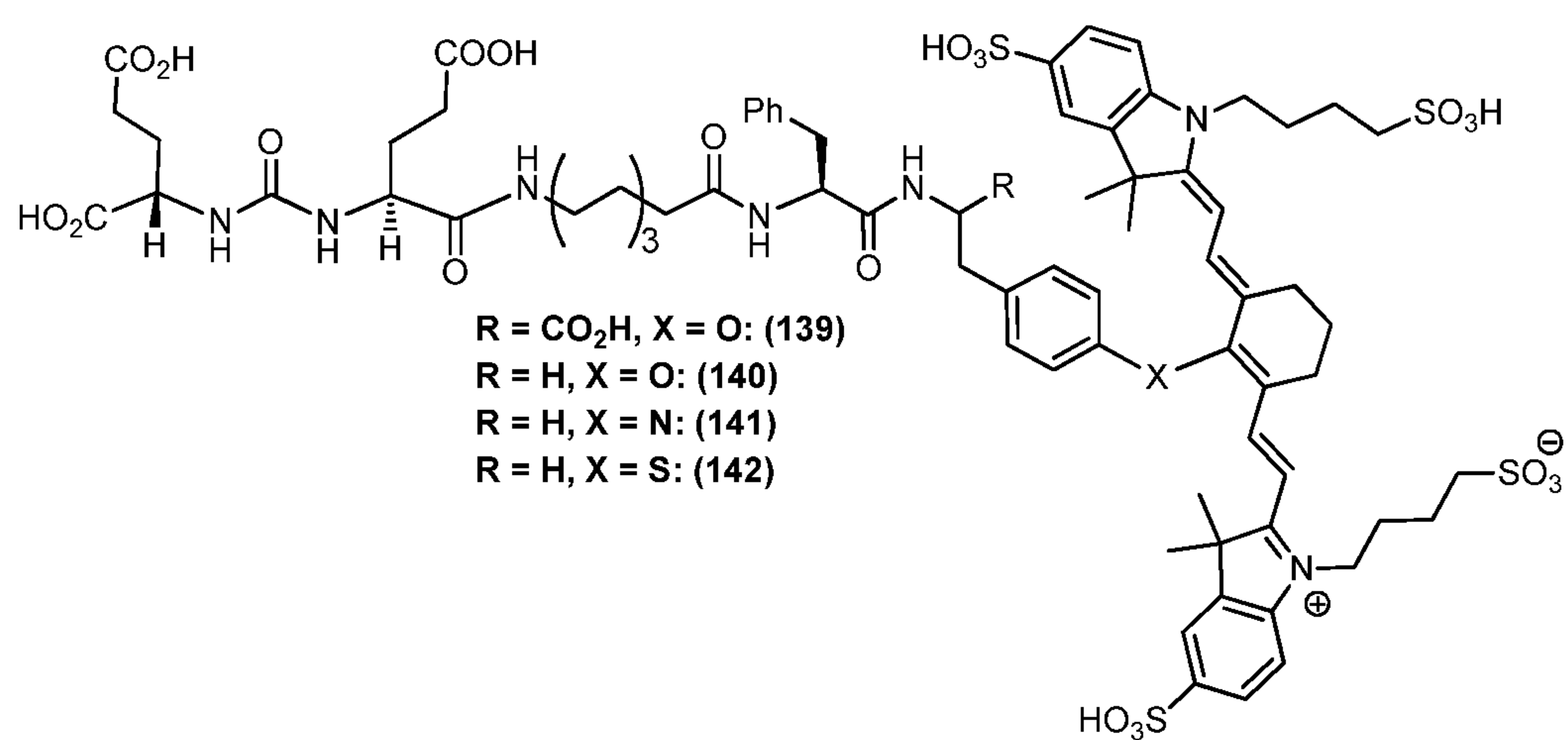
; and



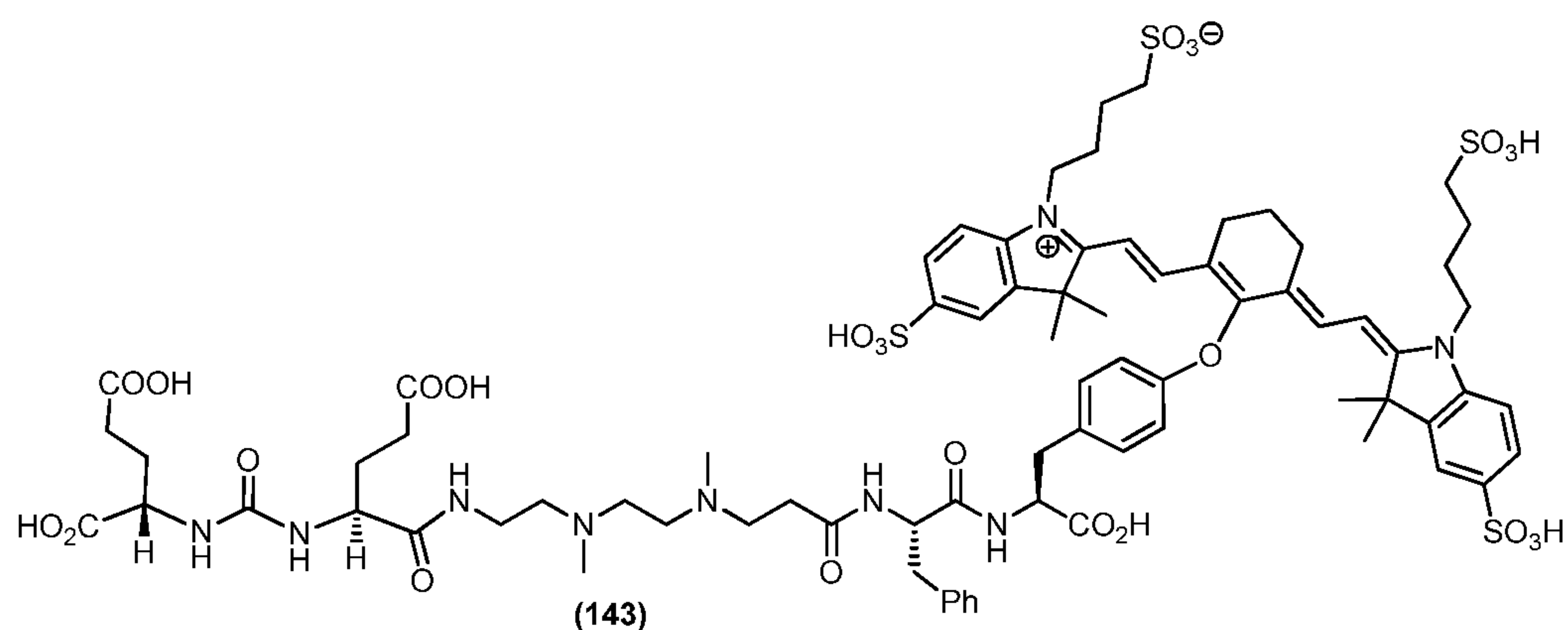
[00205]



[00206]

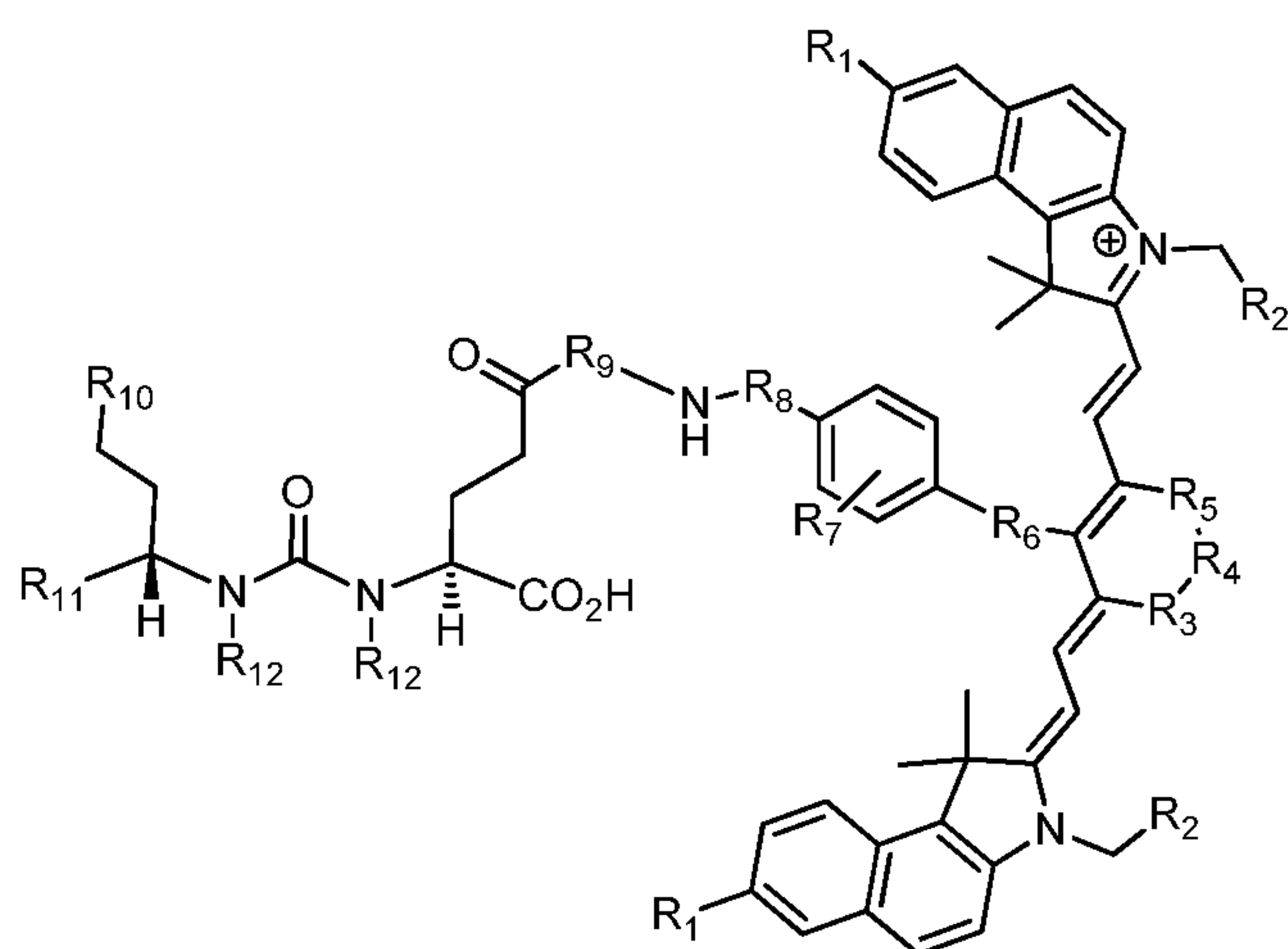


[00207]



[00208]

[00209] Additional preferred compounds of the invention include the following:



or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or isotopes thereof, wherein:

R_1 represents a hydrogen or SO_3H ;

R_2 represents a hydrogen, or CH_3 , or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3^-$, or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3^-$, or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{N}^+(\text{CH}_3)_3$;

R_3 , and R_5 each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds, or oxygen, or sulfur, or nitrogen

R_4 represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R_6 represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R_7 is optional and when present represents electron donating aromatic substitution group;

R₈ is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, Trp, His, Tyr, or derivative of them, and/or cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative of them, and/or anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, and/or unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative;

R₉ is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linkers, polyethylene amine linkers, cationic linker, or derivative of them;

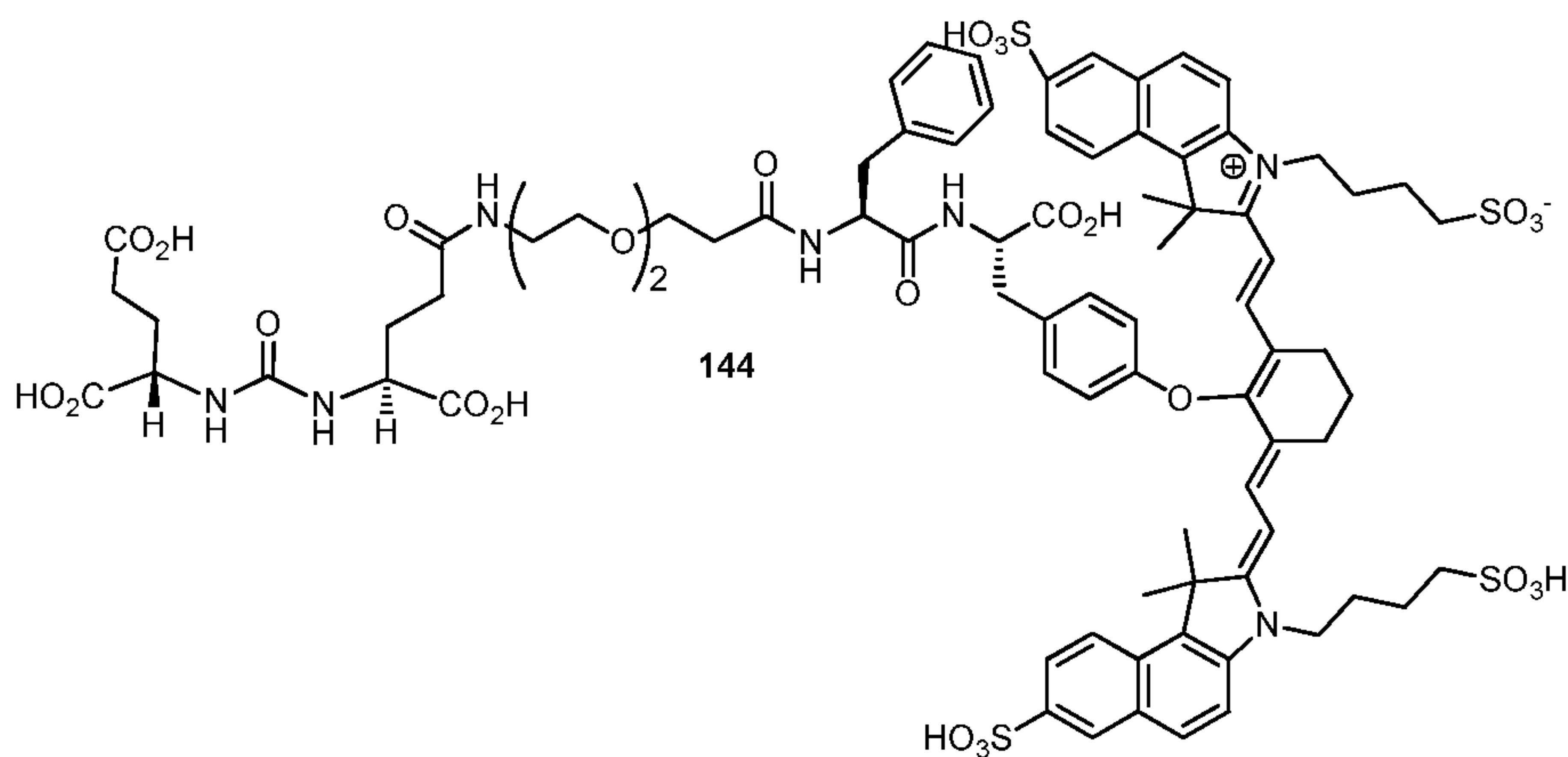
R₁₀ represents a CO₂H, PO₃H₂, SO₃H, CH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H;

R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

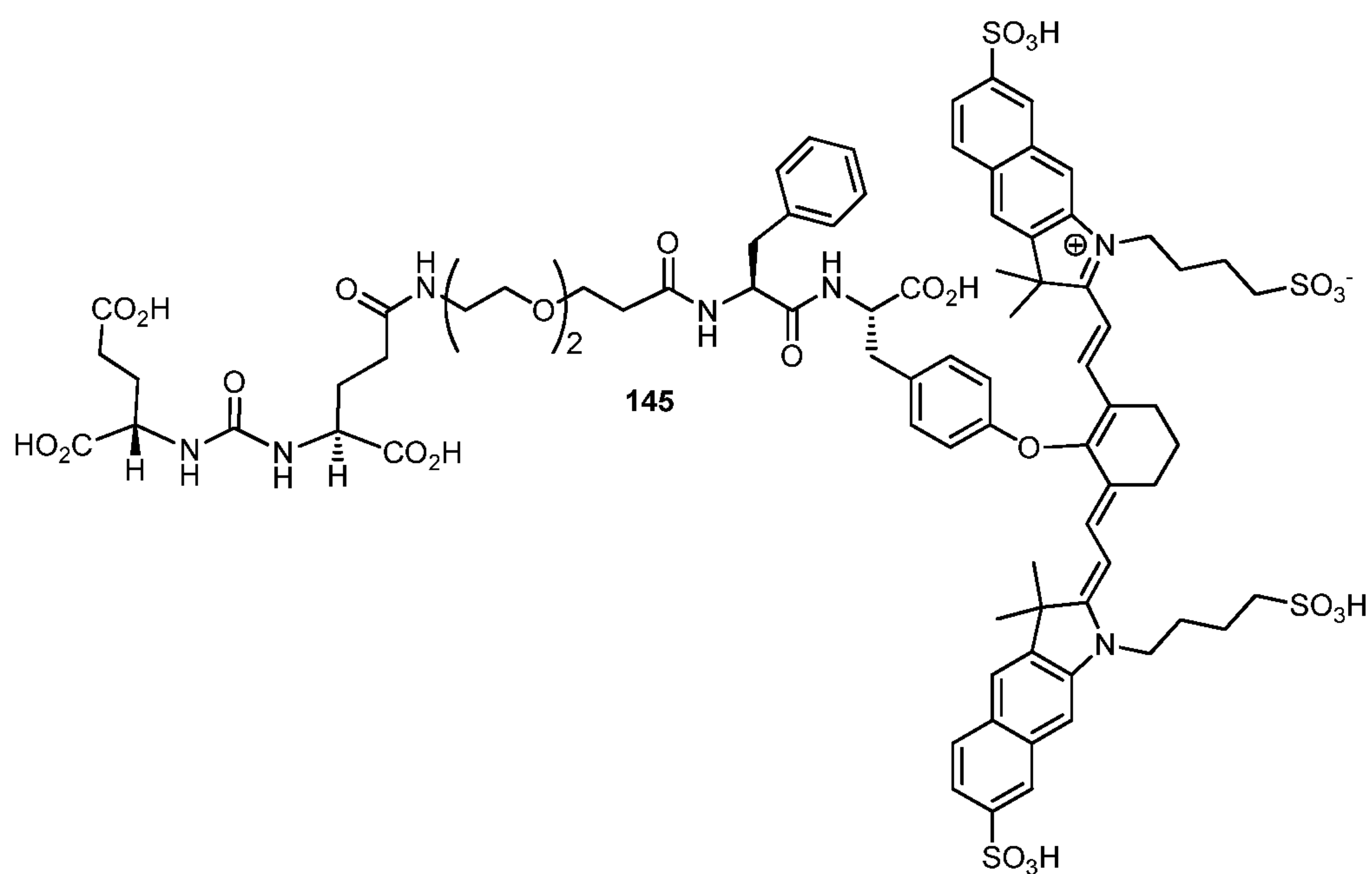
R₁₂ represents independently represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, CH₂COOH, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

[00210] Additional preferred compounds of the invention include the following:

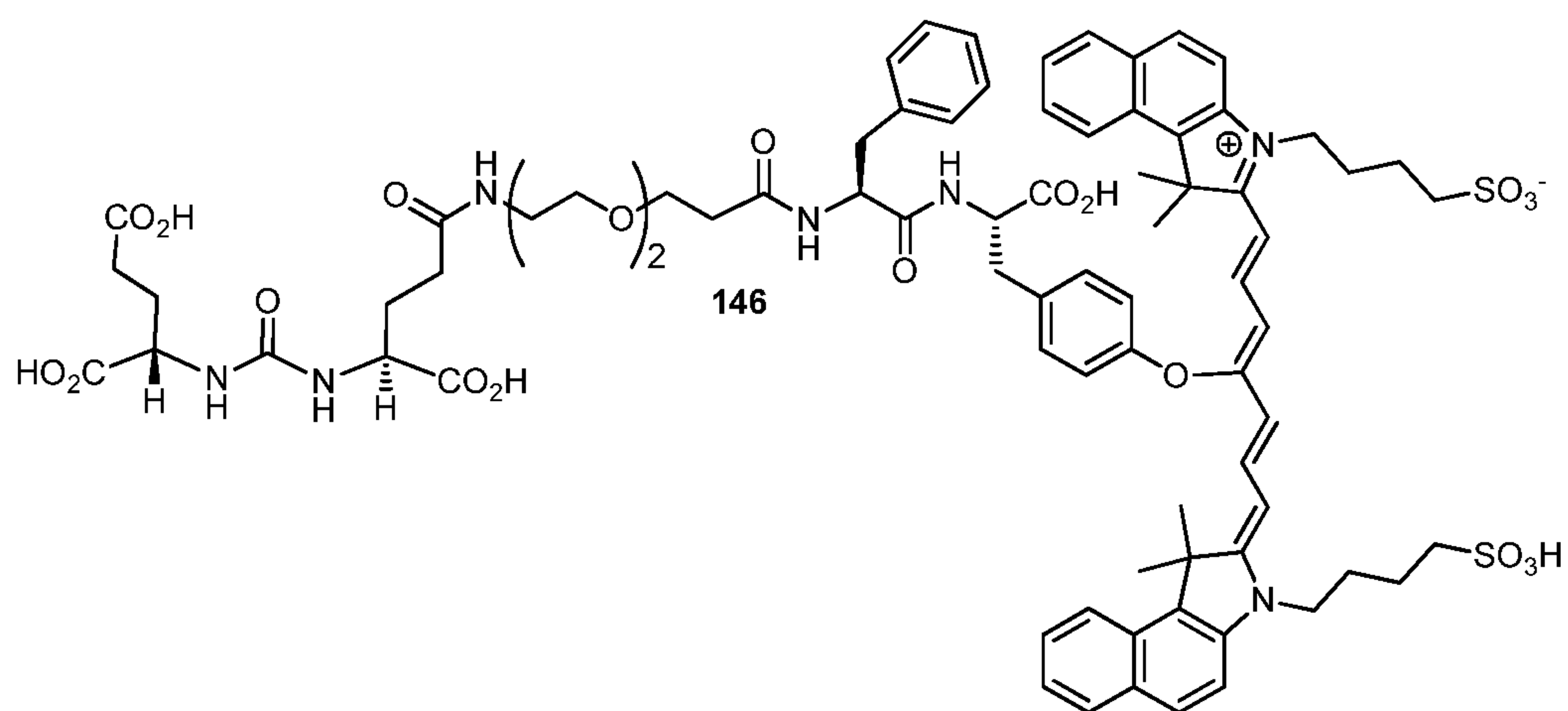
[00211]



[00212]

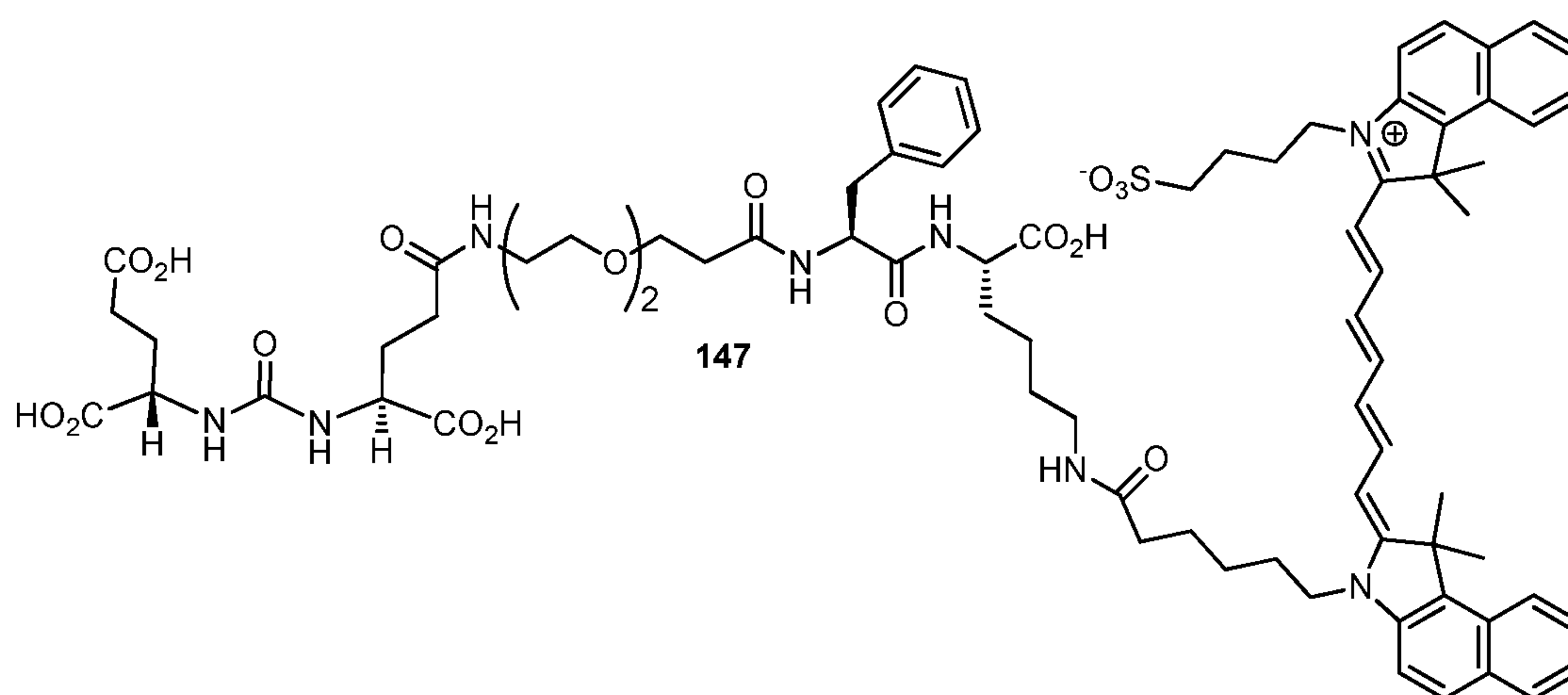


[00213]



[00214]

and



[00215]

[00216] In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have an absorption and emission maxima between about 600 nm and 800 nm.

[00217] In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are made to fluoresce by subjecting the compounds to excitation light of near infrared wavelength. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention have a binding affinity to PSMA that is similar to the binding affinity of DUPA. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are highly selective for targeting to a tumor cell.

[00218] In certain embodiments compounds of the present invention are administered to a subject in need thereof and in some embodiments the administered composition comprises, in addition to the compound, a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, excipient or diluent.

[00219] Some embodiments of the present invention provide methods of optical imaging of PSMA-expressing biological tissue, said method comprising:

- (a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition comprising a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound,
- (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
- (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and
- (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.

[00220] In some embodiments, these methods are used in detection of diseases associated with high PSMA expression. In some embodiments, further comprising the step of constructing an image from the signal emitted in (d). In some embodiments, the invention provides the aforementioned method wherein step (a) includes two or more fluorescent compounds whose signal properties are distinguishable are contacted with the tissue, and optionally the tissue is in a subject. In some embodiments the present invention provides use of an endoscope, catheter, tomographic system, hand-held optical imaging system, surgical goggles, or intra-operative microscope for the illuminating and/or detecting method steps.

[00221] In some embodiments, compositions and methods of the present invention are used to treat cancer. In some embodiments, the cancer is selected from the group consisting of prostate cancer, bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, kidney cancer, sarcoma, breast cancer, brain cancer, neuroendocrine carcinoma, colon cancer, testicular cancer or melanoma. In some embodiments, PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention are used for imaging of PSMA-expressing cells. In certain embodiments those cells are chosen from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells or melanoma cells;

[00222] The present invention also provides methods of targeting a cell type in a biological sample comprising: a) contacting the biological sample with a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type; and b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample, wherein presence of the compound in detecting step c) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample. In some embodiments the present invention provides methods for optical detection of PSMA-expressing cells comprising administering PSMA-targeting NIR dye compounds of the present invention and subjecting the compound to an excitation light source and detecting fluorescence from the compound. In some embodiments, the excitation light source is near-infrared wavelength light. In some embodiments the excitation light wavelength is within a range from about 600 to 1000 nanometers. In some embodiments the excitation light wavelength is within a range from about 670 to 850 nanometers.

[00223] In certain embodiments the present invention provides methods of performing image guided surgery on a subject comprising:

- a) administering a composition comprising a PSMA-targeting NIR dye compound under conditions and for a time sufficient for the compound to accumulate at a given surgical site;
- b) illuminating the compound to visualize the compound using infrared light; and
- c) performing surgical resection of the areas that fluoresce upon excitation by the infrared light.

[00224] In some embodiments methods of the present invention the infrared light wavelength is within a range from about 600 to 1000 nanometers. In some embodiments methods of the present invention use an infrared light wavelength is within a range from about 670 to 850 nanometers.

[00225] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a method of diagnosing a disease in a subject comprising:

- a) administering to a subject in need of diagnosis an amount of a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one PSMA-expressing cell or tissues (PSMA also express in neo-vasculature of most of the solid tumors);
- b) measuring the signal from the compound of present in the biological sample;
- c) comparing the signal measured in b) with at least one control data set, wherein the at least one control data set comprises signals from the compound of claim 1 contacted with a biological sample that does not comprise the target cell type; and
- d) providing a diagnosis of disease wherein the comparison in step c) indicates the presence of the disease.

[00226] Some embodiments of the present invention provide a kit comprising a PSMA-targeting NIR dye compound. In some embodiments, the kit is used for the imaging of PSMA-expressing cells or tissues. In some embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are tumor cells. In some embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are non-prostate cancer cells. In certain embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are prostate tumor cells. In certain embodiments the PSMA-expressing cells are cancer cells. In some embodiments the present invention is used for detection of metastatic disease. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention are used for improved surgical resection and/or improved prognosis. In some embodiments methods of the present invention provide cleaner surgical margins than non-NIR conjugated fluorescing dyes. In some embodiments PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention have an improved tumor-to-background ratio.

[00227] In other embodiments compounds of the present invention are used to image, diagnose, or detect non-prostate cancer cells chosen from the group consisting of bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells,

testicular cancer cells or melanoma cells. In other embodiments, the cells being detected are more than 5mm below the skin. In some embodiments, the tissue being detected is more than 5mm below the skin. In other embodiments, the tumor being detected is more than 5mm below the skin. In some embodiments, the cells being detected are more than 6mm, 7mm, 8mm, 9mm, or 10mm below the subject's skin. In some embodiments of the present invention dye probes that are detectable outside of the visible light spectrum. In some embodiments dye probes greater than the visible light spectrum are used. In some embodiments compounds of the present invention comprise dye probes sensitive to wavelengths between 650nm and 900nm. In some embodiments the PSMA-targeted NIR dye compounds of the present invention have maximum light absorption wavelengths in the near infrared region of between about 650 nm and 1000 nm, for example and in one embodiment, at approximately 800 nm.

[00228] In still another embodiment of the methods provided, the non-prostate cancer is bladder cancer, pancreatic cancer, liver cancer, lung cancer, kidney cancer, sarcoma, breast cancer, brain cancer, neuroendocrine carcinoma, colon cancer, testicular cancer or melanoma.

[00229] In a further embodiment of the methods provided, the PSMA-expressing cancer cells are of a tumor. In still a further embodiment of the methods provided, the PSMA-expressing cancer is a tumor. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is at least 1000mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 1000mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 950mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 900mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 850mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 800mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 750mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 700mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 650mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 600mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 550mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 500mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 450mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 400mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 350mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 300mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 250mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 200mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 150mm³. In some embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than

100mm³. In one embodiment, the volume of the tumor is at least 75mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 75mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 70mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 65mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 60mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 55mm³. In one embodiment, the volume of the tumor is at least 50mm³. In other embodiments, the tumor is less than 50mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 45mm³. In other embodiments, the volume of the tumor is less than 40mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 35mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 30mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 25mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 20mm³. In another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 15mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 10mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 12mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 9mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 8mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 7mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 6mm³. In still another embodiment, the volume of the tumor is less than 5mm³.

[00230] In one embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 5mm prior to surgical resection using a PSMA-targeted NIR dye compound of the present invention. In one embodiment, these methods detect tumors less than 5mm. In other embodiments the methods herein detect tumors less than 4mm. In some embodiments, the methods herein detect tumors less than 3mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 6mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 7mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 8mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 9mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 10mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 11mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 12mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 13mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 14mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 15mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 16mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 17mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 18mm. In yet a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 19mm. In

still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 20mm. In another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 21mm. In still another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 22mm. In yet another embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 23mm. In a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 24mm. In still a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 25mm. In yet a further embodiment, the tumor has a length of at least 30mm.

[00231] In some embodiments the present disclosure relates to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA) targeted compounds conjugated to near-infra red (NIR) dyes and methods for their therapeutic and diagnostic use. More specifically, this disclosure provides compounds and methods for diagnosing and treating diseases associated with cells expressing prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA), such as prostate cancer and related diseases. The disclosure further describes methods and compositions for making and using the compounds, methods incorporating the compounds, and kits incorporating the compounds. It has been discovered that a PSMA-targeted compound, such as DUBA or conjugating PSMA –targeting ligand to an NIR dye via a linker (L) may be useful in the imaging, diagnosis, and/or treatment of prostate cancer, and related diseases that involve pathogenic cell populations expressing or over-expressing PSMA. PSMA is a cell surface protein that is internalized in a process analogous to endocytosis observed with cell surface receptors, such as vitamin receptors. PSMA also express in the neo-vasculature of most of solid tumors. Accordingly, it has been discovered that certain conjugates that include a linker having a predetermined length, and/or a predetermined diameter, and/or preselected functional groups along its length may be used to treat, image, and/or diagnose such diseases.

[00232] In one illustrative embodiment, the linker L may be a releasable or non-releasable linker. In one aspect, the linker L is at least about 7 atoms in length. In one variation, the linker L is at least about 10 atoms in length. In one variation, the linker L is at least about 14 atoms in length. In another variation, the linker L is between about 7 and about 22, between about 7 and about 24, or between about 7 and about 20 atoms in length. In another variation, the linker L is between about 14 and about 31, between about 14 and about 24, or between about 14 and about 20 atoms in length.

[00233] In an alternative aspect, the linker L is at least about 10 angstroms (Å) in length.

[00234] In one variation, the linker L is at least about 15 Å in length. In another variation, the linker L is at least about 20 Å in length. In another variation, the linker L is in the range from about 10 Å to about 30 Å in length.

[00235] In an alternative aspect, at least a portion of the length of the linker L is about 5 Å in diameter or less at the end connected to the binding ligand B. In one variation, at least a portion of the length of the linker L is about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter at the end connected to the binding ligand B. It is appreciated that the illustrative embodiments that include a diameter requirement of about 5 Å or less, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less may include that requirement for a predetermined length of the linker, thereby defining a cylindrical-like portion of the linker. Illustratively, in another variation, the linker includes a cylindrical portion at the end connected to the binding ligand that is at least about 7 Å in length and about 5 Å or less, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter.

[00236] In another embodiment, the linker L includes one or more hydrophilic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including amino acids that have hydrophilic side chains, such as Ser, Thr, Cys, Arg, Orn, Lys, Asp, Glu, Gln, and like residues. In another embodiment, the linker L includes one or more hydrophobic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including amino acids that have hydrophobic side chains, such as Val, Leu, Phe, Tyr, Met, and like residues. It is to be understood that the foregoing embodiments and aspects may be included in the linker L either alone or in combination with each other. For example, linkers L that are at least about 7 atoms in length and about 5 Å, about 4 Å or less, or about 3 Å or less in diameter or less are contemplated and described herein, and also include one or more hydrophilic linkers capable of interacting with one or more residues of PSMA, including Val, Leu, Phe, Tyr, Met, and like residues are contemplated and described herein.

[00237] In another embodiment, one end of the linker is not branched and comprises a chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms. In one embodiment, the linear chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms is at least 5 atoms in length. In one variation, the linear chain is at least 7 atoms, or at least 10 atoms in length. In another embodiment, the chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms are not substituted. In one variation, a portion of the chain of carbon, oxygen, nitrogen, and sulfur atoms is cyclized with a divalent fragment. For example, a

linker (L) comprising the dipeptide Phe-Phe may include a piperazin- 1 ,4-diyl structure by cyclizing two nitrogens with an ethylene fragment, or substituted variation thereof.

[00238] In another embodiment, pharmaceutical compositions are described herein, where the pharmaceutical composition includes the conjugates described herein in amounts effective to treat diseases and disease states, diagnose diseases or disease states, and/or image tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA. Illustratively, the pharmaceutical compositions also include one or more carriers, diluents, and/or excipients.

[00239] In another embodiment, methods for treating diseases and disease states, diagnosing diseases or disease states, and/or imaging tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA are described herein. Such methods include the step of administering the conjugates described herein, and/or pharmaceutical compositions containing the conjugates described herein, in amounts effective to treat diseases and disease states, diagnose diseases or disease states, and/or image tissues and/or cells that are associated with pathogenic populations of cells expressing or over expressing PSMA.

[00240] In some embodiments, it is shown herein that such PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates bind to PSMA expressing tumor cells within a tissue. Moreover, the intensity of the fluorescence is greater than the intensity of previously observed with other near infrared dyes that are targeted with folate for folate receptor positive tumors. This increased intensity allows the targeting and clear identification of smaller areas of biological samples (e.g., smaller tumors) from a tissue being monitored. In addition, the increased intensity of the compounds of the present invention provides the added advantage that lower doses/quantities of the dye can be administered and still produces meaningful results. Thus, the compounds of the present invention lead to more economical imaging techniques. Moreover, there is an added advantage that a lower dose of the compounds of the invention as compared to conventional imaging compounds minimizes the toxicity and other side effects that are attendant with administration of foreign materials to a body.

[00241] Furthermore, identification of small tumors will lead to a more accurate and more effective resection of the primary tumor to produce negative margins, as well as accurate identification and removal of the lymph nodes harboring metastatic cancer cells and

identification of satellite disease. Each of these advantages positively correlates with a better clinical outcome for the patient being treated.

[00242] In specific embodiments, it is contemplated that in addition to tyrosine and tyrosine derivatives, a PSMA-targeted conjugate of a near infrared dye with cysteine or cysteine derivatives also may be useful. Furthermore, it is contemplated that a direct linkage of the PSMA-targeted moiety to the dye or linkage of the dye to DUPA or a PSMA-targeted ligand through an amine linker also produces a loss of intensity of the fluorescence from the conjugate whereas the presence of the tyrosine or tyrosine derivative as the linking moiety between enhances the fluorescence of the conjugated compound as a result of the fact that the tyrosine-based compounds of the invention do not require an extra amine linker to conjugate the SO456 and further because conjugation through the phenol moiety of the tyrosine leads to enhanced fluorescence.

[00243] The compounds can be used with fluorescence-mediated molecular tomographic imaging systems, such as those designed to detect near-infrared fluorescence activation in deep tissues. The compounds provide molecular and tissue specificity, yield high fluorescence contrast, brighter fluorescence signal, and reduce background autofluorescence, allowing for improved early detection and molecular target assessment of diseased tissue in vivo (e.g., cancers). The compounds can be used for deep tissue three dimensional imaging, targeted surgery, and methods for quantifying the amount of a target cell type in a biological sample.

[00244] In specific embodiments, the linker is less than ten atoms. In other embodiments, the linker is less than twenty atoms. In some embodiments, the linker is less than 30 atoms. In some embodiments, the linker is defined by the number of atoms separating the PSMA-targeting compound and the NIR dye. In another embodiment, linkers have a chain length of at least 7 atoms. In some embodiments, linkers have a chain length of at least 14 atoms. In another embodiment, linkers have a chain length in the range from 7 atoms to 20 atoms. In another embodiment, linkers have a chain length in the range of 14 atoms to 24 atoms.

[00245] PSMA-targeting compounds suitable for use in the present invention can be selected, for example, based on the following criteria, which are not intended to be exclusive: binding to live cells expressing PSMA; binding to neo-vasculature expressing PSMA; high affinity of binding to PSMA; binding to a unique epitope on PSMA (to eliminate the possibility that antibodies with complimentary activities when used in combination would compete for binding

to the same epitope); opsonization of cells expressing PSMA; mediation of growth inhibition, phagocytosis and/or killing of cells expressing PSMA in the presence of effector cells; modulation (inhibition or enhancement) of NAALADase, folate hydrolase, dipeptidyl peptidase IV and/or γ -glutamyl hydrolase activities; growth inhibition, cell cycle arrest and/or cytotoxicity in the absence of effector cells; internalization of PSMA; binding to a conformational epitope on PSMA; minimal cross-reactivity with cells or tissues that do not express PSMA; and preferential binding to dimeric forms of PSMA rather than monomeric forms of PSMA.

[00246] PSMA-targeting compounds, PSMA antibodies and antigen-binding fragments thereof provided herein typically meet one or more, and in some instances, more than five of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet six or more of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet seven or more of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet eight or more of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet nine or more of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet ten or more of the foregoing criteria. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compounds of the present invention meet all of the foregoing criteria.

[00247] Examples of tumors that can be imaged with the PSMA-targeted compounds of the present invention (e.g., PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates) provided herein, include any tumor that expresses PSMA such as, e.g., prostate, bladder, pancreas, lung, colon, kidney, melanomas and sarcomas. A tumor that expresses PSMA includes tumors with neovasculature expressing PSMA.

[00248] In some embodiments, a PSMA-targeted molecules bind to PSMA and are internalized with PSMA expressed on cells. Thus, a PSMA ligand conjugate comprising a internalized with PSMA expressed on cells. The mechanism by which this internalization occurs is not critical to the practice of the present invention.

[00249] In some embodiments, the PSMA targeting compounds bind to a conformational epitope within the extracellular domain of the PSMA molecule. In other embodiments, a PSMA-targeting compound binds to a dimer-specific epitope on PSMA. Generally, the compound that binds to a dimer-specific epitope preferentially binds the PSMA dimer rather than the PSMA

monomer. In some embodiments of the present invention, the PSMA-targeting compound preferentially binds to the PSMA dimer. In some embodiments of the present invention, the PSMA-targeting compound has a low affinity for the monomeric PSMA protein.

[00250] In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compound is a ligand. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compound is 2- [3 -(1,3- dicarboxypropyl)ureido] pentanedioic acid (DUPA). In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compound is DUPA or derivative of DUPA, ligand, inhibitor, or agonist that binds to PSMA-expressing live cells.

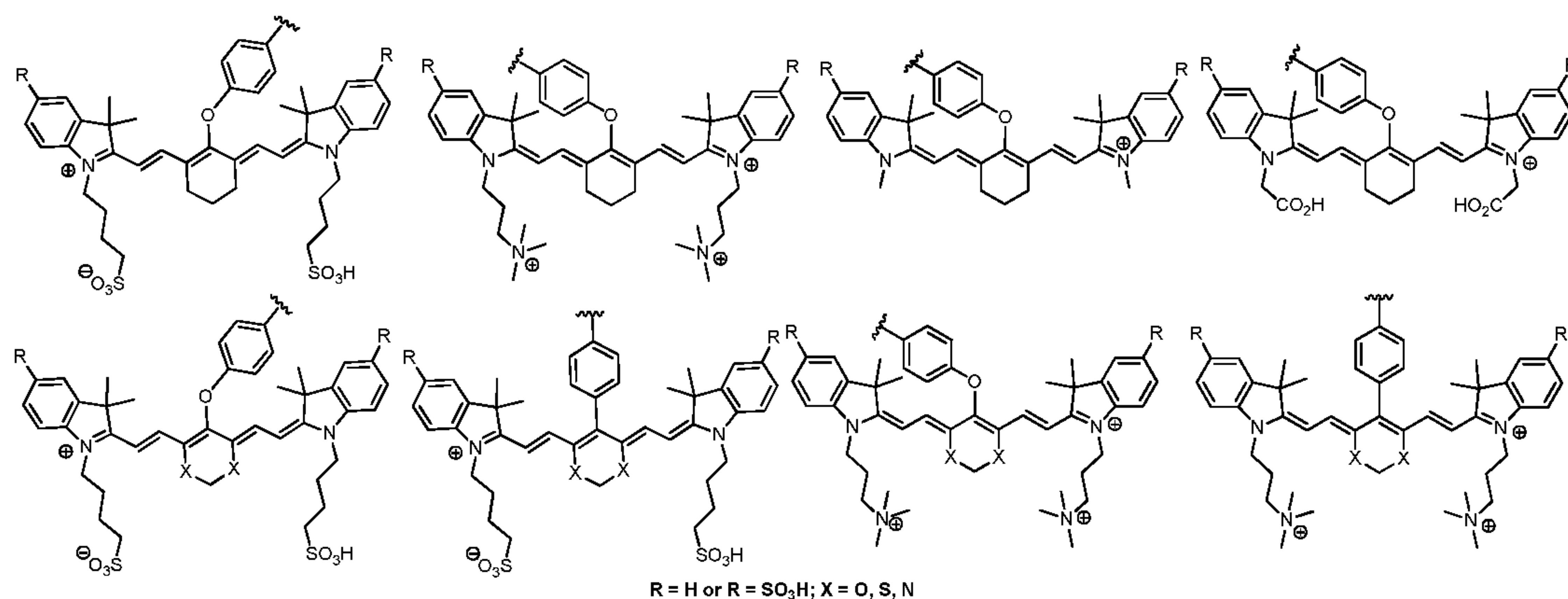
[00251] The PSMA-targeting NIR dye of the present invention produces a tumor-to-background signal ratio that is higher than the tumor-to-background signal ratio of the PSMA-targeting compound conjugated to a non-NIR dye or non-targeted NIR dye. In some embodiments, the improvement is 10-fold. In some embodiments, the tumor-to-background signal ratio is at least a 4-fold improvement. In some embodiments, the tumor-to-background ratio is increased by at least 1.5-fold. In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted NIR dye background signal is half the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than half the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than half the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one third of the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one third of the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one fourth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods

using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one fourth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one fifth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one fifth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one eighth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one eighth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one tenth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 600nm in wavelength. In some embodiments of the present invention, methods using the PSMA-targeted NIR dye on live cells produces a background signal less than one tenth the background signal of the PSMA-targeted compound conjugated to a fluorescent dye reactive to light less than 500nm in wavelength.

[00252] In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeting compound is a small molecule ligand that binds specifically PSMA. Such small molecule ligands may bind to the enzymatic site of PSMA in its native conformation. Also, such small molecule ligands may possess any one or more of the characteristics for PSMA antibody ligands.

[00253] This disclosure also provides methods for synthesizing amino acid linking groups that are conjugated to a PSMA-targeting compound used for the targeted imaging of PSMA-expressing cells, tissues, or tumors. In certain embodiments, this disclosure relates to a compound or a salt derivative thereof, that comprises a PSMA-targeting compound, a linking group, and an NIR dye. In certain embodiments, the linking group can be an amino acid, an isomer, a derivative, or a racemic mixture thereof. In some aspects, the dye is selected from the

group consisting of LS288, IR800, SP054, S0121, KODAK, S2076, S0456 and/or the dyes selected from group consisting of.



[00254] In some aspects, this disclosure provides a method of conjugating an amino acid linking group to an NIR dye, wherein the amino acid can be tyrosine, serine, threonine, lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, cysteine, selenocysteine, isomers, and the derivatives thereof. In certain embodiments, the amino acid, isomers, or the derivatives thereof, contain an $-\text{OH}$, $-\text{NH}_2$, or $-\text{SH}$ functional group that upon addition of the fluorescent dye in slight molar excess produces the conjugation of fluorescent group with the amino acid, isomer, or the derivatives thereof. In other embodiments, the amino acid, isomers, or the derivatives thereof, contains an $-\text{OH}$ functional group that upon synthesis generates an ether bond with the dye that increases the brightness and detection of the compound. In some embodiments, this disclosure relates to the conjugation of the amino acid linking group with the NIR dye, wherein the amino acid, isomers, or the derivatives thereof, contains an $-\text{SH}$, $-\text{SeH}$, $-\text{PoH}$, or $-\text{TeH}$ functional group that upon synthesis generates a C-S, C-Se, C-Po, or C-Te bond with the dye. In some aspects, this disclosure relates to the conjugation of the amino acid linking group to a dye that has an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm. In other aspects, the amino acid linking group is conjugated to a fluorescent dye that has an absorption and emission maxima between about 600 nm and about 800 nm.

[00255] In additional embodiments, this disclosure provides a method for conjugating the amino acid linking group to a PSMA ligand, wherein the amino acid linking group is tyrosine, serine, threonine, lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, cysteine, selenocysteine, isomers or the derivatives thereof, and is conjugated to folate through a dipeptide bond. In additional aspects,

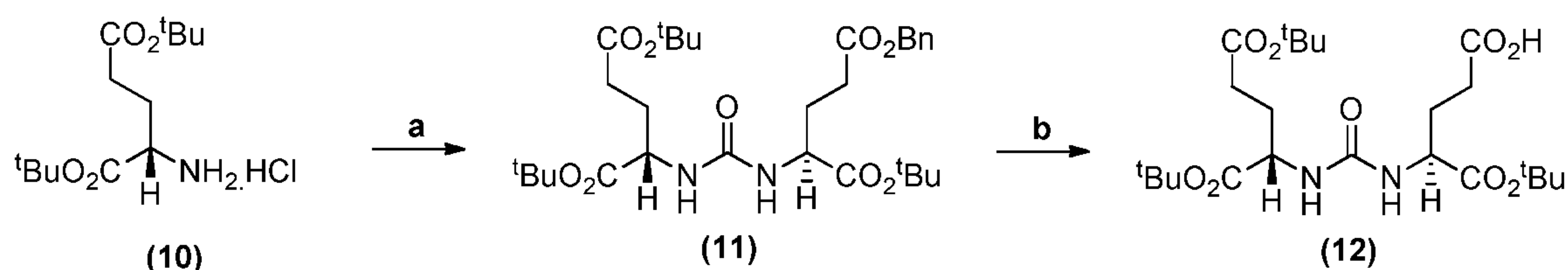
this disclosure provides a method of conjugating the linking group with a folate ligand, wherein the linking group is tyrosine, serine, threonine, lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, cysteine, selenocysteine, isomers, or the derivatives thereof. In other embodiments, this disclosure relates to a method of conjugating a pteroyl ligand to an amino acid linking group, wherein the linking group is tyrosine, serine, threonine, lysine, arginine, asparagine, glutamine, cysteine, selenocysteine, isomers or the derivatives thereof. In certain aspects, the carboxylic acid of the linking group is bound to the alpha carbon of any amino acid, hence increasing the specificity of the compound for targeted receptors. In some embodiments, the charge of the linker contributes specificity to the compound, wherein the observed binding affinity of the compound to targeted receptors is at least 15 nM.

[00256] In other embodiments, this disclosure relates to the use of a compound designated, DUPA-EAOA-Tyr-S0456, wherein EAOA is eight aminooctonoic acid, for image guided surgery, tumor imaging, prostate imaging, PSMA-expressing tissue imaging, PSMA-expressing tumor imaging, infection diseases, or forensic applications. In other aspects, the compound is a DUPA-EAOA-Tyr-S0456 derivative selected from the group consisting of DUPA-EAOA-(D)Tyr-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-homoTyr-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-beta-homo-Tyr-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-(NMe)-Tyr-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-Tyr(OMe)-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-Tyr(OBn)-S0456, DUPA-EAOA-NHNH-Tyr-OAc-S0456, salts, and derivatives thereof.

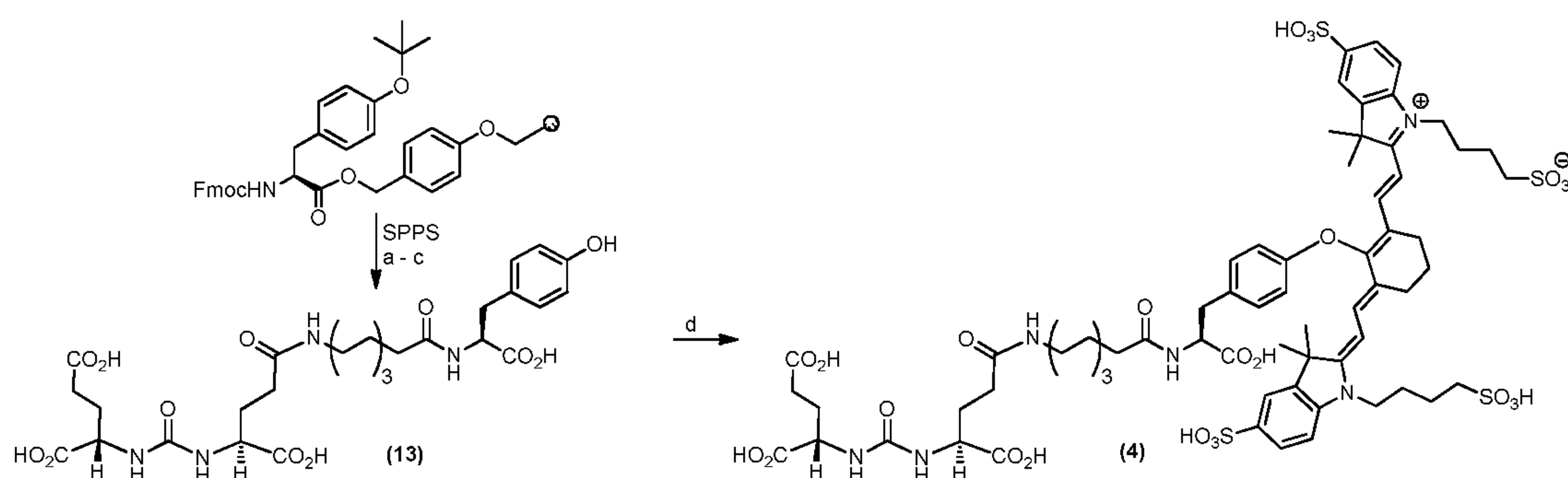
[00257] In some embodiments, the PSMA-targeted compound of the present invention is a small molecule ligand of PSMA.

[00258] PSMA-Targeted NIR Dye Conjugates and Their Synthesis

[00259] The following schemes show the synthesis of PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates of the present invention.

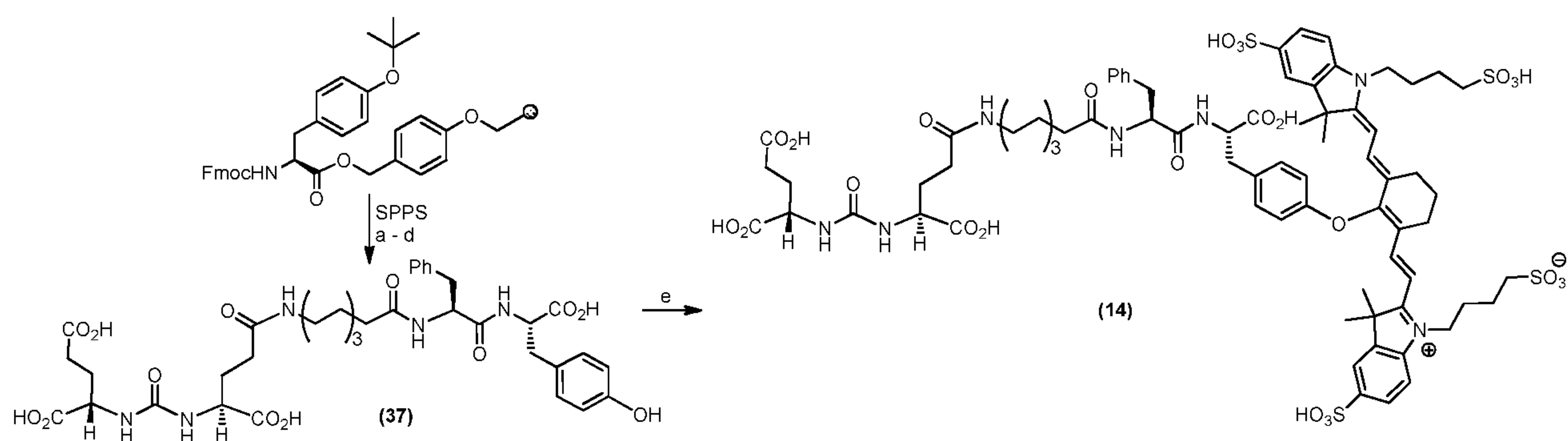


Scheme 1: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) triphosgene, TEA/ DCM, -78 °C; (ii) H-L-Glu(OBn)-O^tBu · HCl; (b) H₂; Pd-C/DCM



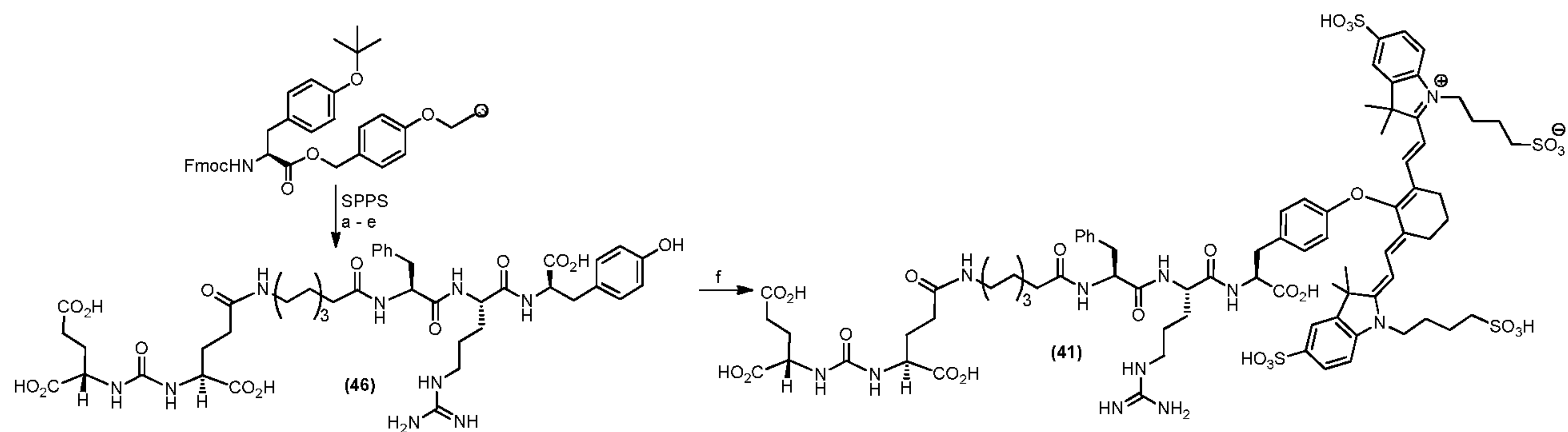
Scheme 2: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; c) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1h; (d) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/ pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

(a)

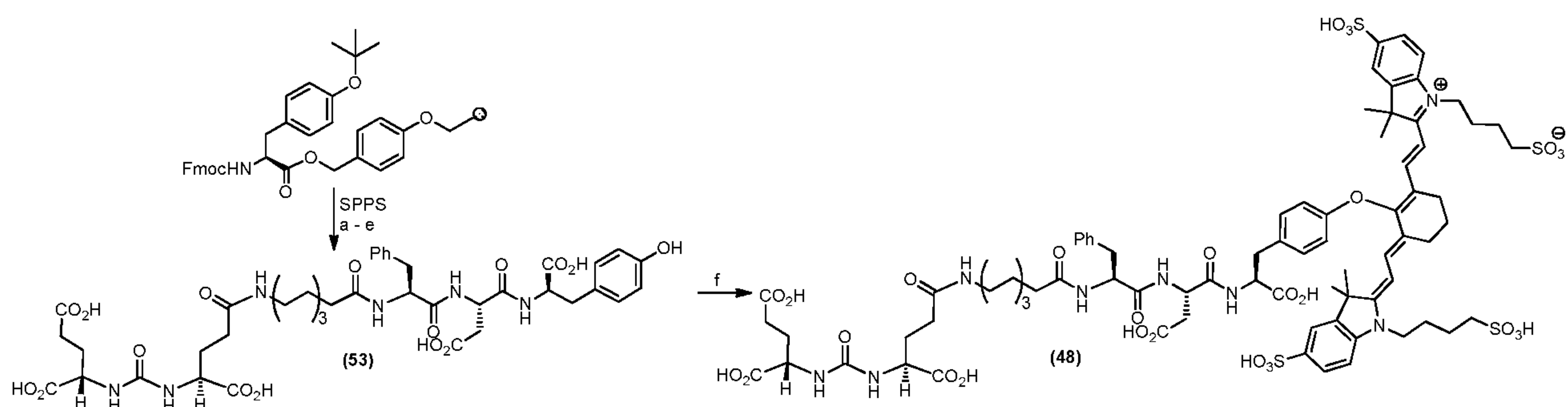


Scheme 3: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; d) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (e) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/ pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

(a)



Scheme 4: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Arg(Pbf)-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (d) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (e) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (f) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/ pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.



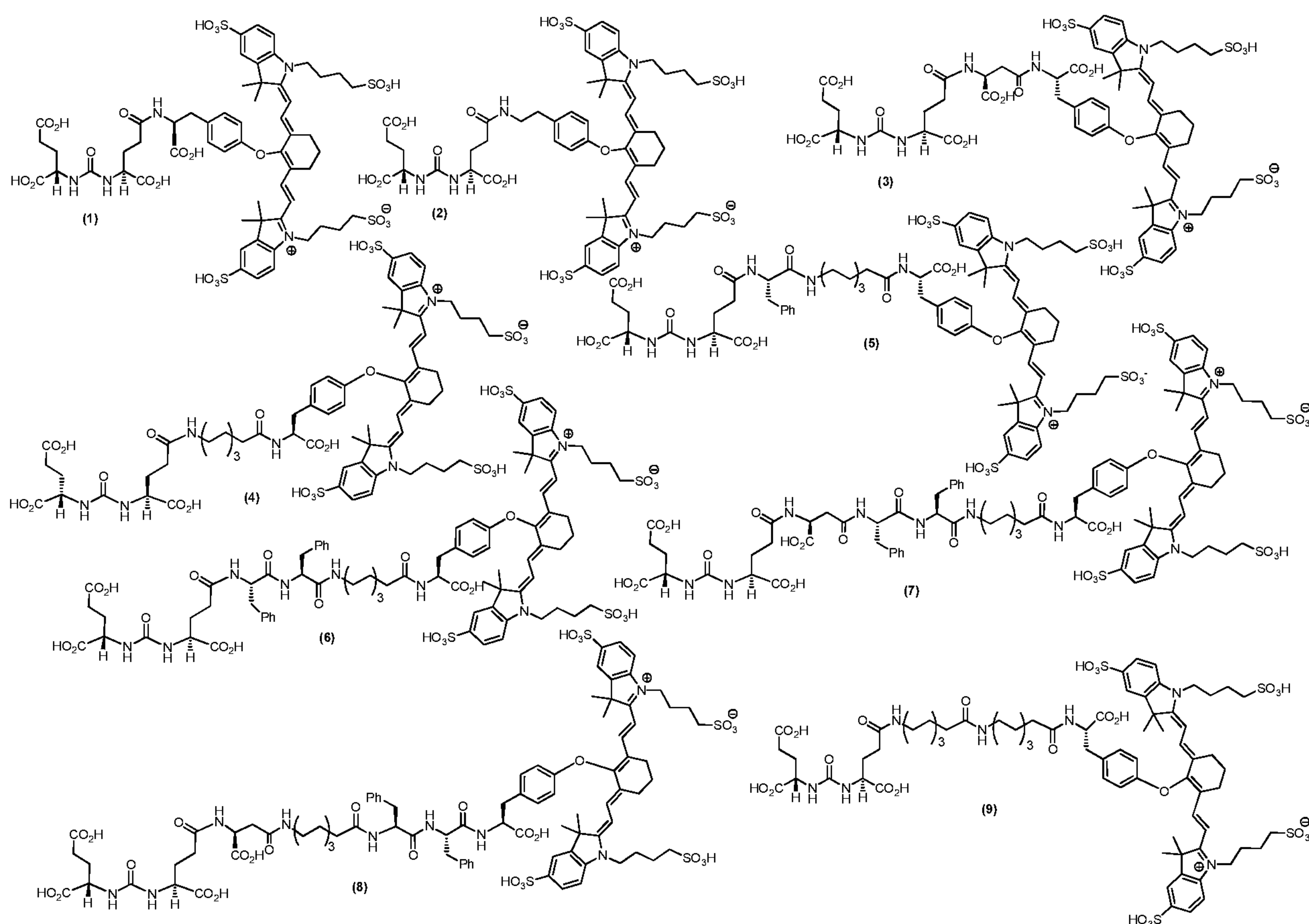
Scheme 5: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Asp(O^tBu)-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (d) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (e) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (f) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

[00260]

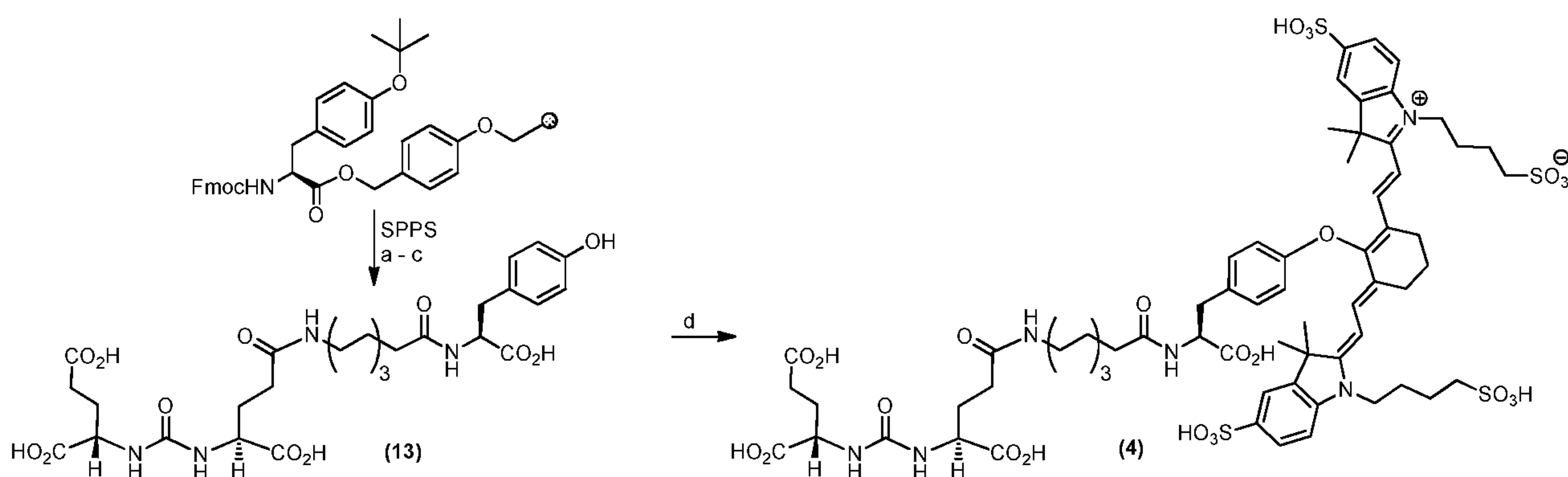
[00261] The examples that follow are merely provided for the purpose of illustrating particular embodiments of the disclosure and are not intended to be limiting to the scope of the appended claims. As discussed herein, particular features of the disclosed compounds and methods can be modified in various ways that are not necessary to the operability or advantages they provide. For example, the compounds can incorporate a variety of amino acids and amino acid derivatives as well as targeting ligands depending on the particular use for which the compound will be employed. One of skill in the art will appreciate that such modifications are encompassed within the scope of the appended claims.

[00262] EXAMPLES

Example (1): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates with random variation of length of the linker/spacer between the ligand and the NIR dye



Scheme 1: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) triphosgene, TEA/ DCM, -78 °C; (ii) H-L-Glu(OBn)-O^tBu · HCl; (b) H₂; Pd-C/DCM



Scheme 2: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightamino-octanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min

min; (ii) **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; c) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1h; (d) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/ pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

(a) In vitro studies.

Figure 2 shows Structure of PSMA-targeted DUPA-FITC (Fluorescein isothiocyanate) conjugate (**14**) and its binding affinity (K_D) and specificity on PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells and on PSMA-negative A549 human alveolar basal epithelial cells in culture. DUPA-FITC dissolved in RPMI medium was added at the indicated concentrations to 22Rv1 or A549 cells in RPMI culture media and allowed to incubate for 1 h at 37 °C. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS (phosphate buffered saline). Samples were analyzed using flow cytometry. Error bars represent SD ($n = 3$). ** does not bind to A549 cells

Figure 3 Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates **1 – 9** with respect to DUPA-FITC (**14**). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

The binding affinity of the DUPA-NIR conjugates was monitored and the data are shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Binding affinity of DUPA-NIR conjugates with variable length spacers to PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells.

Compound	Number of atoms between DUPA and NIR agent	K_D (nM)
1	3	141.9
2	3	112.7
3	7	9.71

4	12	15.2
5	15	12.2
6	18	35.7
7	22	26.8
8	22	23.2
9	21	17.2

[00263] In vivo studies. For in vivo analysis, the tissue distribution of DUPA-NIR conjugates was monitored and is shown in Figure 4. More specifically, biodistribution of DUPA-NIR conjugates **1 - 9** was monitored using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). The results are shown in Figure 4.

[00264] The conjugates were also tested to show the ratio of tumor-to-tissue fluorescence. Figure 5 shows the tumor-to-tissue fluorescence ratio from tissue biodistribution data of PSMA-targeted DUPA-NIR conjugates **1 – 9**. After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated

[00265] Conclusion: The *in vitro* binding affinity data showed that the compounds **3** (7 atom spacer), **4** (12 atom spacer), and **5** (15 atom spacer) have very high affinity for PSMA whereas the compounds **1** (3 atom spacer) and **2** (3 atom spacer) have low affinity for PSMA. The above data show that the PSMA-targeted NIR dye need a minimum length of a 7 atom spacer between DUPA and NIR agent to have optimal effective binding affinity.

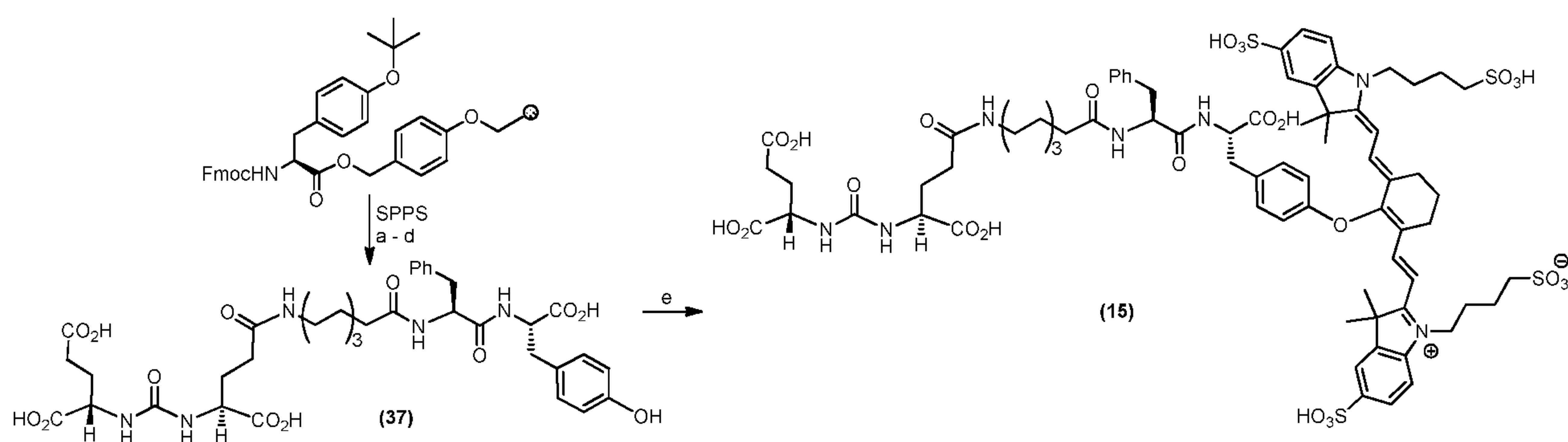
[00266] Compound **4**, DUPA-EAOA-Tyr-S0456, (EAOA – Eight aminooctonoic acid) showed the best tumor-to-background ratio (TBR) out of all compounds evaluated. Compound **4** also showed higher fluorescence intensity in the tumor. Compounds **6** and **7** showed the second

and third best TBR amongst the compound evaluated in this example. However, fluorescence intensity in the tumor for compound 6 and 7 was lower as compared to that of compound 3, 4, and 5. After considering affinity and specificity for PSMA expressing prostate cancer cells and tumor tissues, fluorescence intensity in the tumor, tumor-to-background ratio, etc., it appears that Compound 4 can be considered as a suitable clinical candidate although the other compounds also may provide some valuable insights in the clinic as well as in experimental conditions.

[00267] Example 2: Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates with aromatic amino acid linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye.

[00268] Figure 6 shows the structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with aromatic amino acid linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye. The synthesis scheme is shown in scheme 3.

(b) Synthesis



Scheme 3: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) 12, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2h; d) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (e) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/ pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

[00269] in vitro studies. Figure 7 shows the Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with aromatic amino acids linkers with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[00270] Table 2 shows data of the binding affinity of DUPA-NIR conjugates with aromatic linkers to PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells.

Compound	K _d (nM)
15	4.9
23	7.5
25	6.3
27	22.2
32	32
33	16
34	34.9
35	23.9
36	13.4

[00271] **in vivo studies.** Figure 8 shows Tissue biodistribution analysis and tumor-to-tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **15** and **23** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[00272] Figure 9 shows an overlay of whole or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **15** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00273] Figure 10 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing

mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **23** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00274] Figure 11 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **25** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals

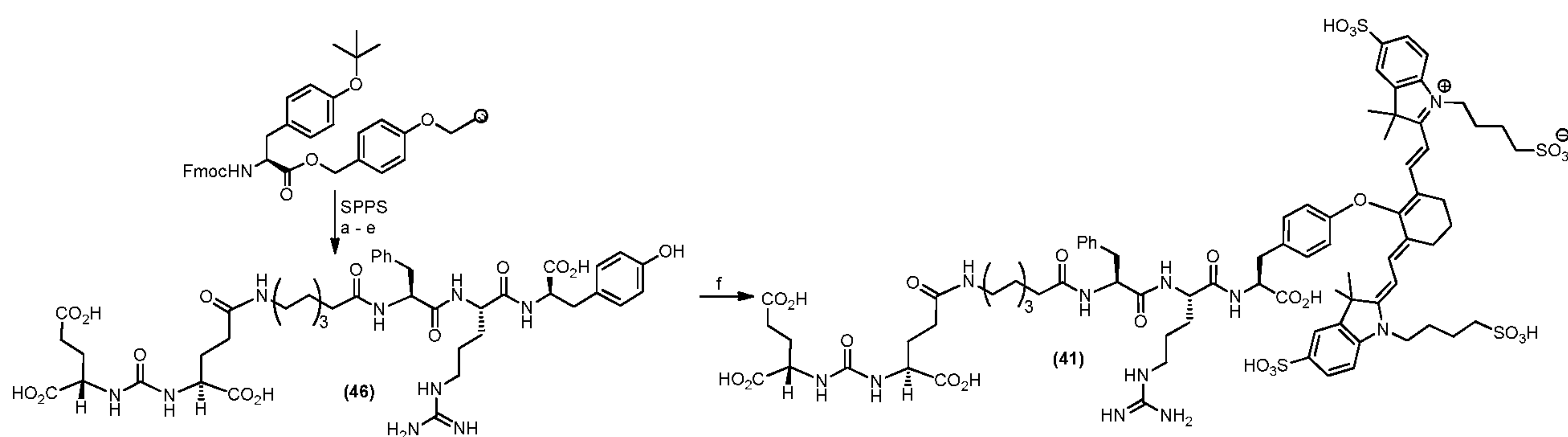
[00275] Figure 12 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **35** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00276] Figure 13 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **36** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00277] **Conclusion:** These *in vitro* binding affinity data showed that compounds 15, 23, 25 and 36 have very high affinity for PSMA. Moreover, compounds 15, 23, 25, 35, and 36 showed very good whole-body imaging data within 2 – 4 hours after administering to the animal. In addition, compounds 15 and 35 showed excellent tumor-to-background ratio (TBR). After considering affinity and specificity for PSMA expressing prostate cancer cells and tumor tissues, fluorescence intensity in the tumor, tumor-to-background ratio, ease synthesis and availability of starting materials for low cost, compound 15 and 35 can be considered as excellent clinical candidates, although the other compounds also may be useful both as clinical and/or experimental candidates.

Example (3): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates with a positive charge linker between the ligand and the NIR dye

[00278] Figure 14 shows the structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with positive charge linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye and the synthesis scheme for these agents is shown in Scheme 4:



Scheme 4: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Arg(Pbf)-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (d) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightamino-octanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (e) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (f) (i) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

[00279] Figure 15 shows the relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[00280] **In vivo studies:** Figure 16 shows the tumor to tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **39** and **41** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22 Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts were injected with

DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[00281] Figure 17 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **39** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00282] Figure 18 shows and overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **40** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

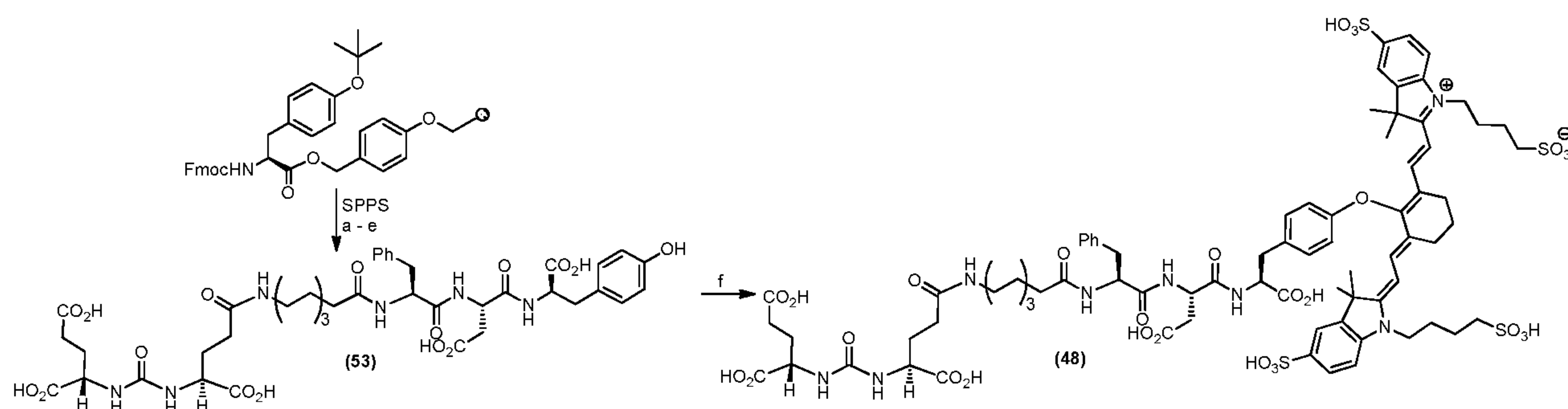
[00283] Figure 19 shows an overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **41** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00284] Conclusion: These *in vitro* binding affinity data showed that the compound 41 has very high affinity for PSMA. Compounds 39, 40 and 41 showed very good whole-body imaging and fast skin clearance in time dependent imaging studies. Adding Arg to the linker between the ligand-eight aminooctonoic acid linker and NIR dye, increased the number of positive charges and decreased the total negative charge of the overall molecule. Although having Arg moieties decreased the affinity of the molecule to PSMA, these compounds showed fast skin clearance. After considering affinity and specificity for PSMA expressing prostate cancer cells and tumor tissues, fast skin clearance, the compound **41** can be considered as a clinical candidate, although the other compounds also may be useful both as clinical and/or experimental candidates.

Example (4): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates with a negative charge linker between the ligand and the NIR dye.

[00285] Figure 20 shows Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with negative charge linkers between the ligand and the NIR dye. The synthesis scheme is shown in Scheme 5.

[00286]



Scheme 5: Reagents and conditions: (a) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Asp(O^tBu)-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (b) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Phe-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (c) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; (ii) Fmoc-Eightaminooctanoic acid-OH, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (d) (i) 20% piperidine/DMF, r.t., 10 min; **12**, HATU, DMF/DIPEA, 2 h; (e) TFA:H₂O:TIPS (95:2.5:2.5), 1 h; (f) (i) H₂O, aq. NaOH/pH = 9.5, r.t.; (ii) S0456, H₂O, 100 °C, 15 min.

[00287] In vitro studies: Figure 21 Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates of **49** and **50** with respect to DUPA-FITC (**14**). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

[00288] In vivo studies. Figure 22 shows Tissue biodistribution analysis and tumor-to-tissue ratio of DUPA-NIR conjugates **49** and **50** using fluorescence imaging of mice bearing human prostate tumor xenografts (22Rv1 cells). Male nude mice with 22Rv1 tumor xenografts

were injected with DUPA-NIR dye conjugates via tail vein. The mice were euthanized 2 h after administration of the DUPA-NIR dye conjugate, selected tissues were harvested, and tissues were imaged with IVIS imager (ex= 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s). After imaging, fluorescence within a Region of interest (ROI) was measured for each tissue using In Vivo imaging software and tumor- to-tissue fluorescence was then calculated.

[00289] Conclusion: While it had low binding affinity for PSMA, the compound 49 has very high tumor accumulation (high fluorescence intensity) and good tumor-to-background ratio

Example (5): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates with variation of charge of the NIR dye molecule.

[00290] Figure 23 shows structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with variably charged NIR dye molecule.

[00291] **Figure 24:** Relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (**14**). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

Compound	K_D (nM)
15	4.9
54	2.6
55	7.3
56	3.7
59	60.9
60	5.4

[00292] **Figure 25:** Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **54** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00293] Figure 26 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **55** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00294] Figure 27 shows Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **56** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00295] Figure 28 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **57** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals

[00296] Figure 29 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **58** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals

[00297] Figure 30 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **60** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00298] Conclusion: These *in vitro* binding affinity data showed that the compounds 15, 55, 56, and 60 have very high affinity for PSMA. Compounds 15, 54, 57 and 60 showed very good whole-body imaging and fast skin clearance in time dependent imaging studies. Therefore, reducing negative charge by removal of sulfonic acid groups (SO₃H) from the NIR dye helped in

producing fast skin clearance and fast tumor accumulation. After considering affinity and specificity for PSMA expressing prostate cancer cells and tumor tissues, fast skin clearance, the compounds 54, 57, and 60 can be considered as clinical candidates.

Example (6): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates: Miscellaneous DUPA-NIR conjugates

[00299] **Figure 31:** Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with miscellaneous linkers and NIR dyes.

[00300] **Figure 32** shows the relative binding affinities of DUPA-NIR conjugates with respect to DUPA-FITC (14). PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of DUPA-NIR conjugates. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry

Compound	K _d (nM)
62	141.4
64	318.8
65	983
66	Not active

[00301] **in vivo studies.** Figure 33 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **63** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00302] **Figure 34** shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **63** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00303] **Figure 35** shows Overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 20 nmol of **64** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00304] Conclusion: These *in vitro* binding affinity data showed that the compounds 62, 64, 65, and 66 have low affinity for PSMA. However, Compounds 63 and 64 also showed very good whole-body imaging and fast skin clearance in time dependent imaging studies. Therefore, the compounds 63 and 64 can be considered as particularly preferred clinical candidates, although the other compounds also may be useful both as clinical and/or experimental candidates.

Example (7): Pre-clinical evaluation of PSMA-targeted NIR dye conjugates: Alternative ligands for DUPA

[00305] Figure 36 shows Structures of PSMA-targeted NIR imaging agents with different ligand.

[00306] Figure 37 shows relative binding affinities of PSMA-targeted NIR conjugates 15 with respect to DUPA-FITC (14) for PSMA-positive 22Rv1 and for PSMA-negative A549 cells. Cancer cells were incubated for 1 h at 37 °C in the presence of 100 nM DUPA-FITC with increasing concentrations of compound 15. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS. Cell bound fluorescence was assayed as using flow cytometry.

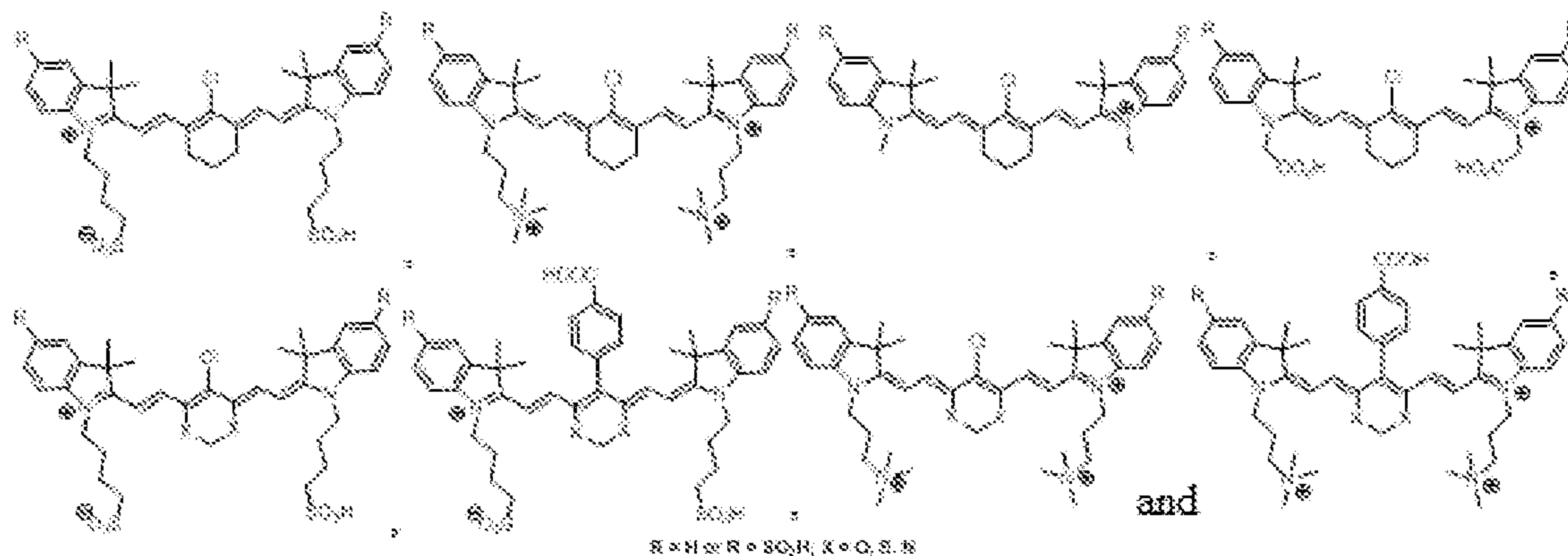
[00307] Figure 38 shows overlay of whole body or half body fluorescence image over white light images after adjusting the threshold. 22Rv1 human prostate tumor xenograft bearing mouse was injected with 6 nmol of **15** and imaged with IVIS imager (ex = 745 nm, em = ICG, exposure time = 1s) at different time intervals.

[00308] Conclusion: While alternative ligands for DUPA that have higher affinity for PSMA when compared to DUPA have been synthesized, this example shows that the compound 15 has a very high affinity for PSMA-positive 22Rv1 cells but not for PSMA-negative A549 cells indicating the compound 15 is highly specific for PSMA. Time dependent whole-body imaging studies showed that the compound 15 accumulated in PSMA – positive tumors and kidneys of the mouse, again demonstrating that compound 15 is an excellent clinical candidate.

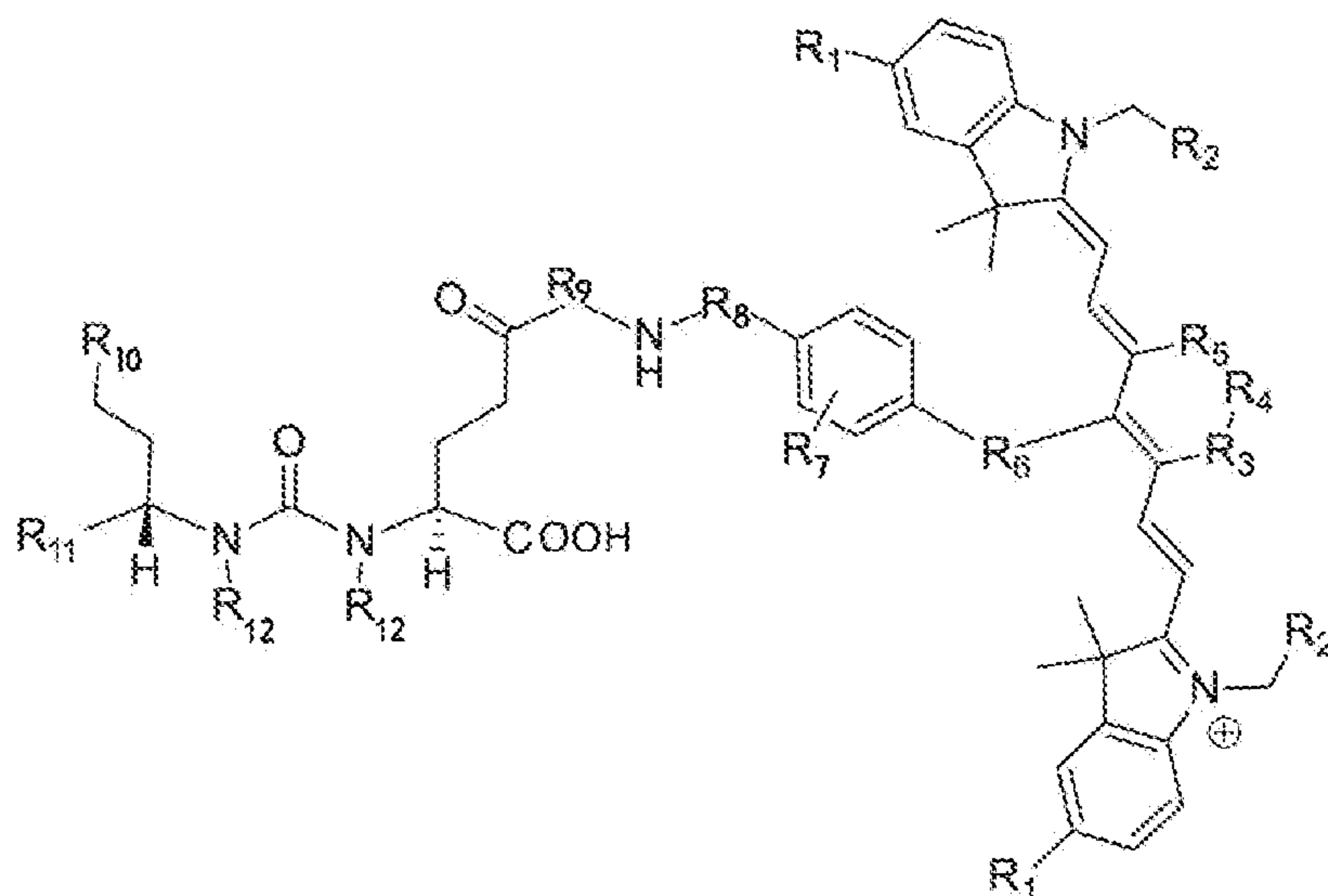
Claims

1. A compound having the formula: B-X-Y-Z, wherein
B comprises a compound capable of binding to prostate specific membrane antigen (PSMA),
X comprises a hydrocarbon chain or hydrocarbon chain with hetero atoms,
Y comprises at least one amino acid, or derivative thereof, and
Z comprises a near-infra red (NIR) dye.
2. The compound of claim 1, wherein B is selected from the group consisting of a small molecule, ligand, inhibitor, agonist, and a derivative thereof.
3. The compound of claim 1, wherein B is 2-[3-(1,3-dicarboxypropyl)-ureido]pentanedioic acid (DUPA) or derivative thereof.
4. The compound of claim 1, wherein X is a hydrophobic spacer.
5. The compound of claim 1, wherein X is a length from 7 atoms to 14 atoms.
6. The compound of claim 1, wherein X is selected from the group consisting of eight aminooctonoic acid (EAOA), polyethylene glycol (PEG), and polyethylene amine (PEA) linker.
7. The compound of claim 1, wherein X is EAOA
8. The compound of claim 1, wherein X is N-amino-dPEG₂-acid
9. The compound of claim 1, wherein Y comprises negatively charged amino acids.
10. The compound of claim 1, wherein Y comprises positively charged amino acids.
11. The compound of claim 1, wherein Y comprises aromatic amino acids.
12. The compound of claim 1, wherein Z has a positive charge.
13. The compound of claim 1, wherein Z has a negative charge.

14. The compound of claim 1, wherein Z is selected from the group consisting of LS288, IR800, SP054, S0121, KODAK, S2076, S0456,



15. The compound claim 1, wherein
- B comprises DUPA or a derivative thereof;
- X is selected from the group consisting of EAOA, PEG and PEA;
- Y is selected from the group consisting of phenylalanine-tyrosine, histidine-tyrosine, phenylalanine-arginine-tyrosine, and histidine-tyrosine;
- and Z comprises S0456.
16. A compound having the structural formula:



or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or isotopes thereof, wherein:

R_1 represents a hydrogen or SO_3H ;

R_2 represents a hydrogen, or CH_3 , or $C_3H_6SO_3^-$, or $C_3H_6SO_3H$ or $C_4H_8SO_3^-$, or $C_4H_8SO_3H$ or $C_3H_6N^+(CH_3)_3$;

R_3 , and R_5 each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds, or oxygen, or sulfur, or nitrogen

R_4 represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R_6 represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R_7 is optional and when present represents electron donating aromatic substitution group;

R_8 is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, Trp, His, Tyr, or derivative of them, and/or cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative of them, and/or anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, and/or unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative;

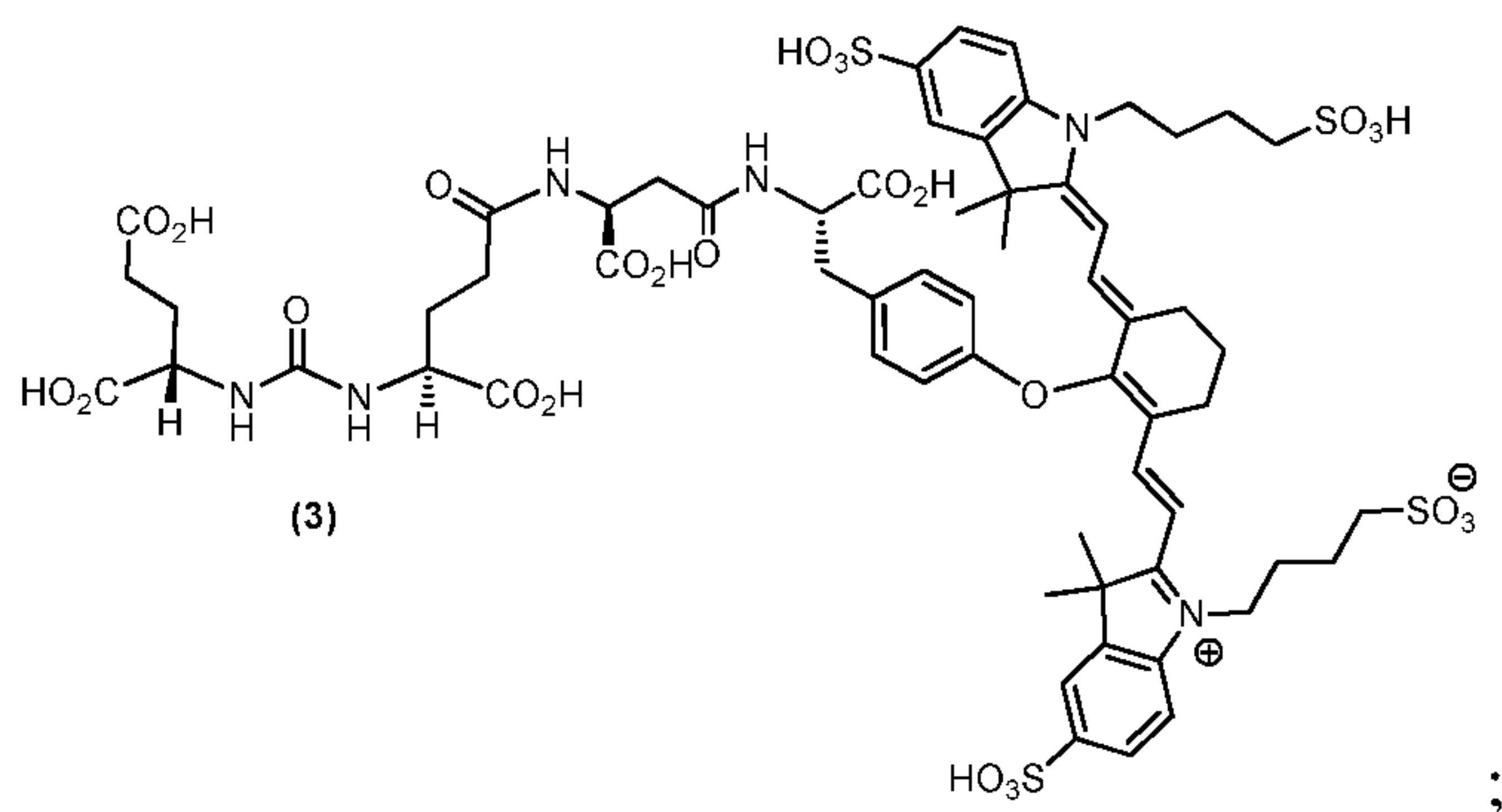
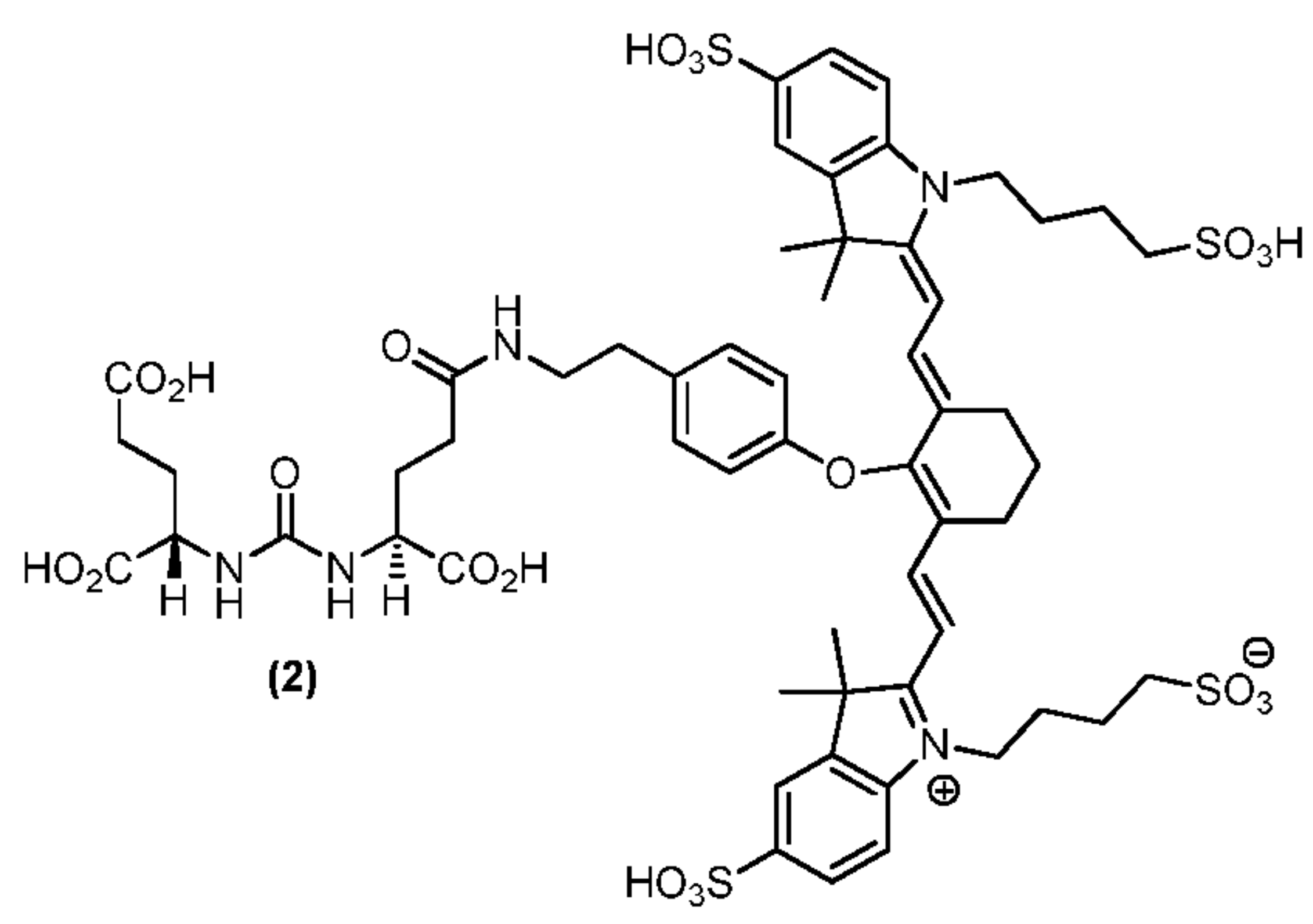
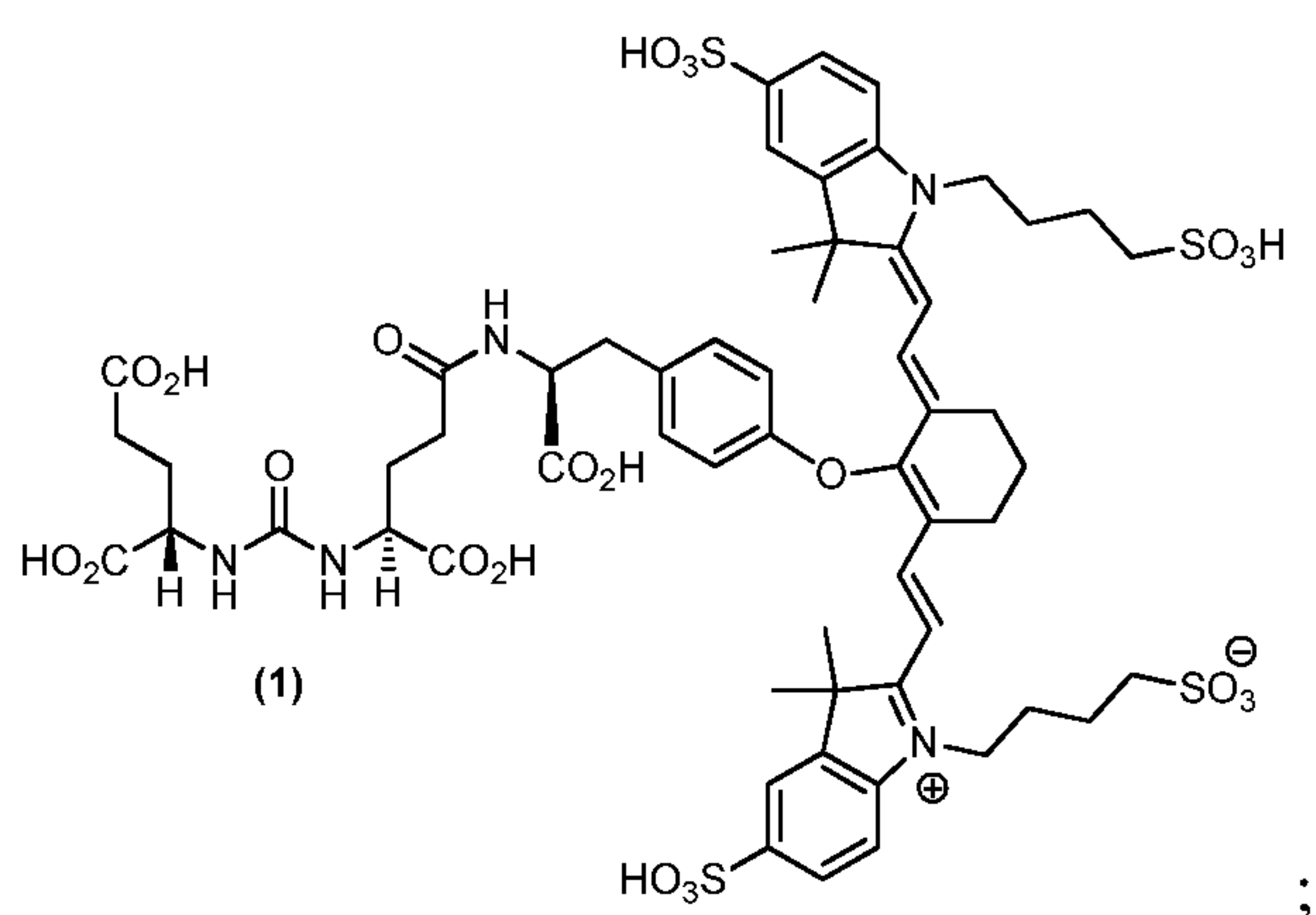
R_9 is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linkers, polyethylene amine linkers, cationic linker, or derivative of them;

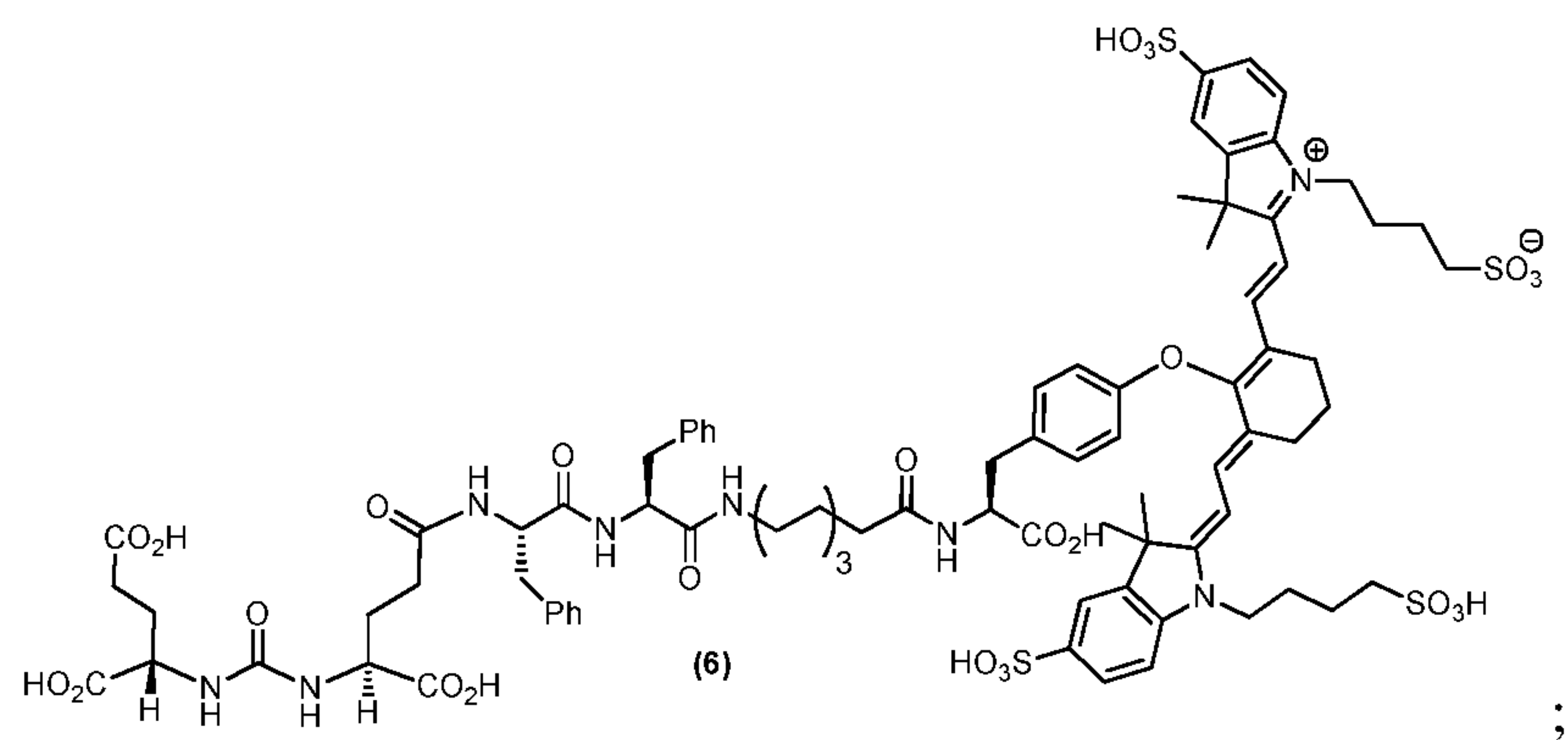
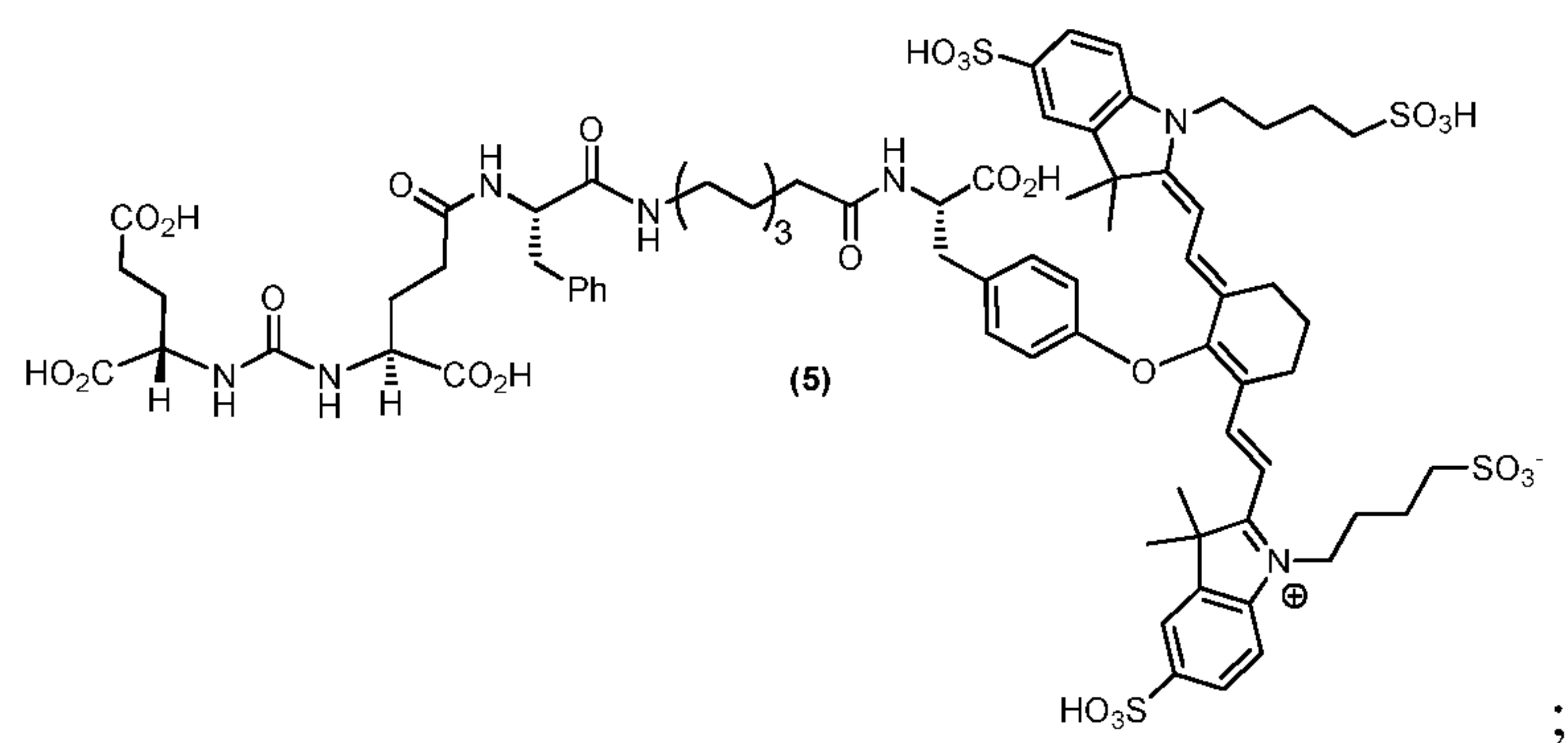
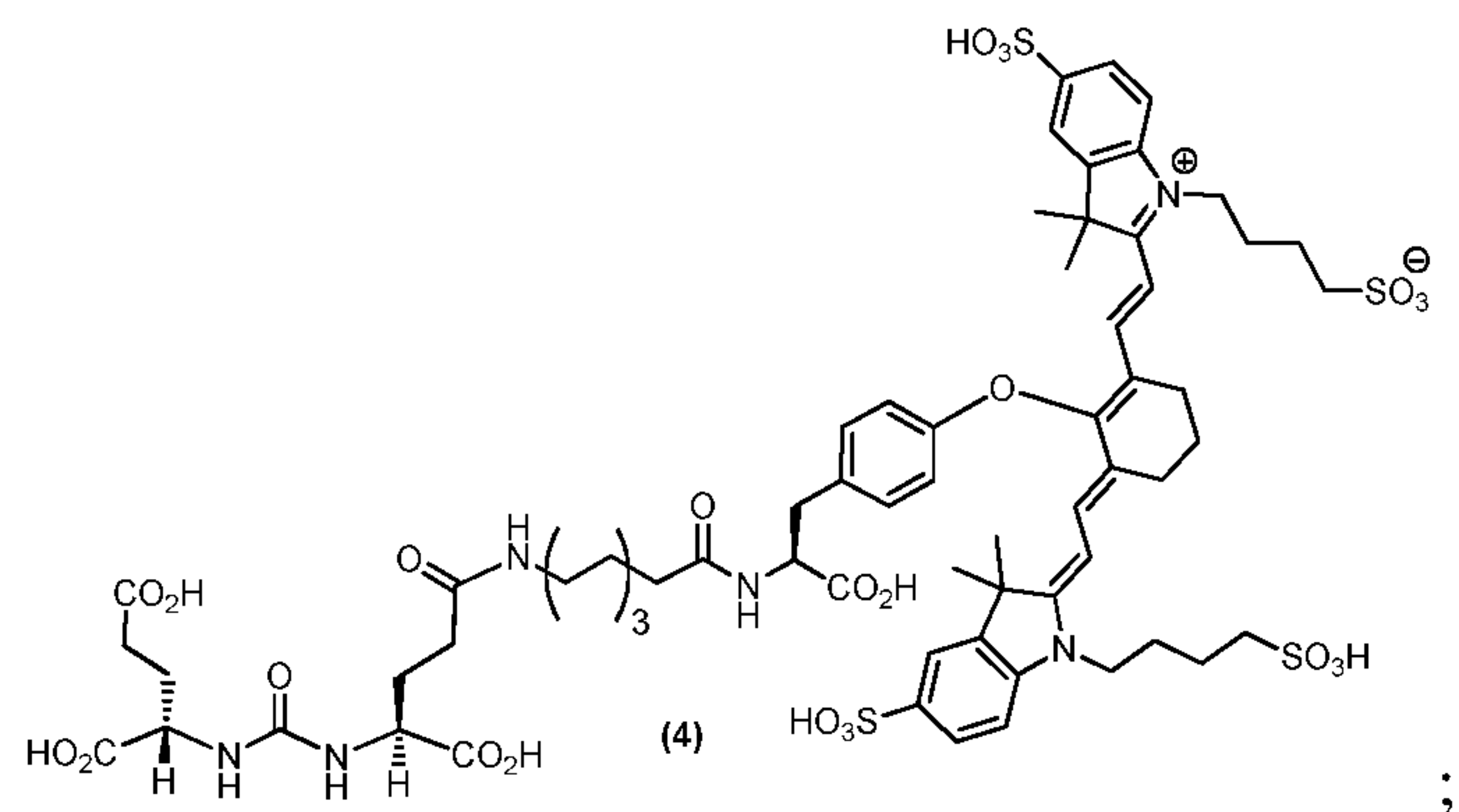
R_{10} represents a CO_2H , PO_3H_2 , SO_3H , CH_2SO_3H , $CH_2CONHCH_2SO_3H$, $CH_2CONHCH_2CH_2SO_3H$;

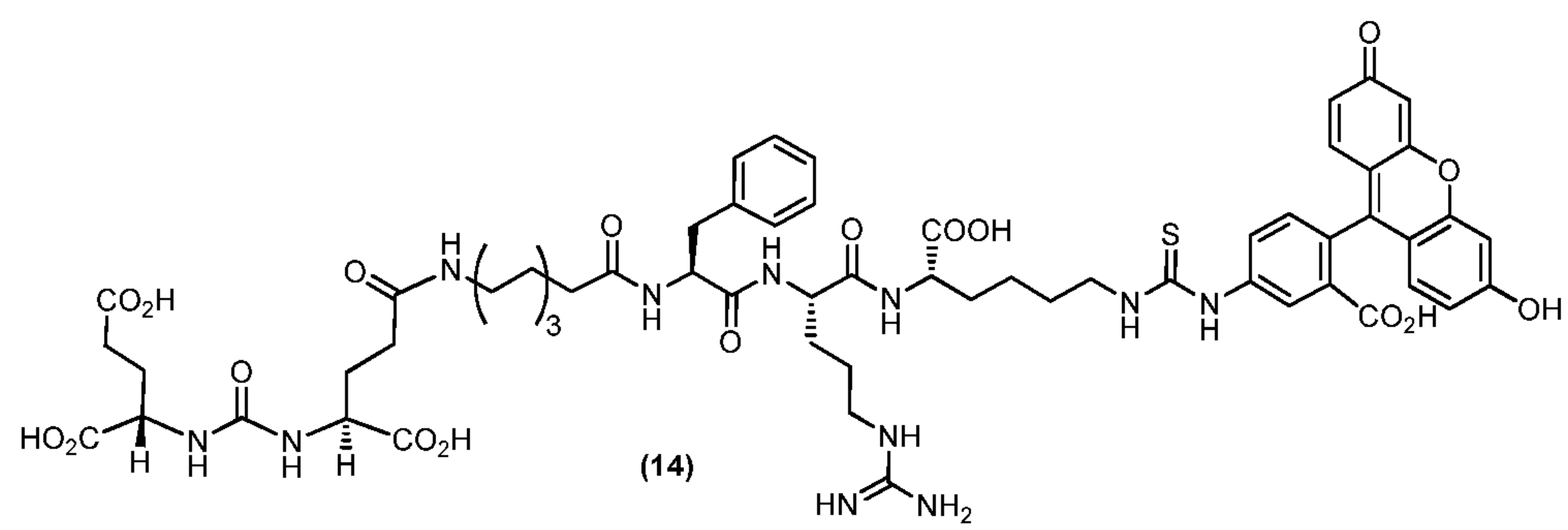
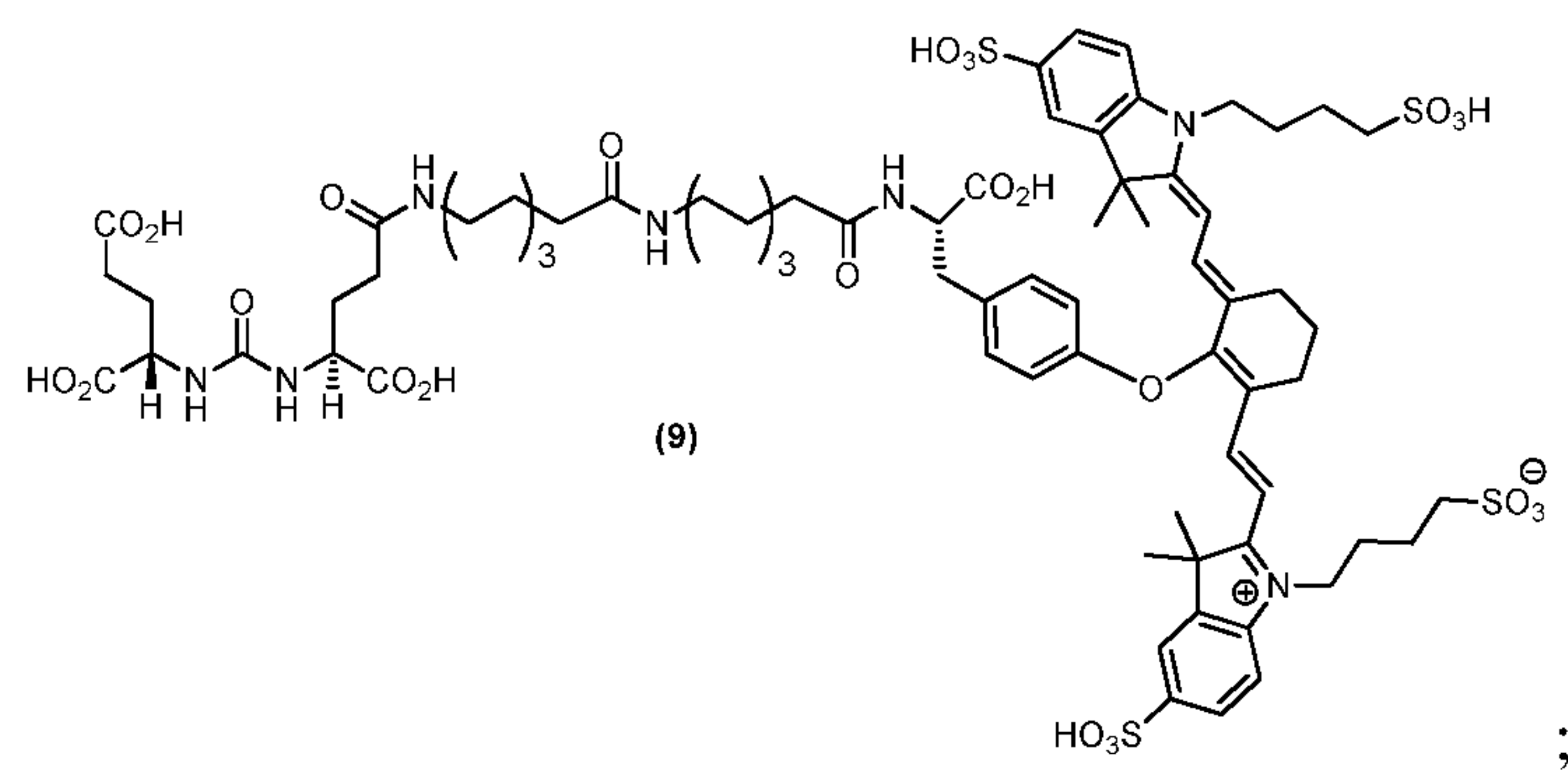
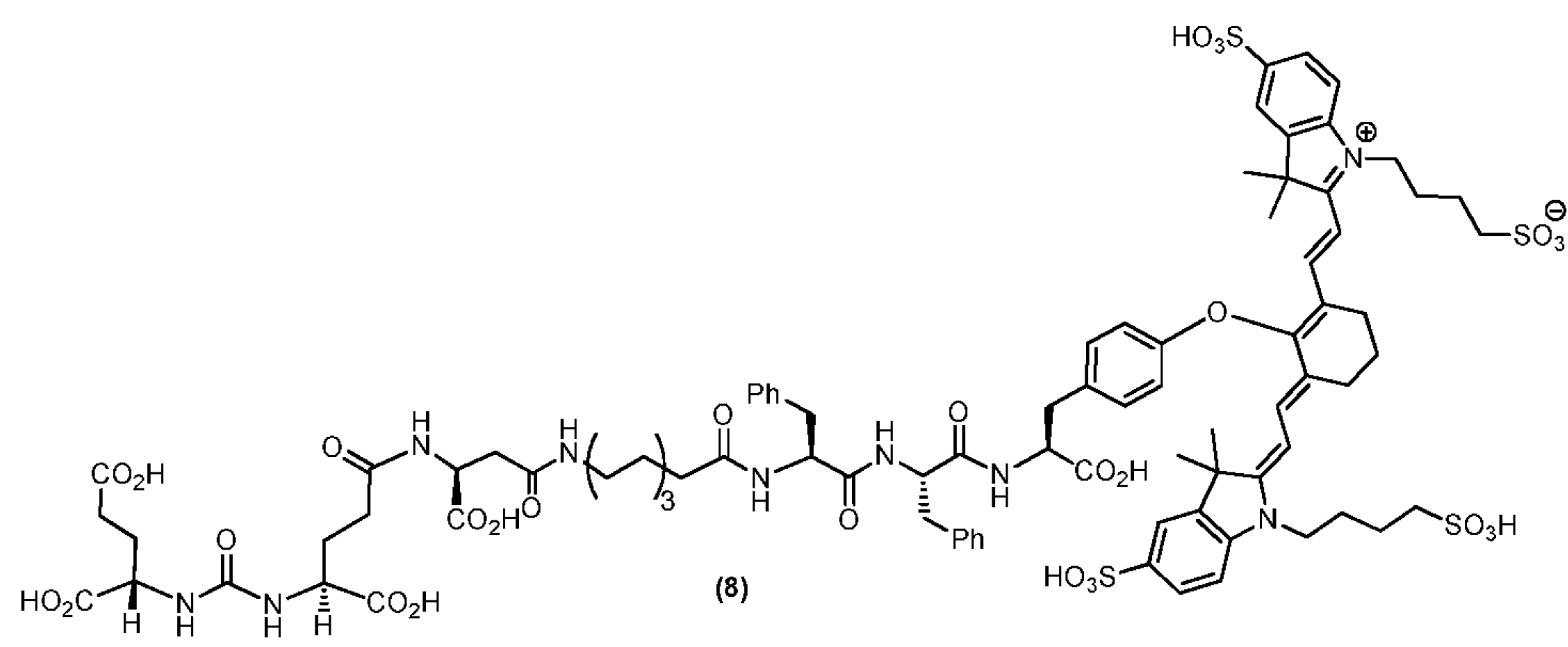
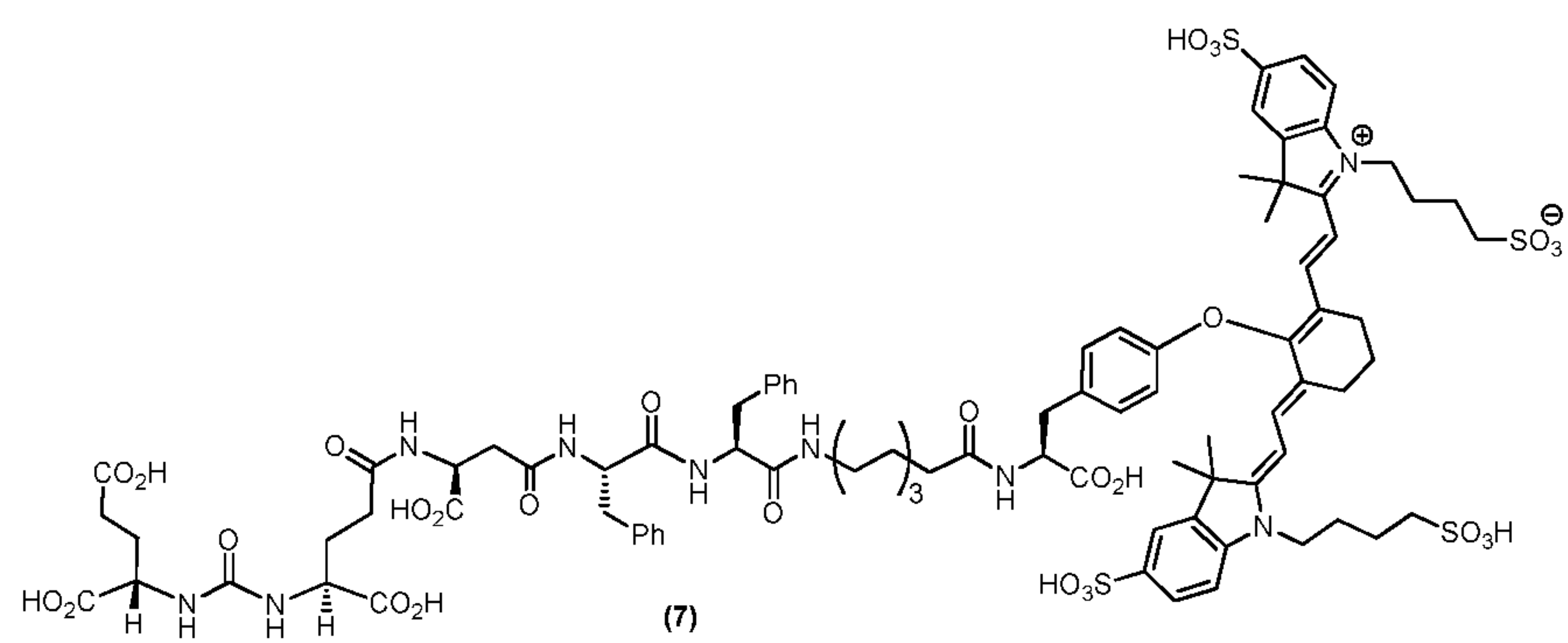
R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

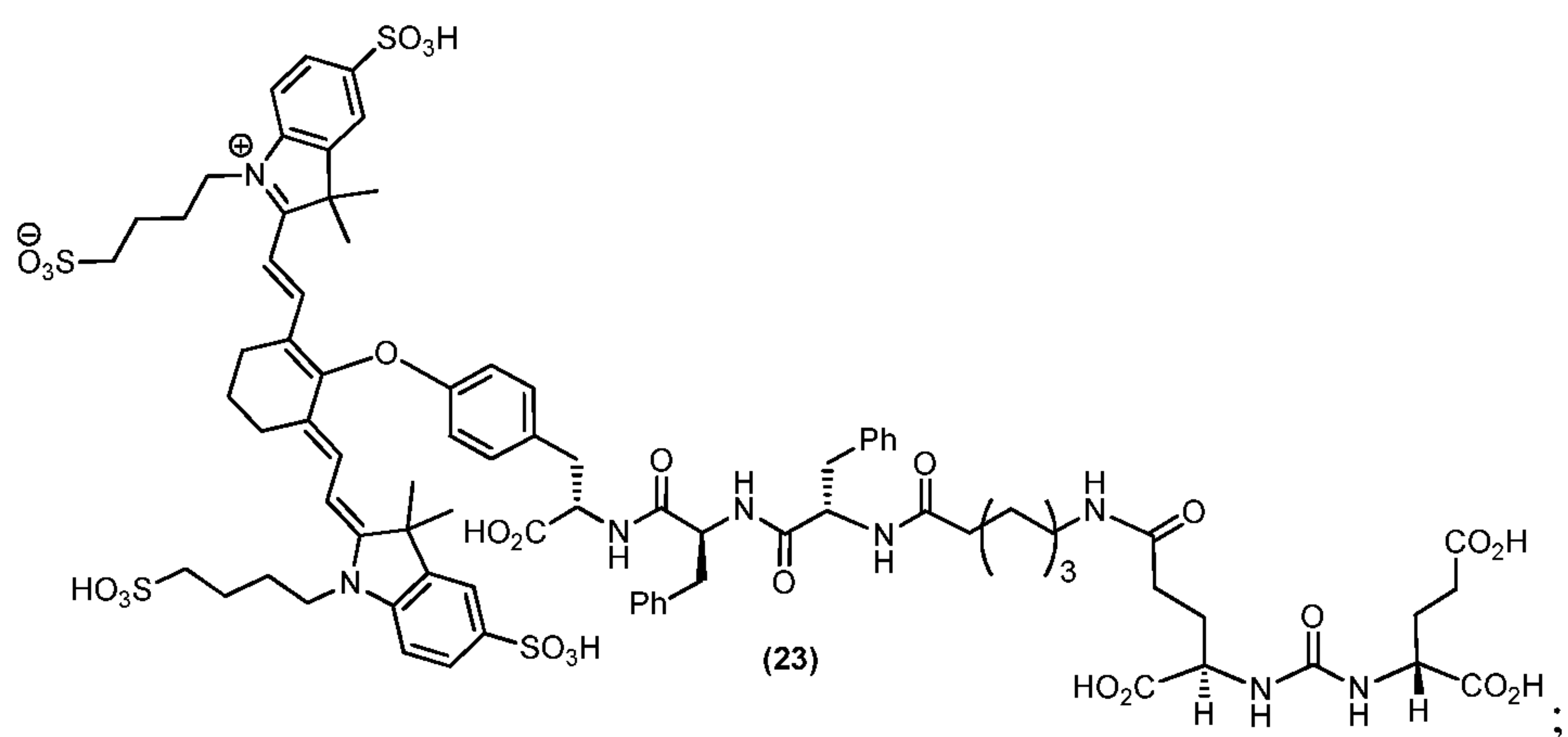
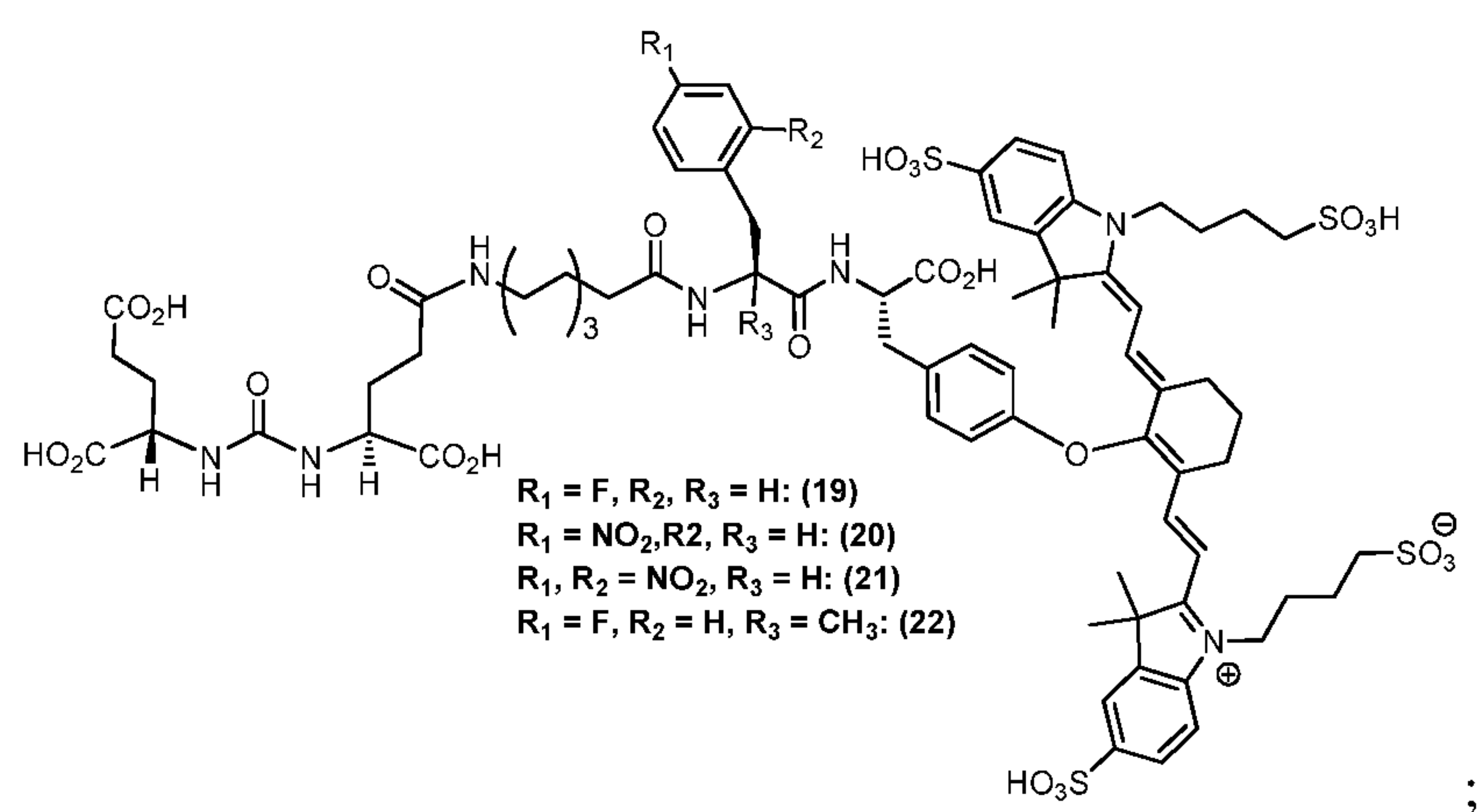
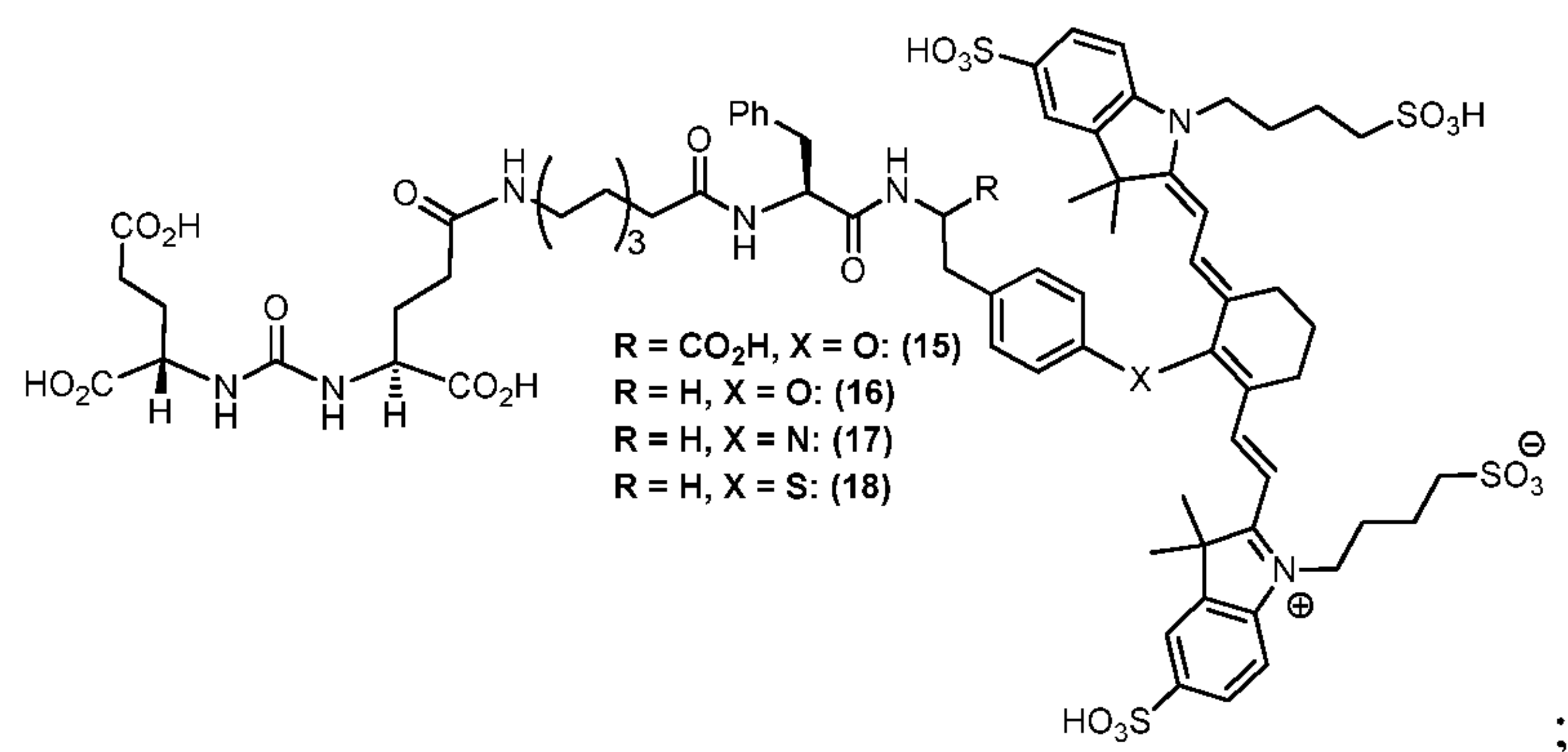
R₁₂ represents independently represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, CH₂COOH, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

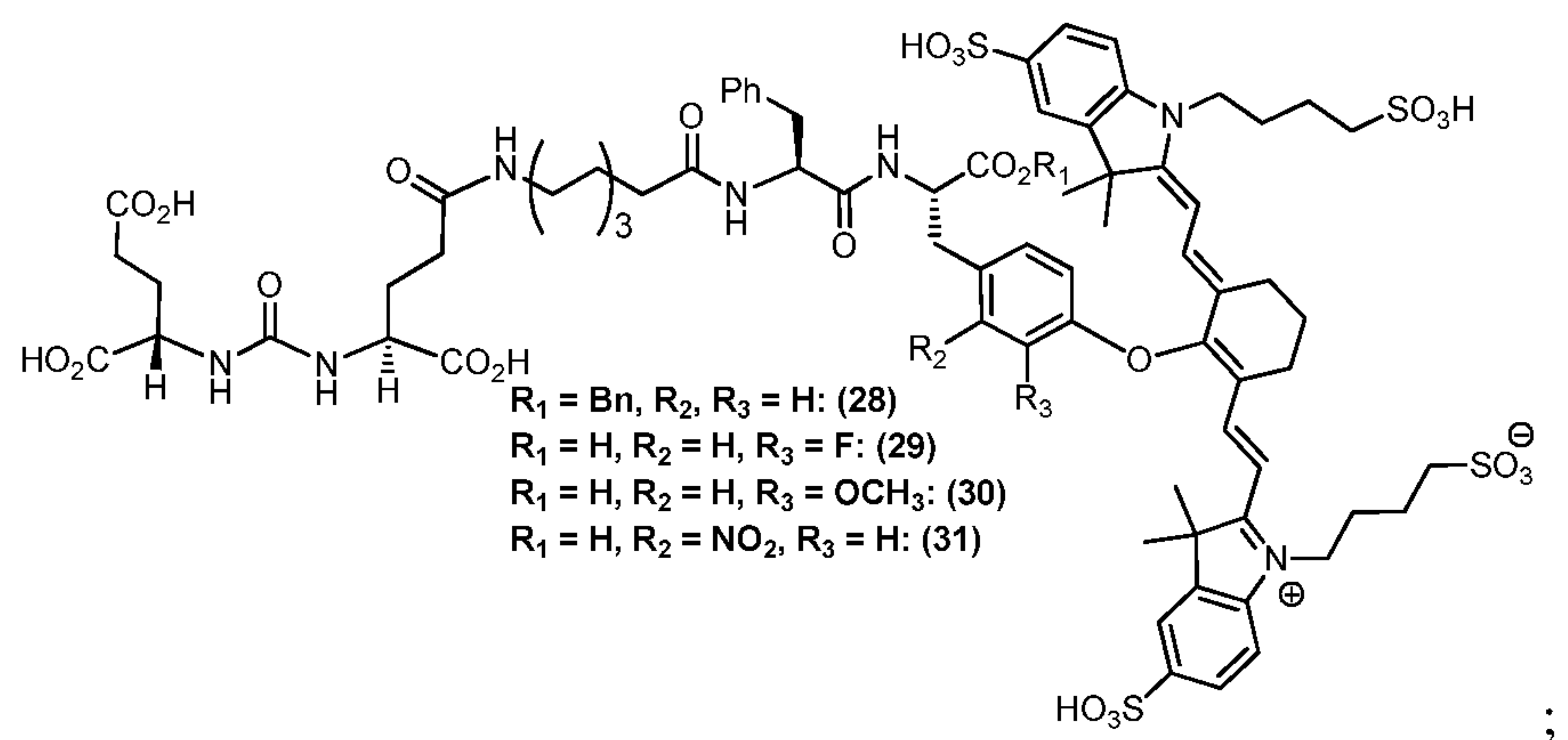
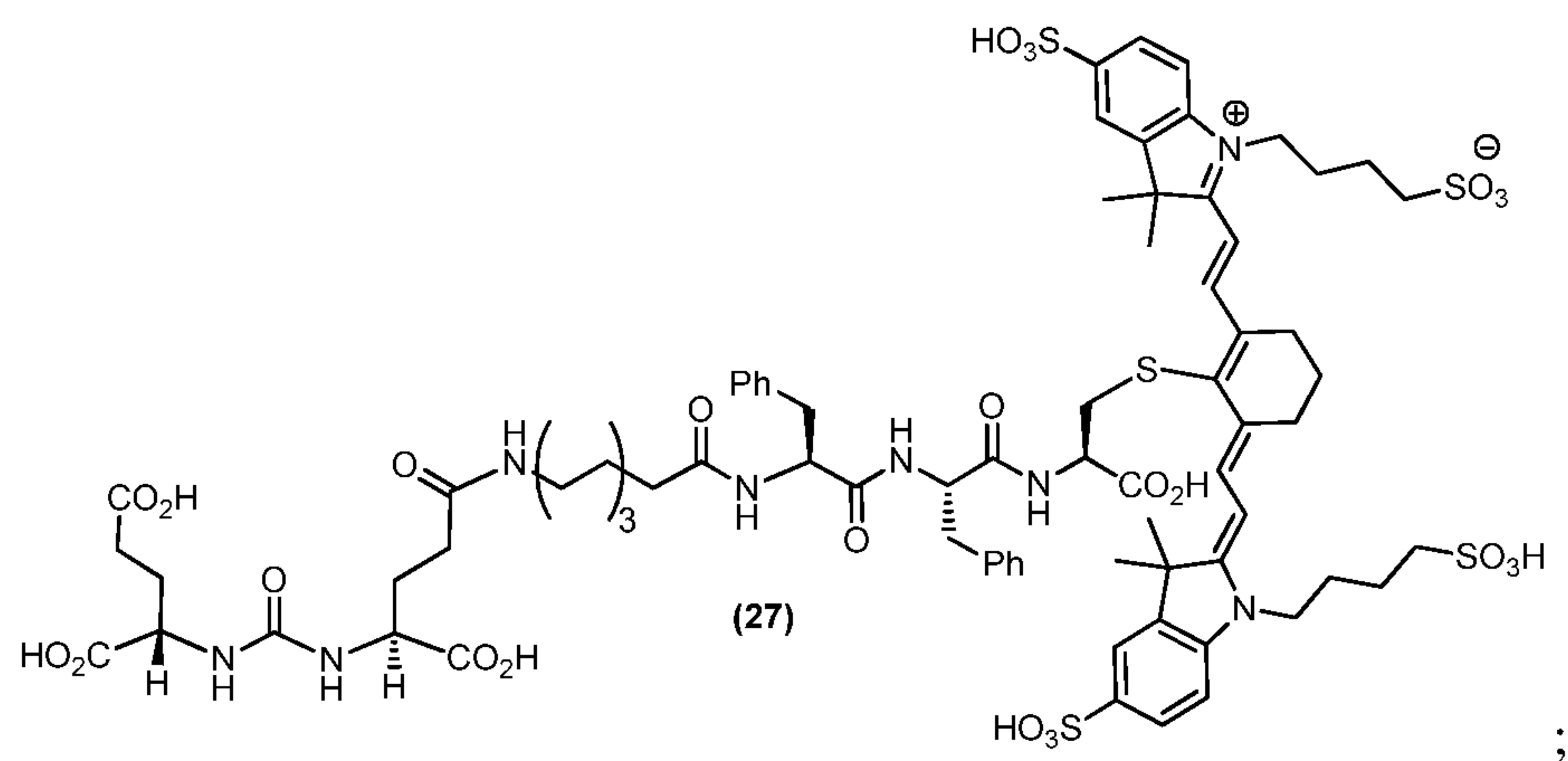
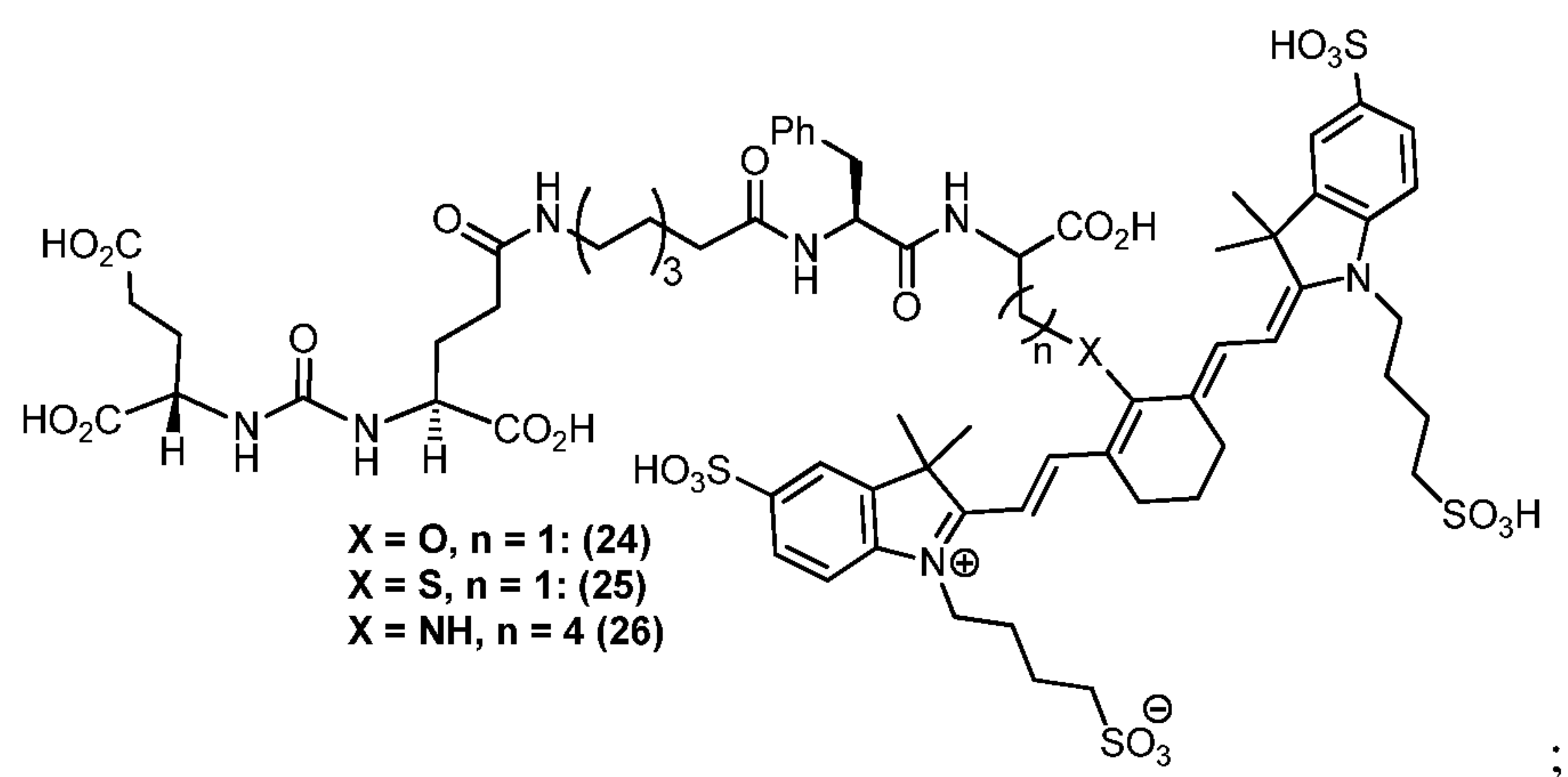
17. The compound of claim 16 wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of:

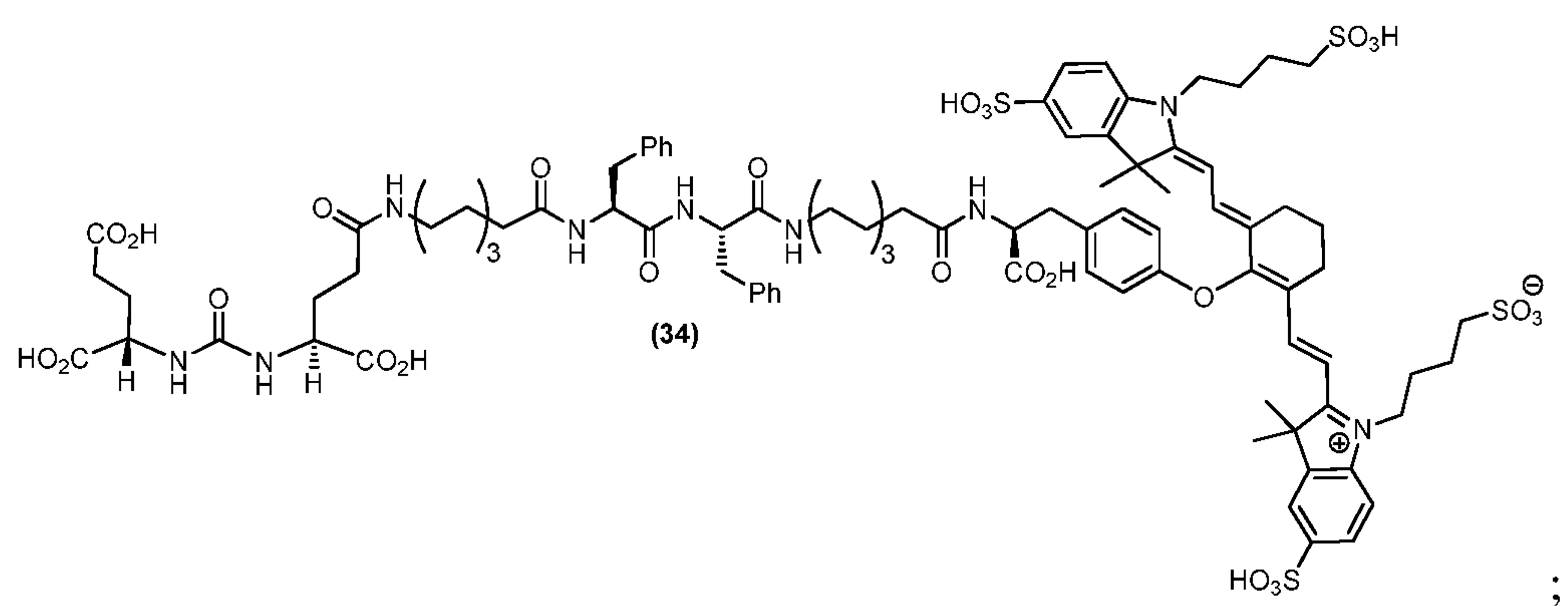
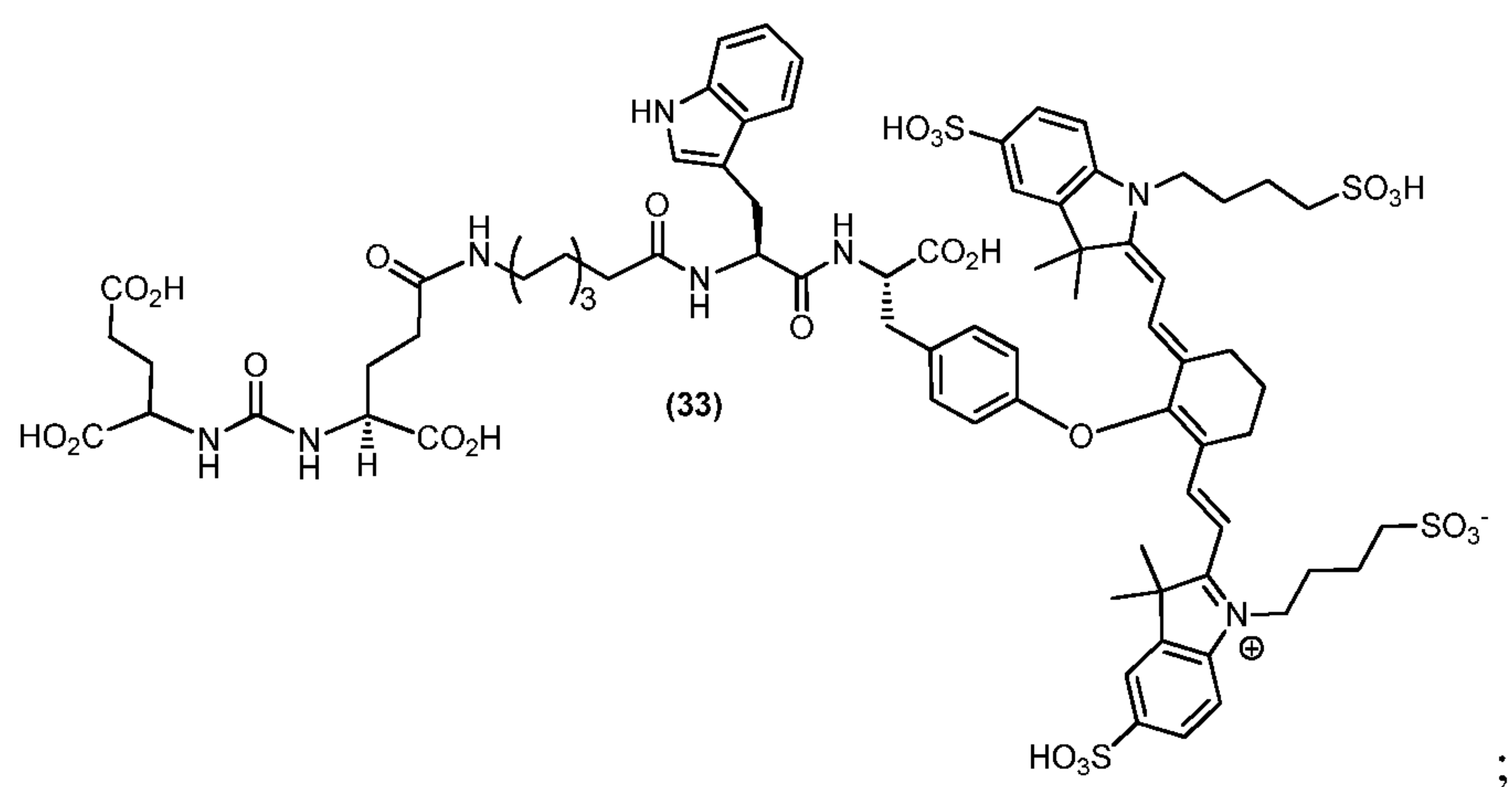
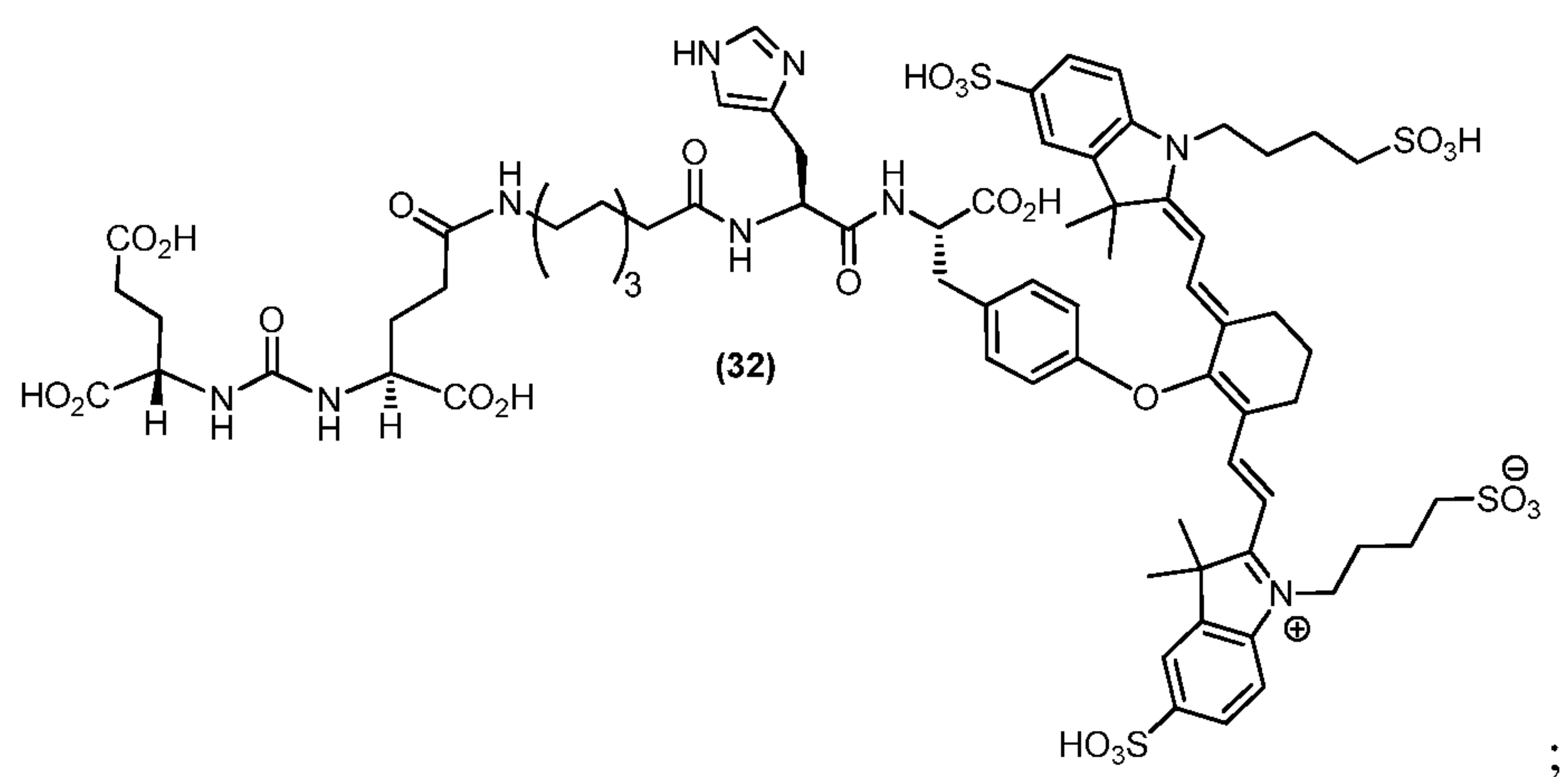


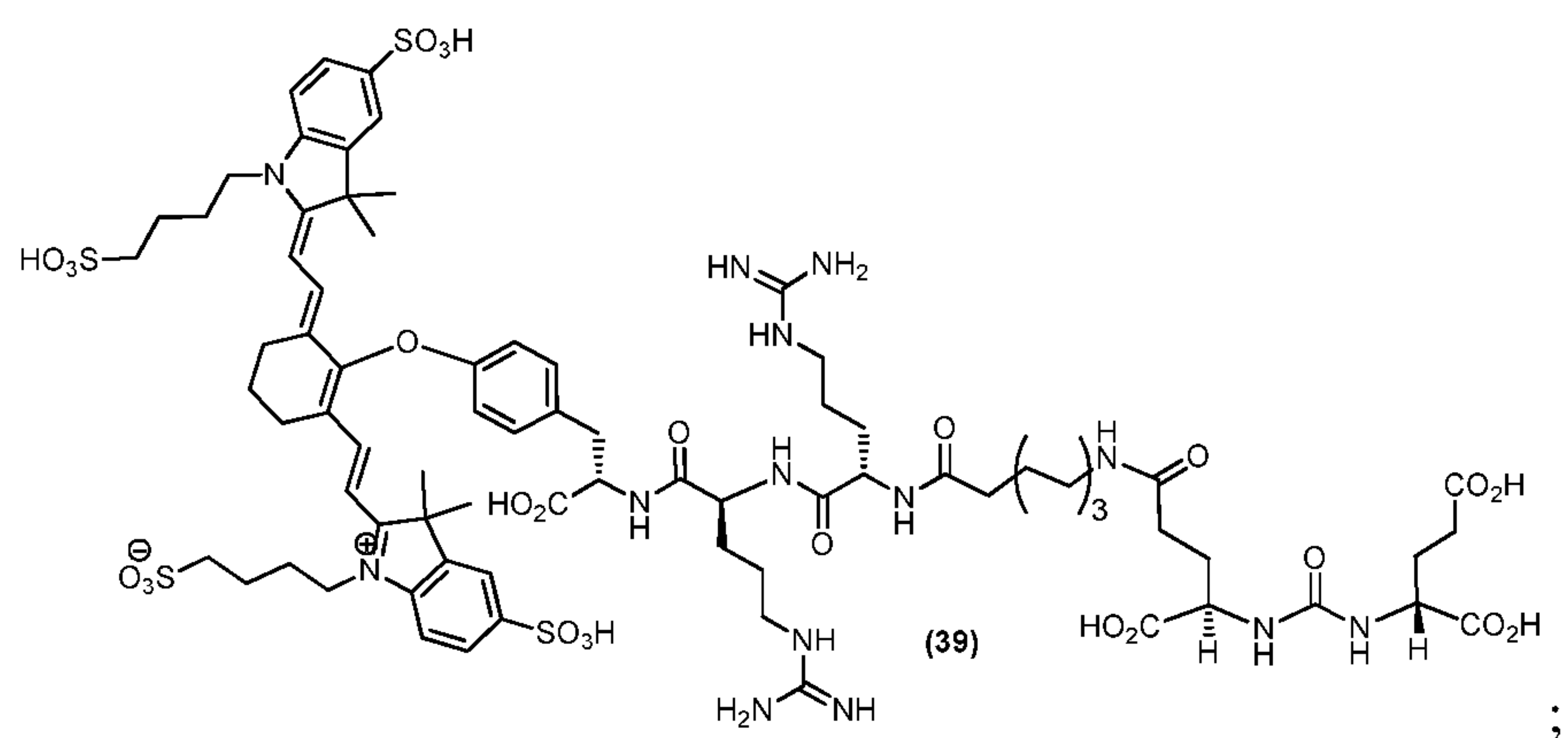
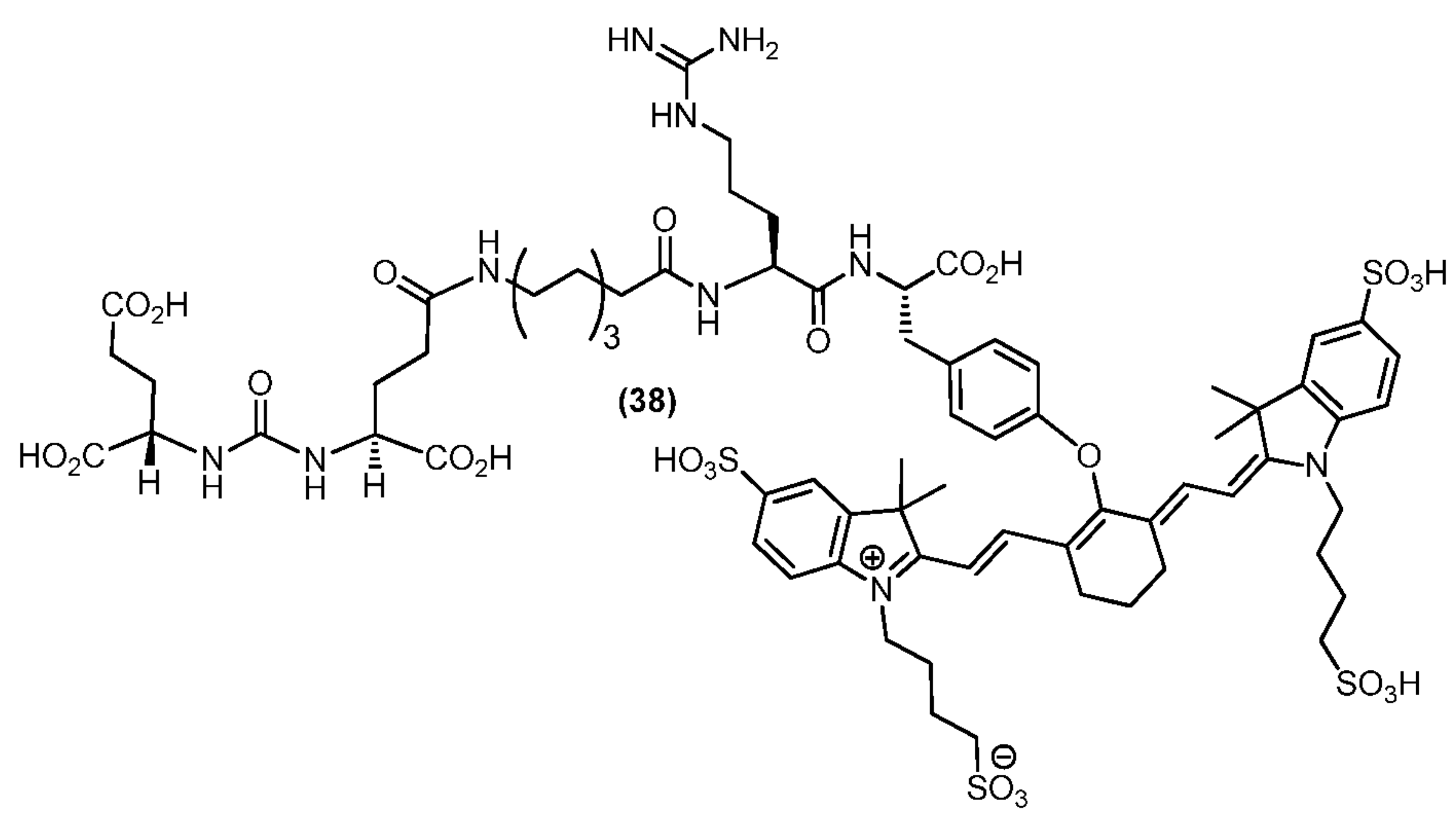
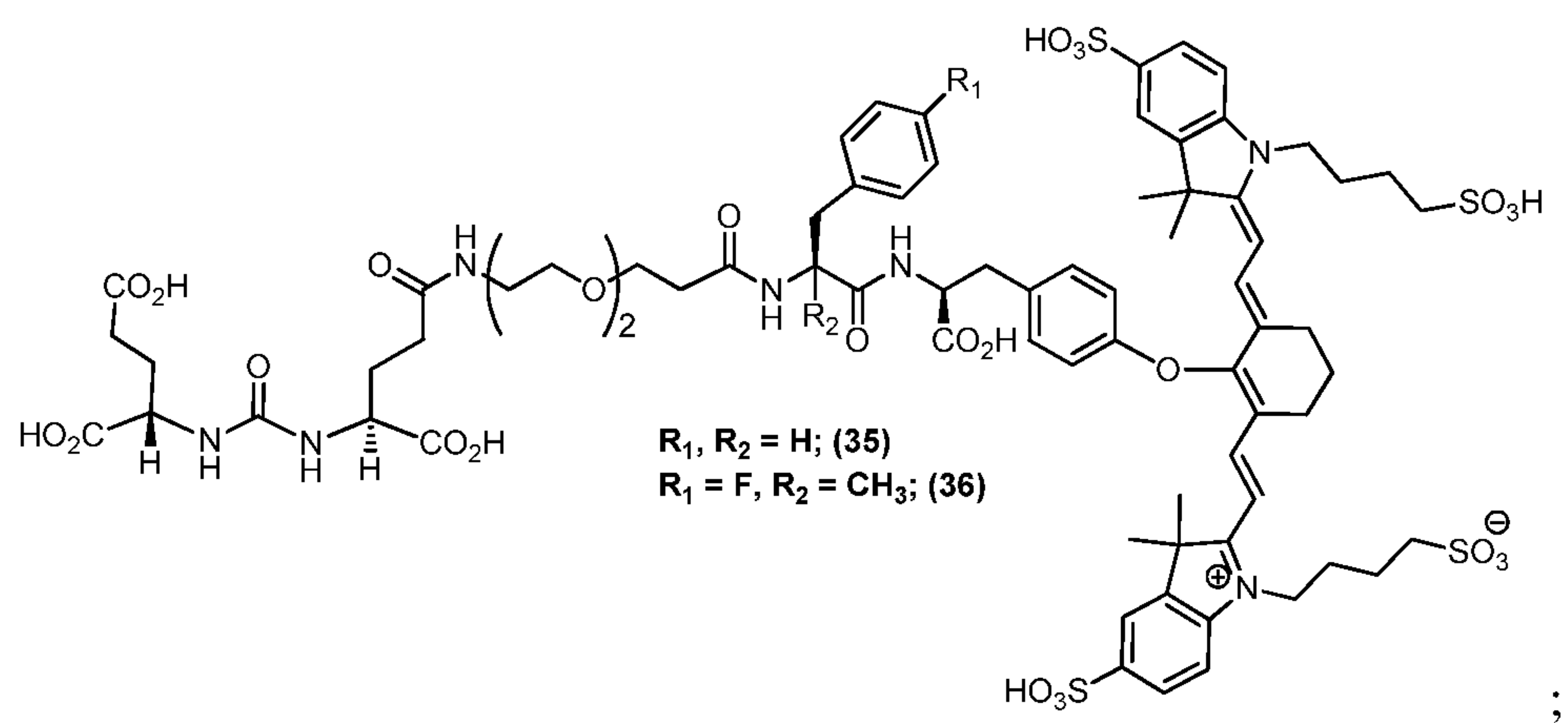


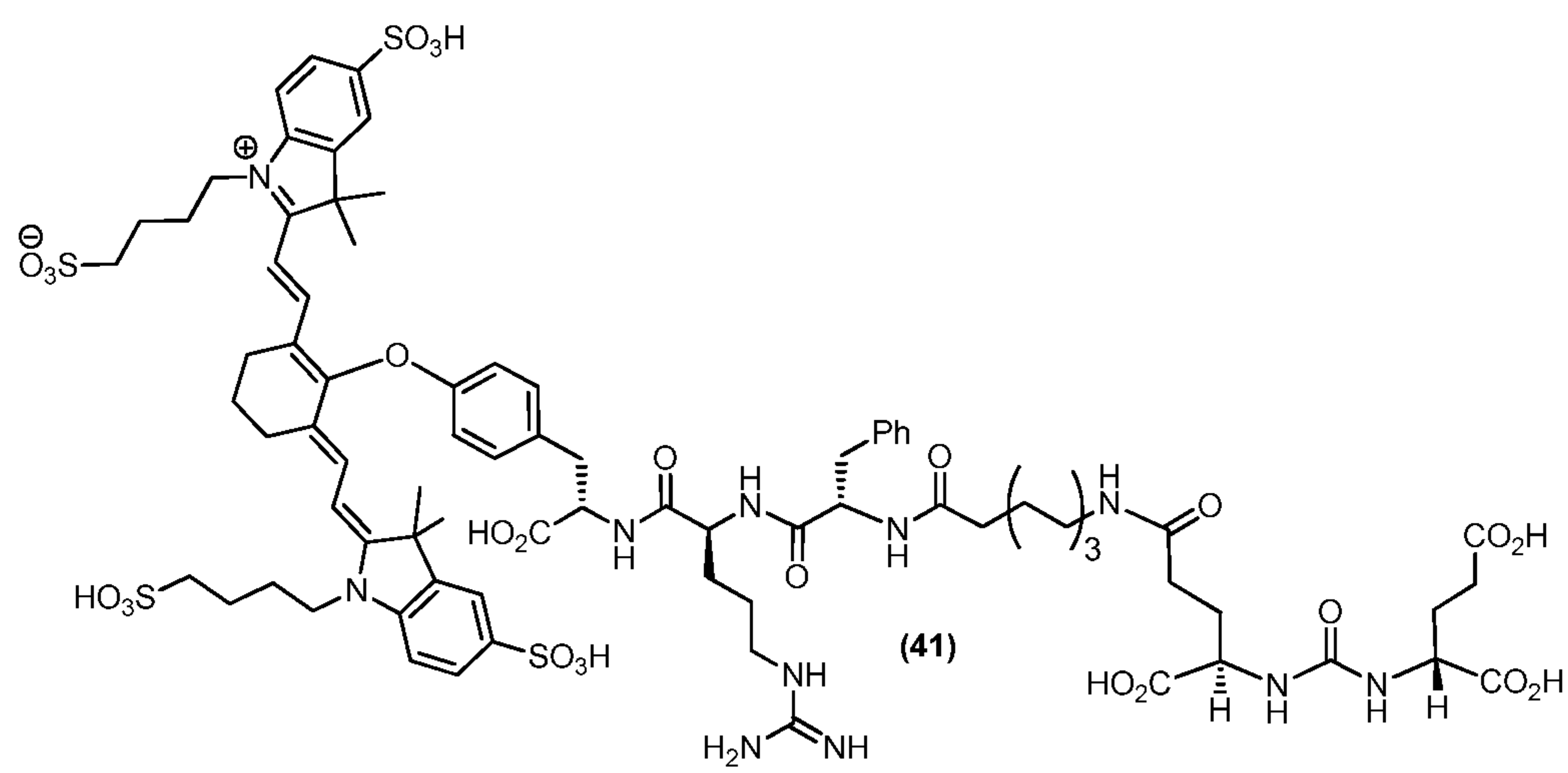
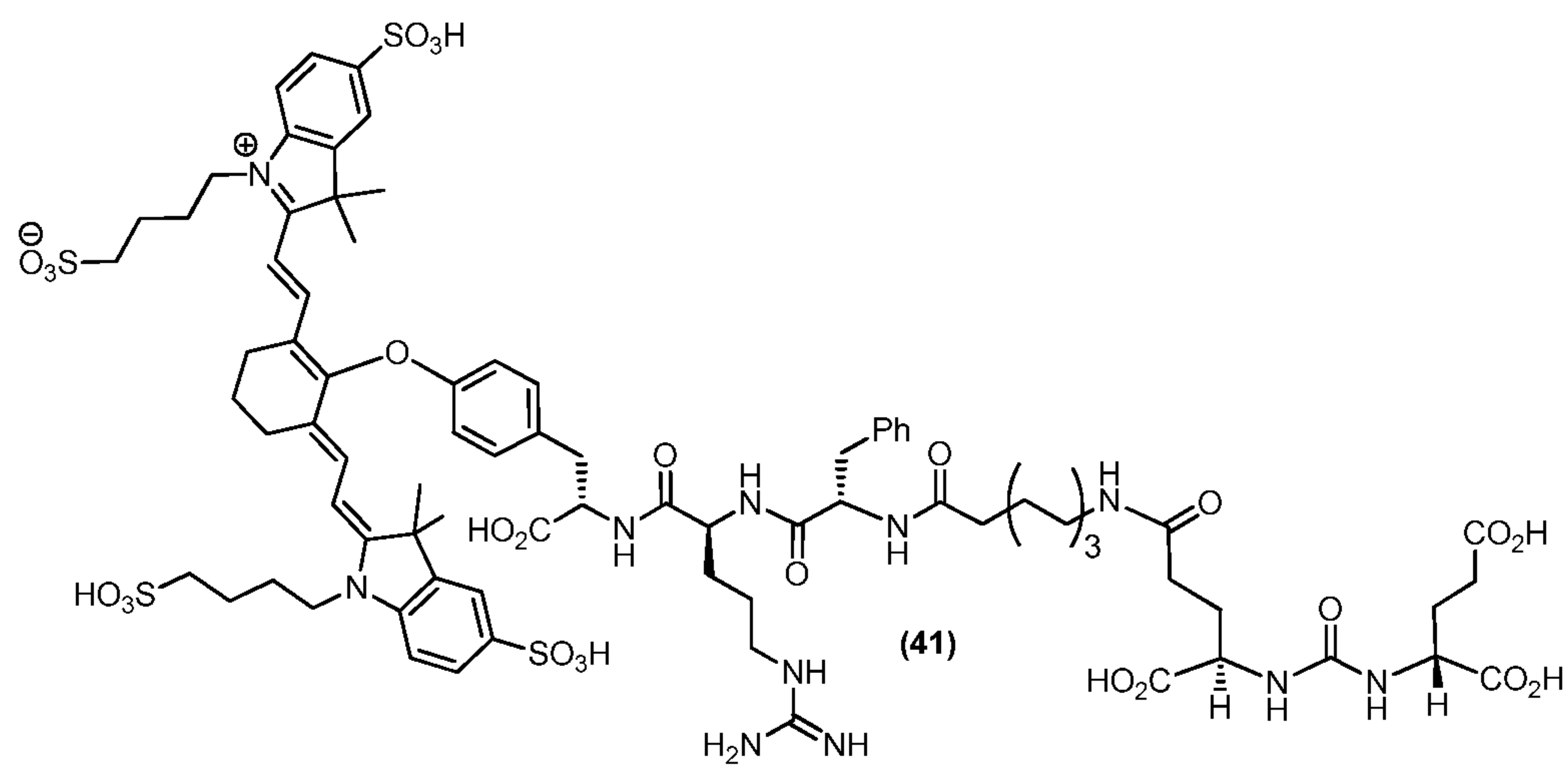
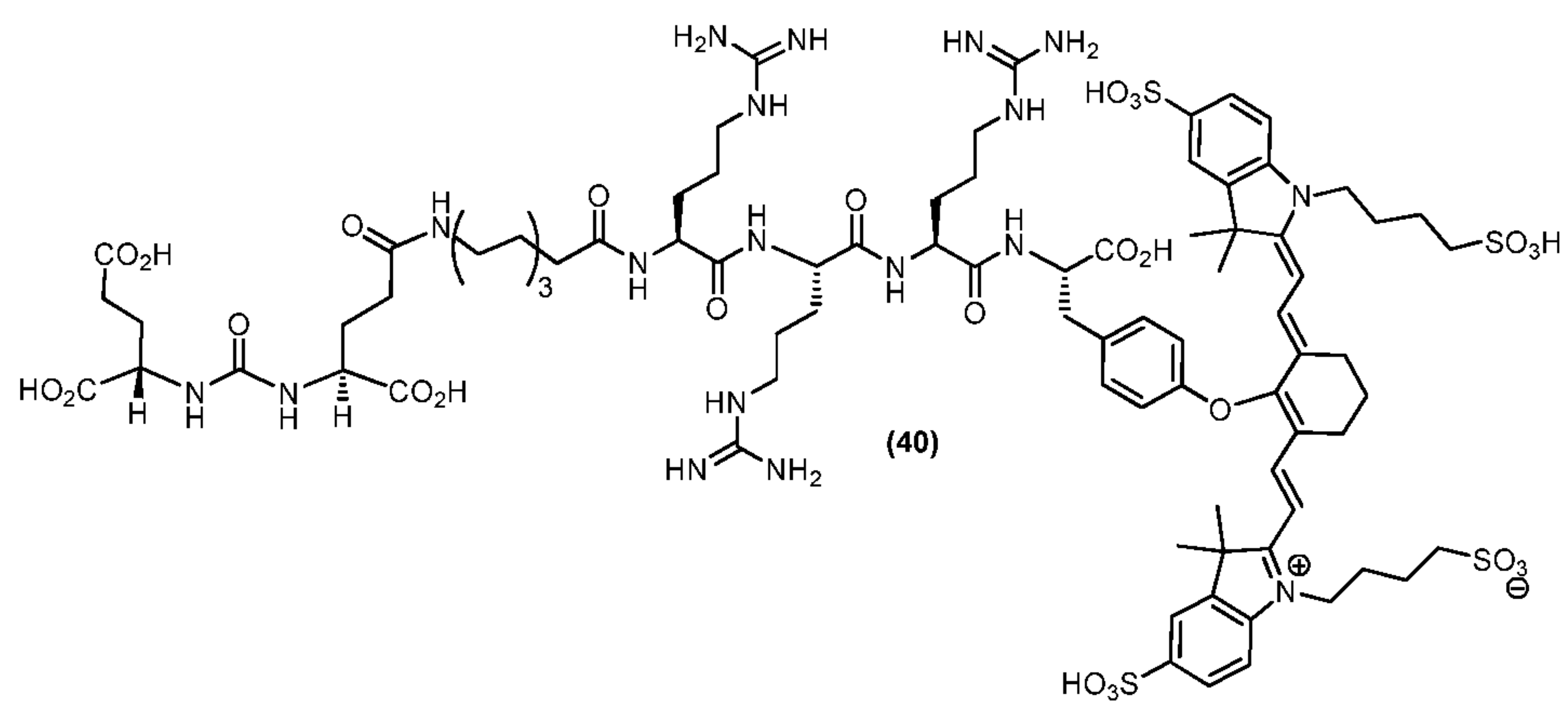


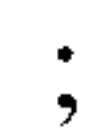
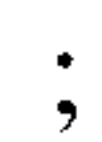


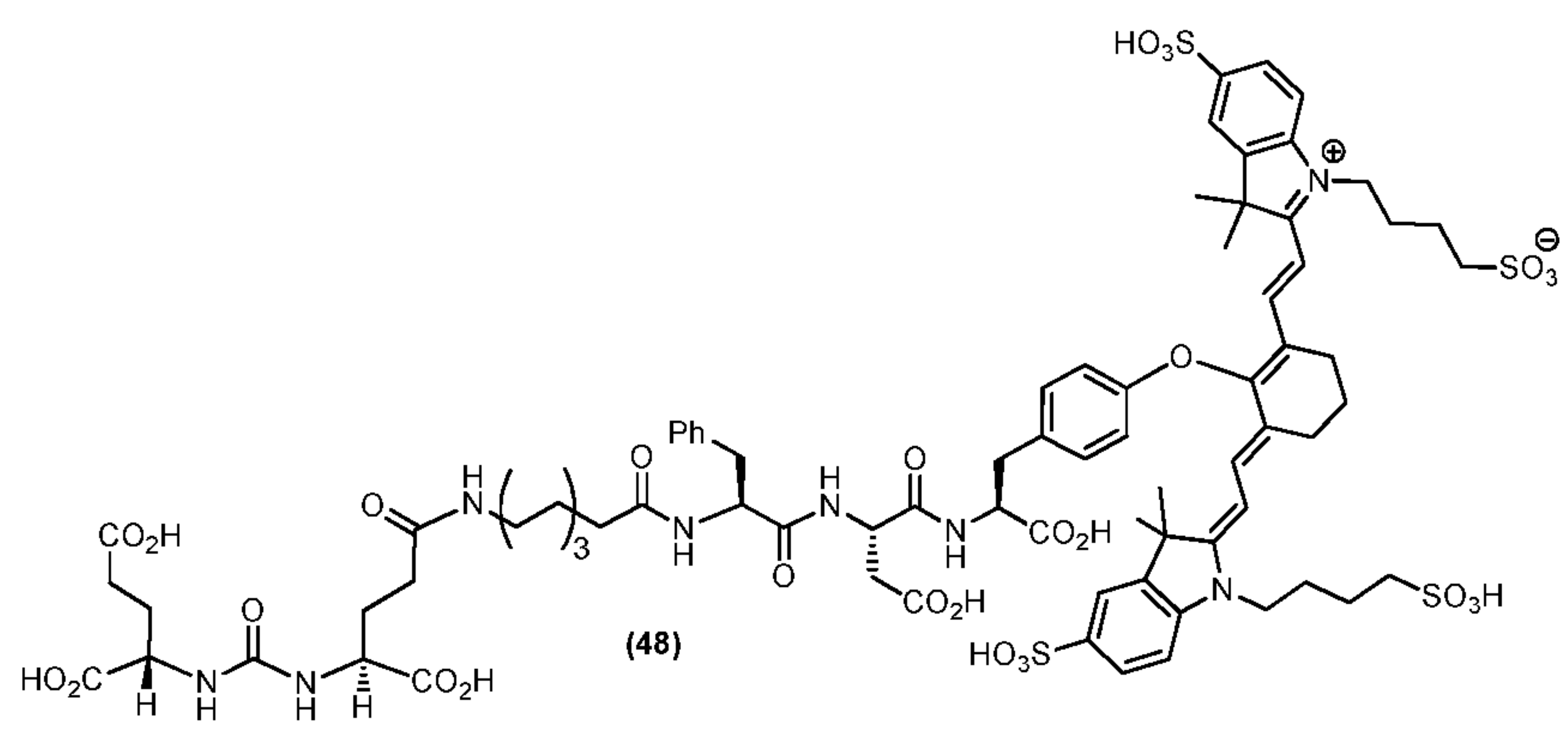
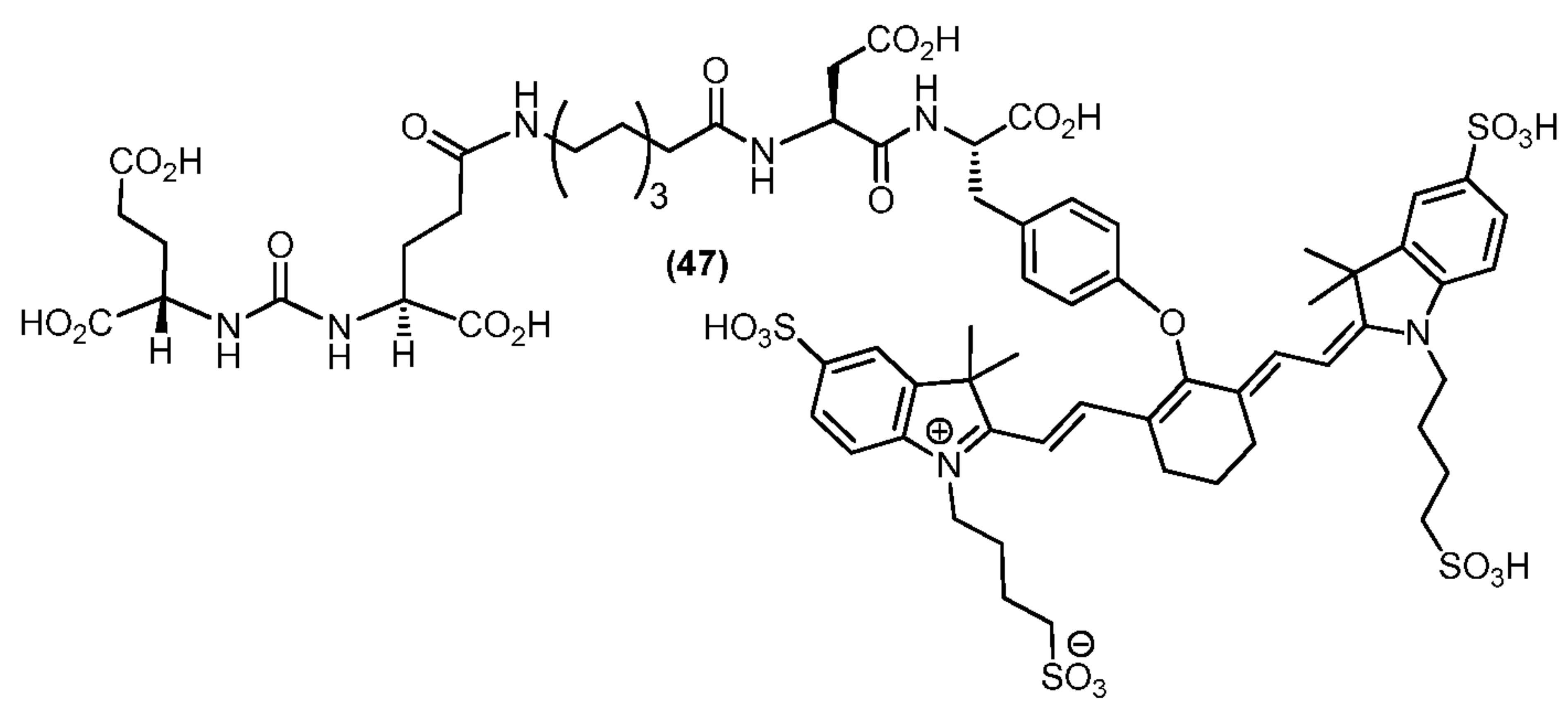
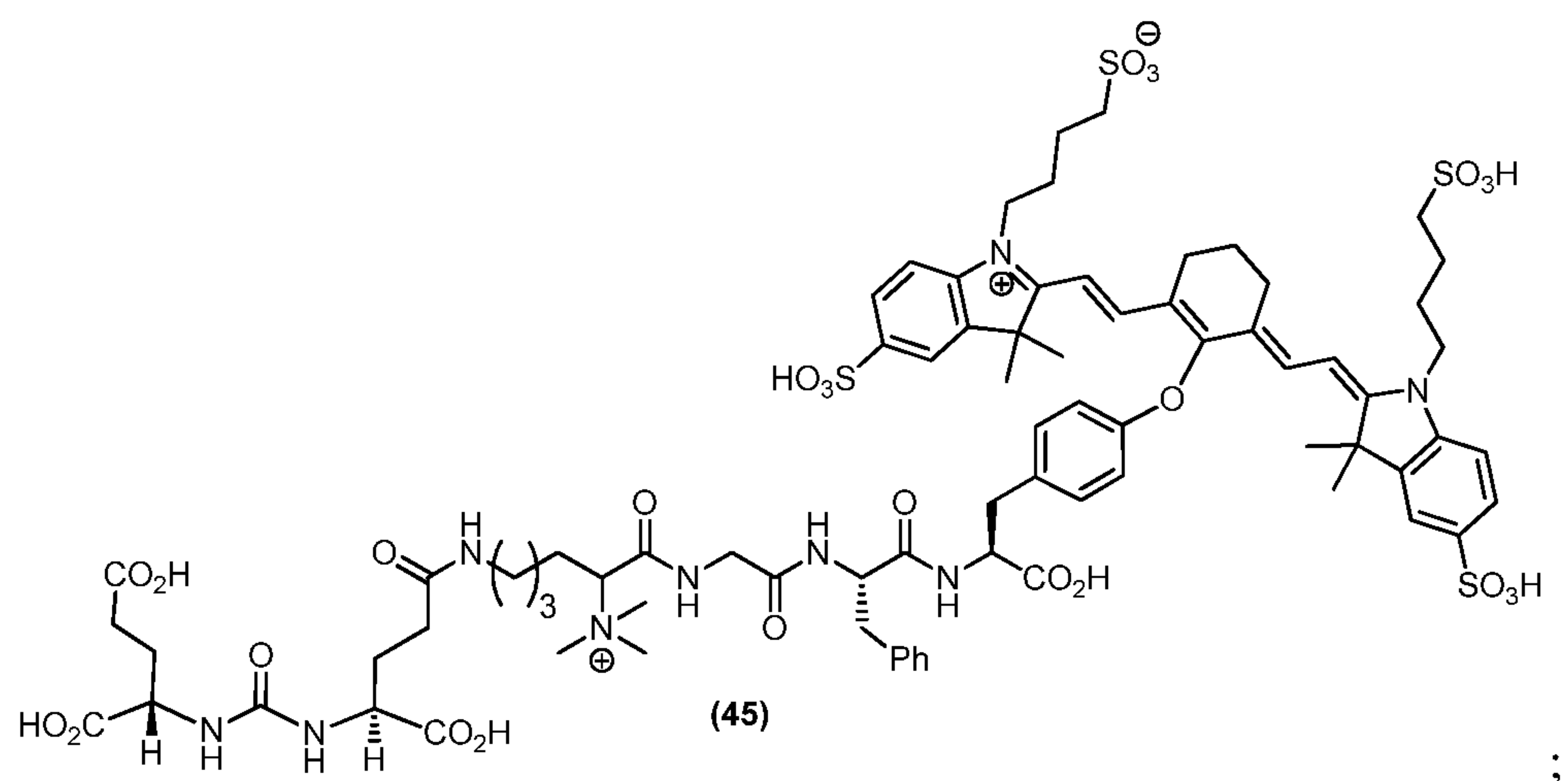


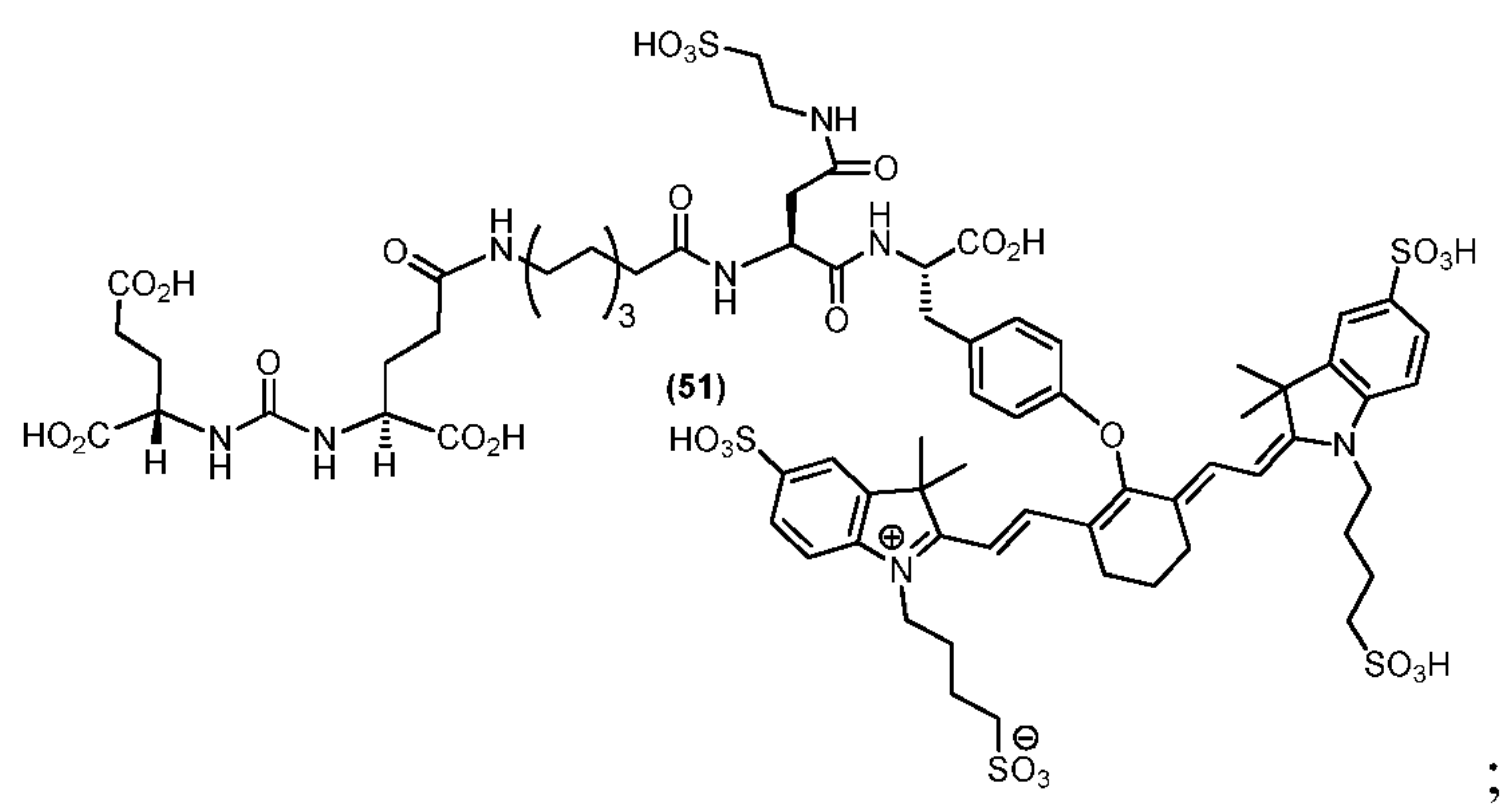
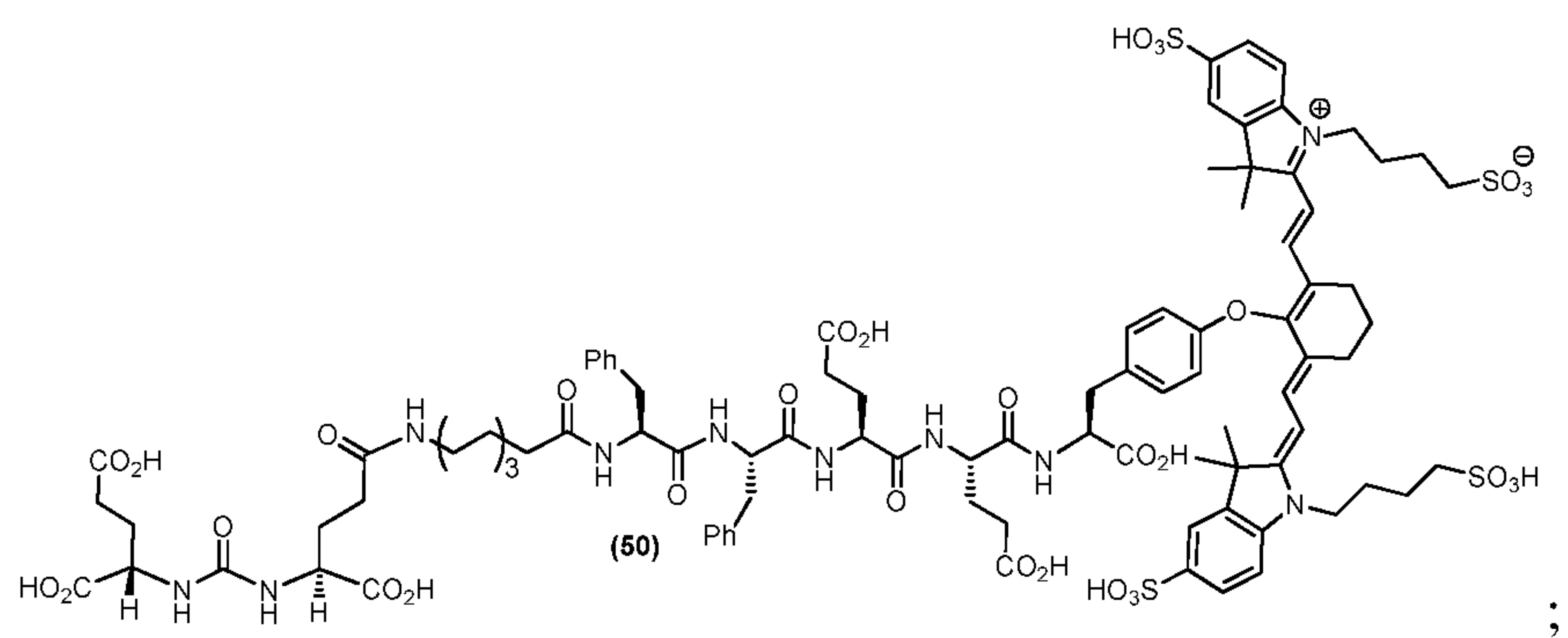
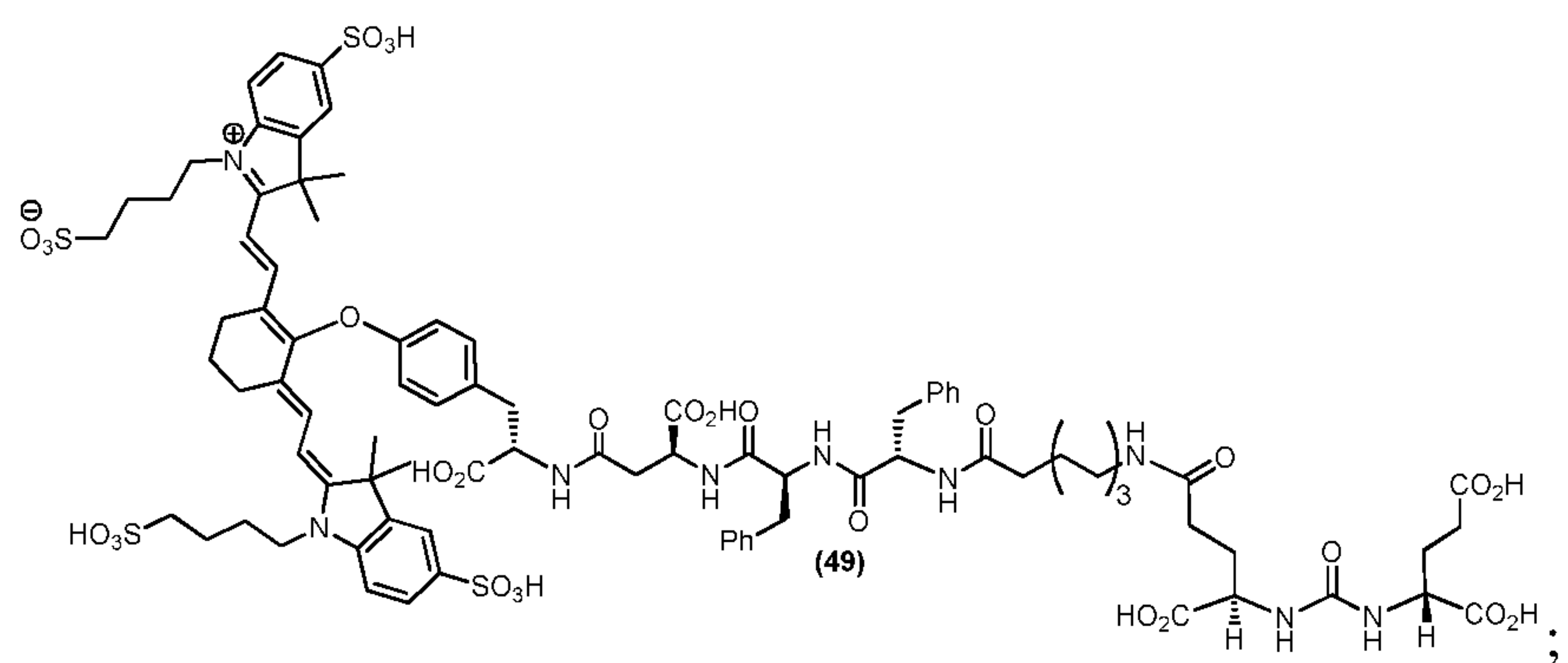


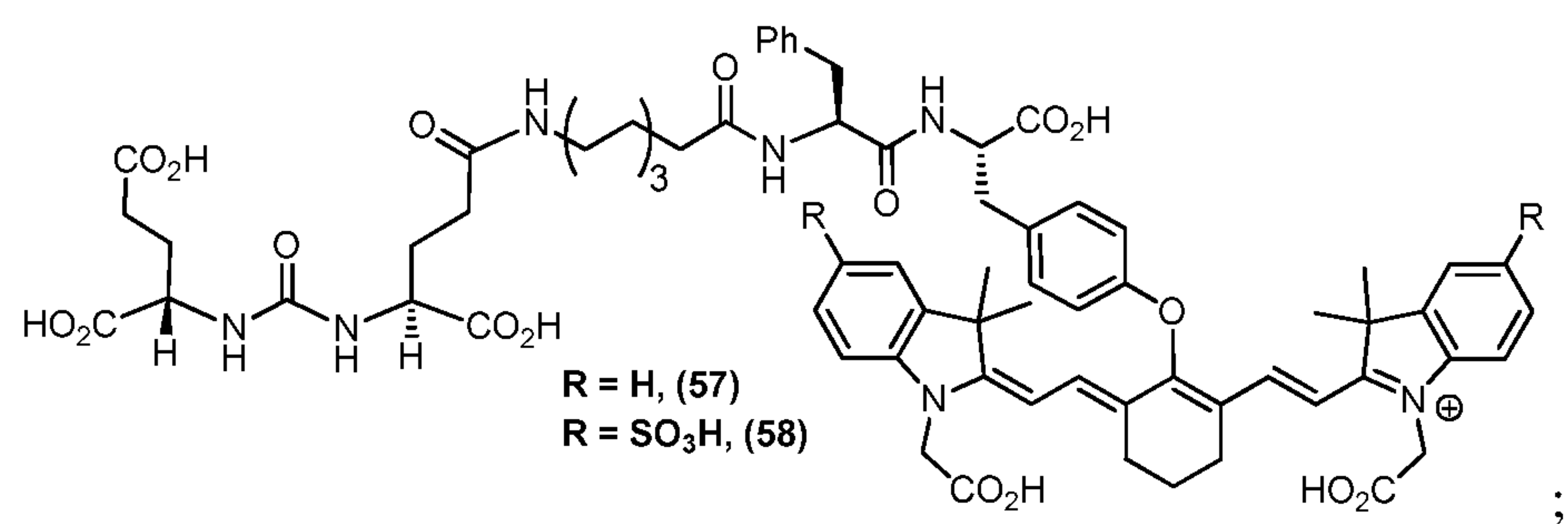
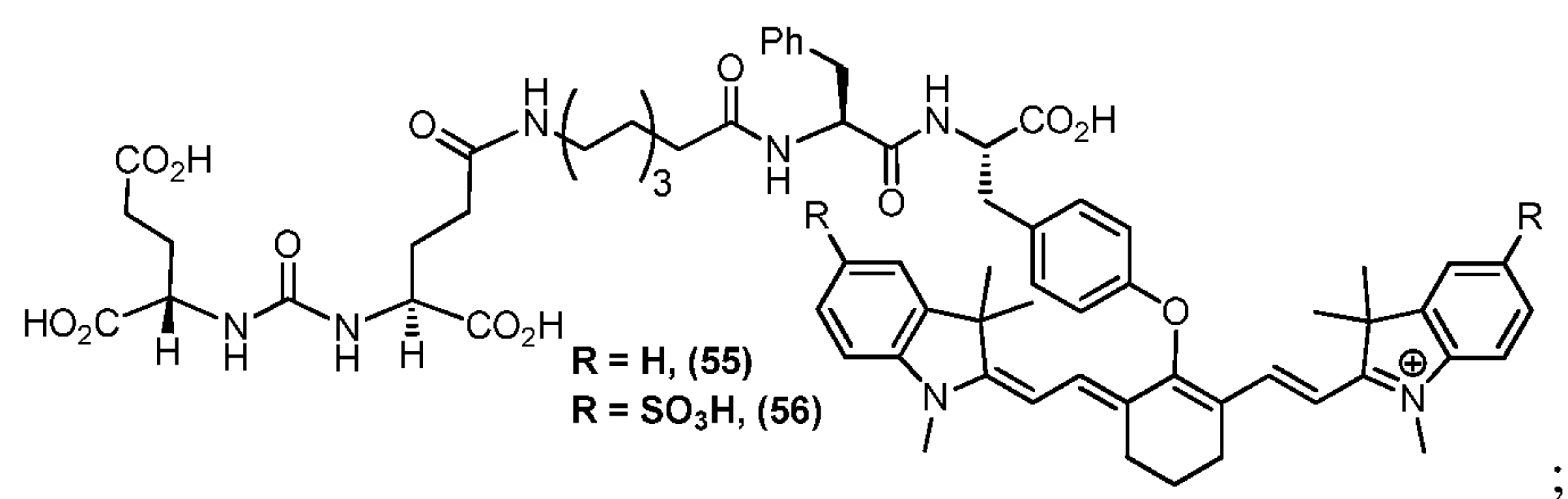
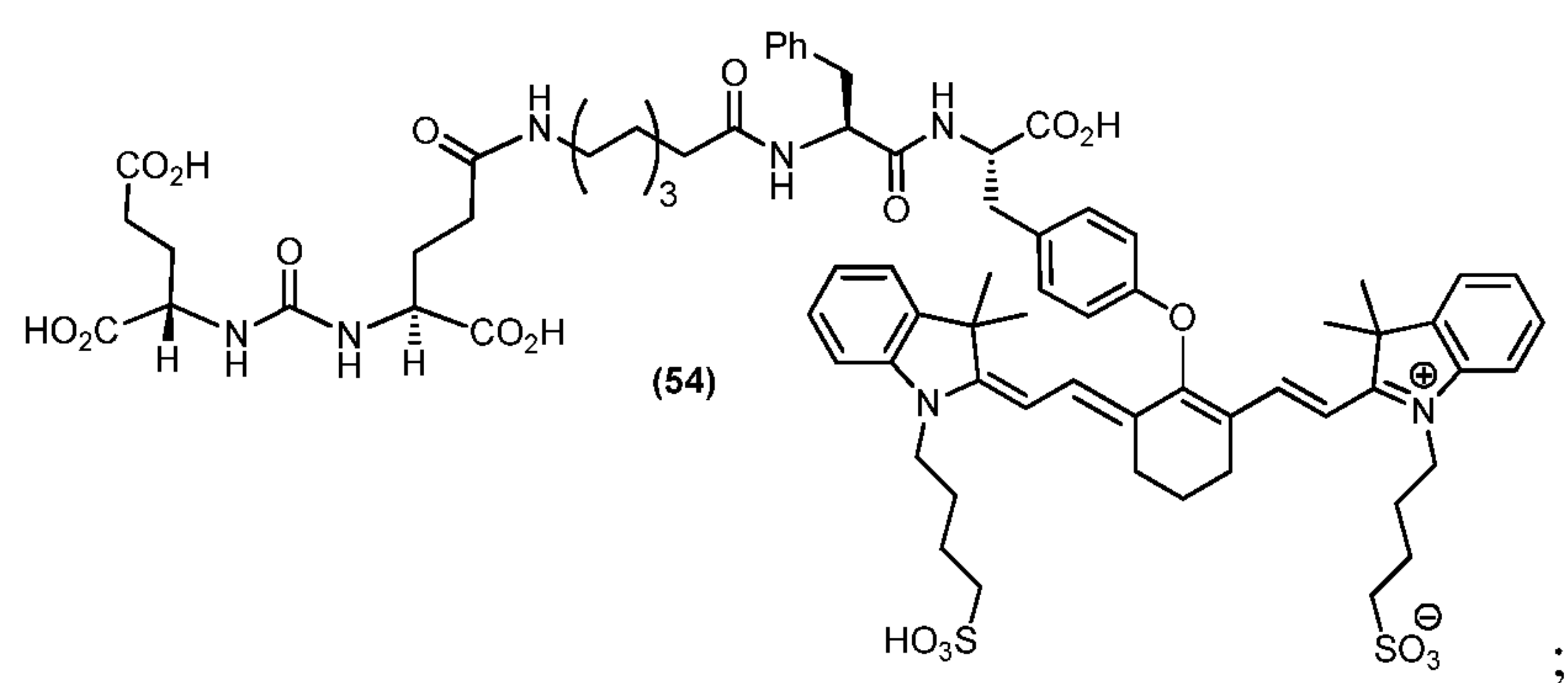
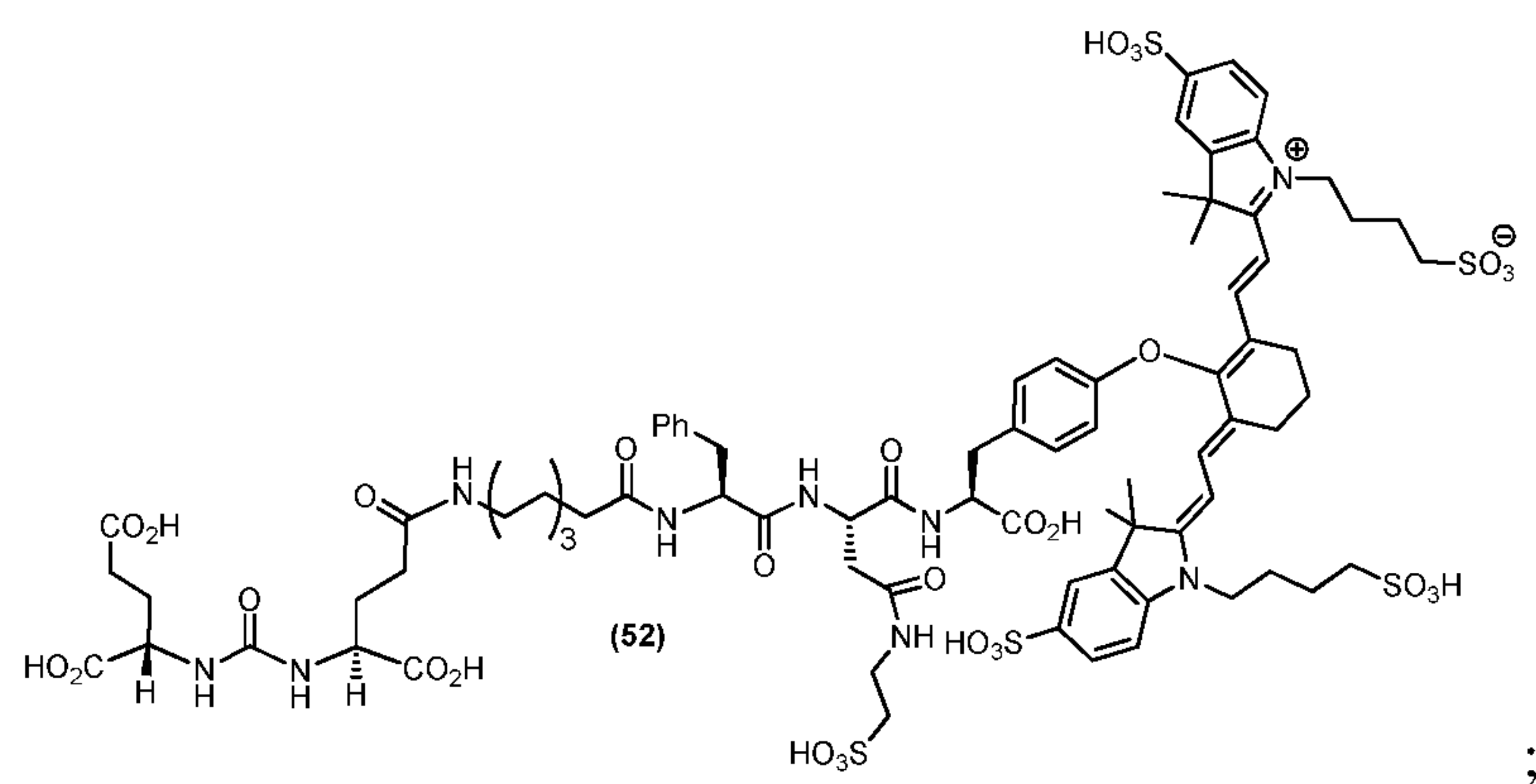


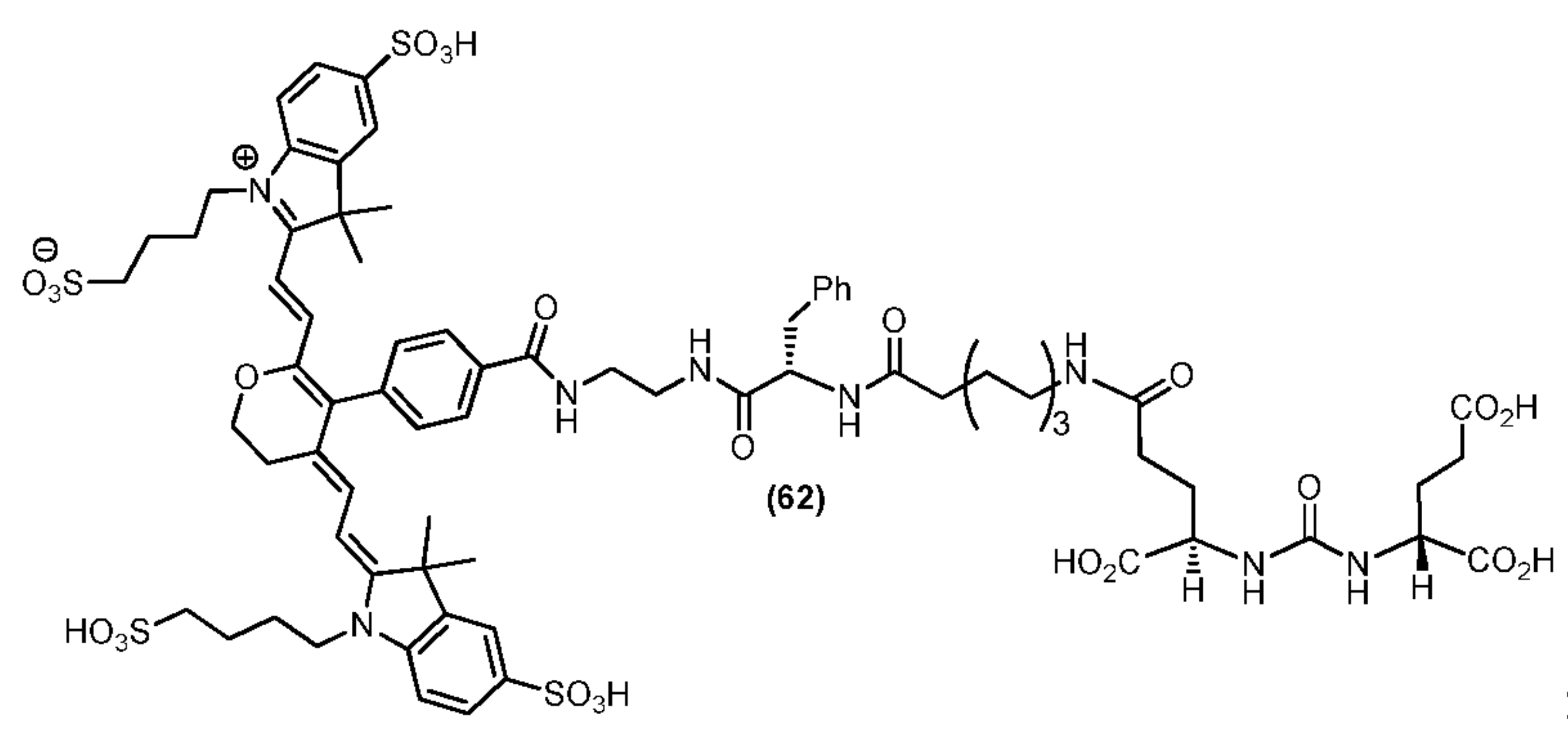
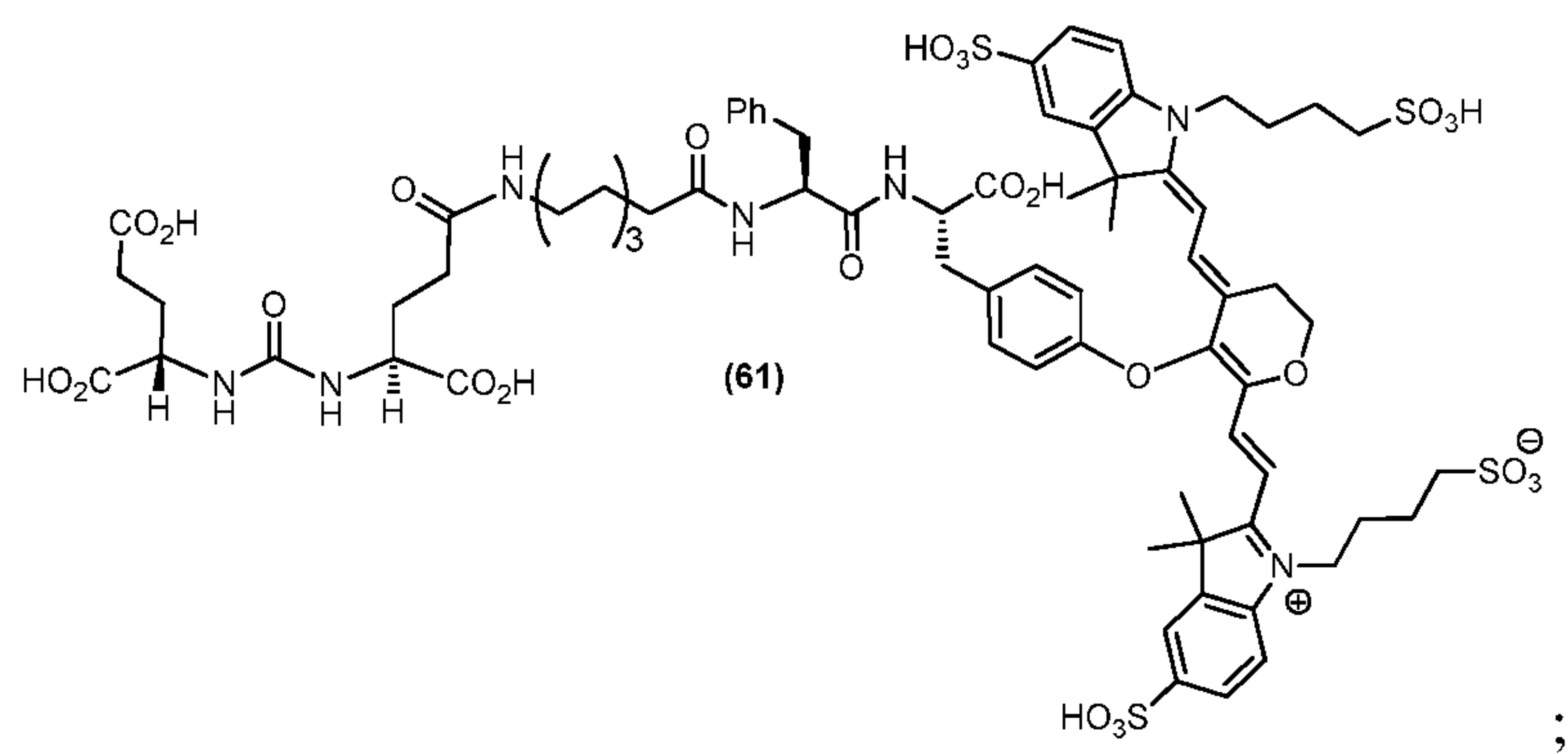
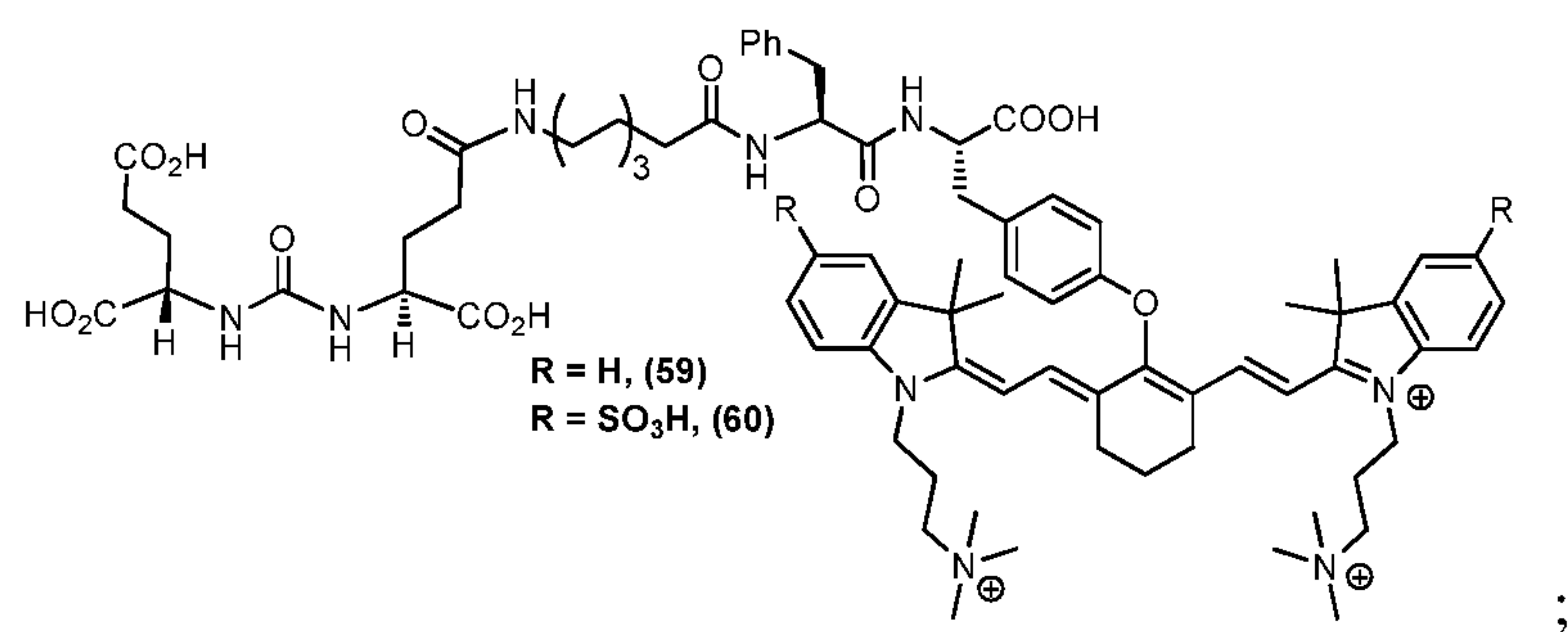




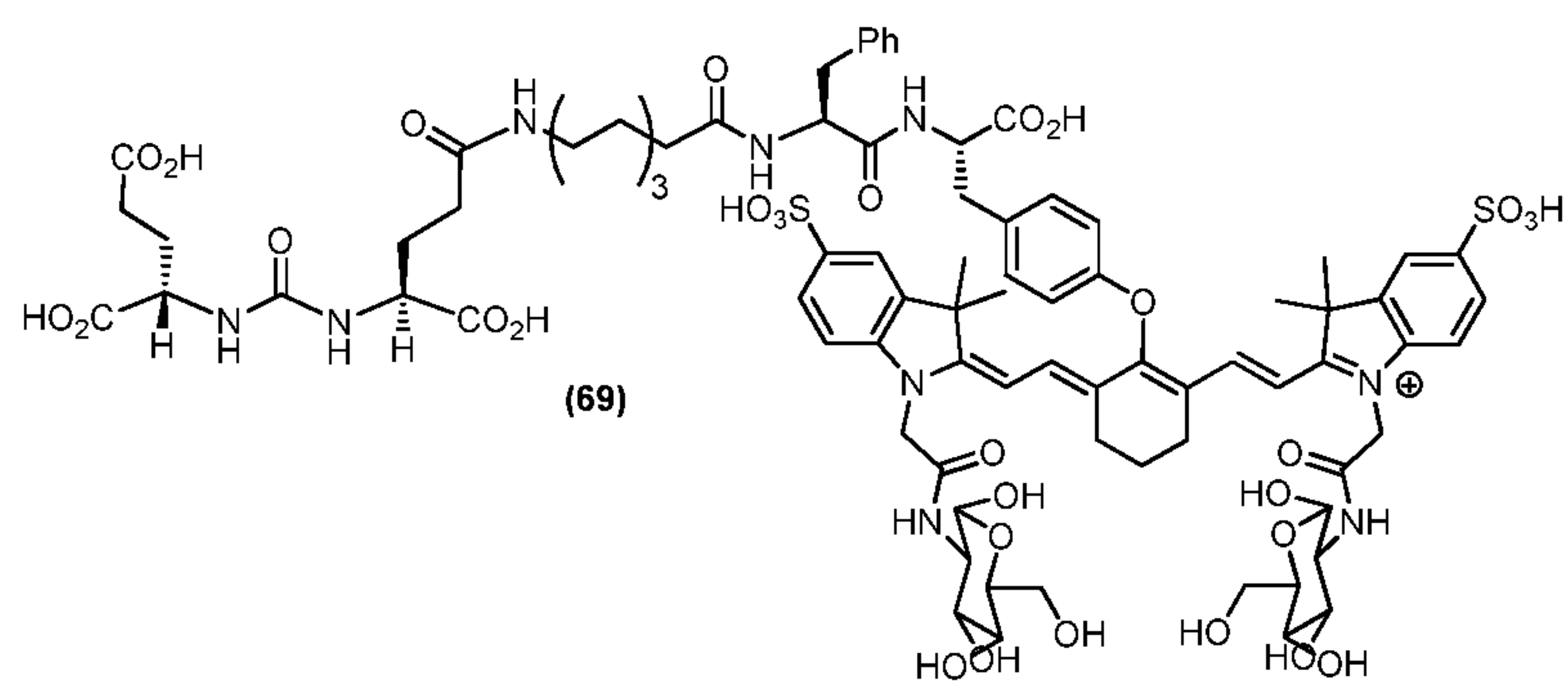
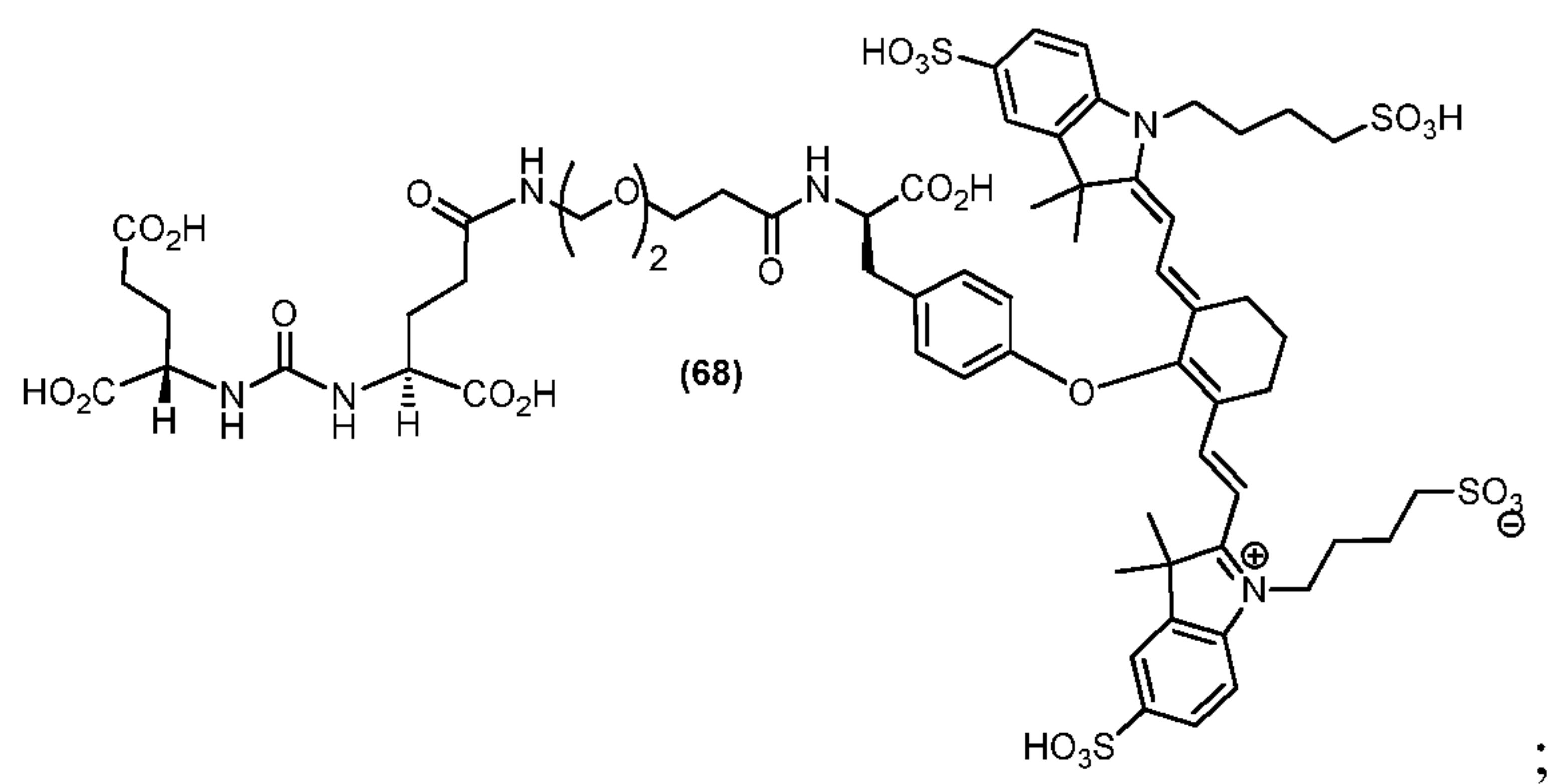
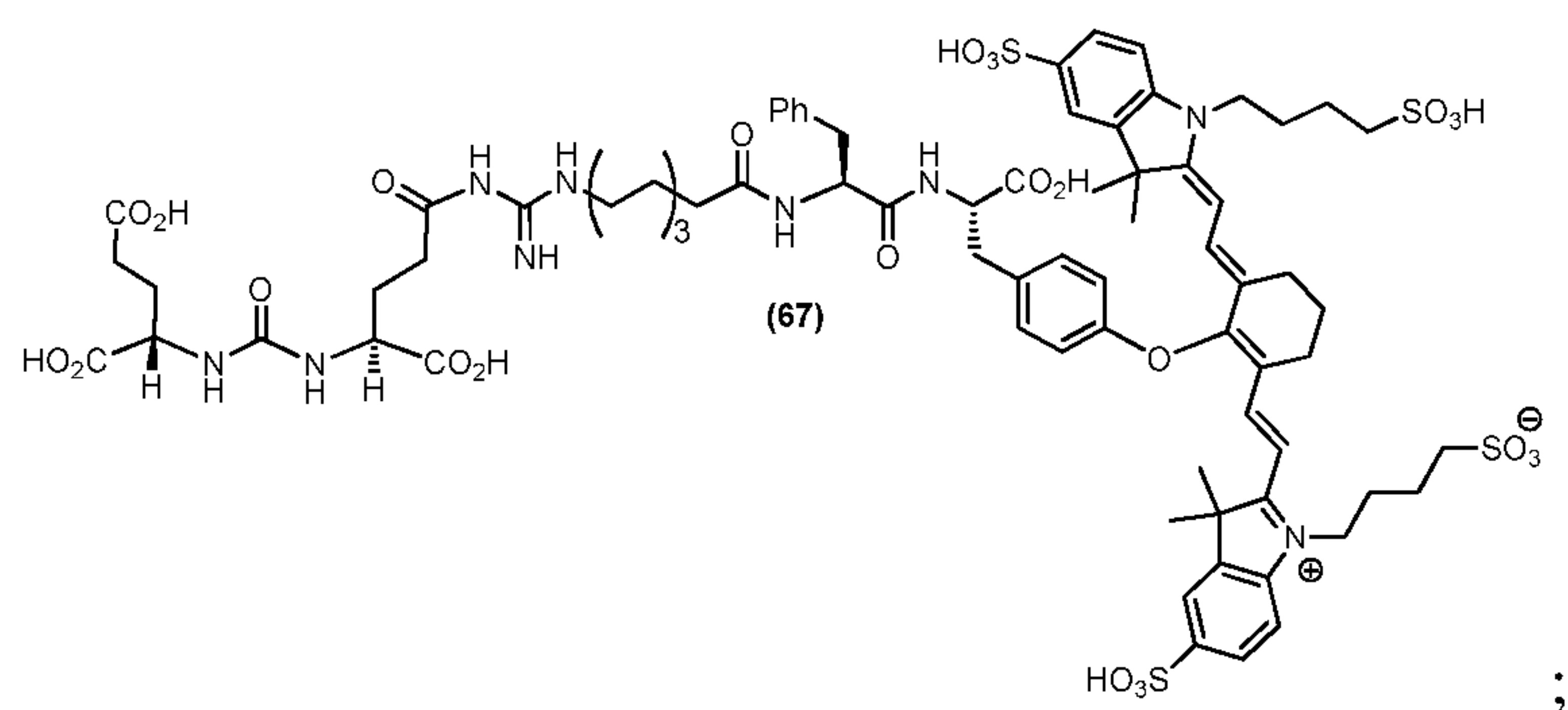
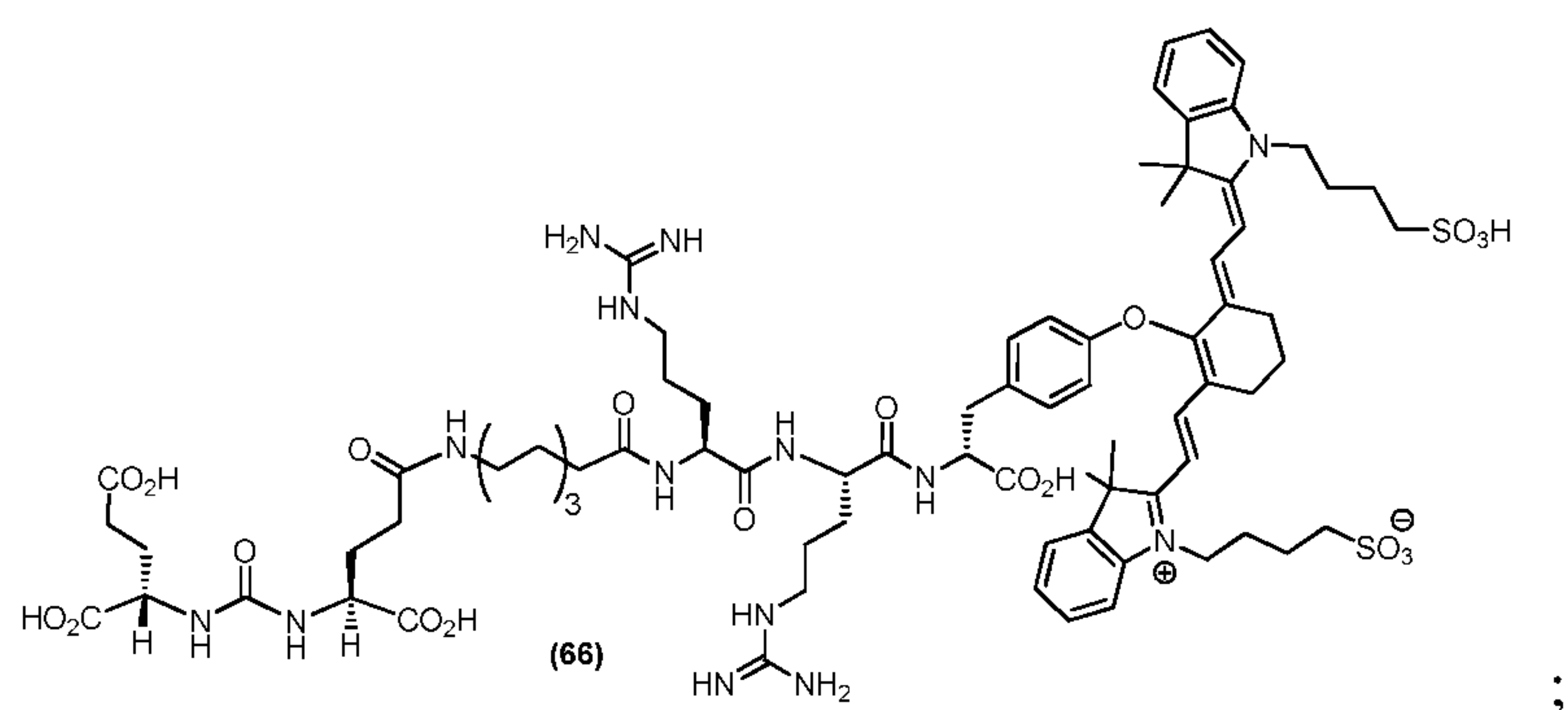


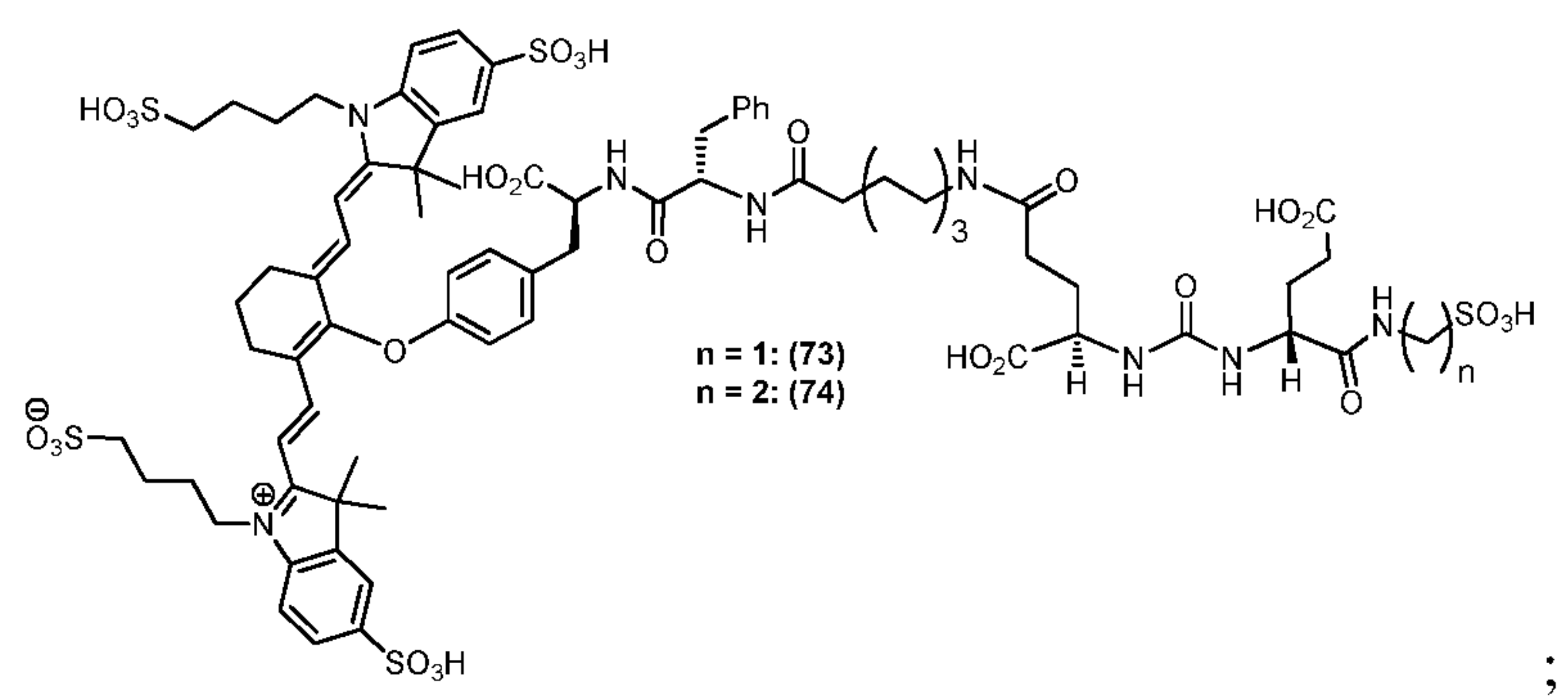
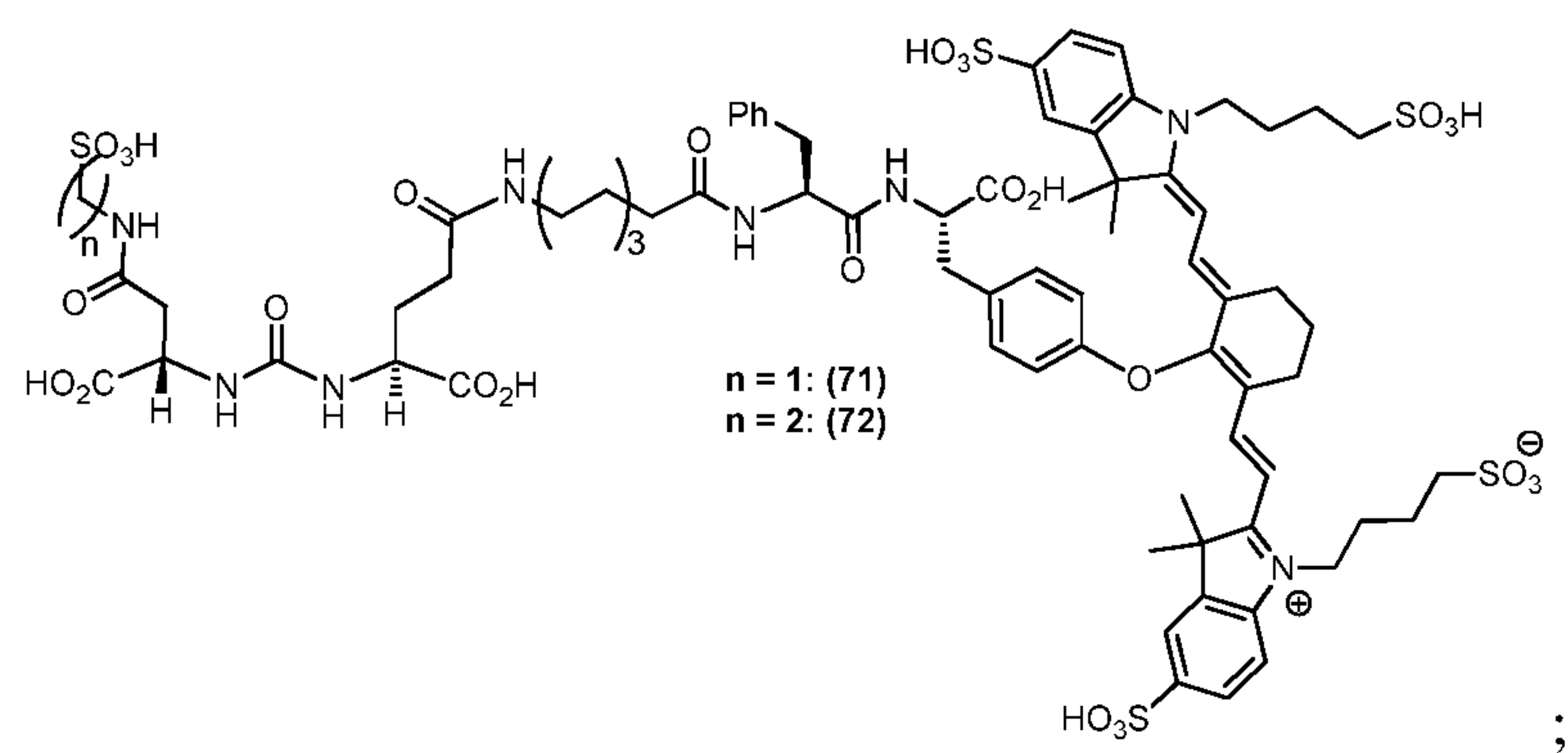
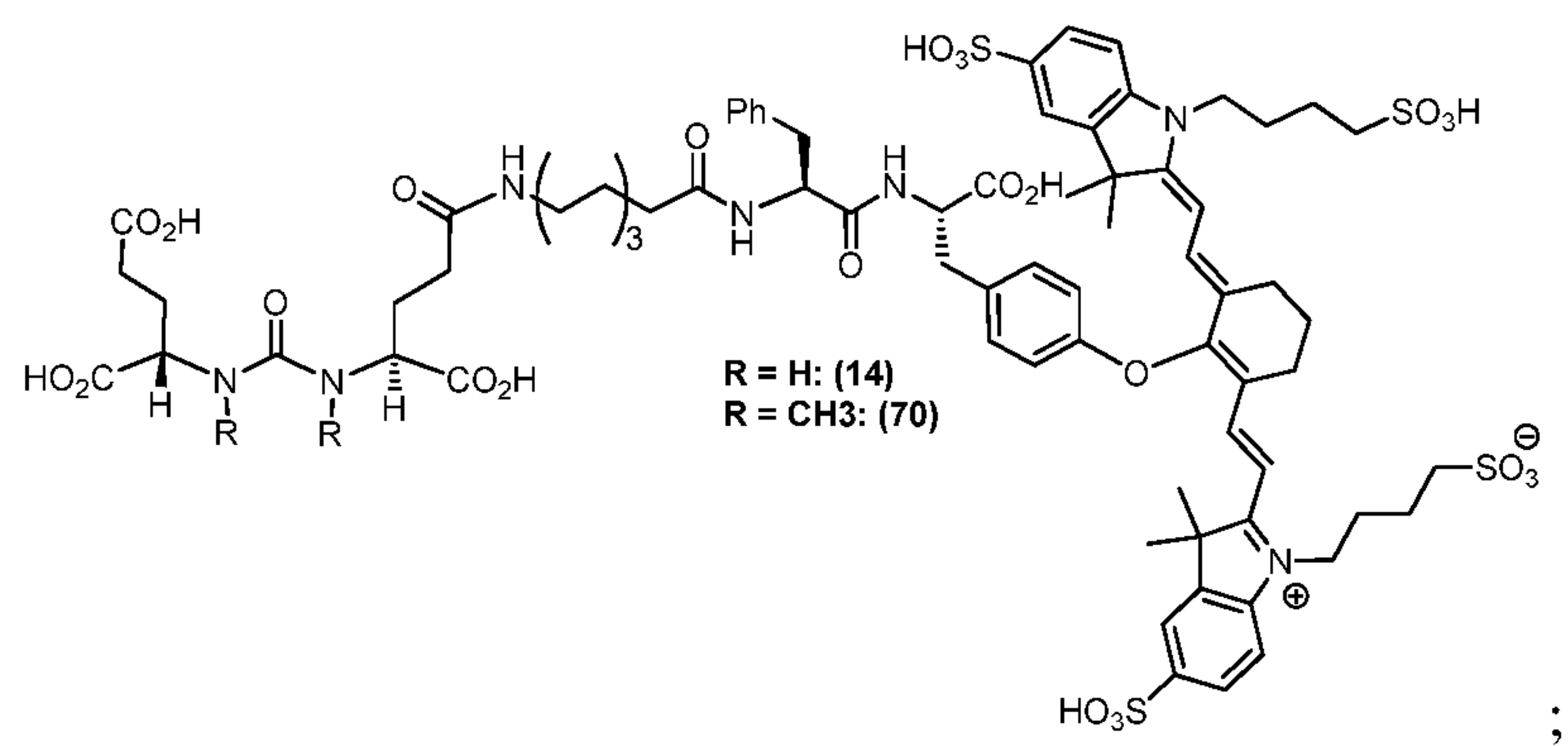


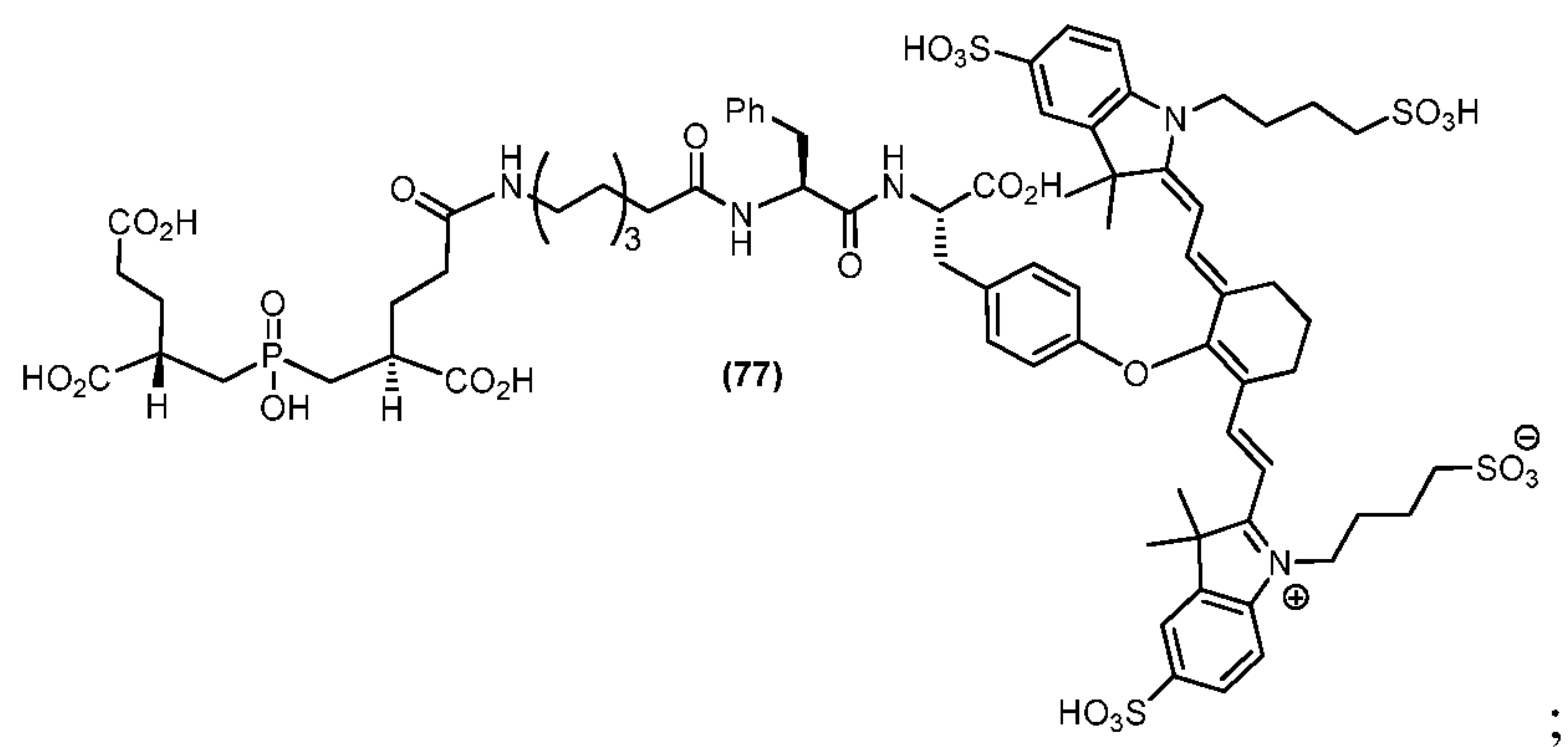
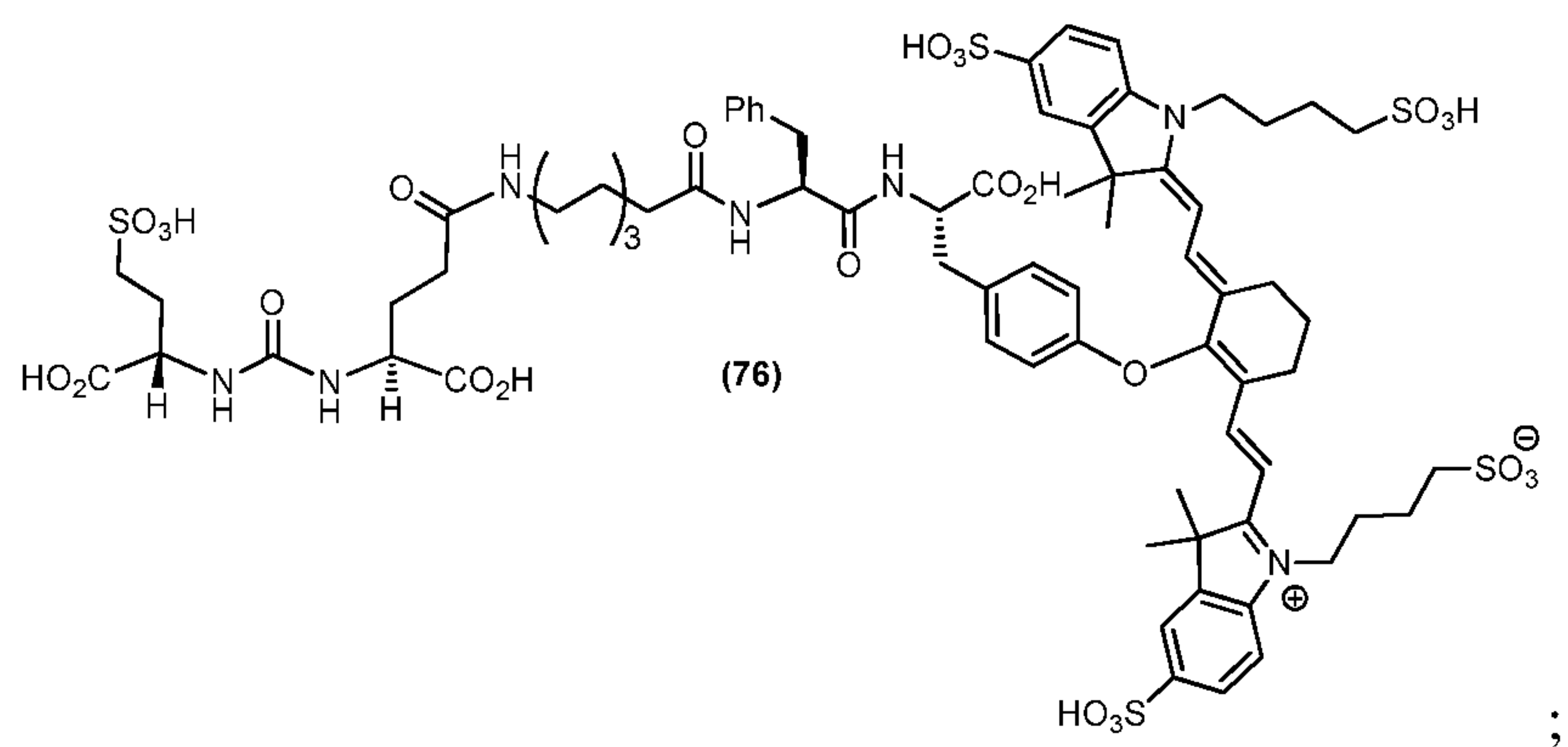
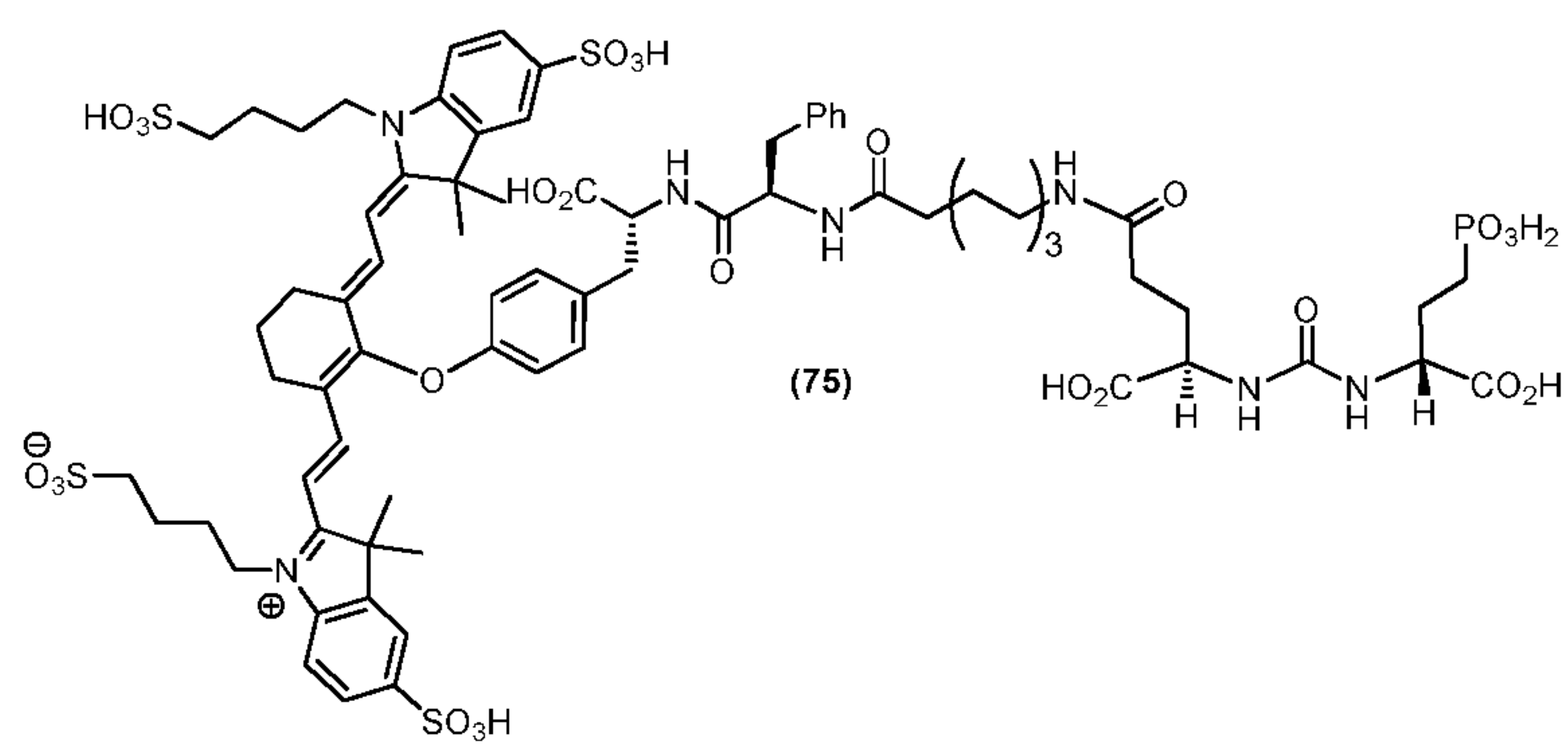


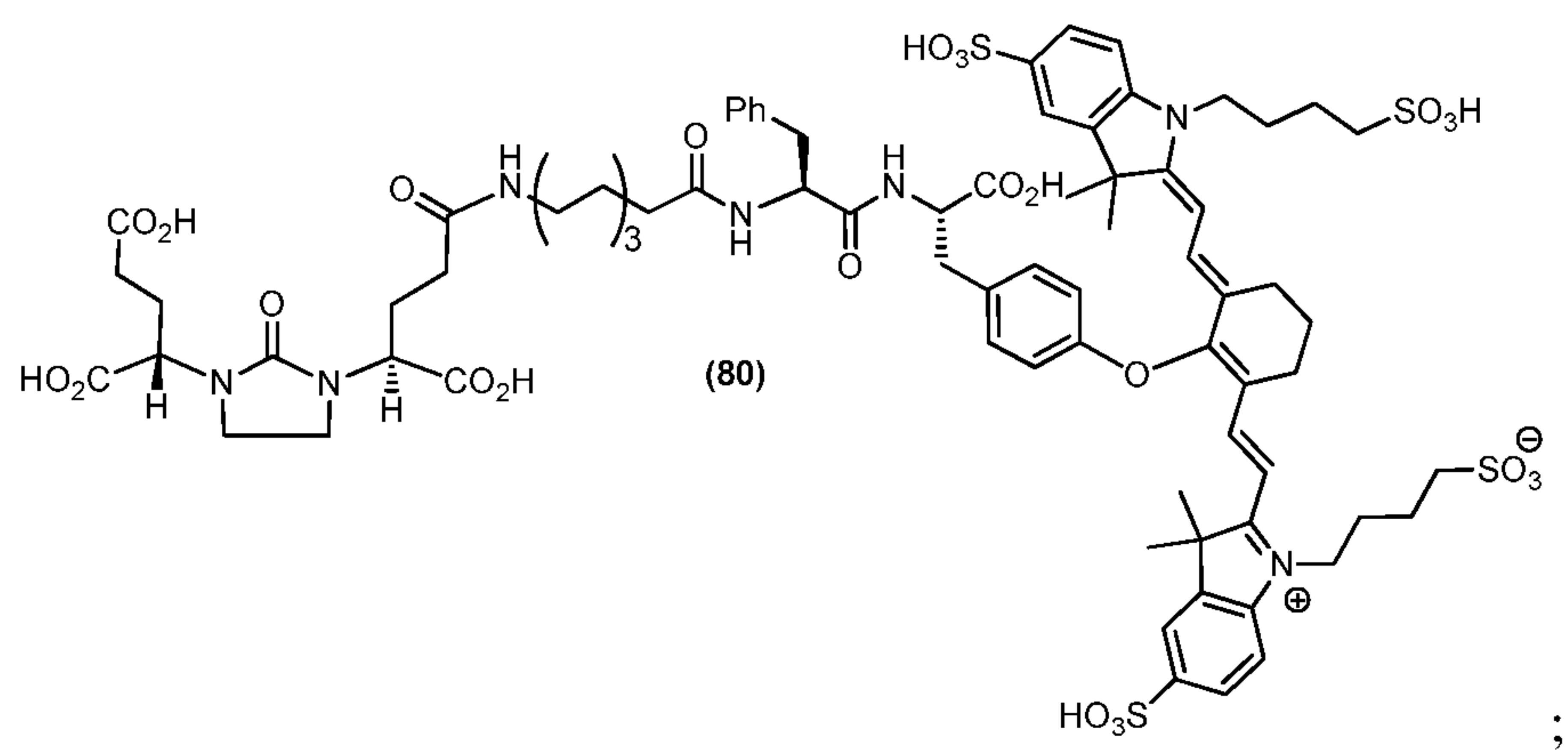
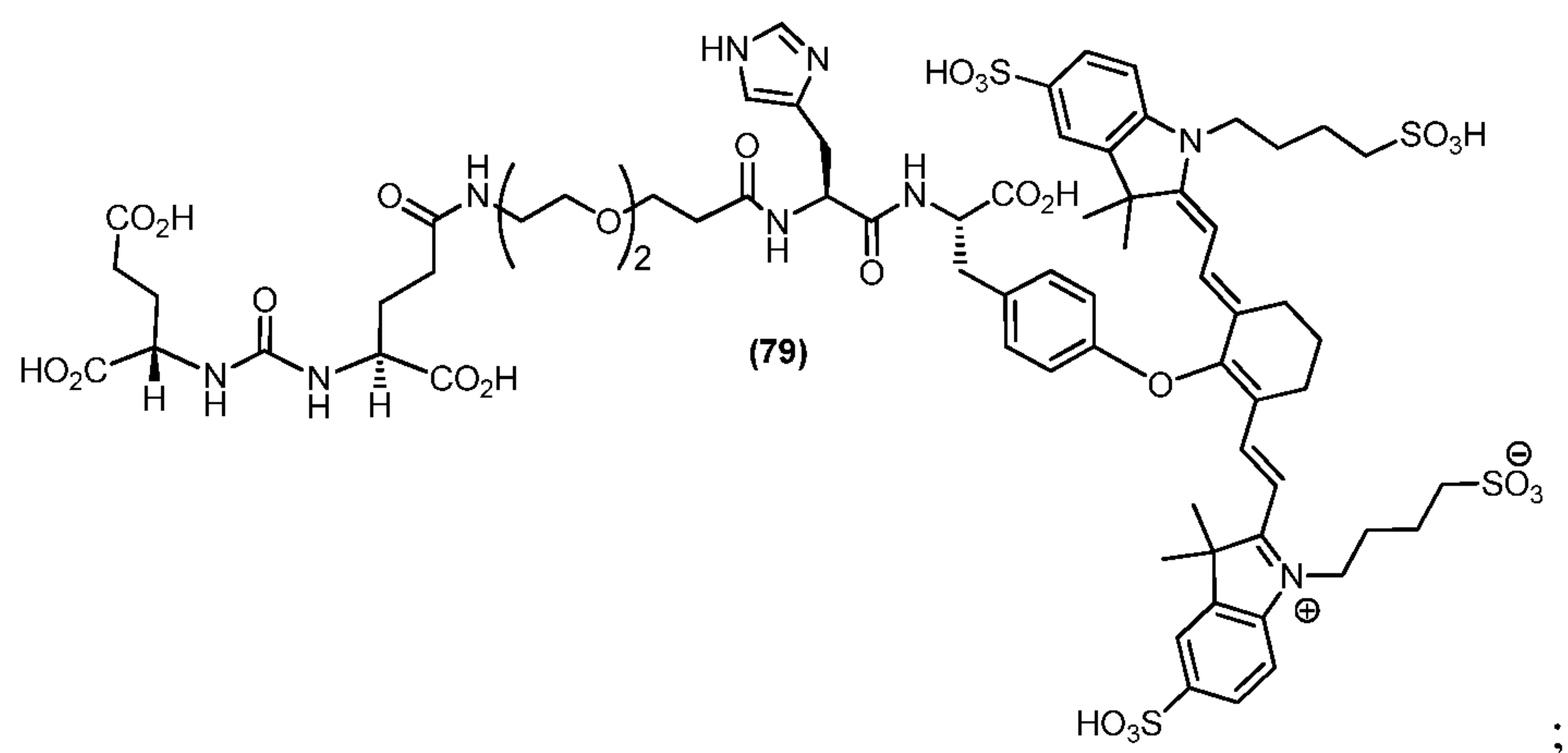
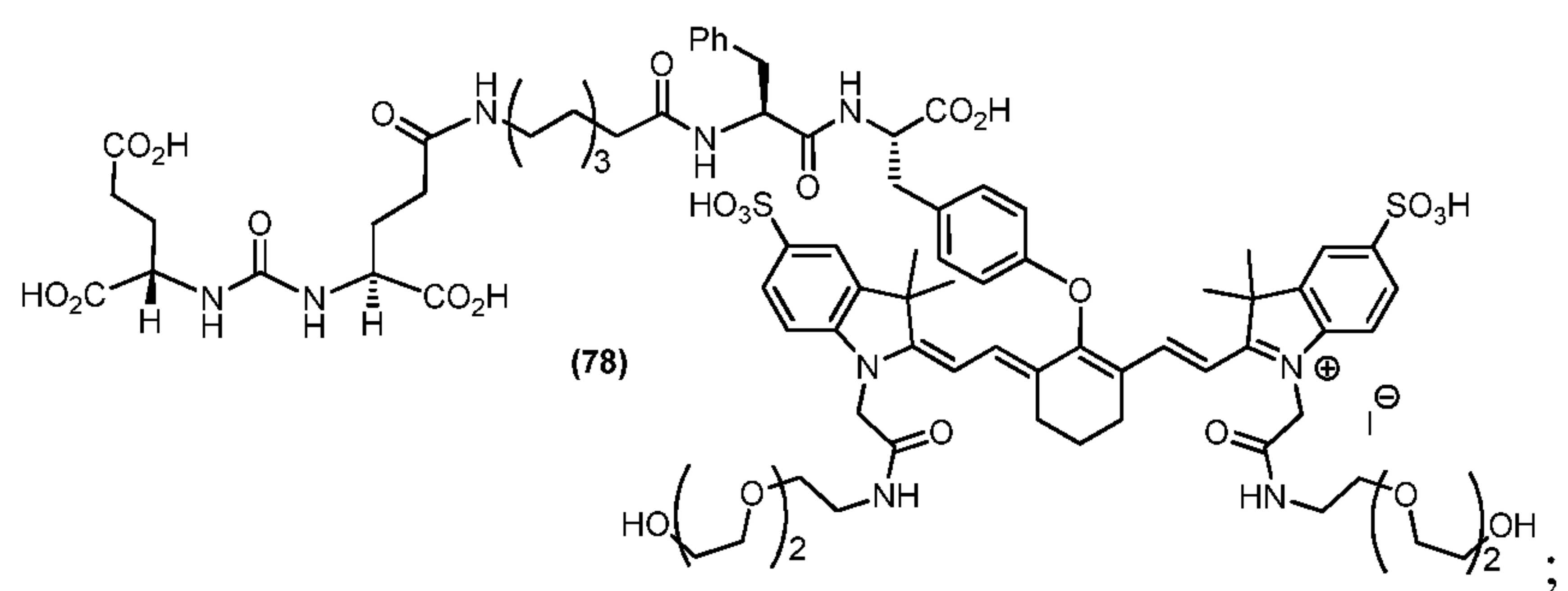


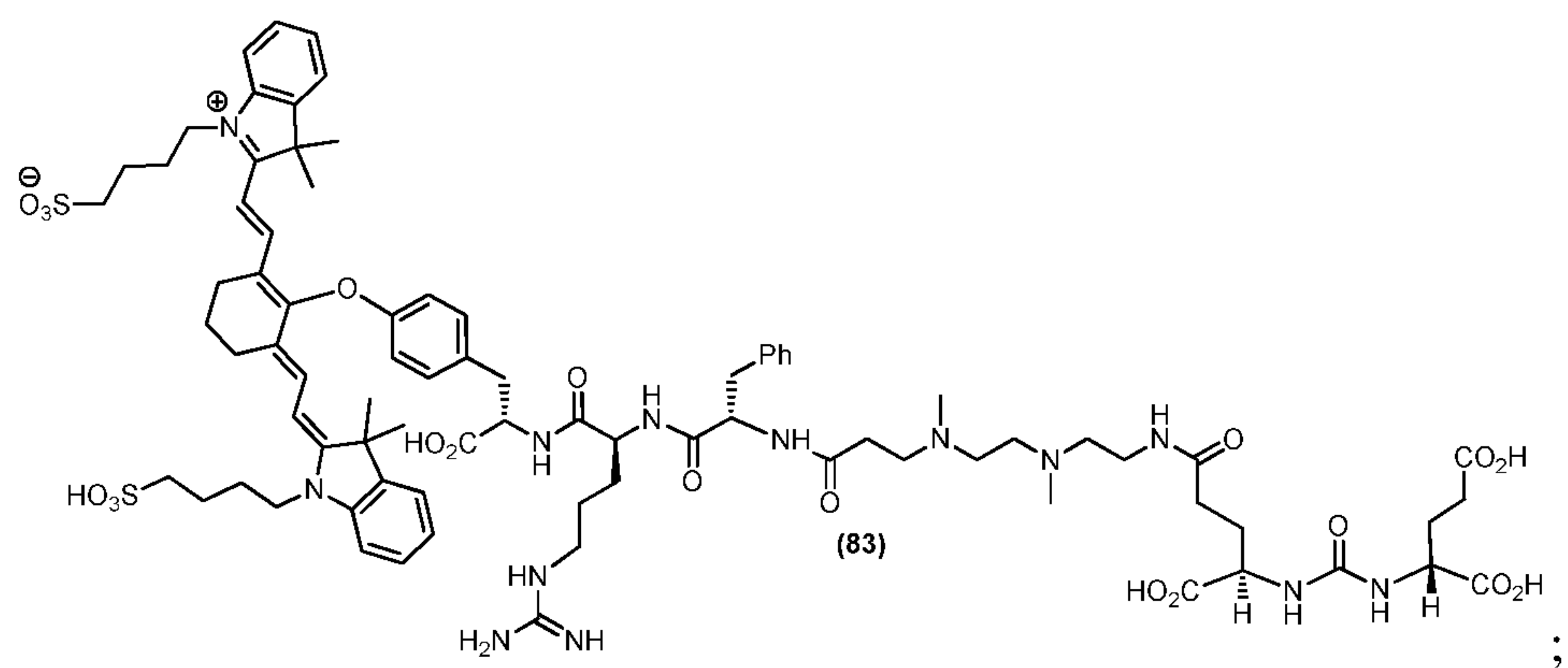
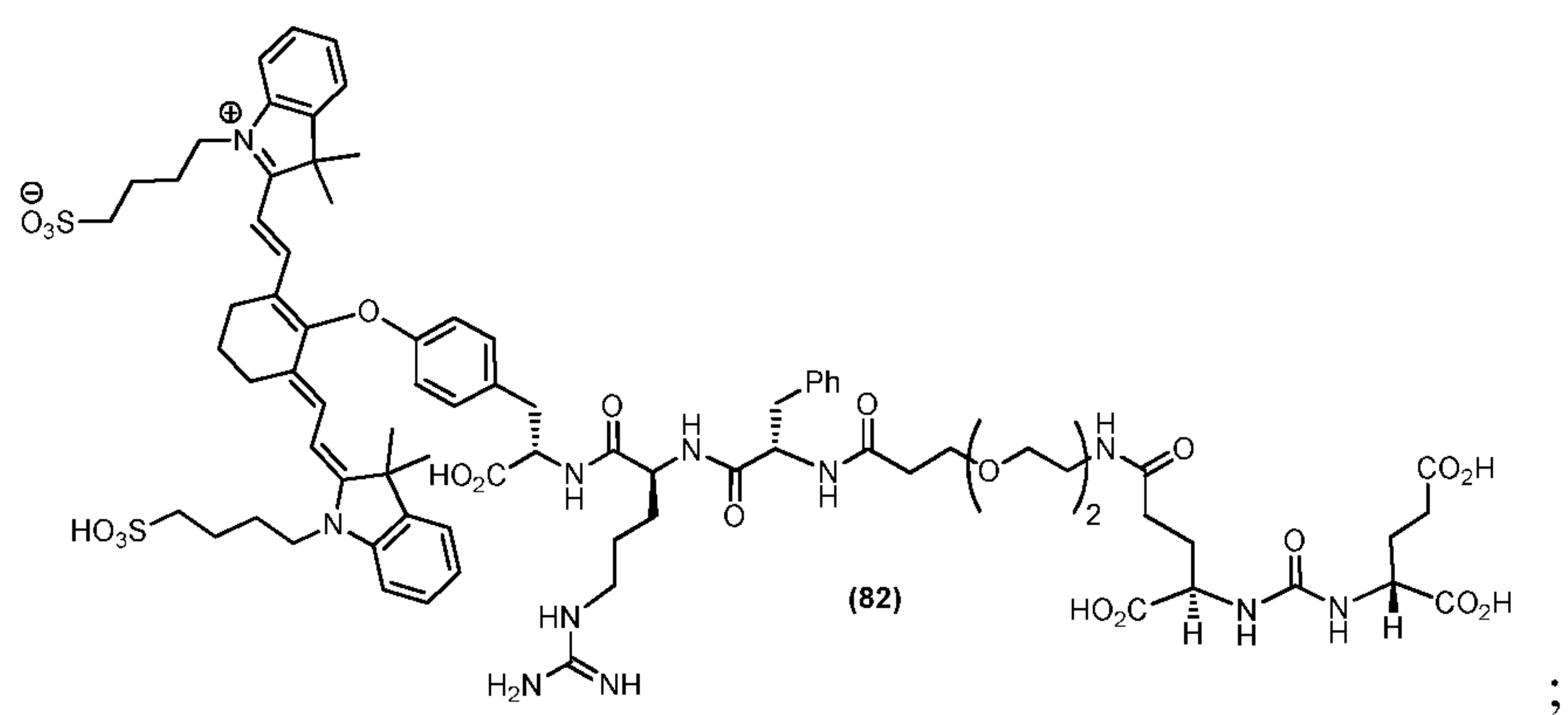
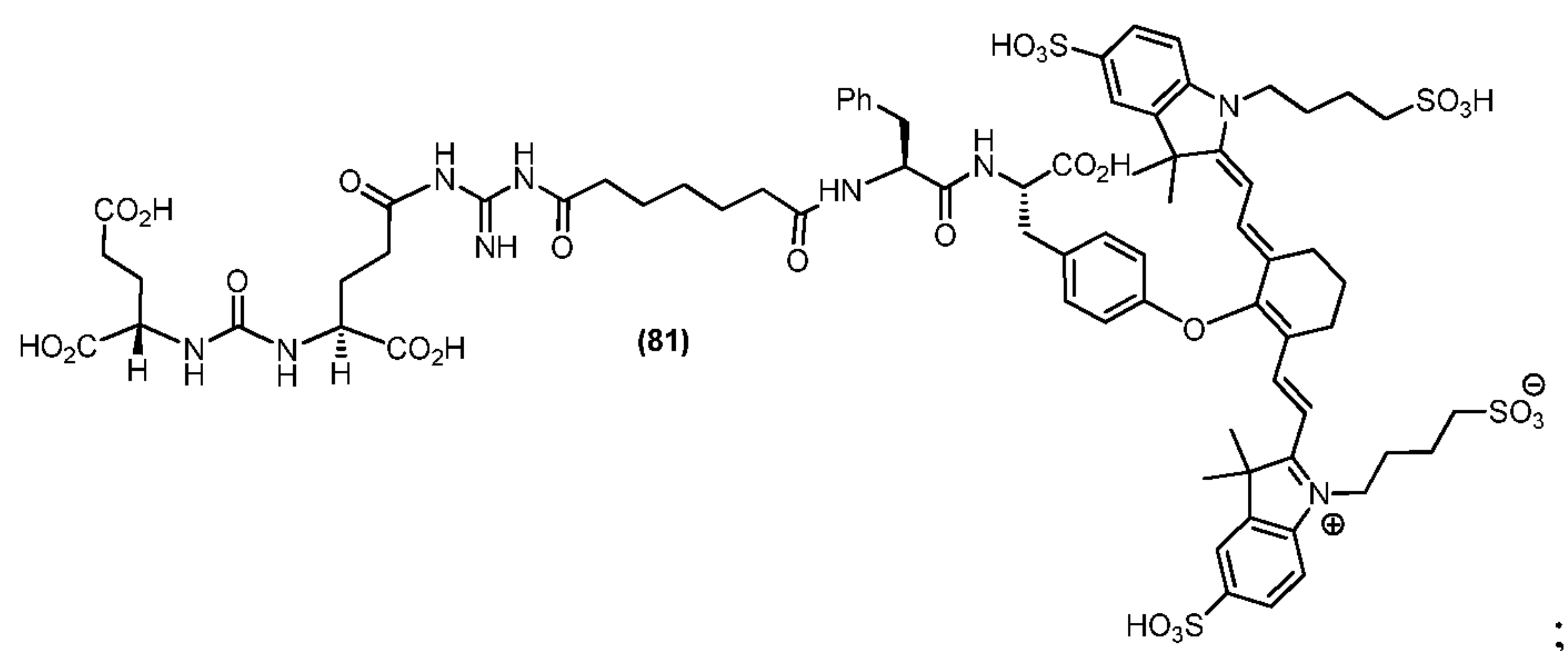


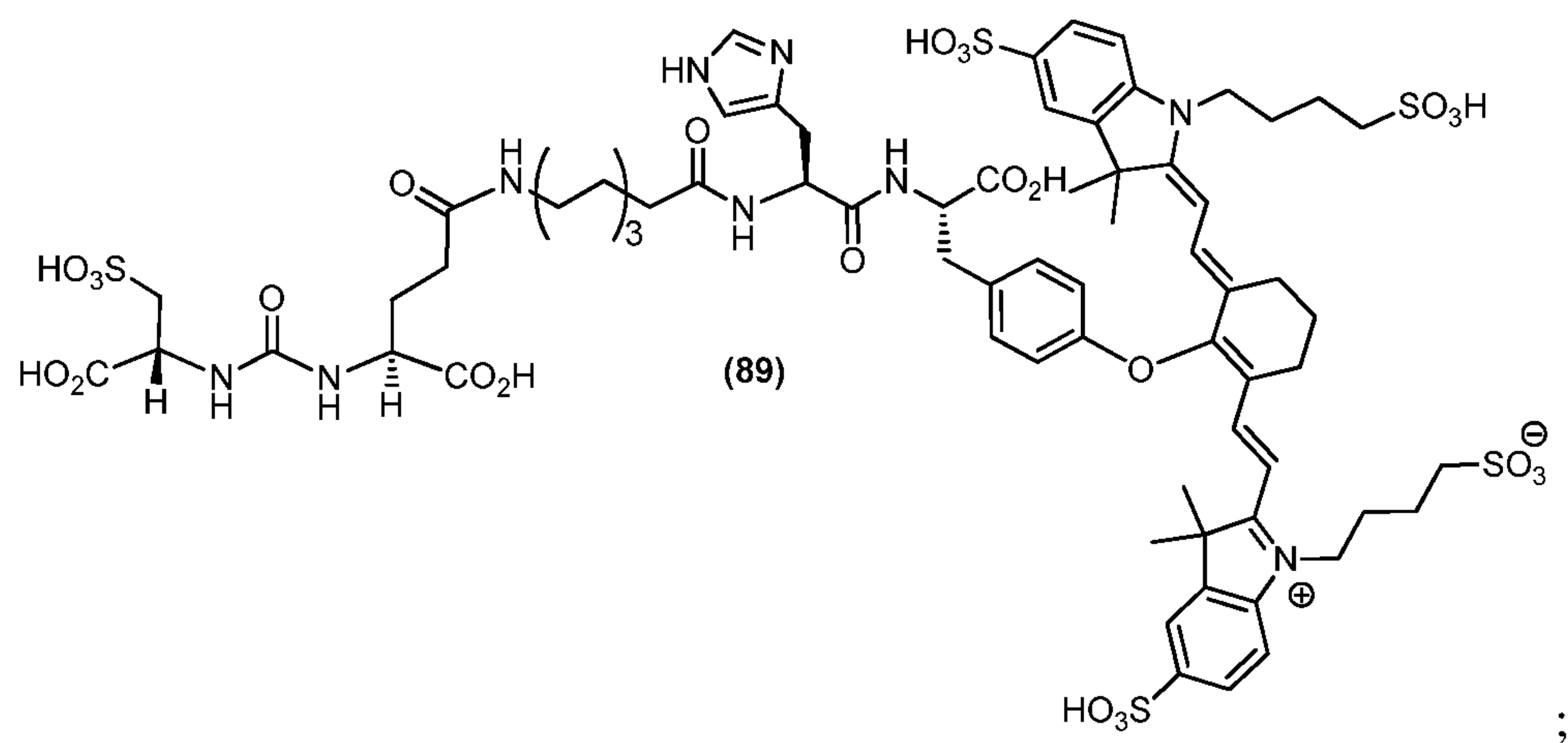
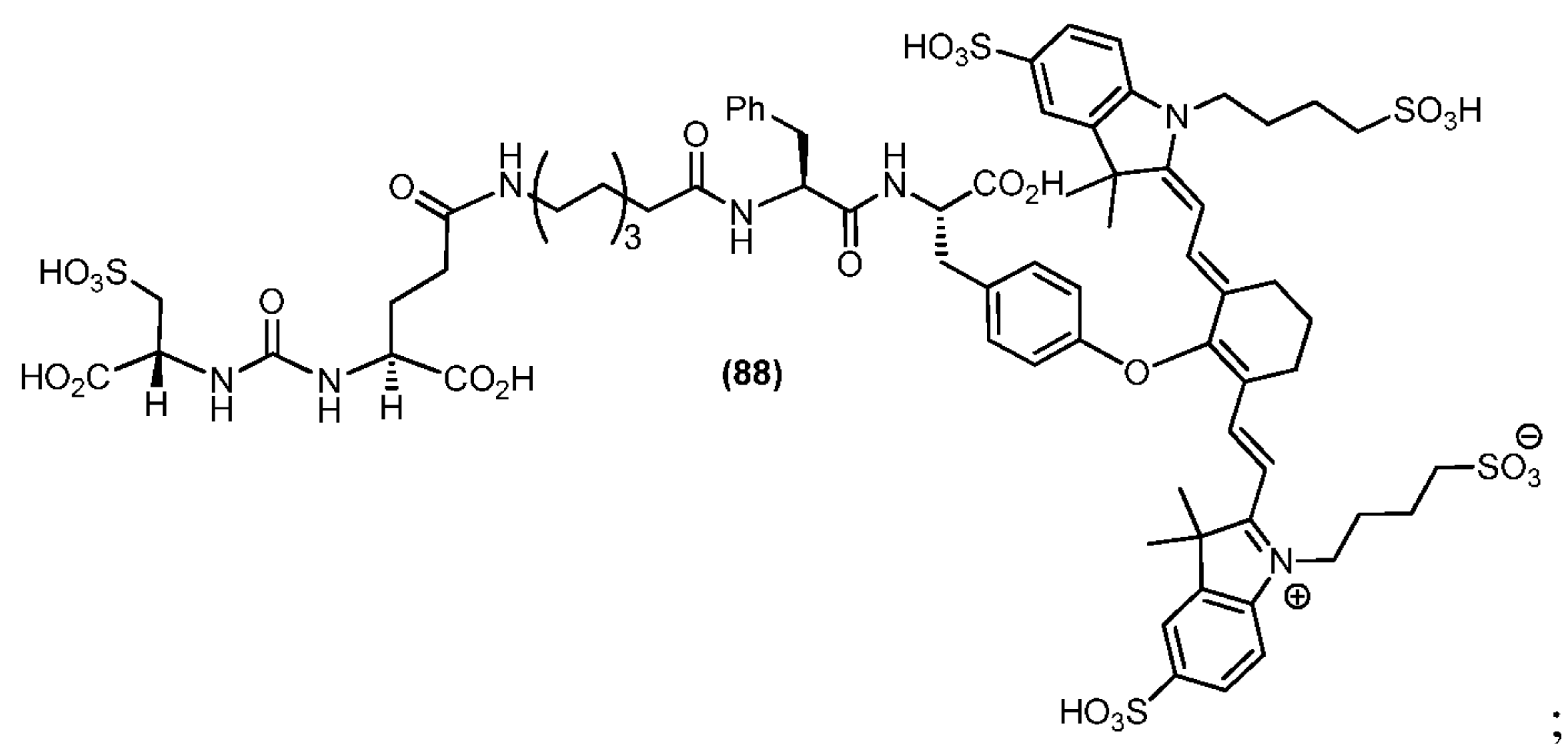
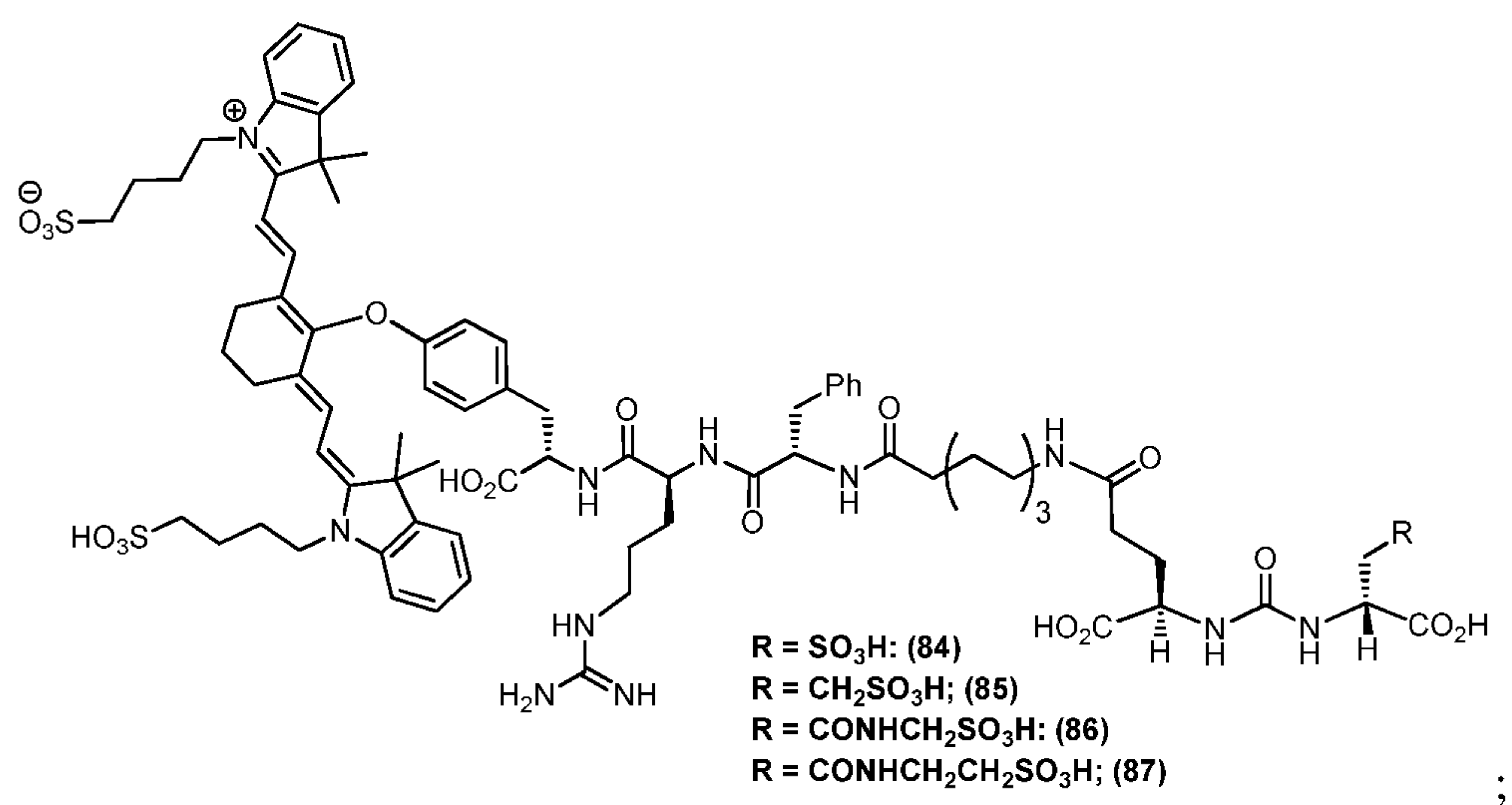


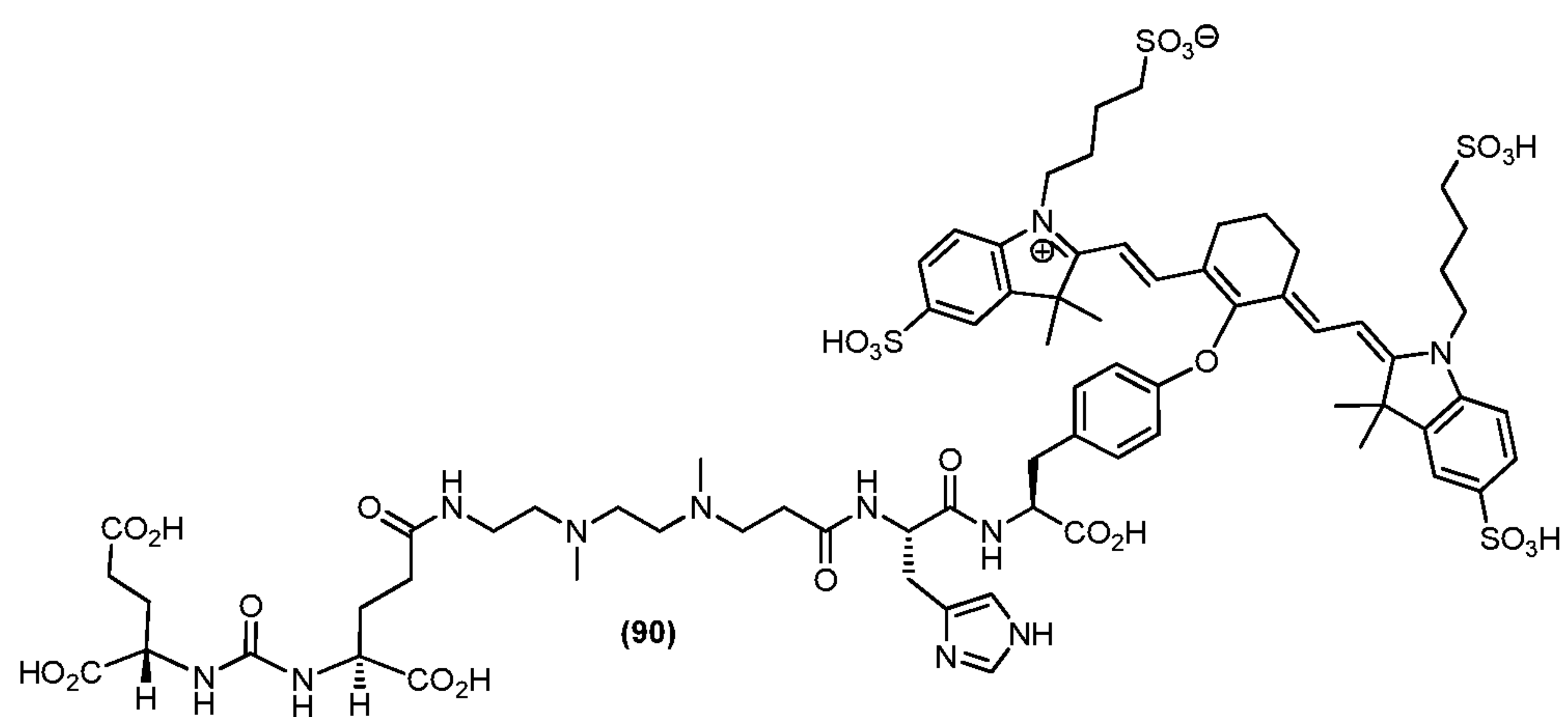




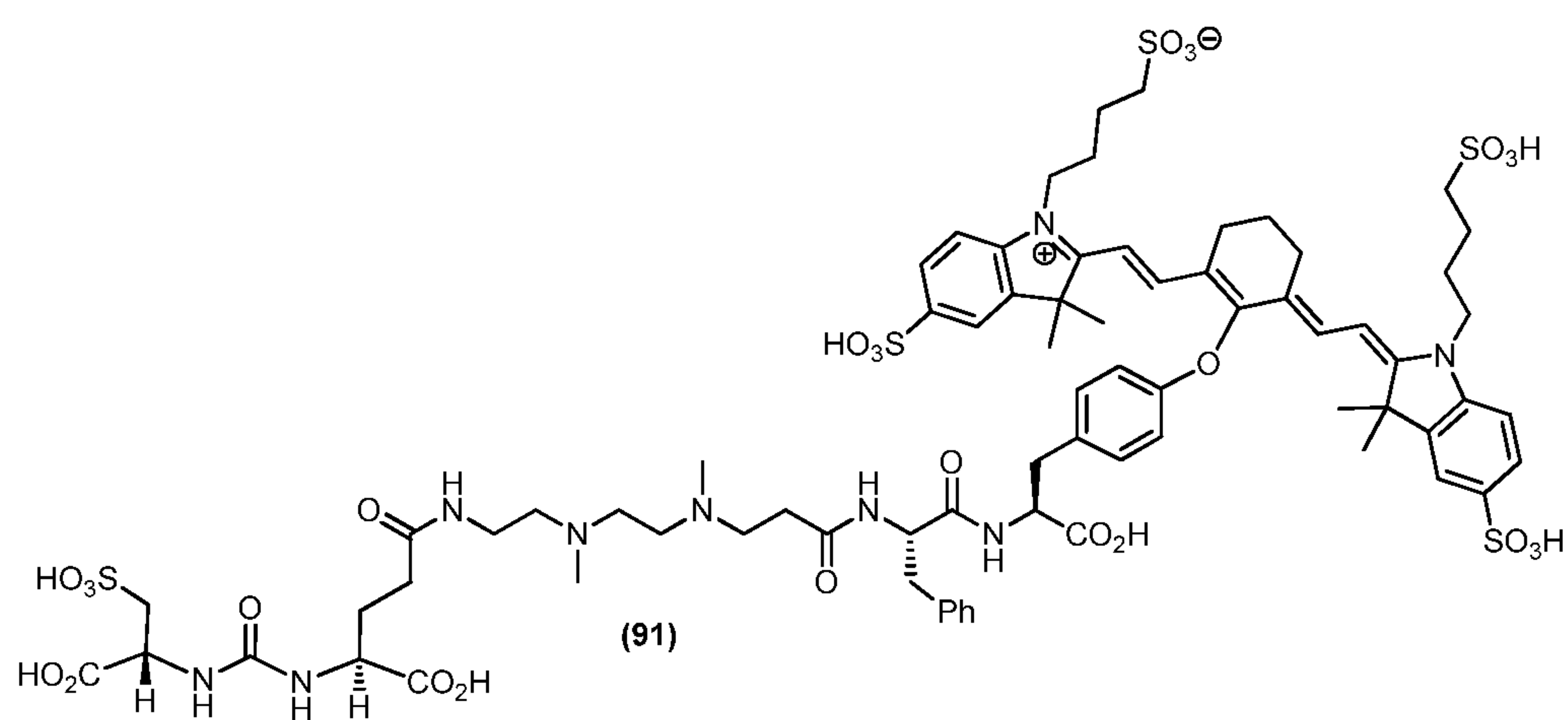




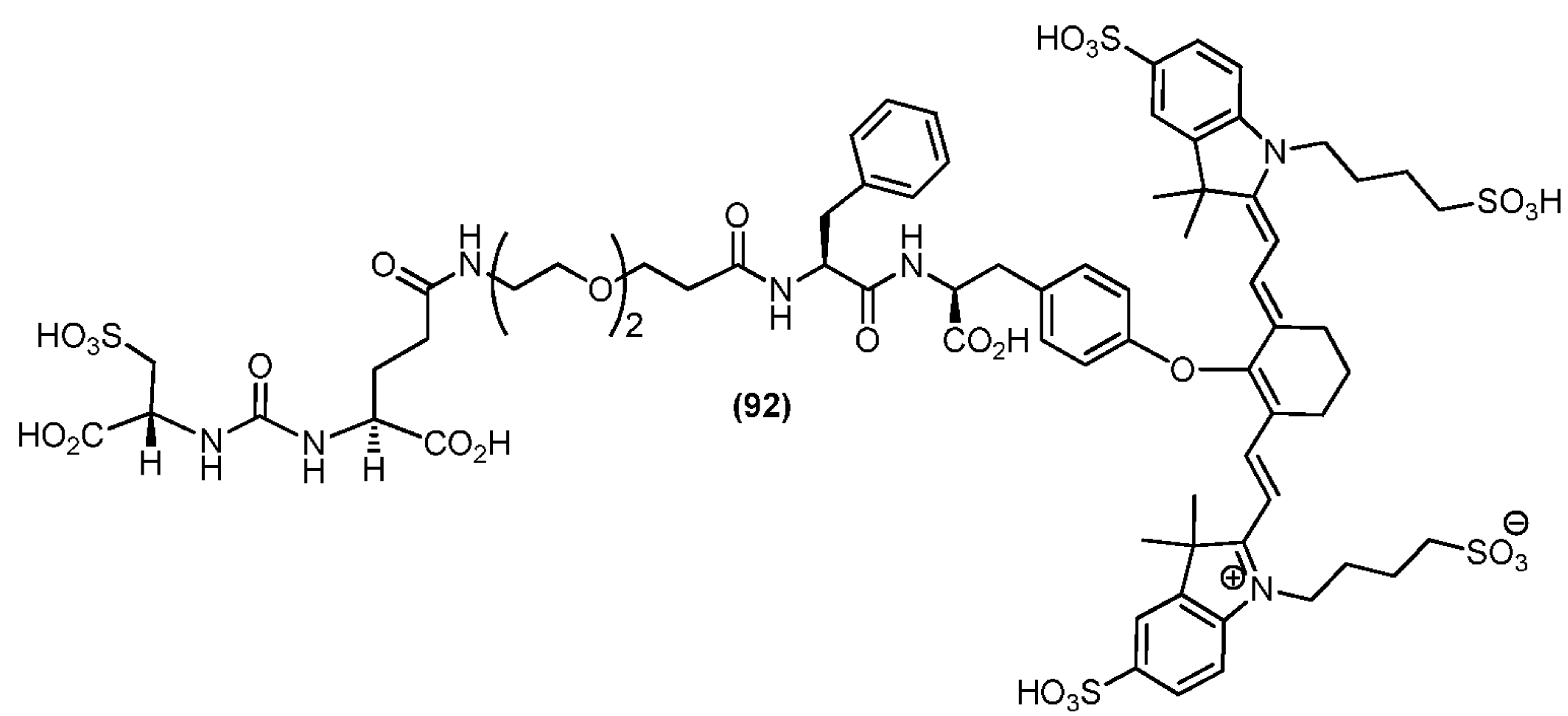




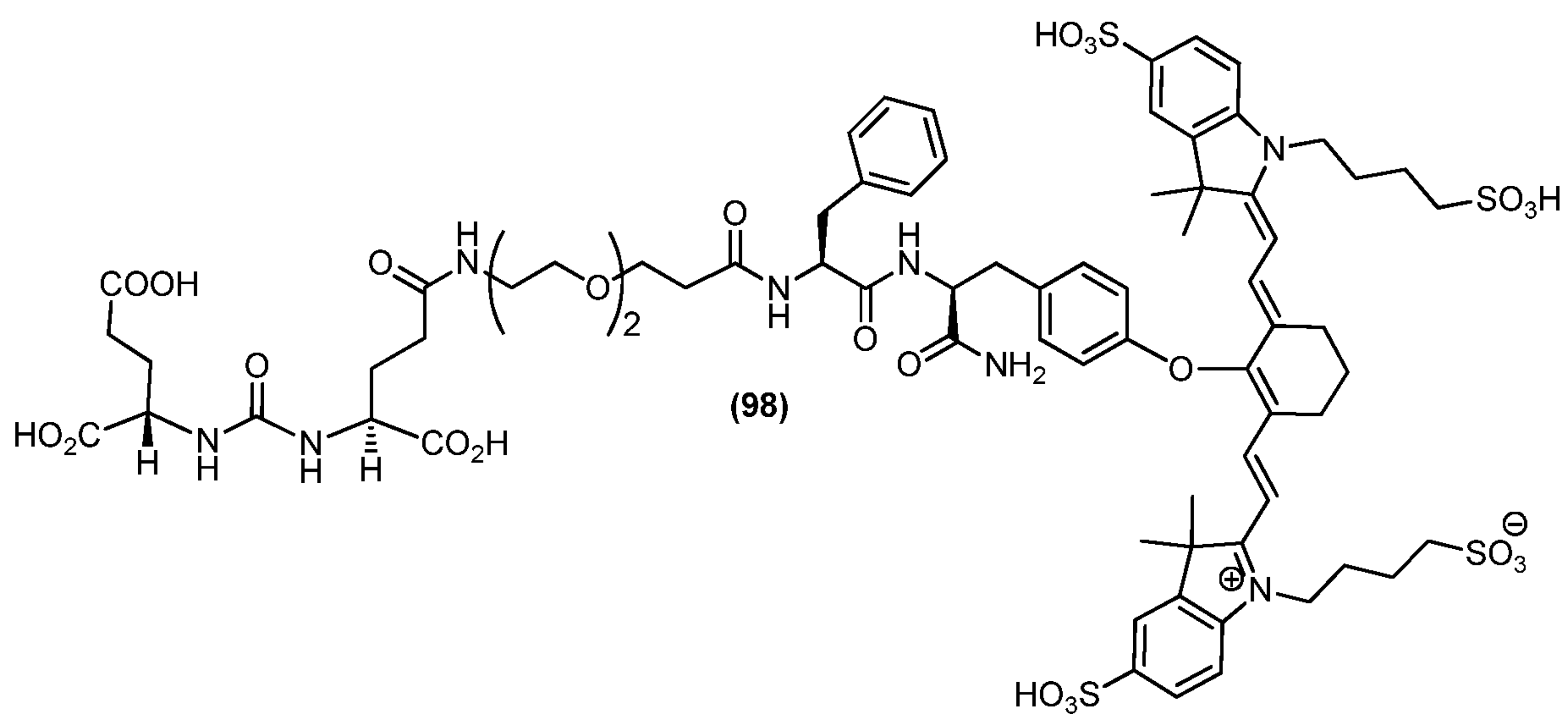
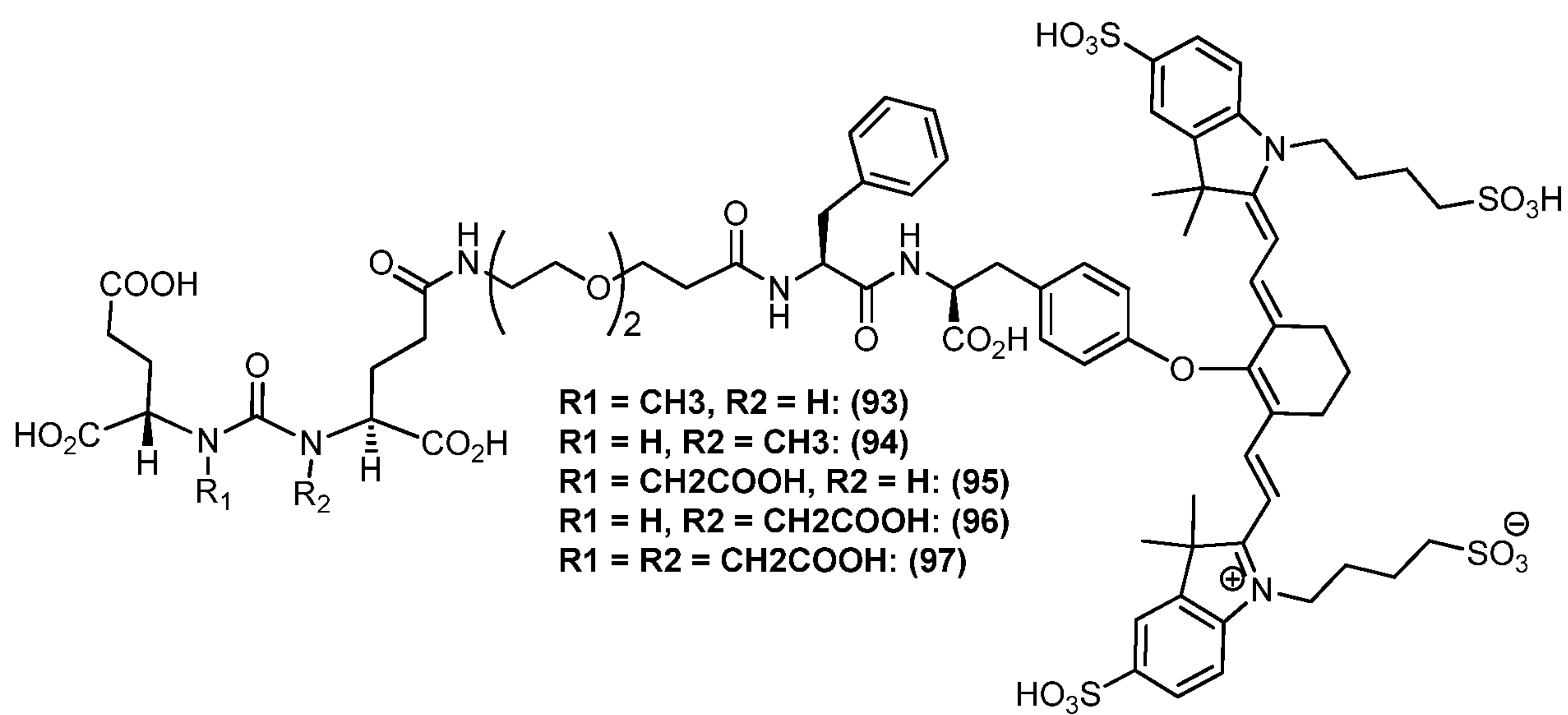
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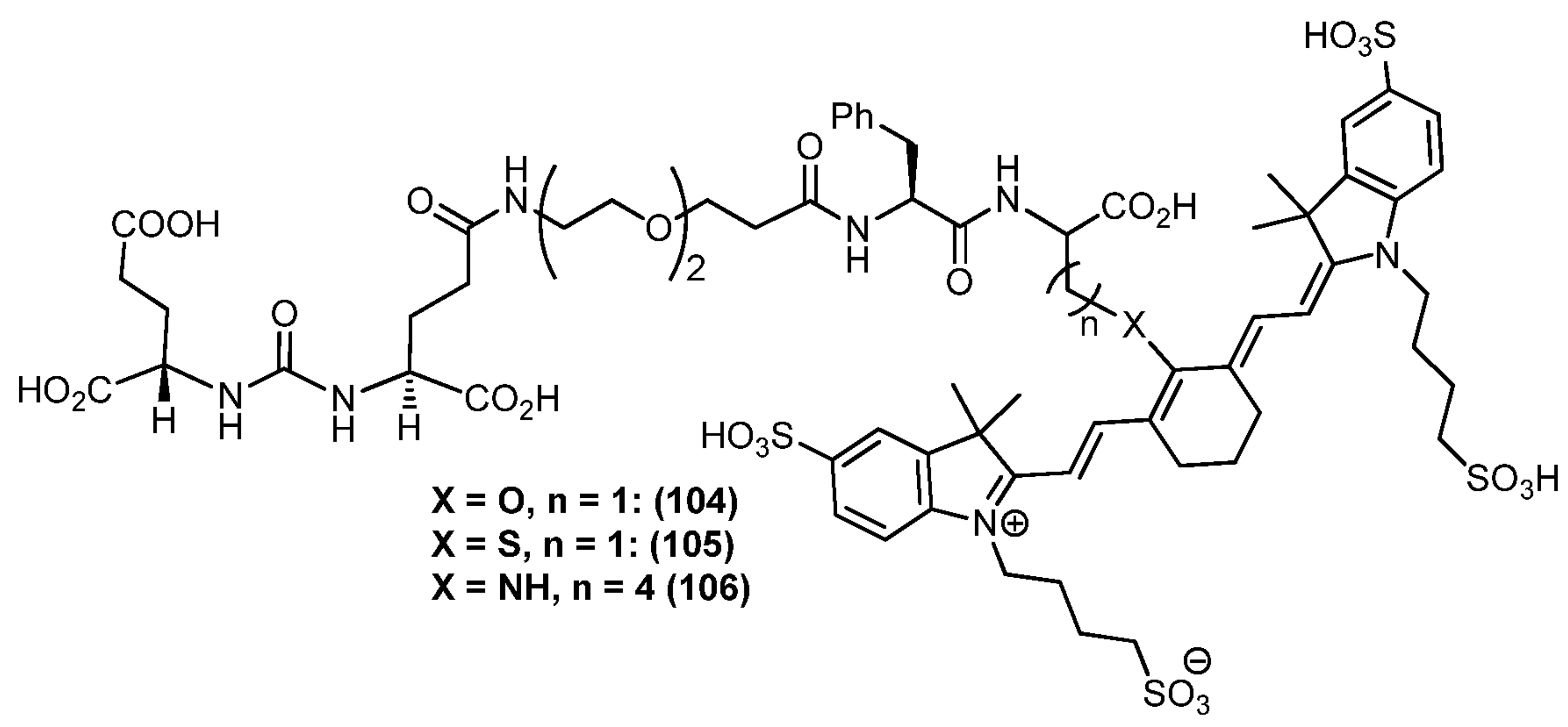
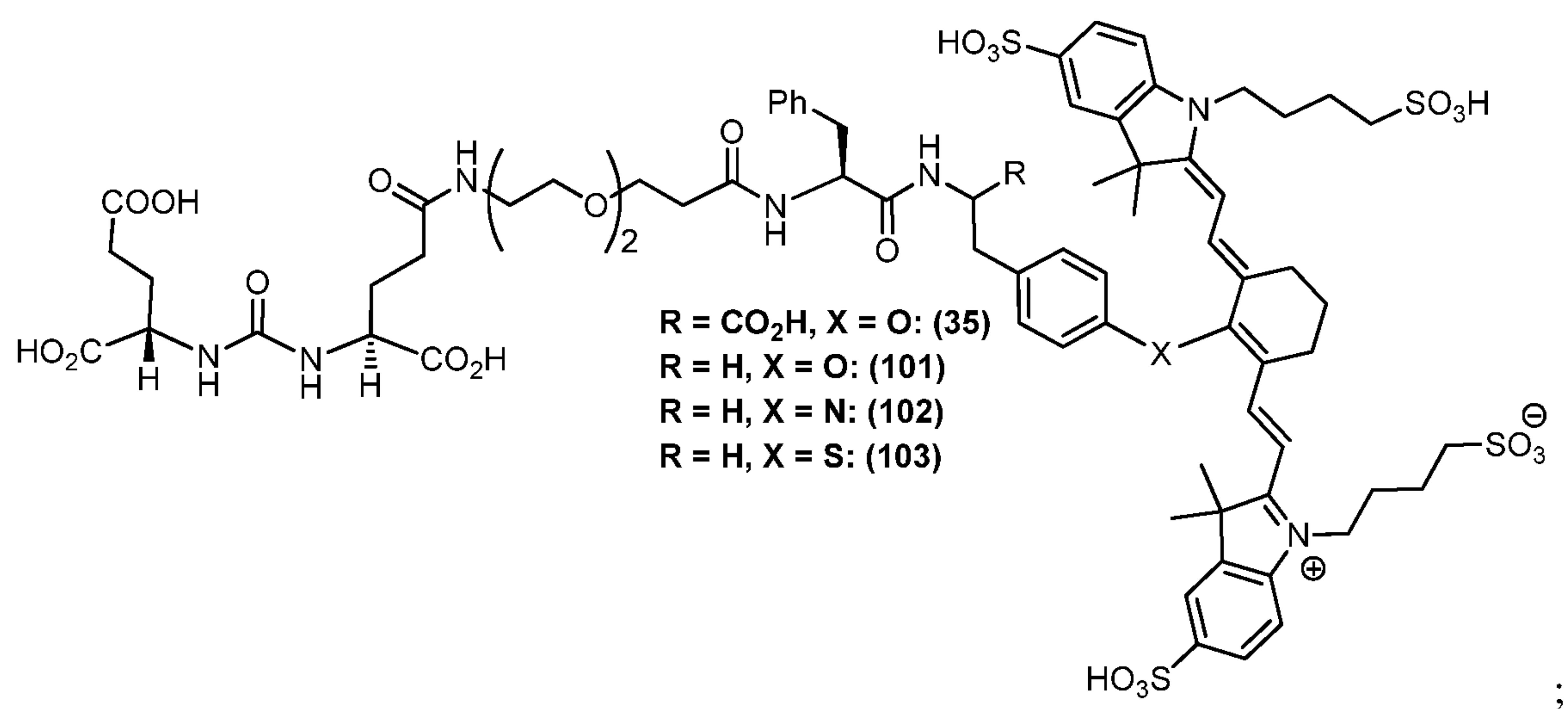
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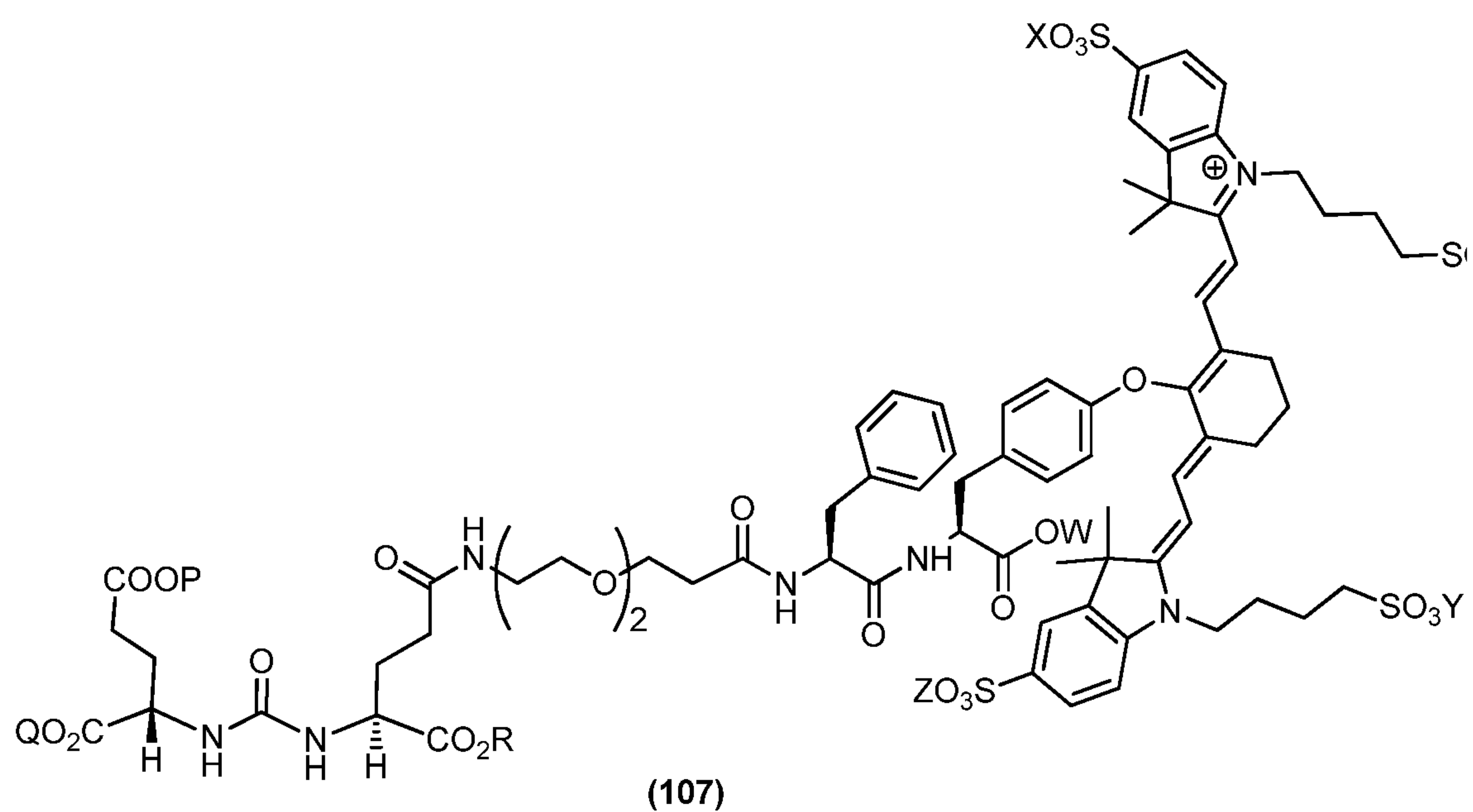


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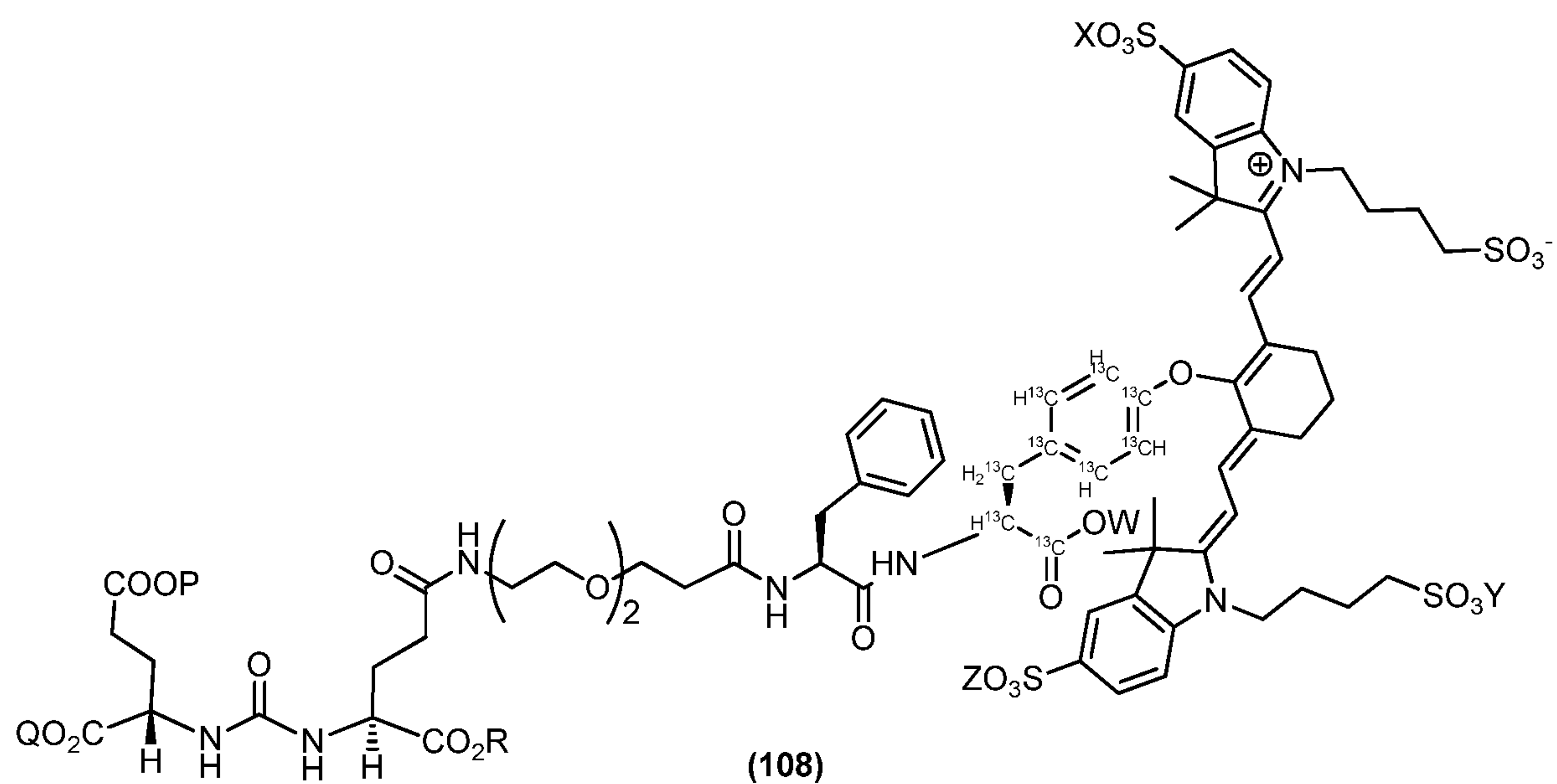






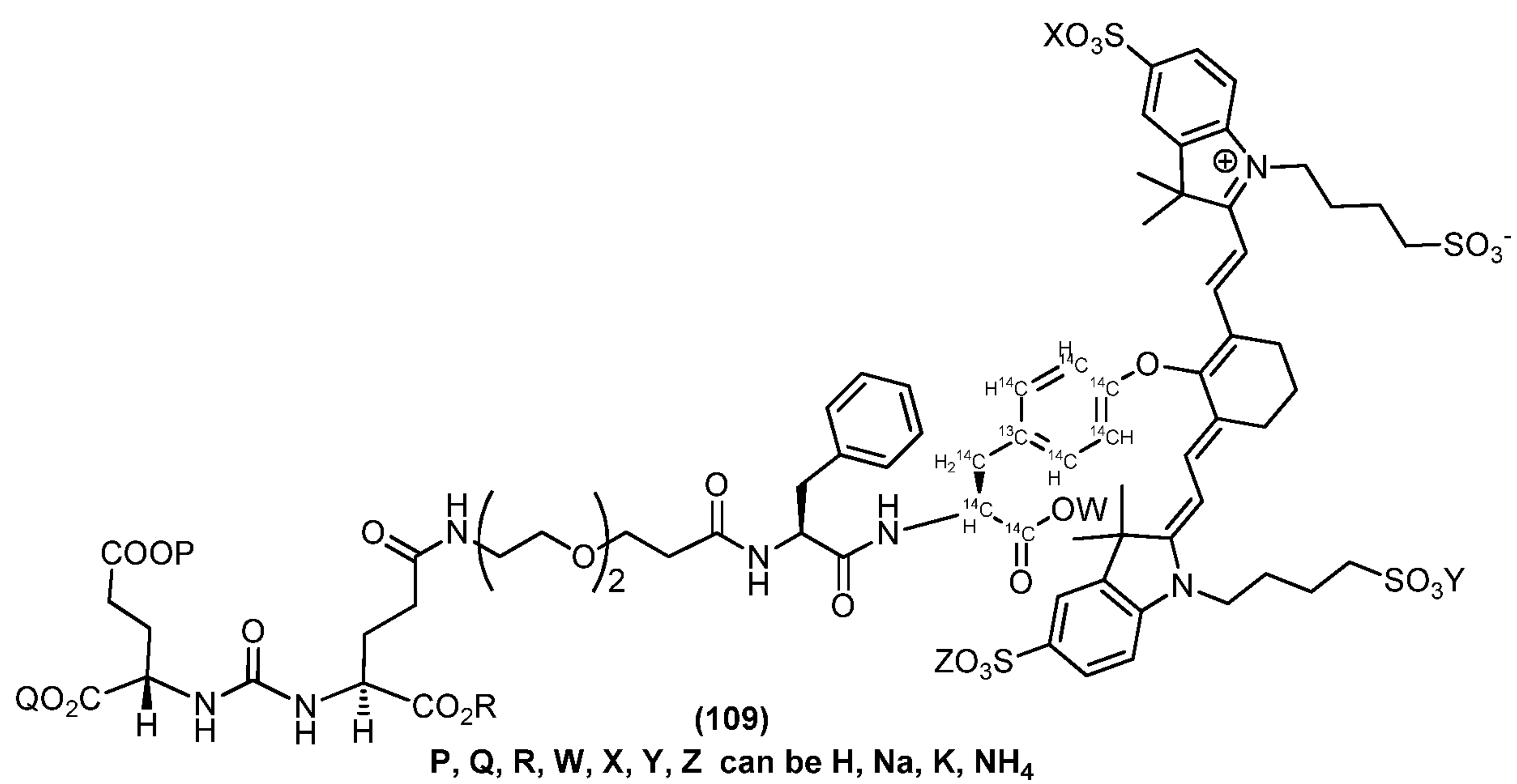
P, Q, R, W, X, Y, Z can be H (35), Na, K, NH₄

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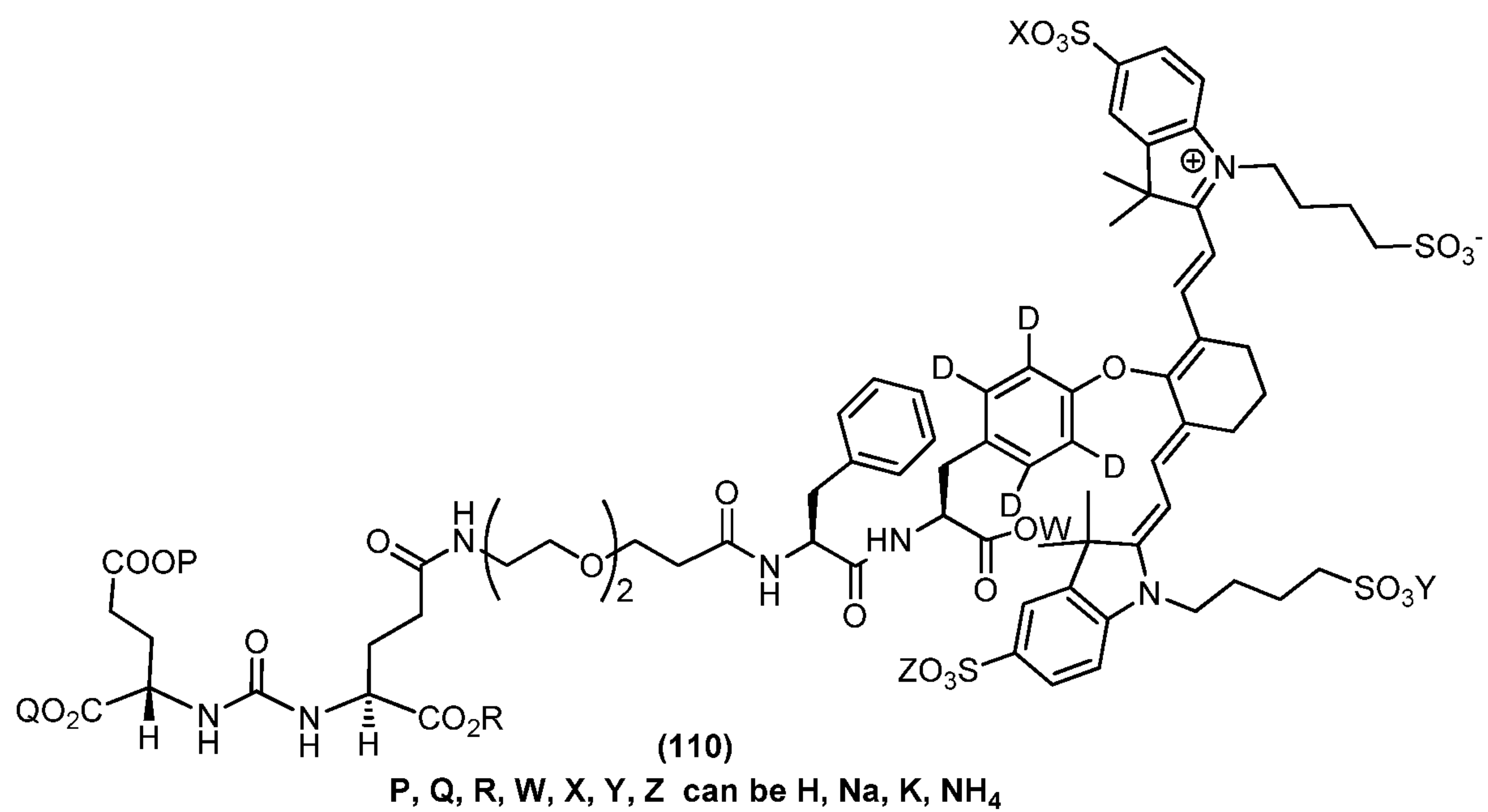


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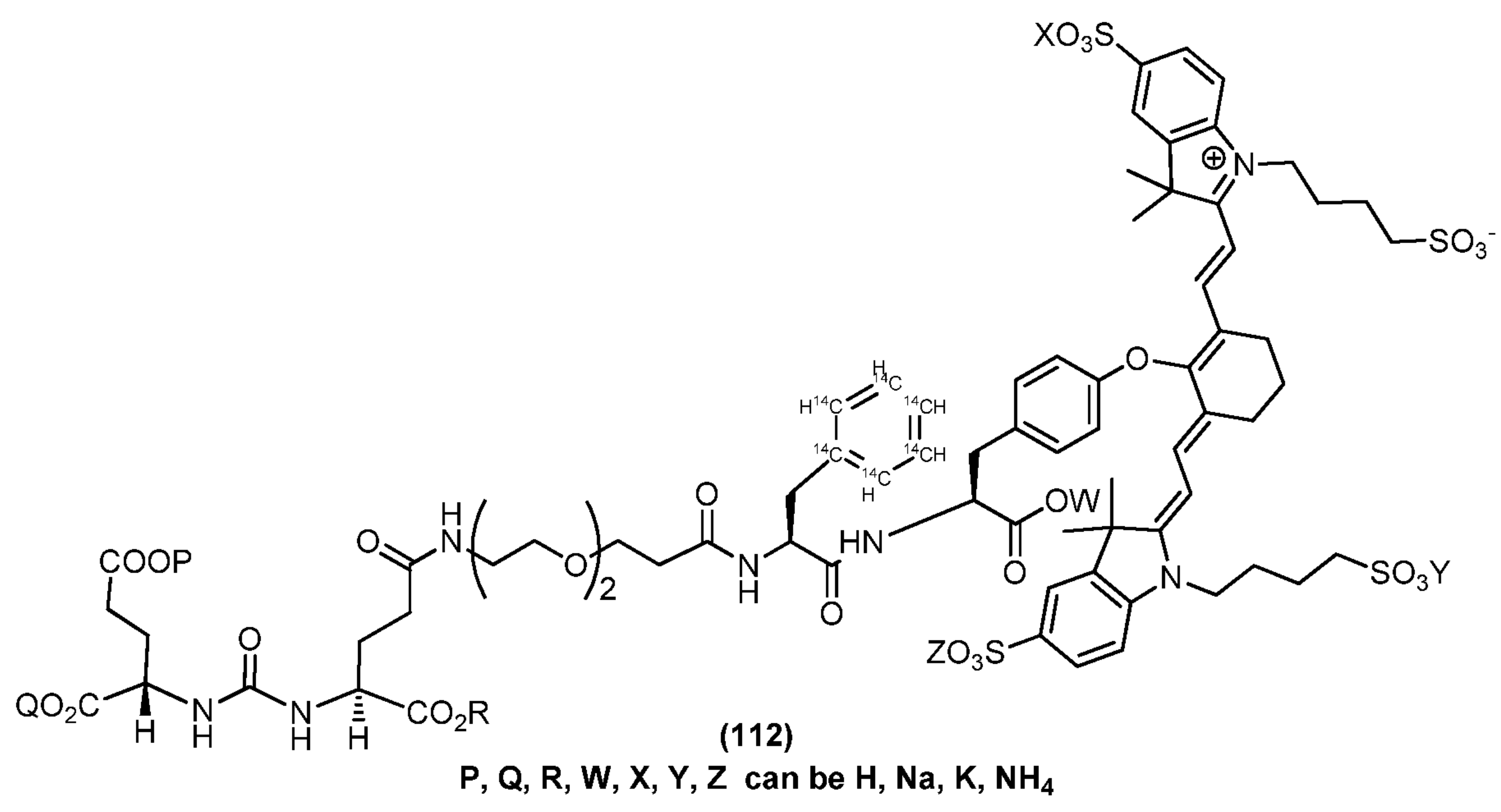
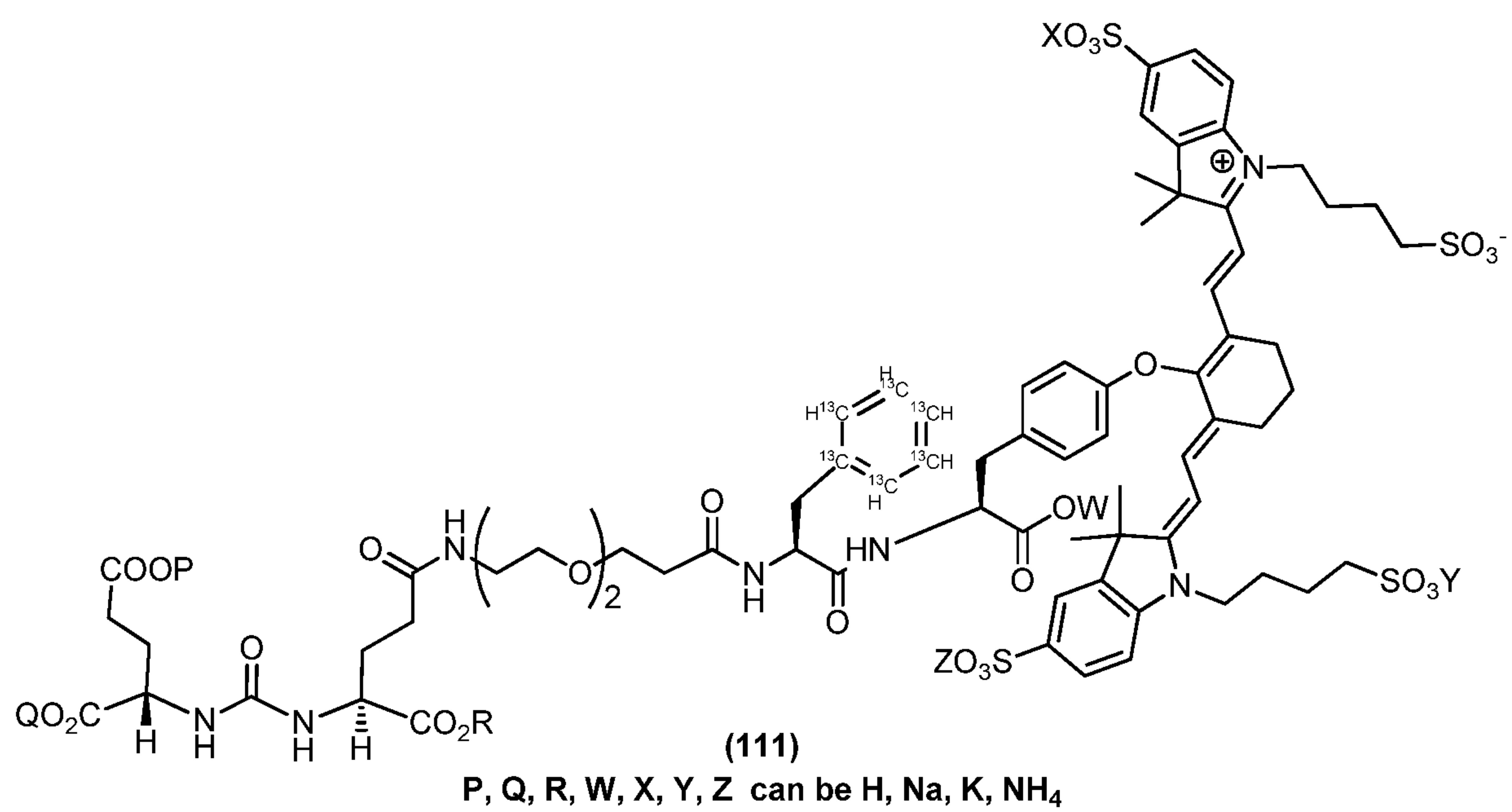
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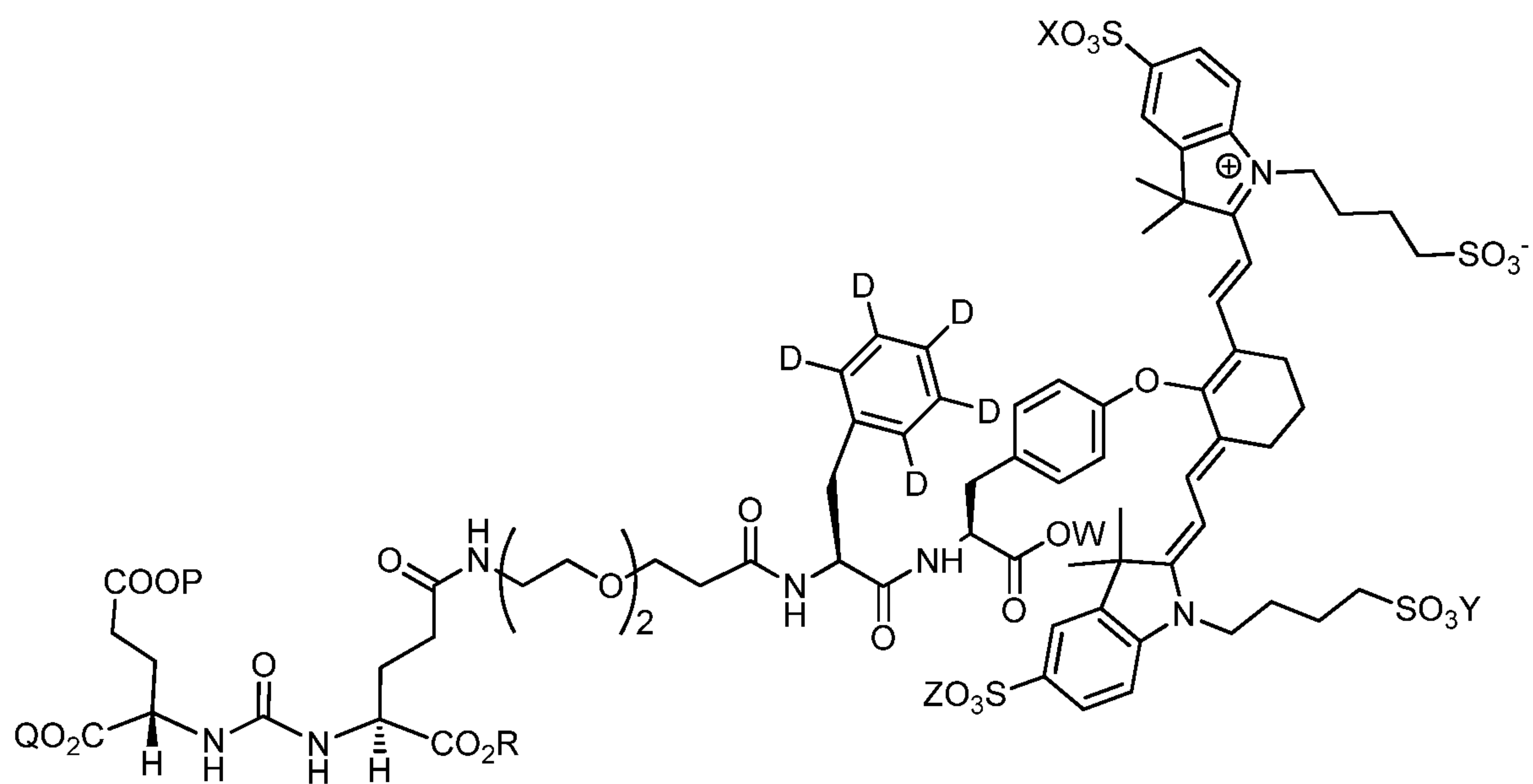


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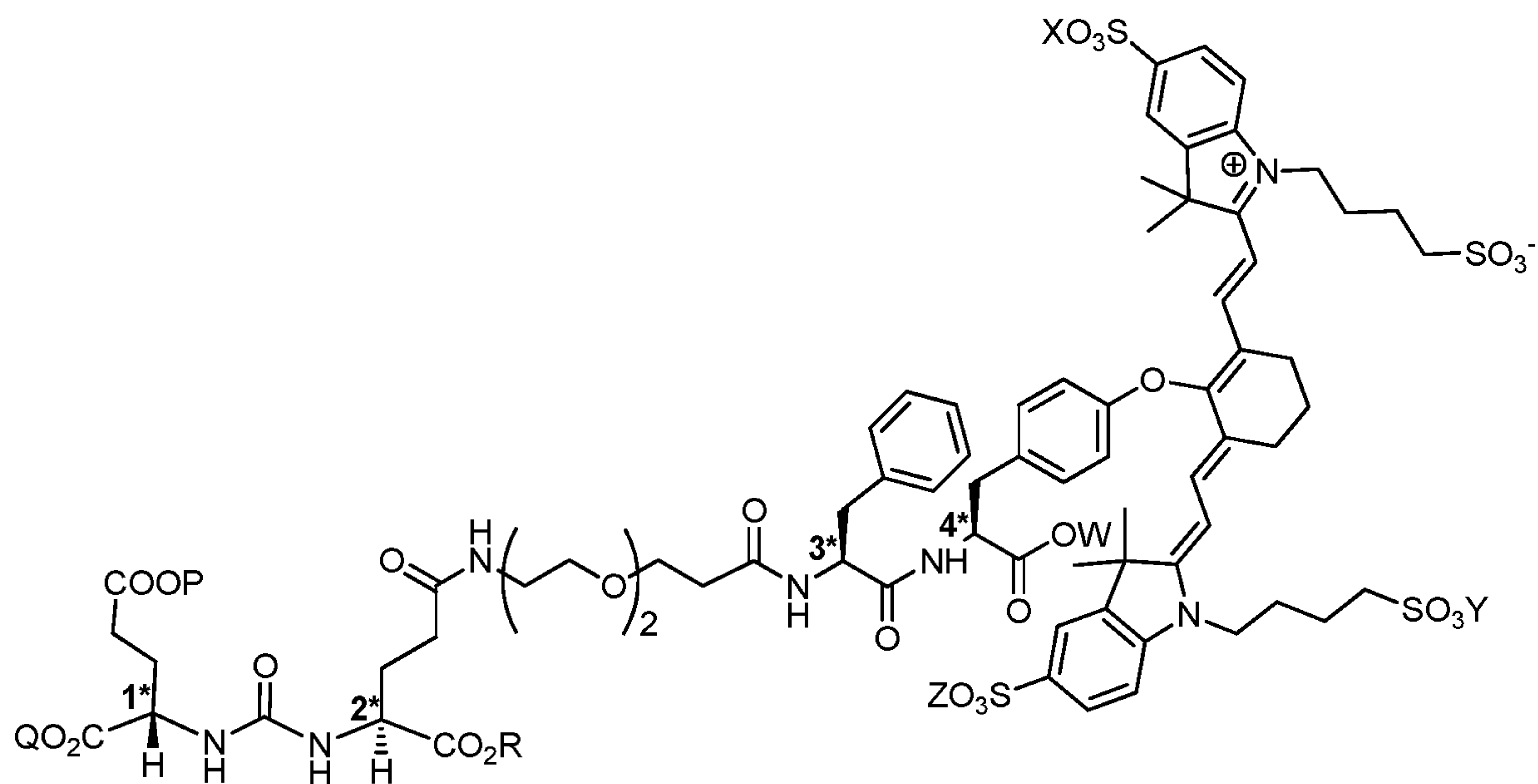




(113)

P, Q, R, W, X, Y, Z can be H (35), Na, K, NH₄

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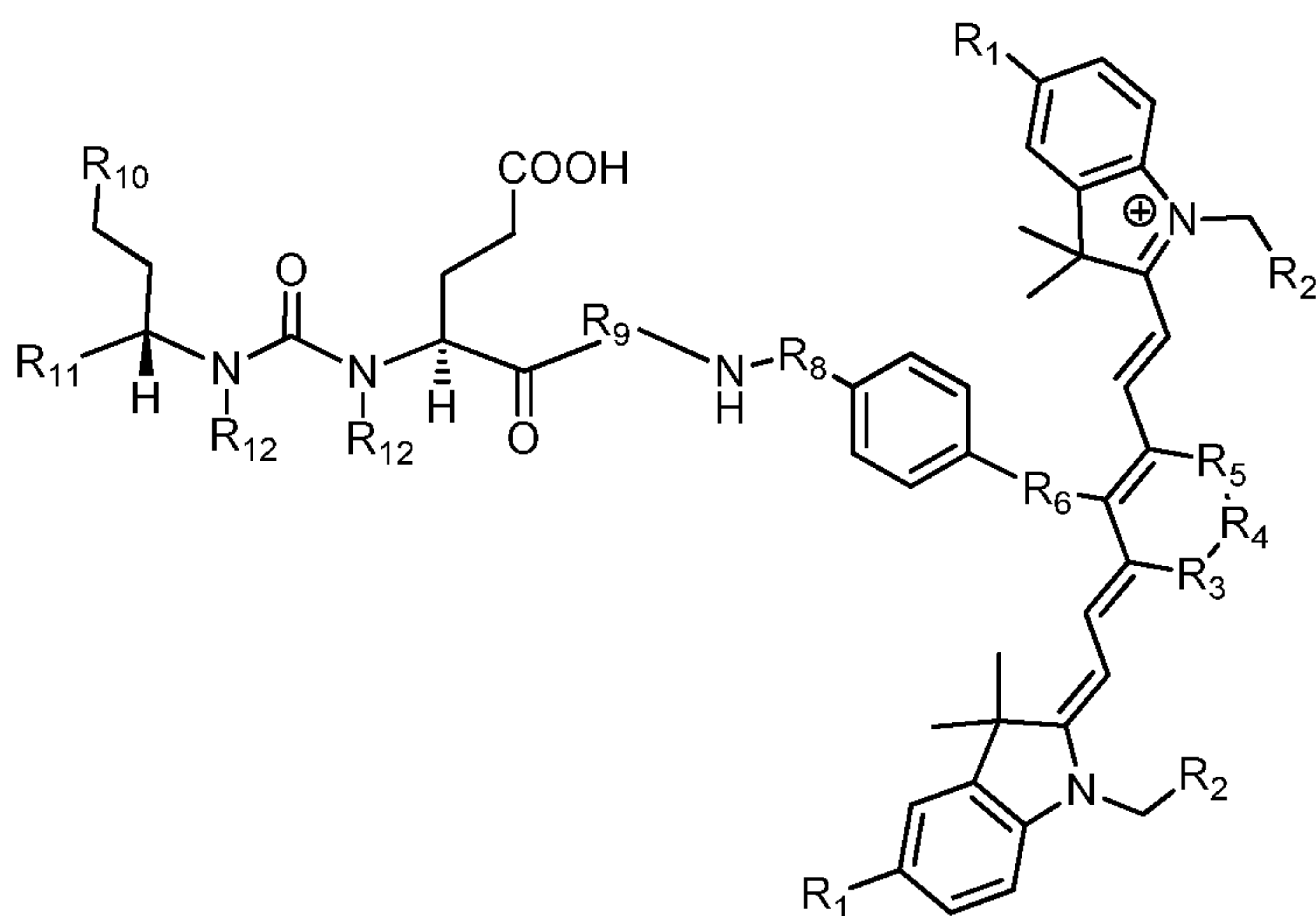


Chiral Center	1*	2*	3*	4*
Compound				
35	L	L	L	L
114	L	L	L	D
115	L	L	D	L
116	L	L	D	D
117	L	D	L	L

118	L	D	L	D
119	L	D	D	L
120	L	D	D	D
121	D	L	L	L
122	D	L	L	D
123	D	L	D	L
124	D	L	D	D
125	D	D	L	L
126	D	D	L	D
127	D	D	D	L
128	D	D	D	D

or racemic mixture thereof.

18. A compound having the structural formula:



or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof, or isotopes thereof, wherein:

R_1 represents a hydrogen or SO_3H ;

R_2 represents a hydrogen, or CH_3 , or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3^-$, or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3^-$, or $\text{C}_4\text{H}_8\text{SO}_3\text{H}$ or $\text{C}_3\text{H}_6\text{N}^+(\text{CH}_3)_3$;

R_3 , and R_5 each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds, or oxygen, or sulfur, or nitrogen

R_4 represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R₆ represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R₇ is optional and when present represents electron donating aromatic substitution group;

R₈ is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, Trp, His, Tyr, or derivative of them, and/or cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative of them, and/or anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, and/or unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative;

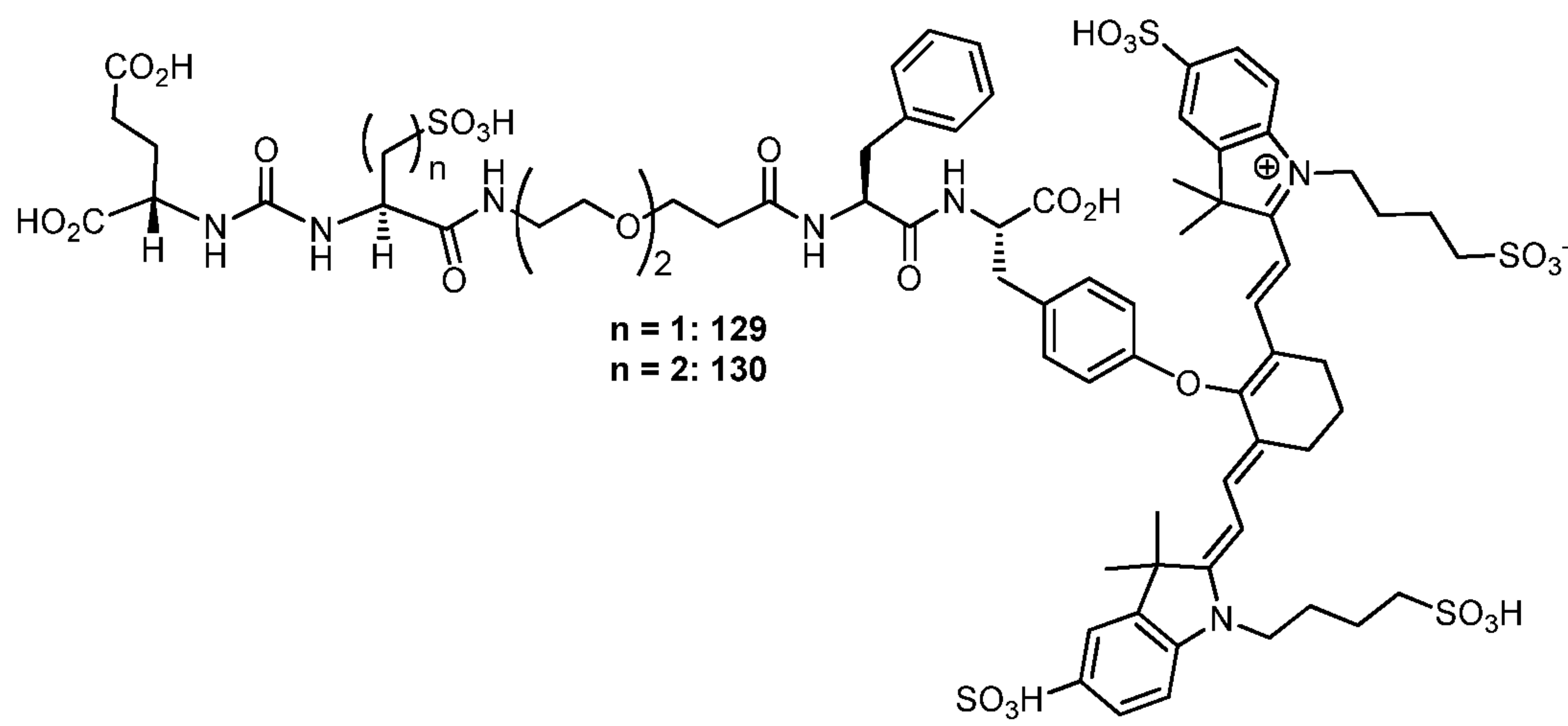
R₉ is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linkers, polyethylene amine linkers, cationic linker, or derivative of them;

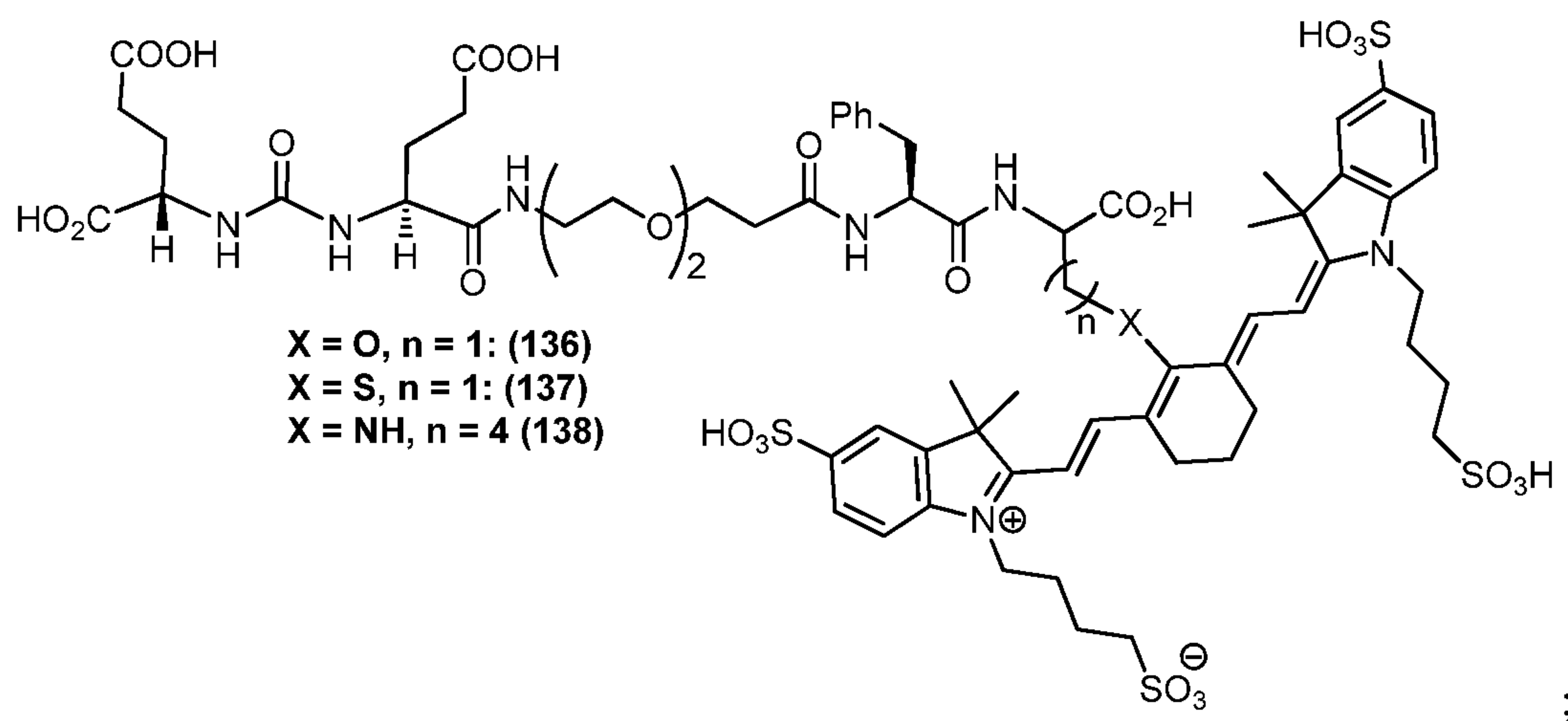
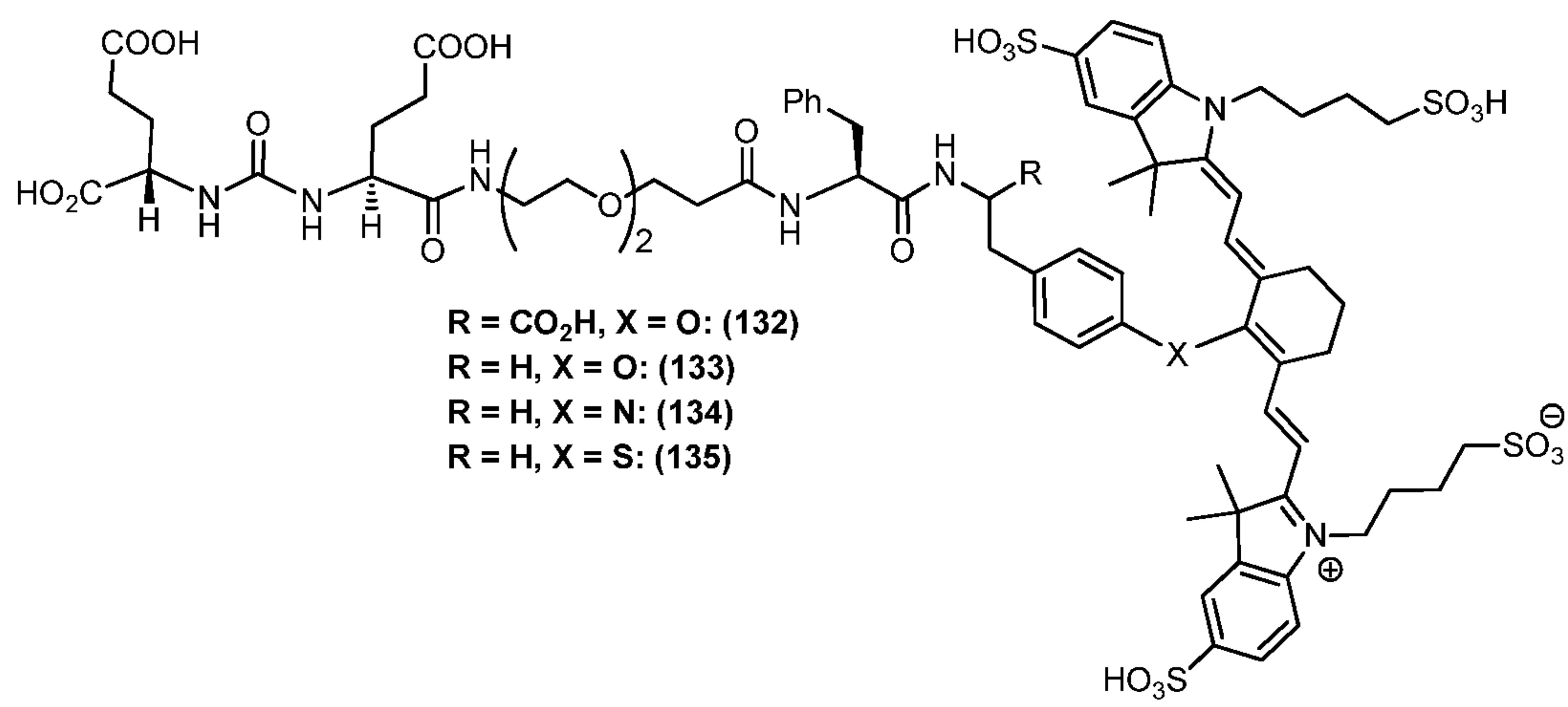
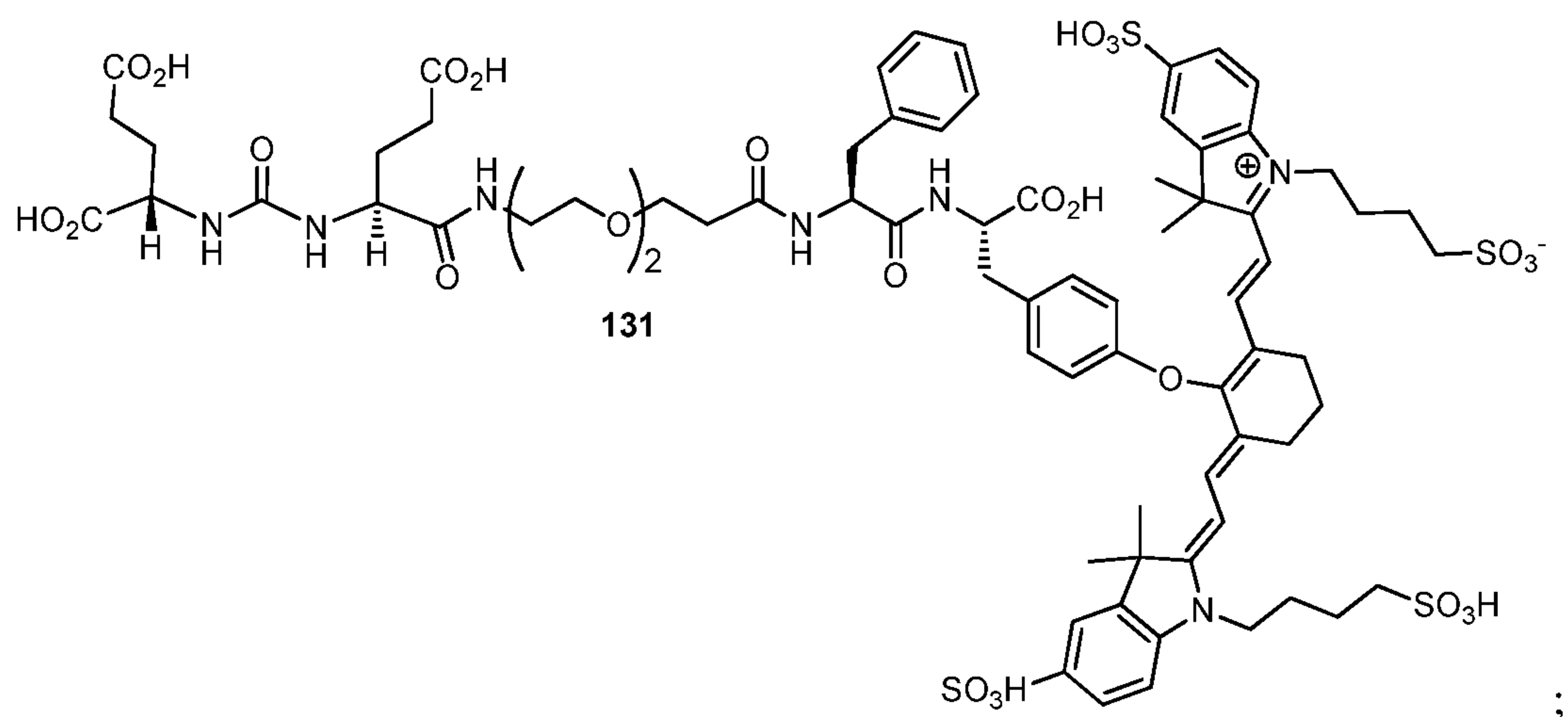
R₁₀ represents a CO₂H, PO₃H₂, SO₃H, CH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H;

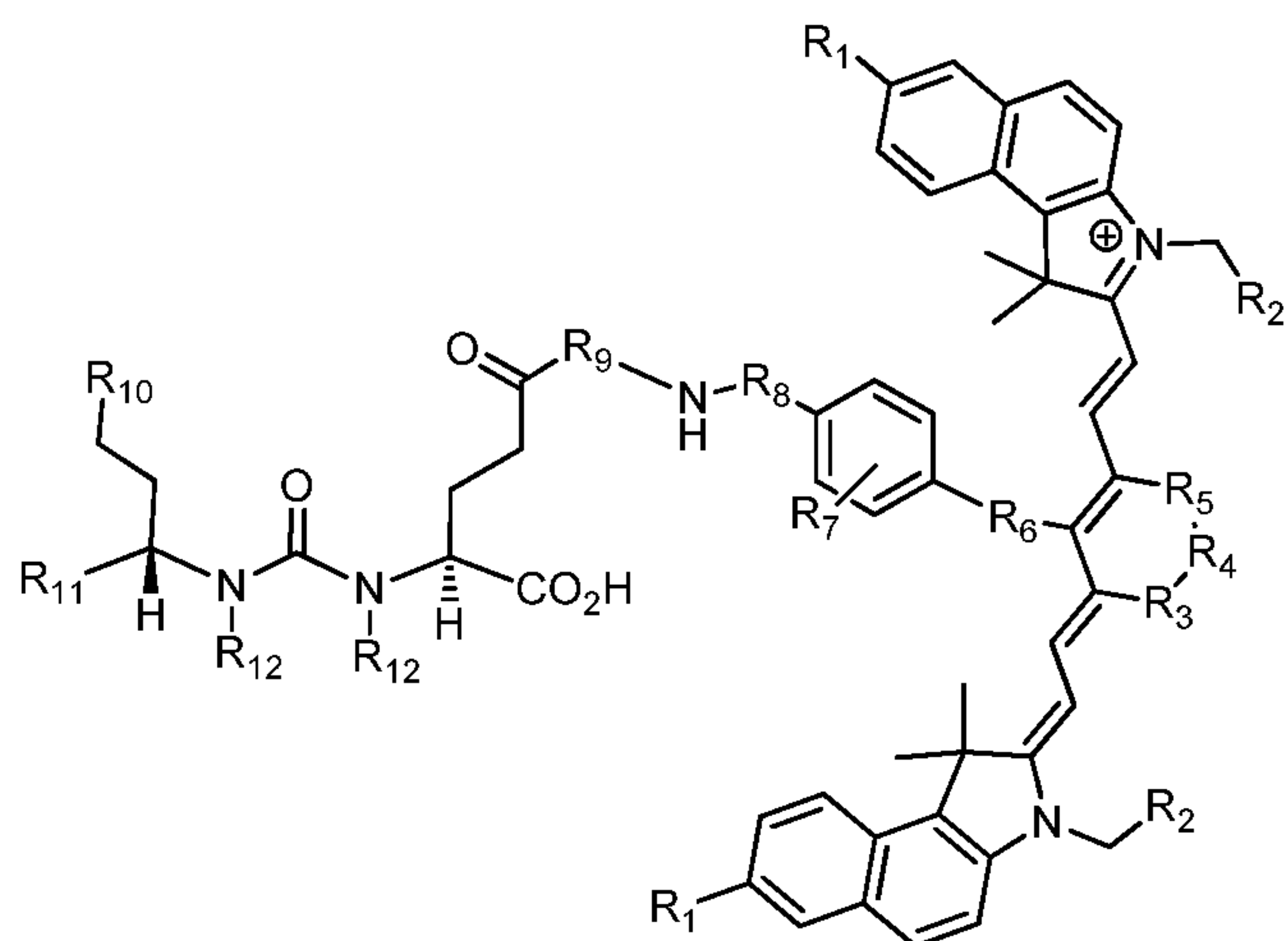
R₁₁ represents CO₂H, SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂SO₃H, CH₂CONHCH₂CH₂SO₃H; and

R₁₂ represents independently represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, CH₂COOH, a CH₂ and may optionally represent each a CH₂ sharing a bond.

19. The compound of claim 18 wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of:







R₁ represents a hydrogen or SO₃H;

R_2 represents a hydrogen, or CH_3 , or $C_3H_6SO_3^-$, or $C_3H_6SO_3H$ or $C_4H_8SO_3^-$, or $C_4H_8SO_3H$ or $C_3H_6N^+(CH_3)_3$;

R_3 , and R_5 each represents a carbon, optionally one or more sharing bonds, or oxygen, or sulfur, or nitrogen

R_4 represents a carbon with optionally one or more sharing bonds;

R_6 represents nitrogen, oxygen, or sulfur or no atom (direct C-C bond between aromatic ring and vinyl ring);

R_7 is optional and when present represents electron donating aromatic substitution group;

R_8 is optional and when present represents linkers with aromatic amino acids such as Phe, Trp, His, Tyr, or derivative of them, and/or cationic amino acids such Arg, Lys, or derivative of them, and/or anionic amino acids such as Asp, Glu or derivative of them, and/or unnatural amino acids of aromatic/cationic/ anionic acids or derivative;

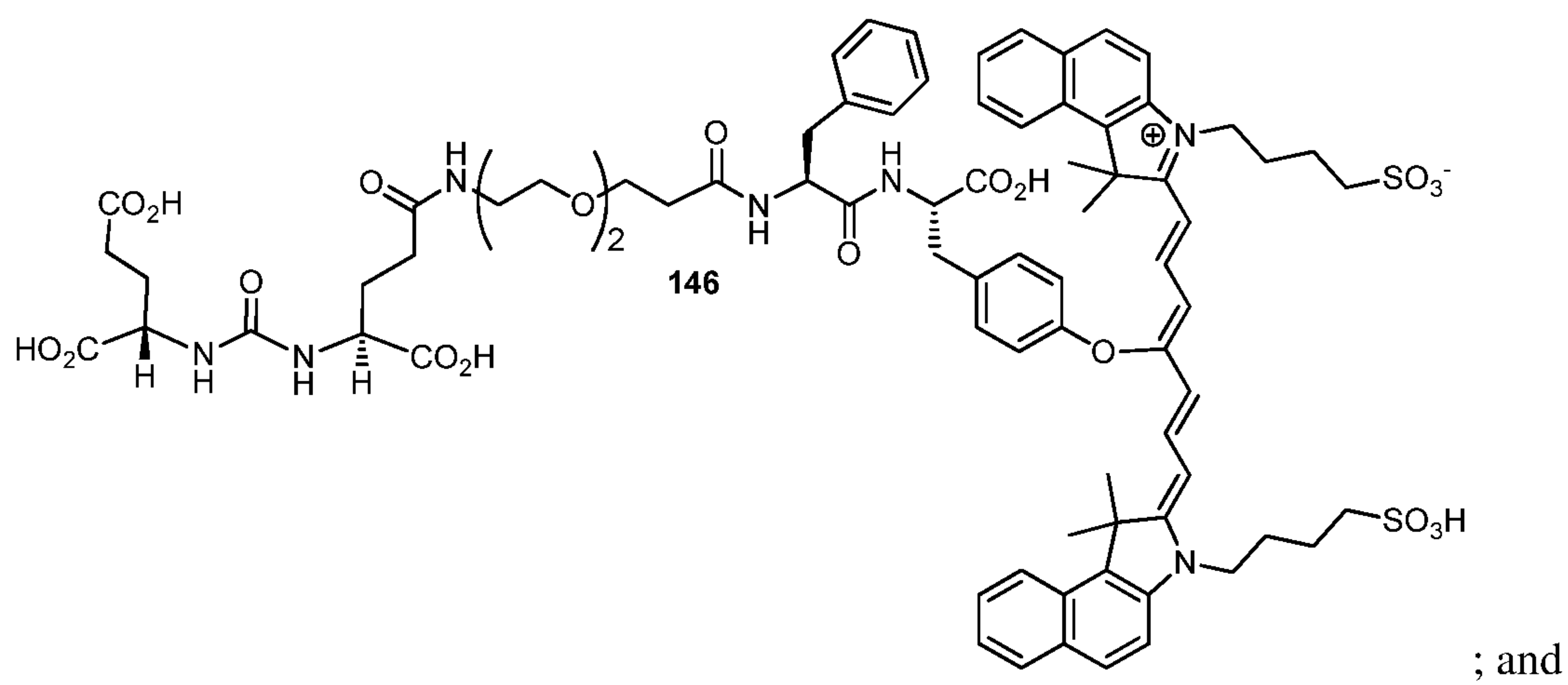
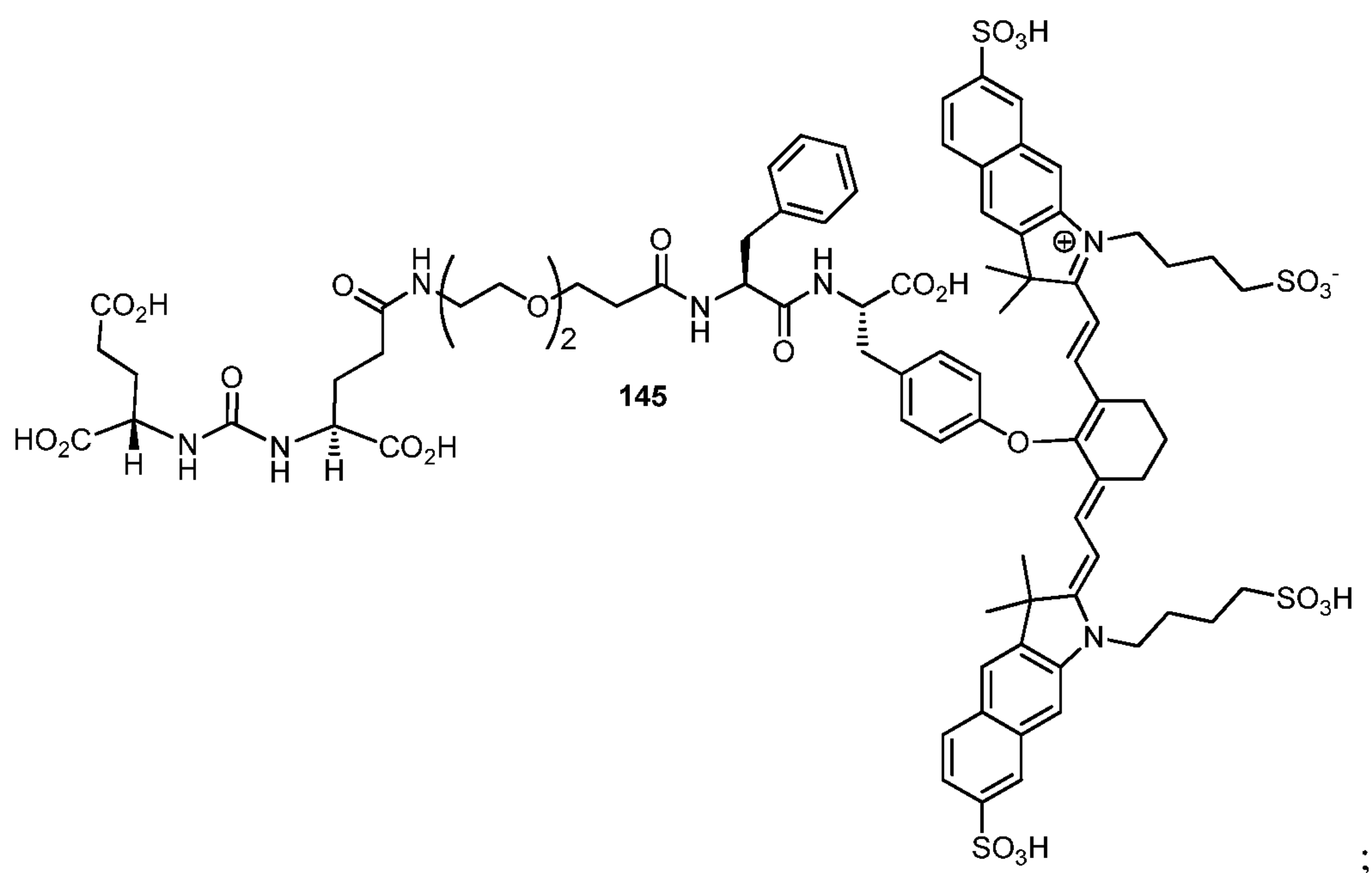
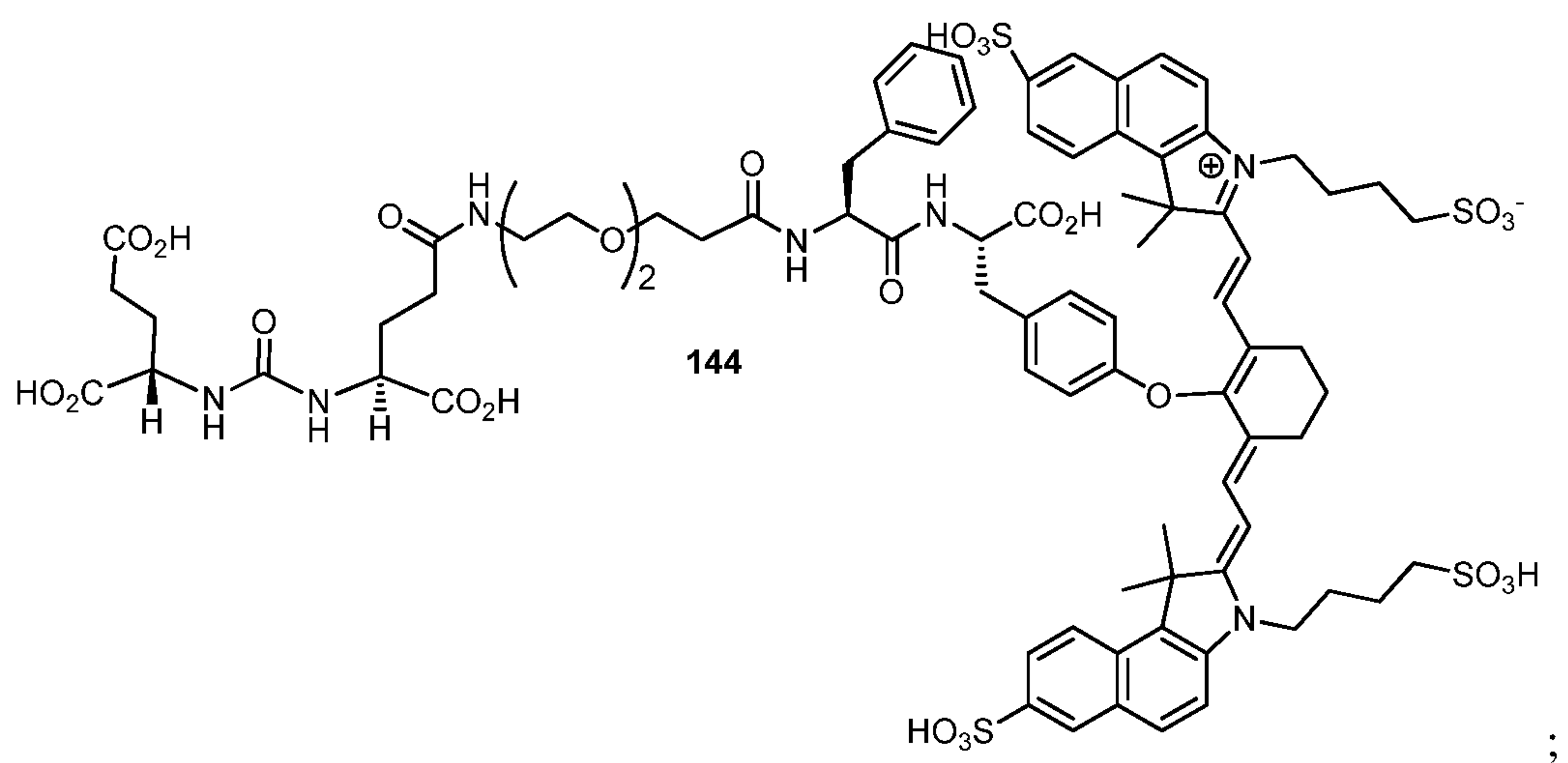
R_9 is optional and when present represents a linear carbon chain, or polyethylene glycol linkers, polyethylene amine linkers, cationic linker, or derivative of them;

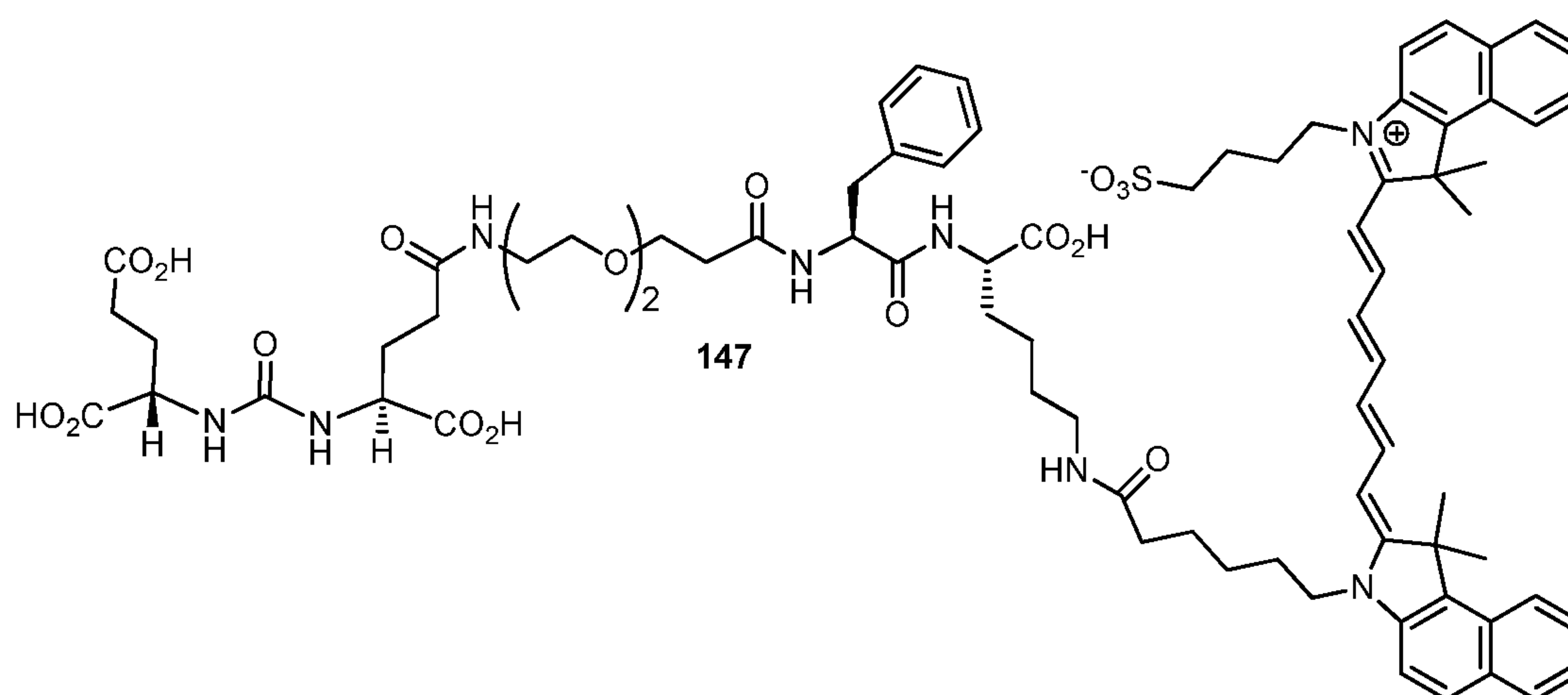
R_{10} represents a CO_2H , PO_3H_2 , SO_3H , CH_2SO_3H , $CH_2CONHCH_2SO_3H$, $CH_2CONHCH_2CH_2SO_3H$;

R_{11} represents CO_2H , SO_3H , $CH_2CONHCH_2SO_3H$, $CH_2CONHCH_2CH_2SO_3H$; and

R_{12} represents independently represents a hydrogen, a methyl group, CH_2COOH , a CH_2 and may optionally represent each a CH_2 sharing a bond.

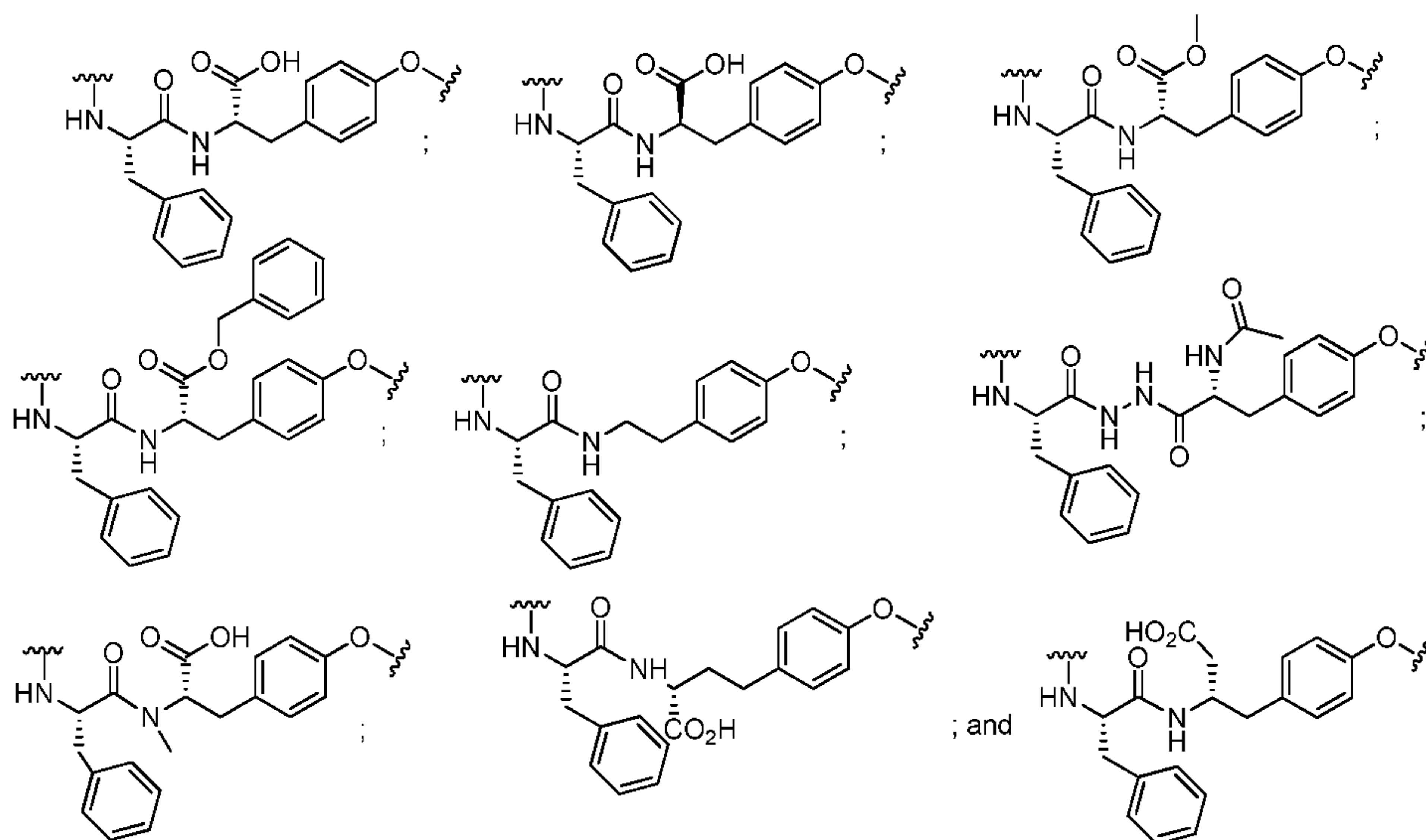
21. The compound of claim 20 wherein said compound is selected from the group consisting of:





22. The compound of claim 1 wherein the amino acids includes an oxygen-containing side chain group
23. The compound of claim 22 wherein the amino acids including an oxygen-containing side chain group is selected from the group consisting of phenylalanine-tyrosine, phenylalanine-serine, and phenylalanine-tyramine.
24. The compound of claim 22 wherein the amino acids including an oxygen-containing side chain group is phenylalanine-tyrosine
25. The compound of claim 1 wherein the amino acids includes a sulfur-containing side chain group.
26. The compound of claim 25 wherein the amino acids including a sulfur-containing side chain group is selected from the group consisting of phenylalanine-cysteine, phenylalanine-methionine, phenylalanine-selenocysteine, or histidine-cysteine.
27. The compound of claim 25 wherein the amino acids including a sulfur-containing side chain group is phenylalanine-cysteine
28. The compound of claim 1 wherein the amino acids includes a nitrogen-containing side chain group.
29. The compound of claim 28 wherein the amino acids including a nitrogen-containing side chain group is selected from the group consisting of phenylalanine-lysine, phenylalanine-ornithine, phenylalanine-arginine, or histidine-lysine.

30. The compound of claim 28 wherein the amino acids including a nitrogen-containing side chain group is phenylalanine-lysine.
31. The compound of claim 1 wherein the amino acid is selected from the group consisting of tyrosine, cysteine, lysine or a derivative thereof, or phenylalanine-tyrosine, phenylalanine-cysteine, phenylalanine-lysine, histidine-tyrosine, or derivatives thereof.
32. The compound of claim 1 wherein Y comprises a phenylalanine-tyrosine or derivative thereof.
33. The compound of claim 1 wherein Y comprises an isotope of amino acids or derivative thereof.
34. The compound of claim 33 wherein a carbon isotope is on the aromatic ring of tyrosine or phenylalanine.
35. The compound of claim 33 wherein a hydrogen isotope is a substituent of the aromatic ring of tyrosine or phenylalanine.
36. The compound of claim 1 wherein the amino acid derivative is a derivative of tyrosine selected from the group consisting of:



or racemic mixtures thereof.

37. The compound of claim 1 wherein the compound has an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm.
38. The compound of claim 37, wherein the compound has an absorption and emission maxima between about 600 nm and 800 nm.
39. The compound of claim 1, wherein the compound is made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells.
40. The compound of claim 39, wherein the tissue cells are selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
41. The compound of claim 16 wherein the compound has an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm.
42. The compound of claim 18 wherein the compound has an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm.
43. The compound of claim 20 wherein the compound has an absorption and emission maxima between about 500 nm and about 900 nm.
44. The compound of claim 16 wherein the compound is made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells.
45. The compound of claim 18 wherein the compound is made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells.
46. The compound of claim 20 wherein the compound is made to fluoresce after distribution thereof in the tissue cells.
47. The compound of claim 44, wherein the tissue cells are selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.

48. The compound of claim 45, wherein the tissue cells are selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
49. The compound of claim 46, wherein the tissue cells are selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
50. The compound of claims 1, wherein the compound is made to fluoresce by subjecting the compound to excitation light of near infrared wavelength.
51. The compound of claim 1, wherein the compound has a binding affinity to PSMA that is similar to the binding affinity of DUPA.
52. The compound of claim 1, wherein the compound is highly selective for targeting to a tumor cell.
53. A composition comprising a compound of claim 1, and a pharmaceutically acceptable carrier, excipient or diluent.
54. A method of optical imaging of a biological tissue that expresses PSMA, the method comprising:
- (a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition of claim 1,
 - (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
 - (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and
 - (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.
55. The method of claim 54, wherein the signal emitted by the compound is used to construct an image.

56. The method of claim 54, wherein the biological tissue is selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
57. A method of optical imaging of a biological tissue that expresses PSMA, the method comprising:
- (a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition of claim 16,
 - (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
 - (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and
 - (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.
58. The method of claim 57, wherein the signal emitted by the compound is used to construct an image.
59. The method of claim 57, wherein the biological tissue is selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
60. A method of optical imaging of a biological tissue that expresses PSMA, the method comprising:
- (a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition of claim 18,
 - (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
 - (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and

- (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.
61. The method of claim 60, wherein the signal emitted by the compound is used to construct an image.
62. The method of claim 60, wherein the biological tissue is selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
63. A method of optical imaging of a biological tissue that expresses PSMA, the method comprising:
- (a) contacting the biological tissue with a composition of claim 20,
 - (b) allowing time for the compound in the composition to distribute within the biological target;
 - (c) illuminating the tissue with an excitation light of a wavelength absorbable by the compound; and
 - (d) detecting the optical signal emitted by the compound.
64. The method of claim 63, wherein the signal emitted by the compound is used to construct an image.
65. The method of claim 63, wherein the biological tissue is selected from the group consisting of prostate cells, prostate cancer cells, bladder cancer cells, pancreatic cancer cells, liver cancer cells, lung cancer cells, kidney cancer cells, sarcoma cells, breast cancer cells, brain cancer cells, neuroendocrine carcinoma cells, colon cancer cells, testicular cancer cells and melanoma cells.
66. A method of identifying a target cell type in a biological sample comprising:
- a) contacting the biological sample with a compound of claim 1 for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type or vasculature of the target tissue; and

- b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample, wherein presence of the compound in detecting step b) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample.
67. A method of identifying a target cell type in a biological sample comprising
- a) contacting the biological sample with a compound of claim 16 for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type; and
 - b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample,
 - c) wherein presence of the compound in detecting step b) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample.
68. A method of identifying a target cell type in a biological sample comprising
- a) contacting the biological sample with a compound of claim 18 for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type; and
 - b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample,
 - c) wherein presence of the compound in detecting step b) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample.
69. A method of identifying a target cell type in a biological sample comprising
- a) contacting the biological sample with a compound of claim 20 for a time and under conditions that allow for binding of the compound to at least one cell of the target cell type; and
 - b) optically detecting the presence or absence of the compound of in the biological sample,
 - c) wherein presence of the compound in detecting step b) indicates that the target cell type is present in the biological sample.

70. A kit comprising a compound of claim 1.

Figure 1: Structures of PSMA-targeted DUPA-Linker-NIR imaging agents with variable length of the linker

(a) Synthesis of DUPA-Linker-NIR dye conjugates

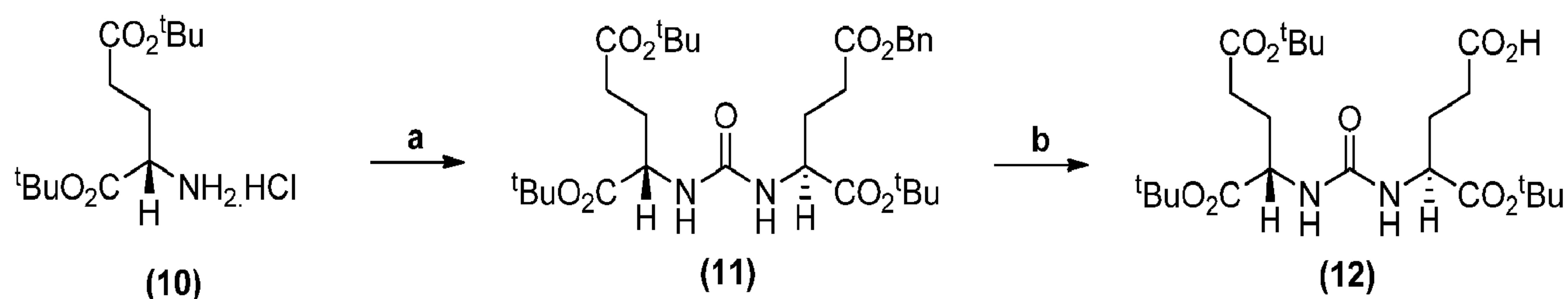


Figure 2

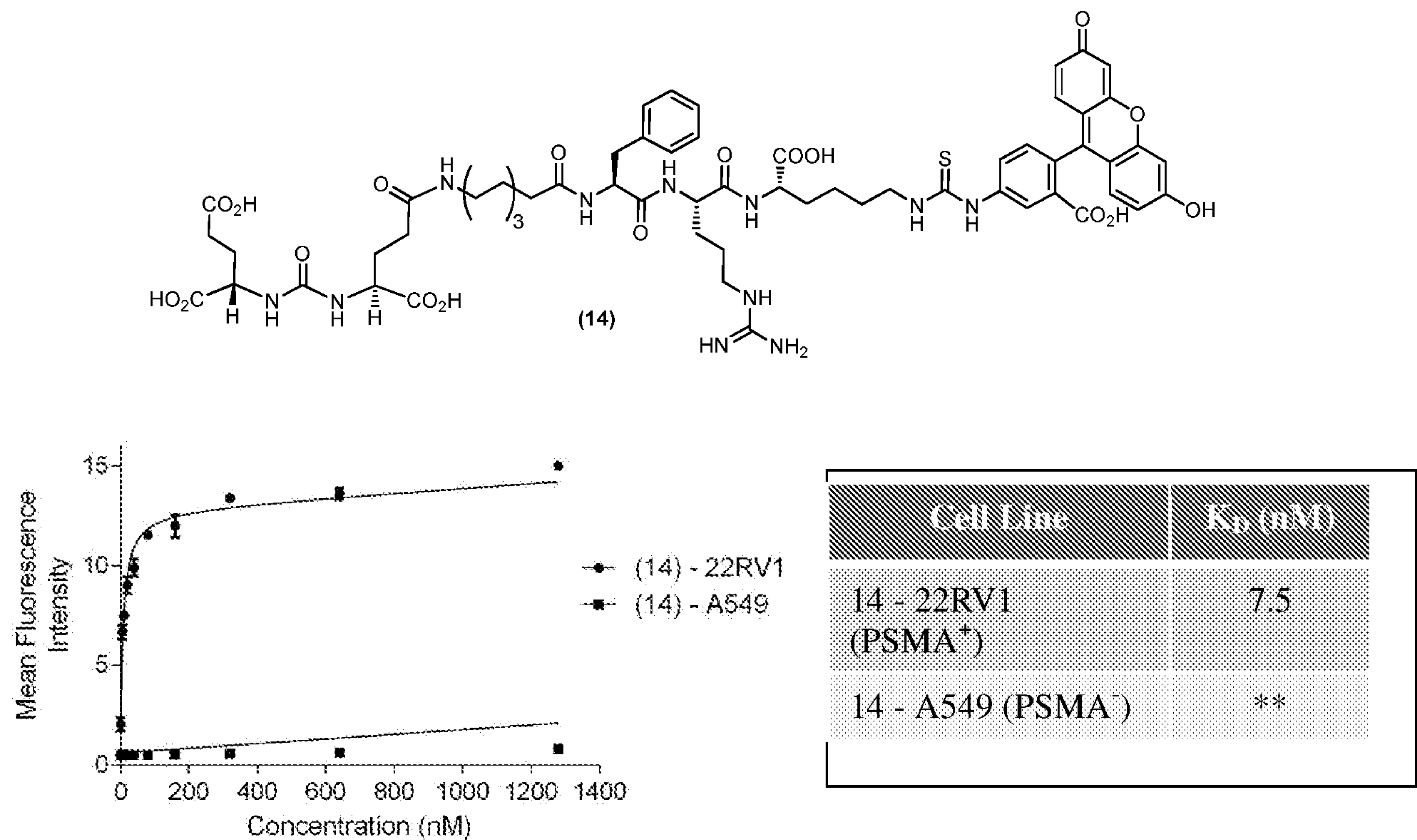


Figure 2: Structure of PSMA-targeted DUPA-FITC (Fluorescein isothiocyanate) conjugate (14) and its binding affinity (K_D) and specificity on PSMA-positive 22Rv1 human prostate cancer cells and on PSMA-negative A549 human alveolar basal epithelial cells in culture. DUPA-FITC dissolved in RPMI medium was added at the indicated concentrations to 22Rv1 or A549 cells in RPMI culture media and allowed to incubate for 1 h at 37 °C. Media was then removed, washed with fresh media (3x), and replaced with PBS (phosphate buffered saline). Samples were analyzed using flow cytometry. Error bars represent SD ($n = 3$). ** does not bind to A549 cells

Figure 3

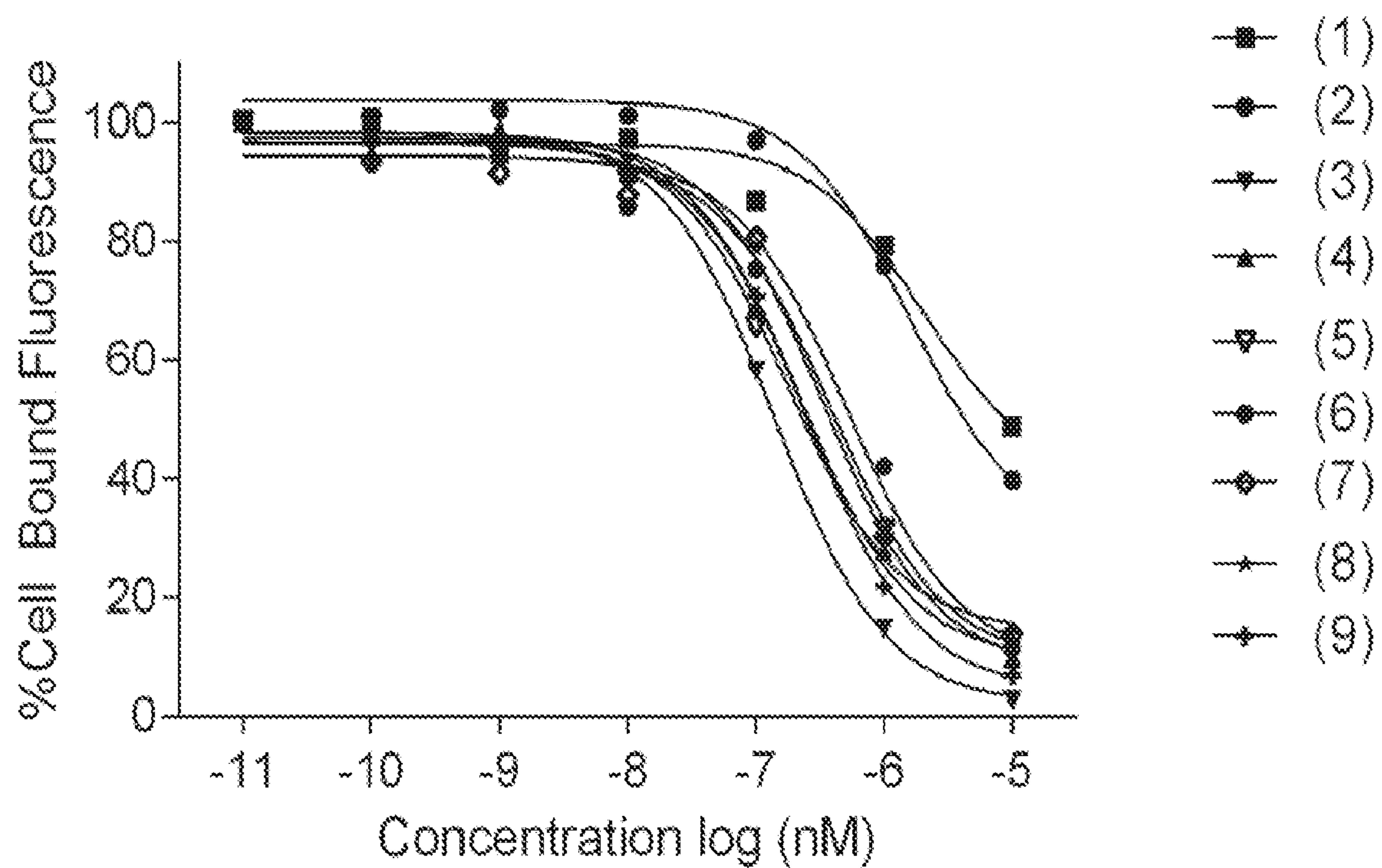


Figure 4

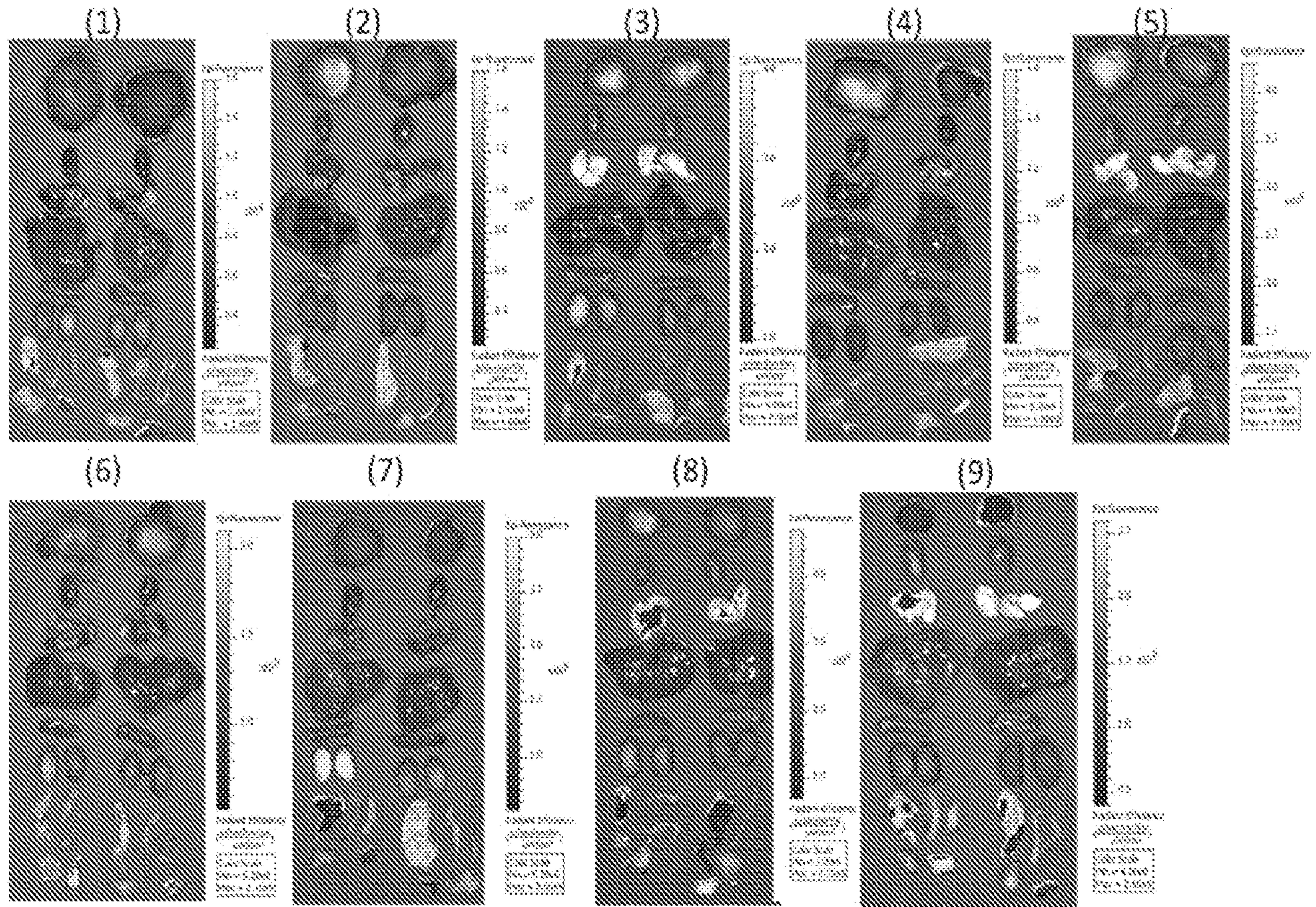


Figure 5

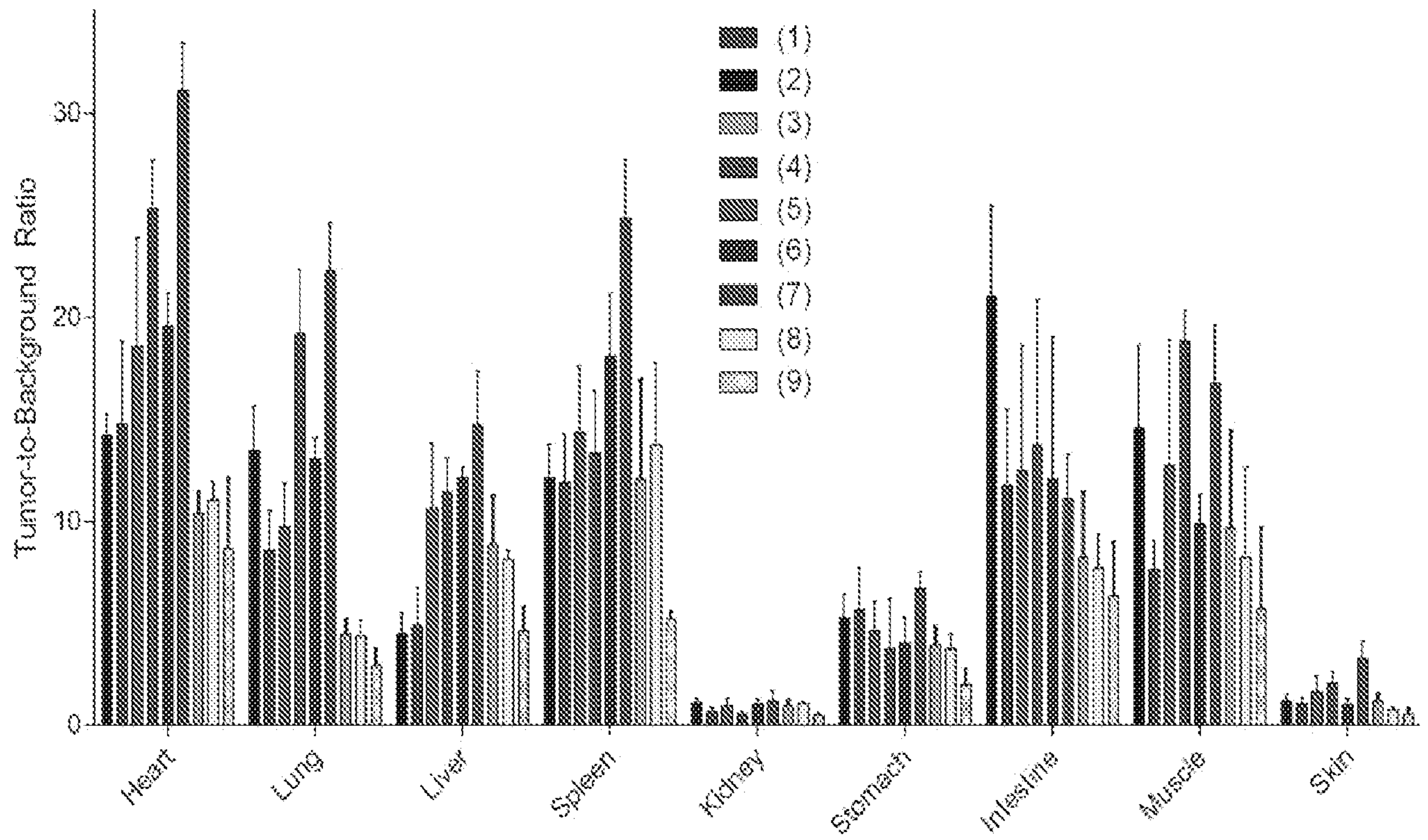
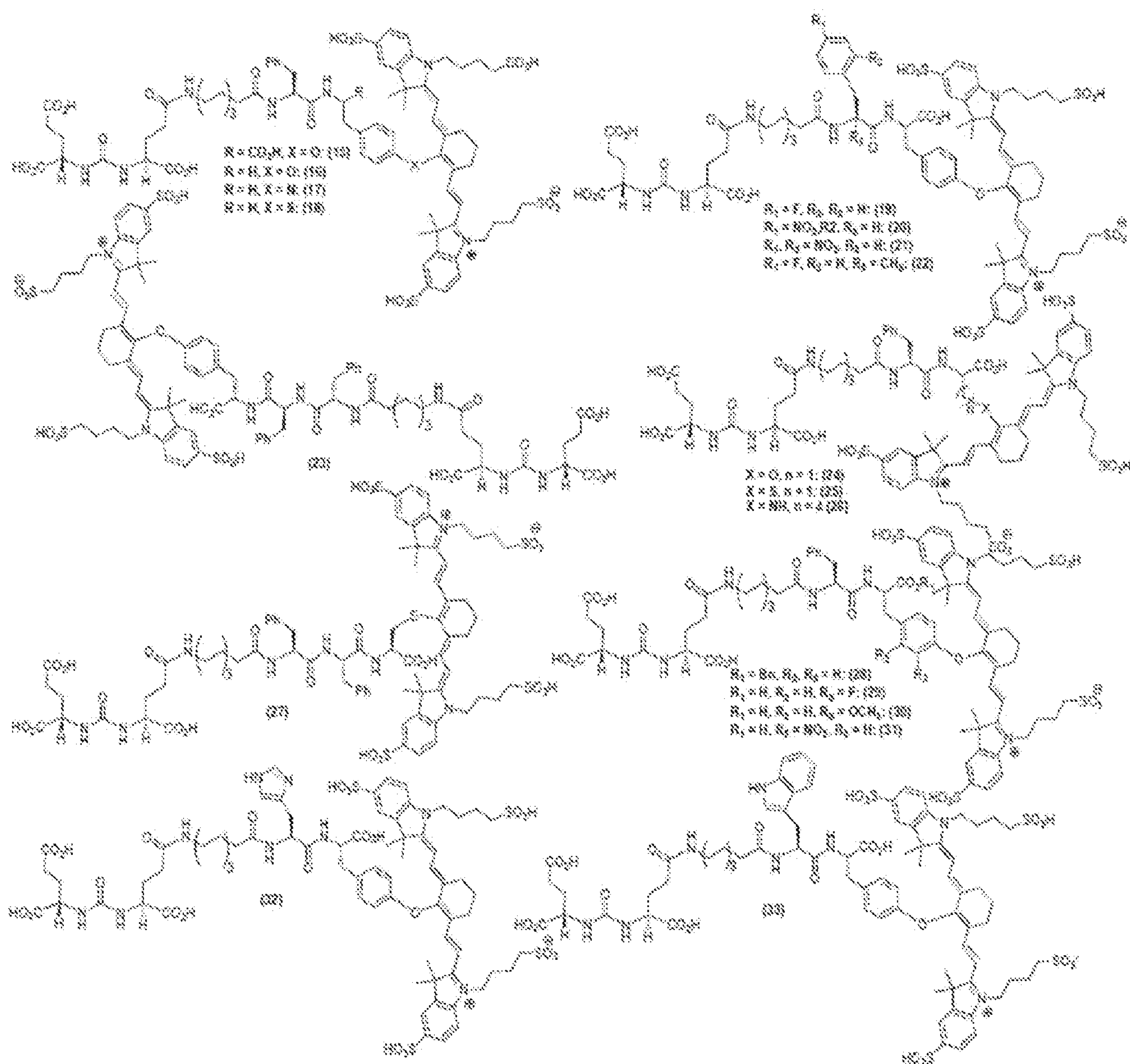


Figure 6



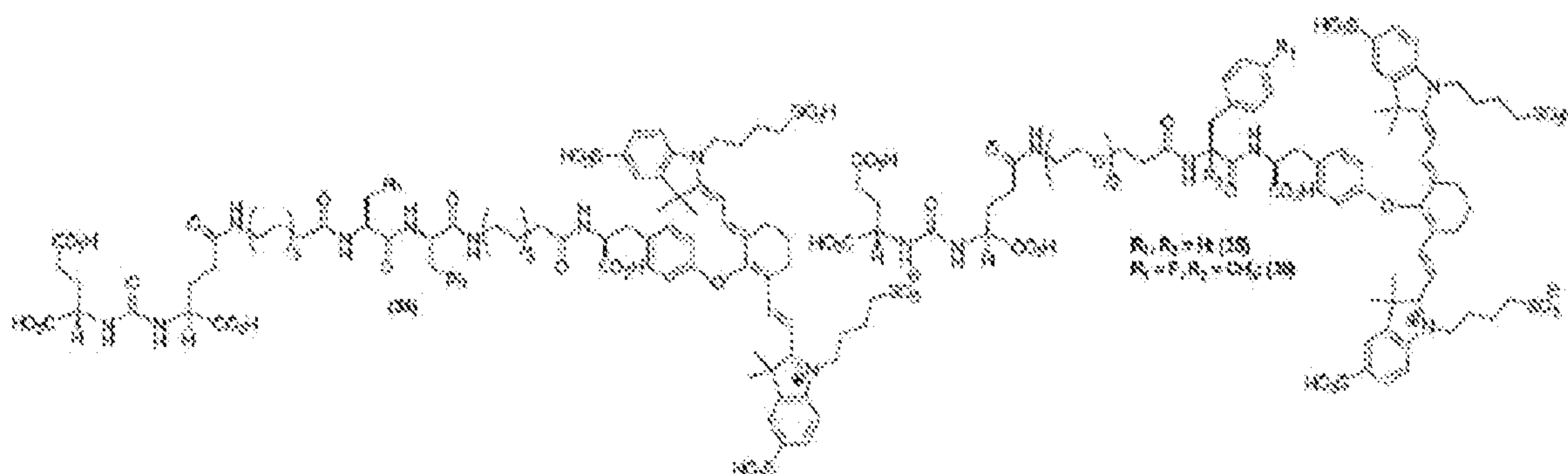


Figure 7

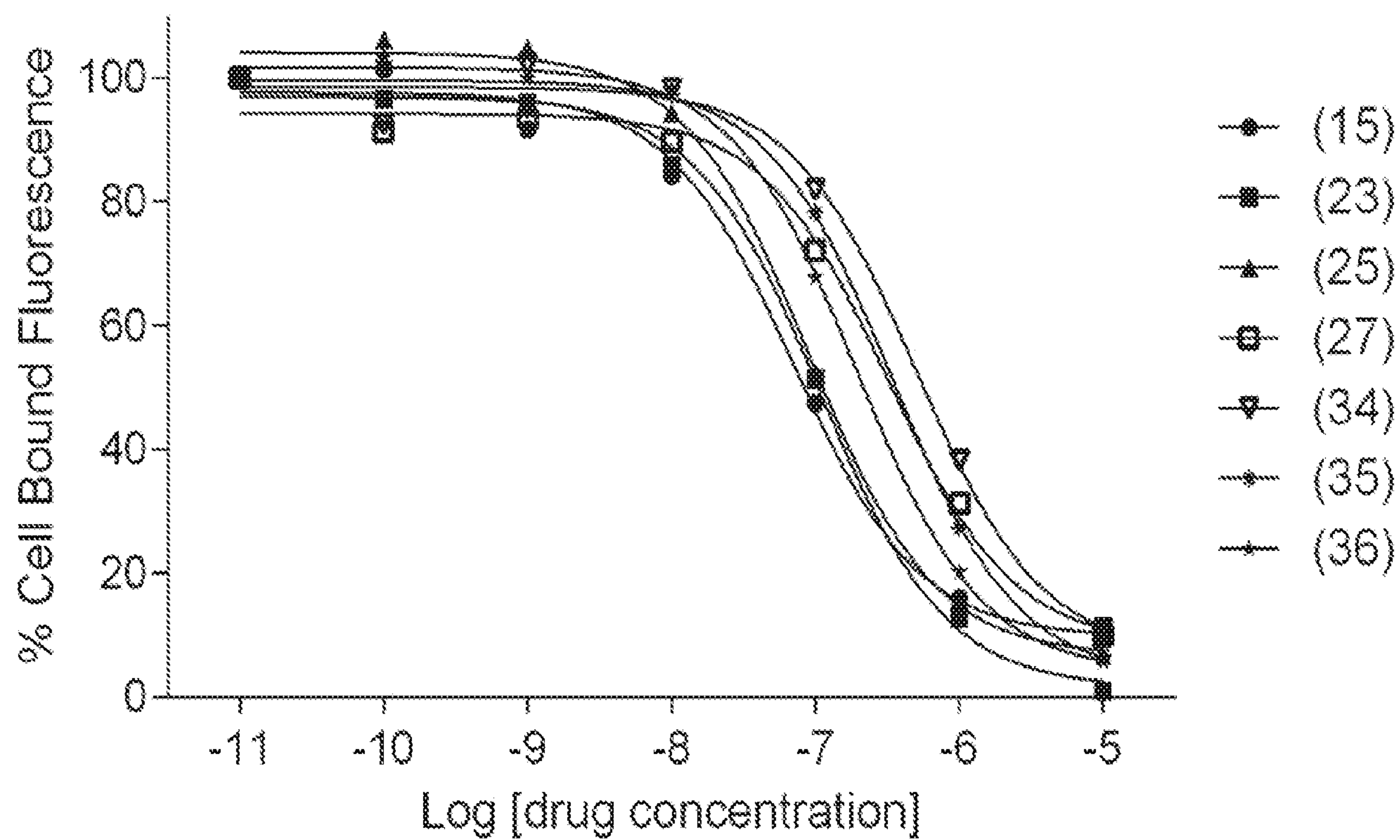
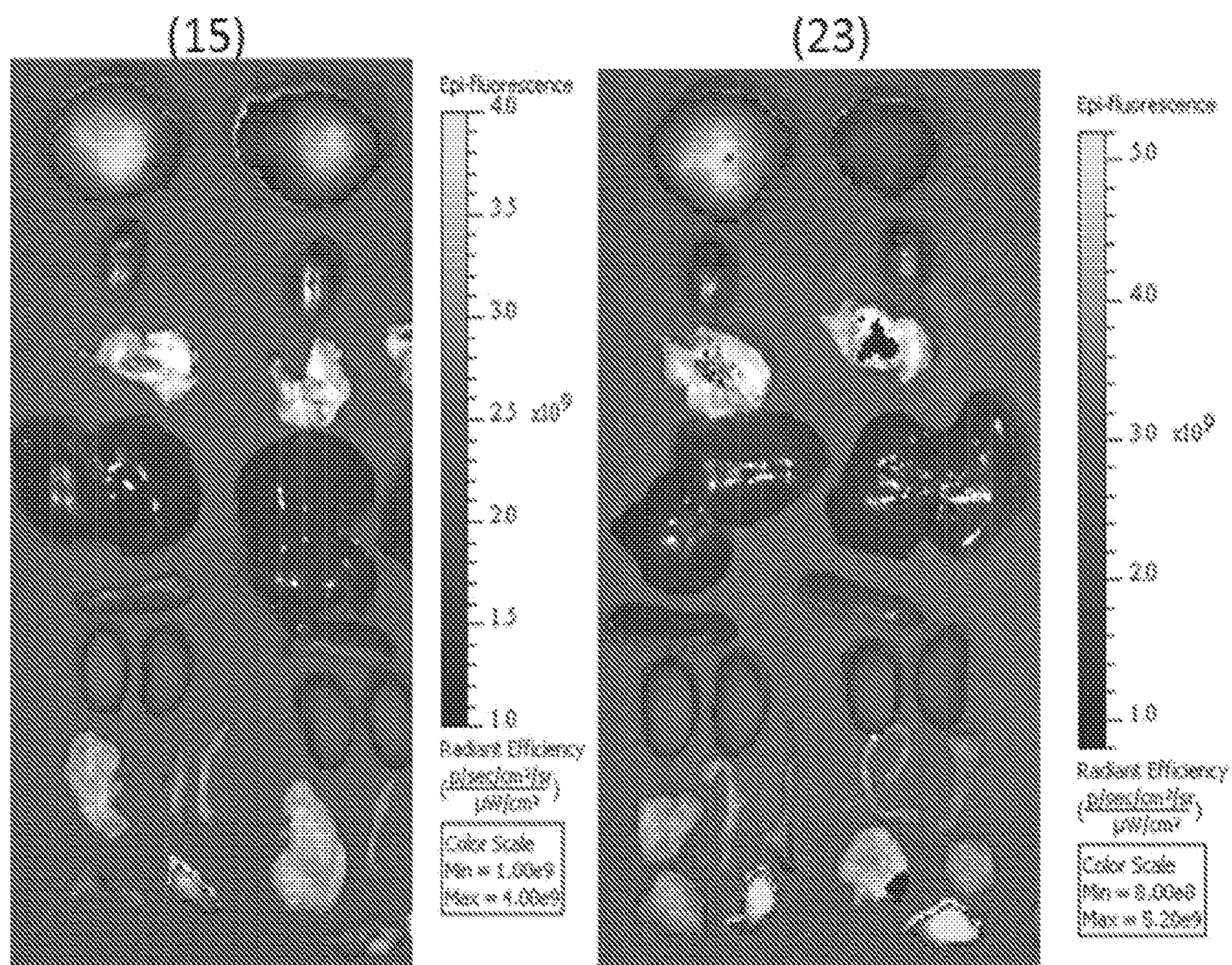


Figure 8



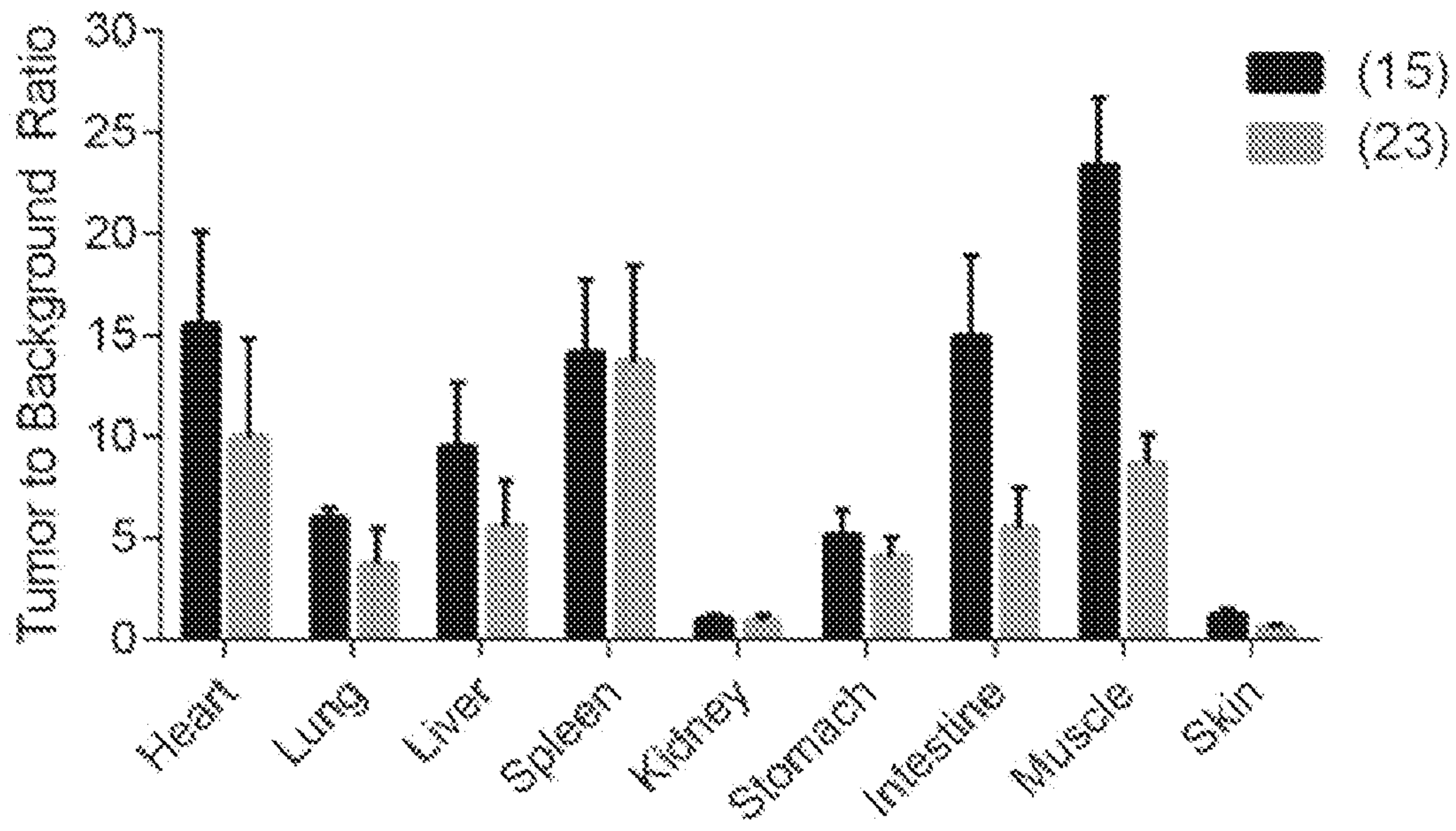


Figure 9

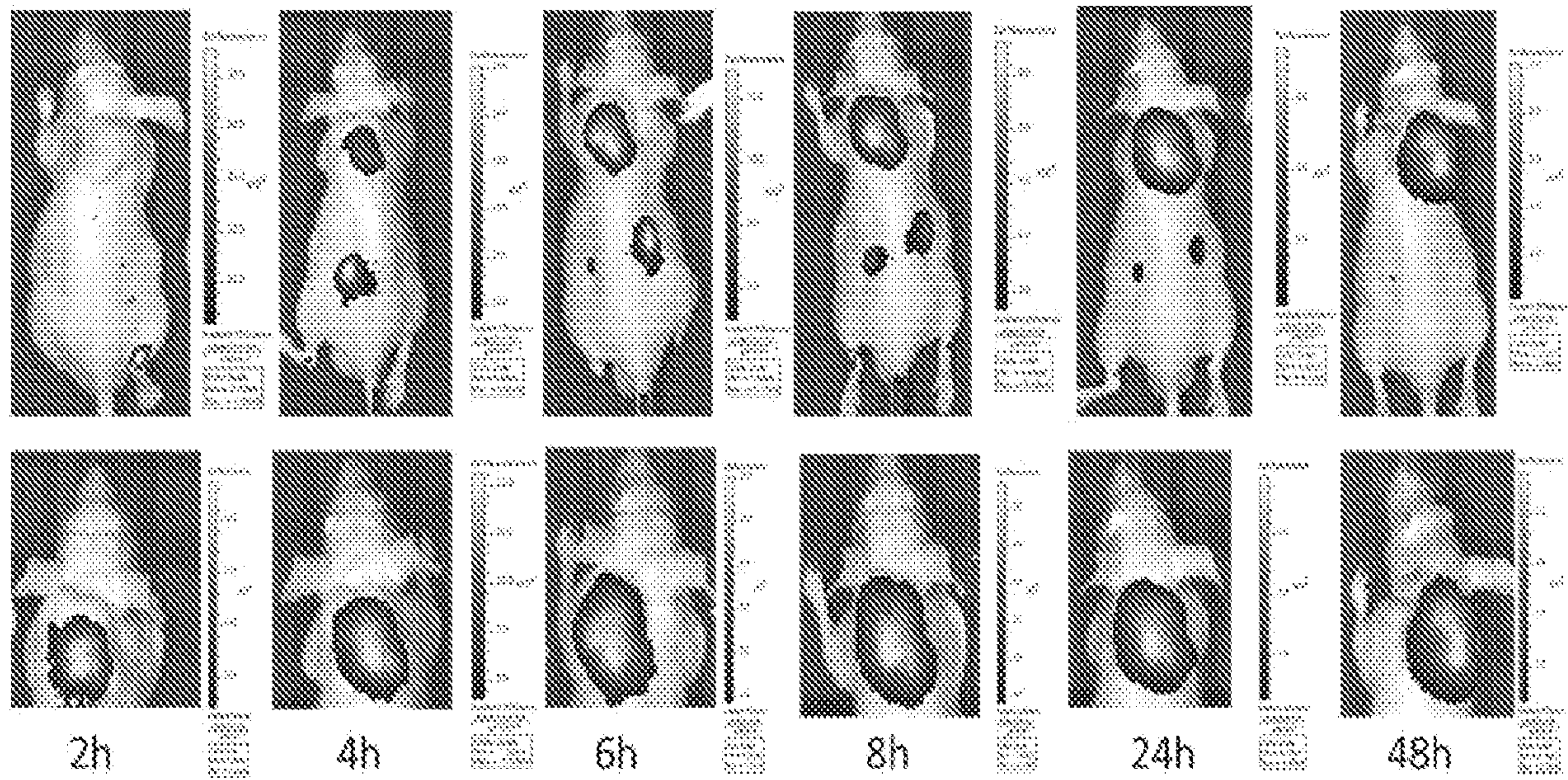


Figure 10

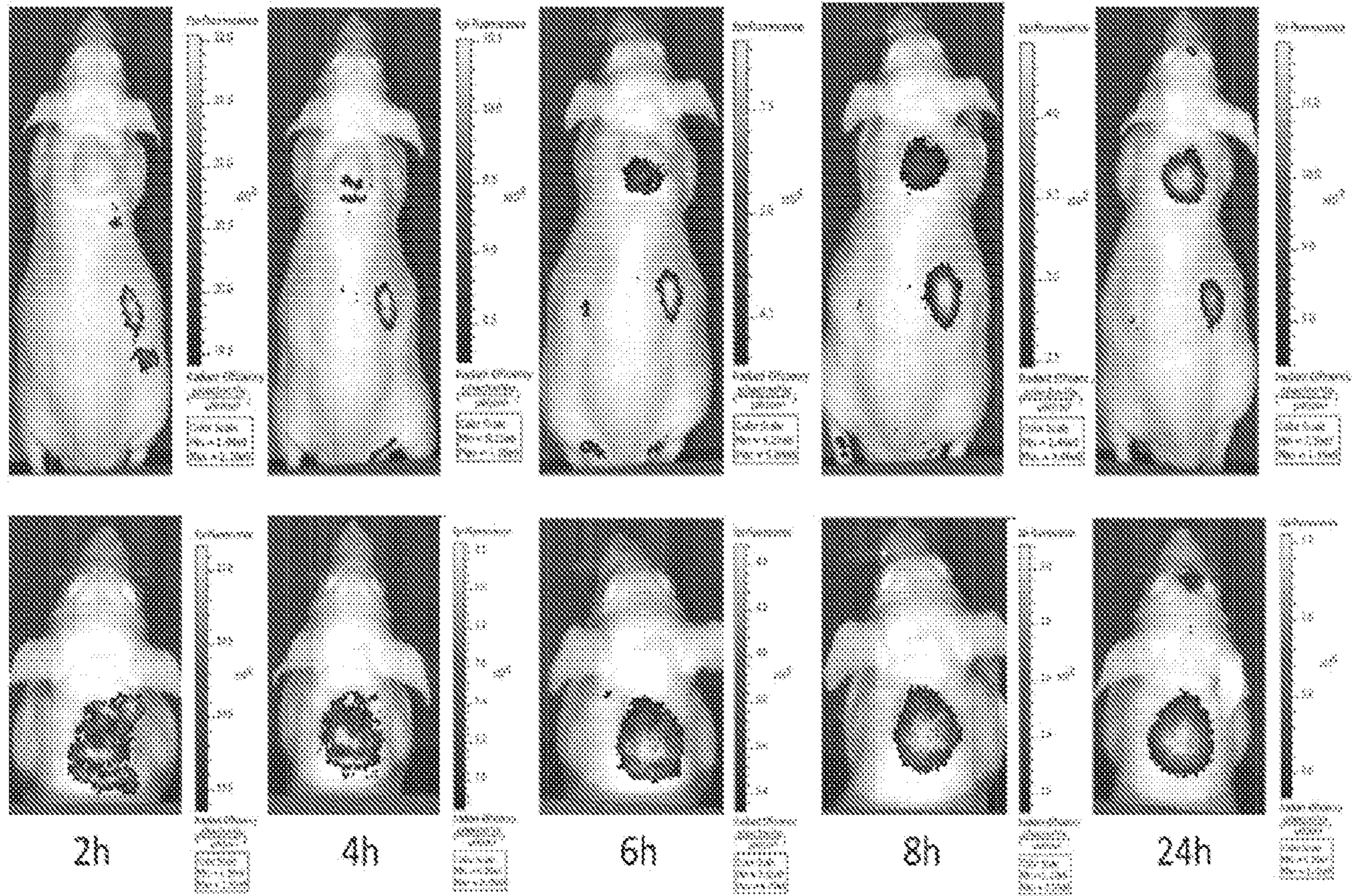


Figure 11

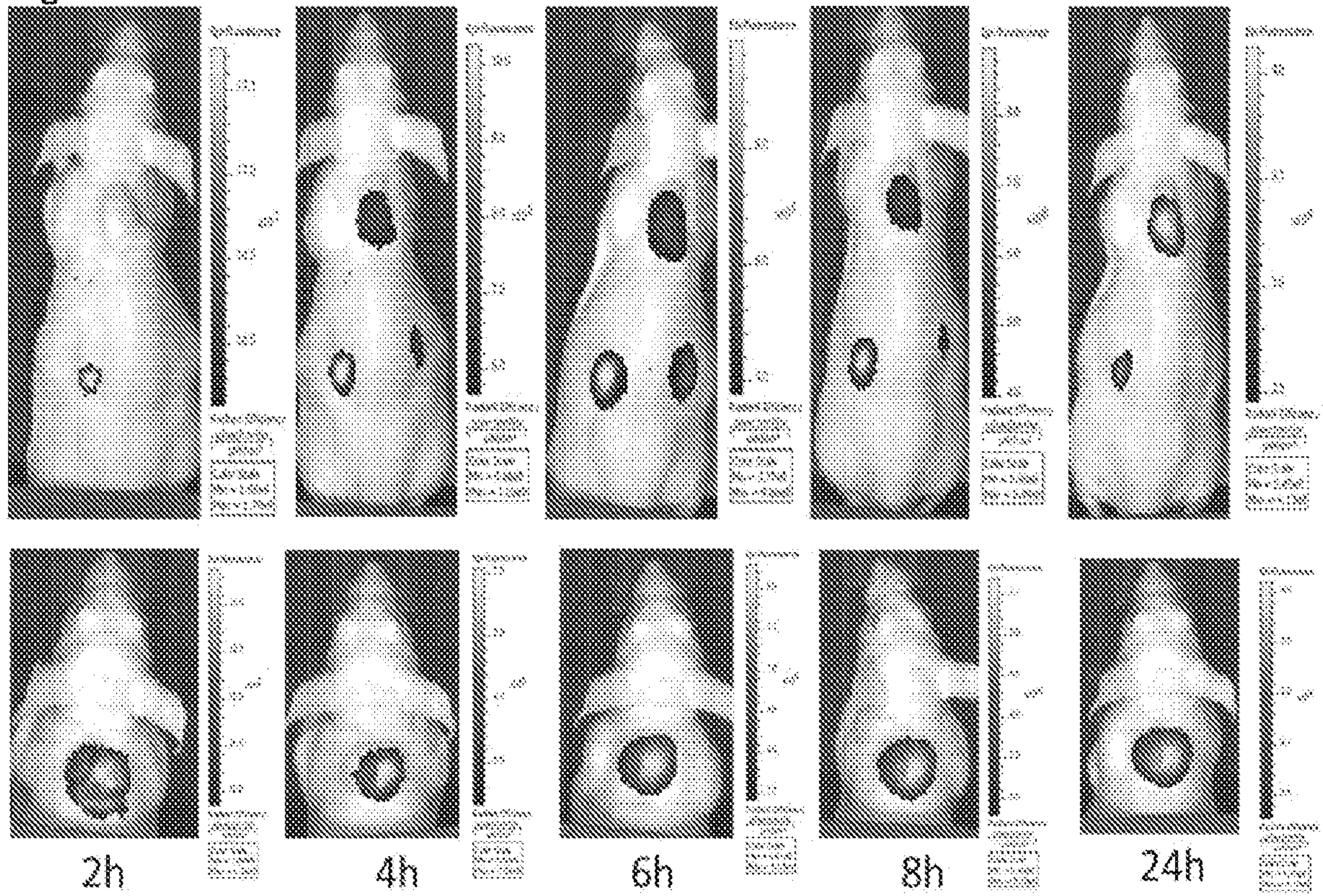


Figure 12

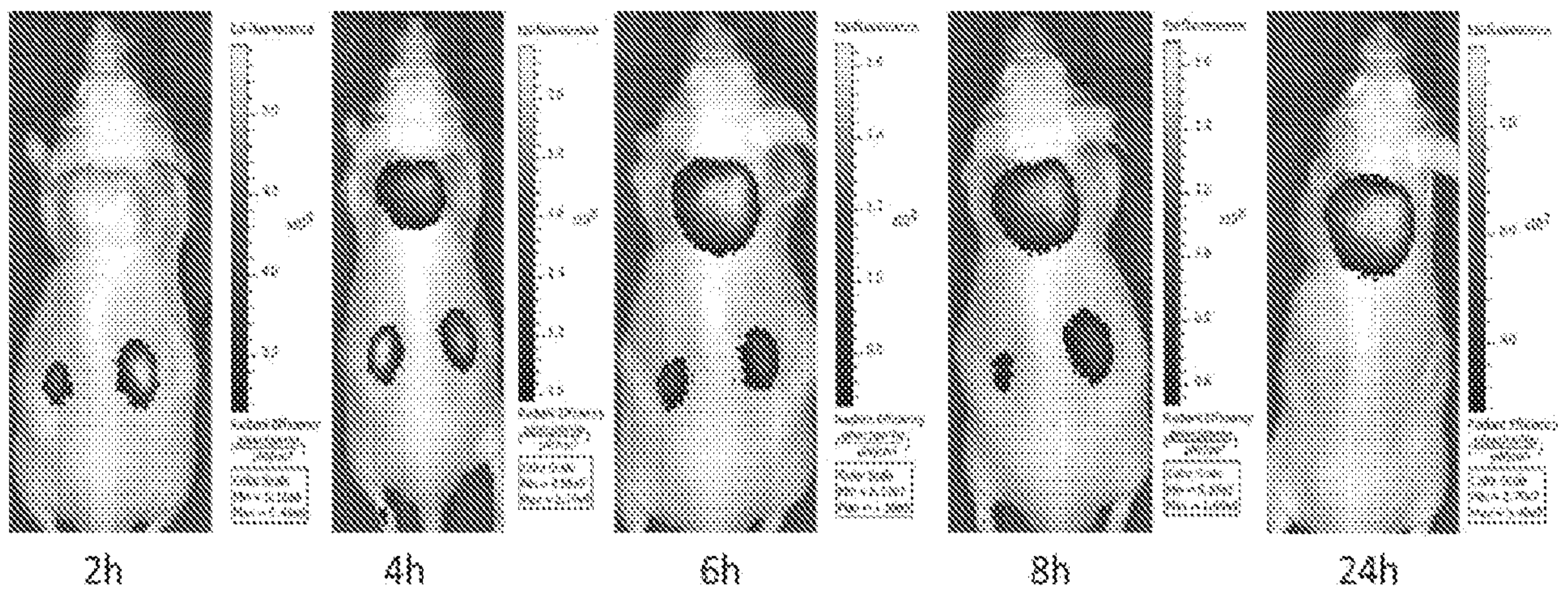


Figure 13

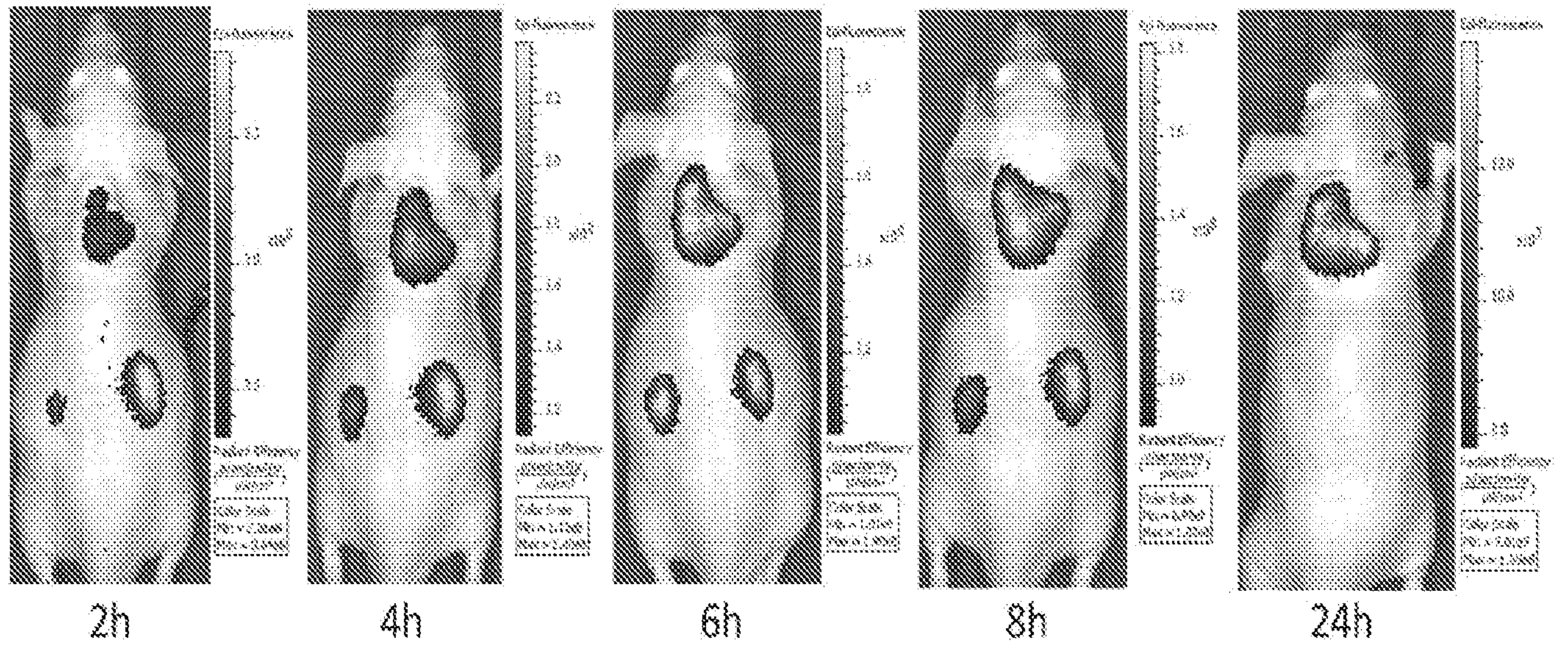


Figure 14

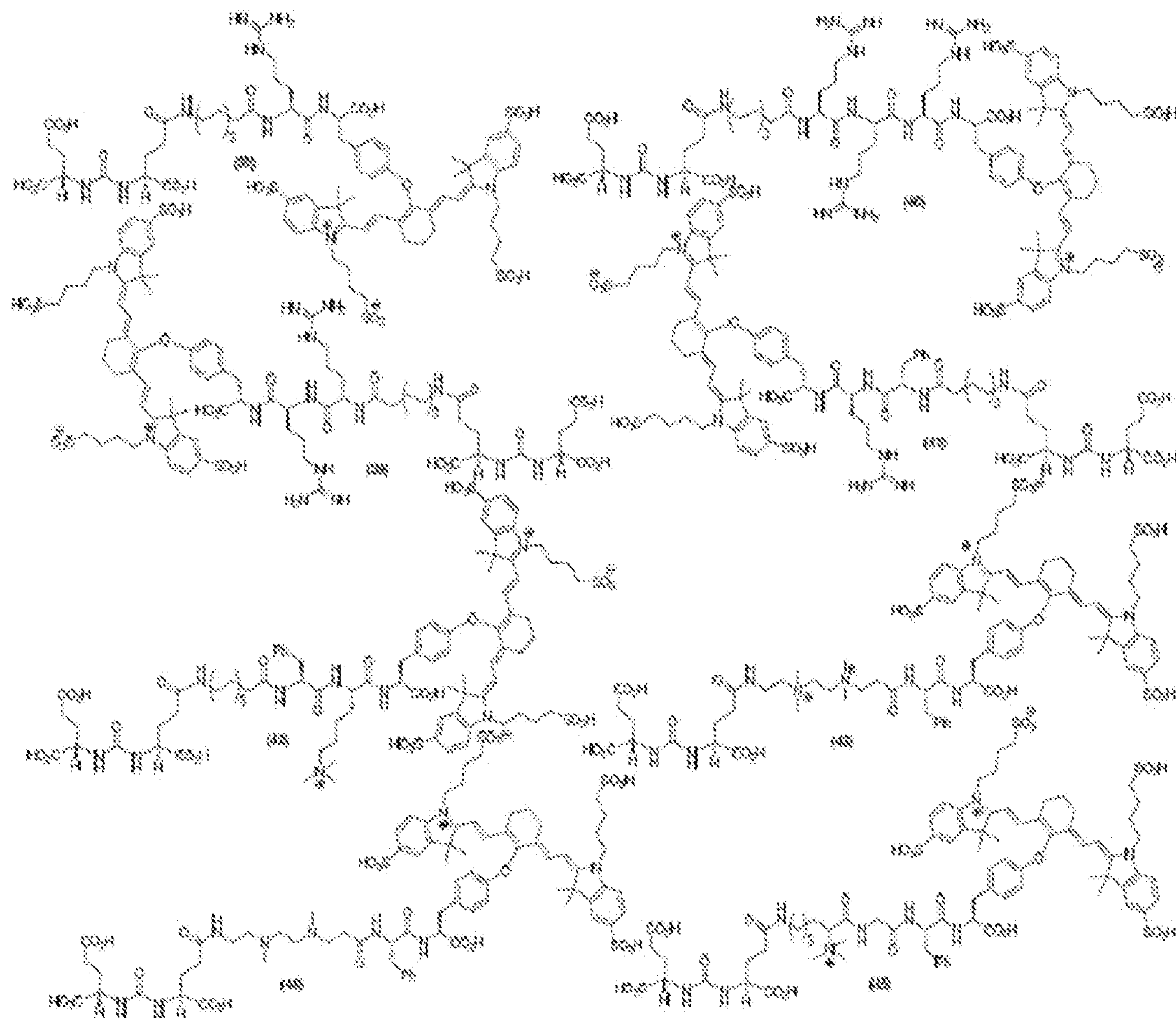
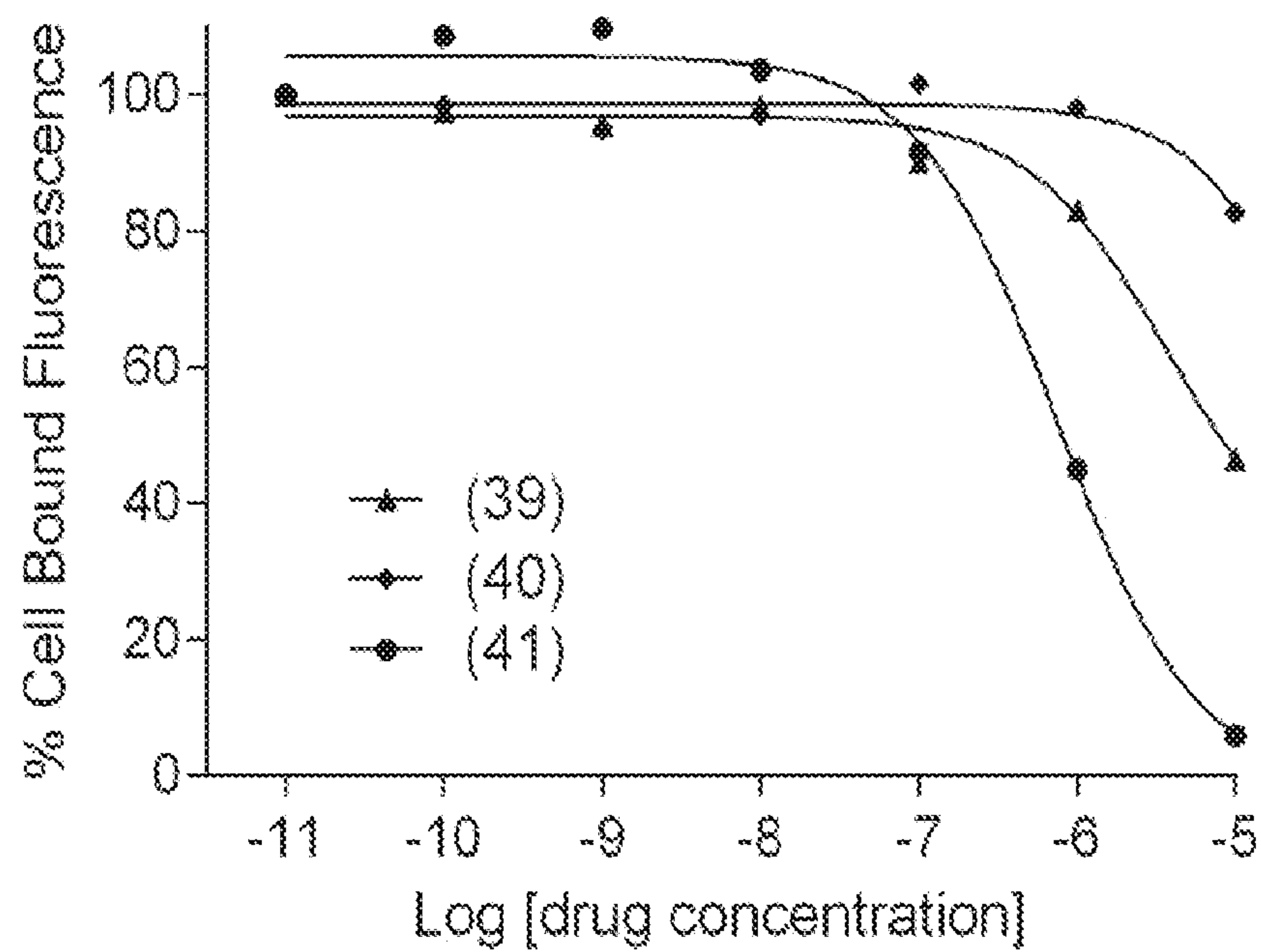


Figure 15



Compound	K_d (nM)
39	258.9
40	NA*
41	51.7

Figure 16

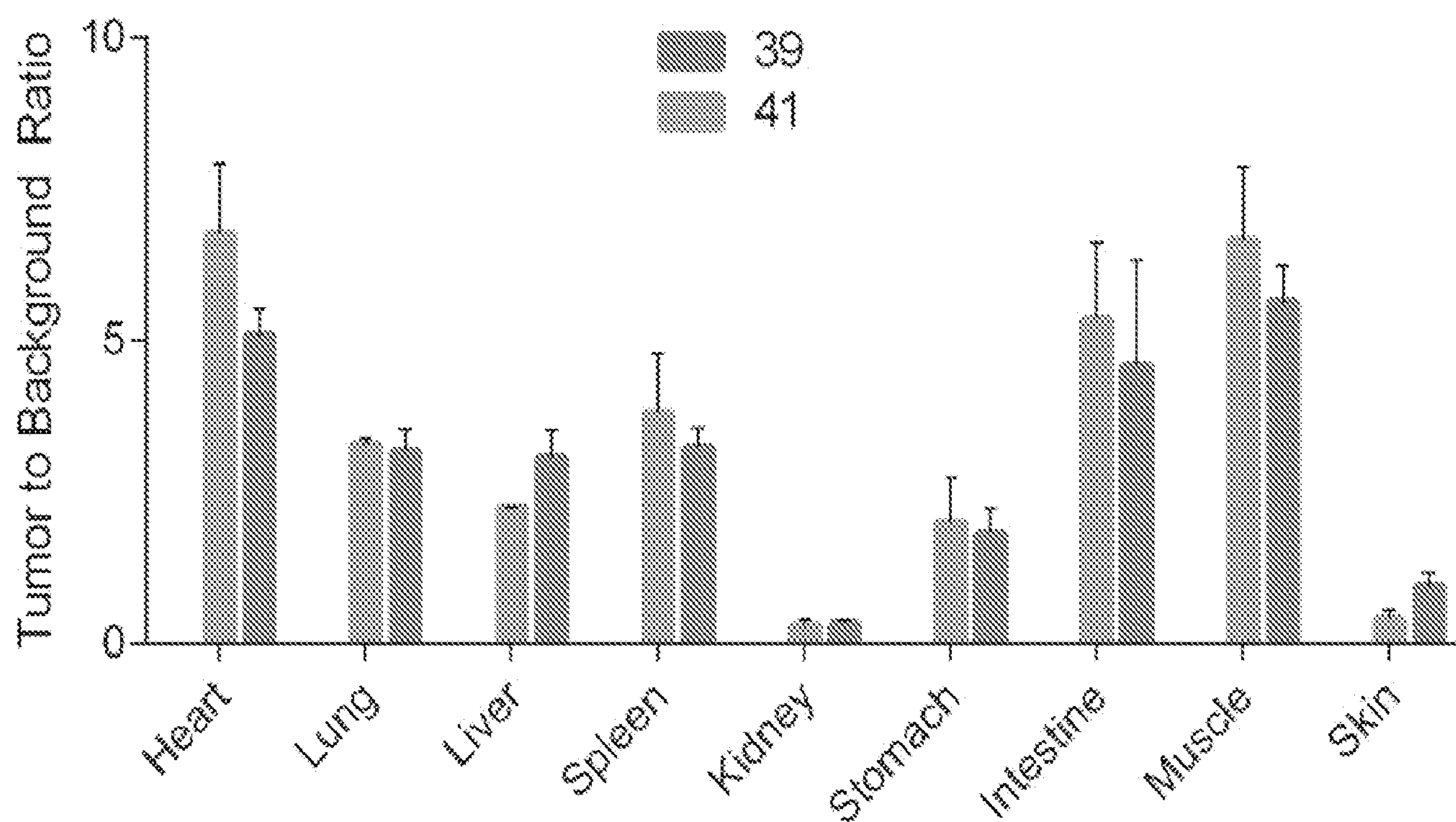


Figure 17

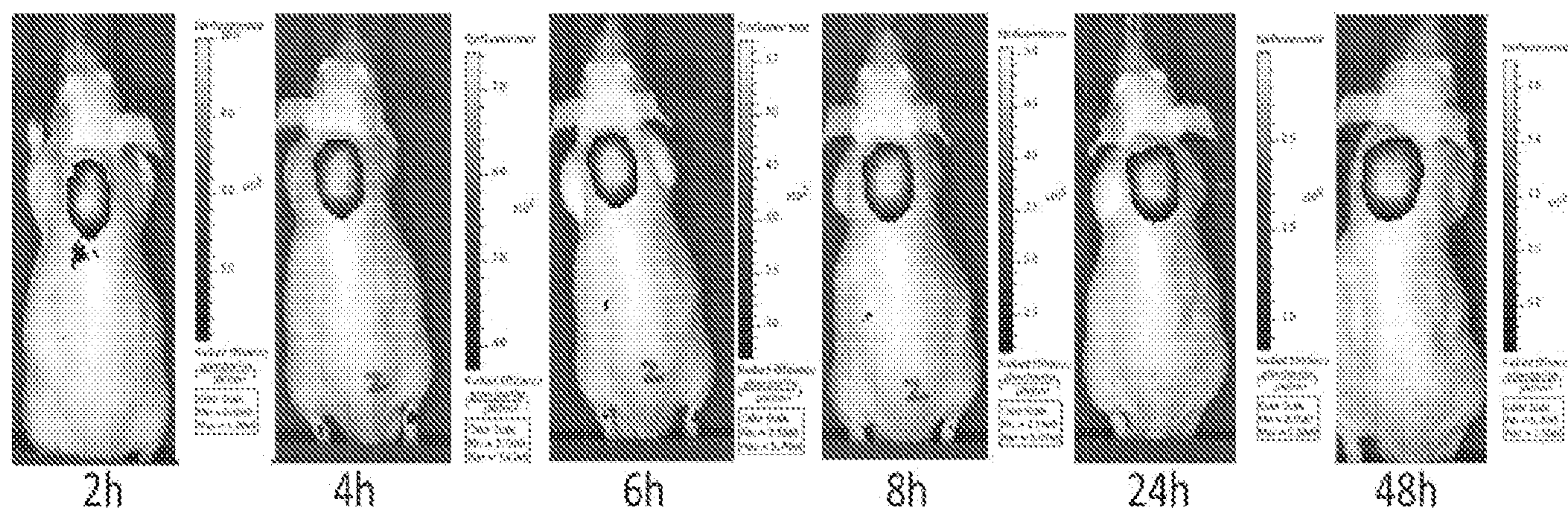


Figure 18

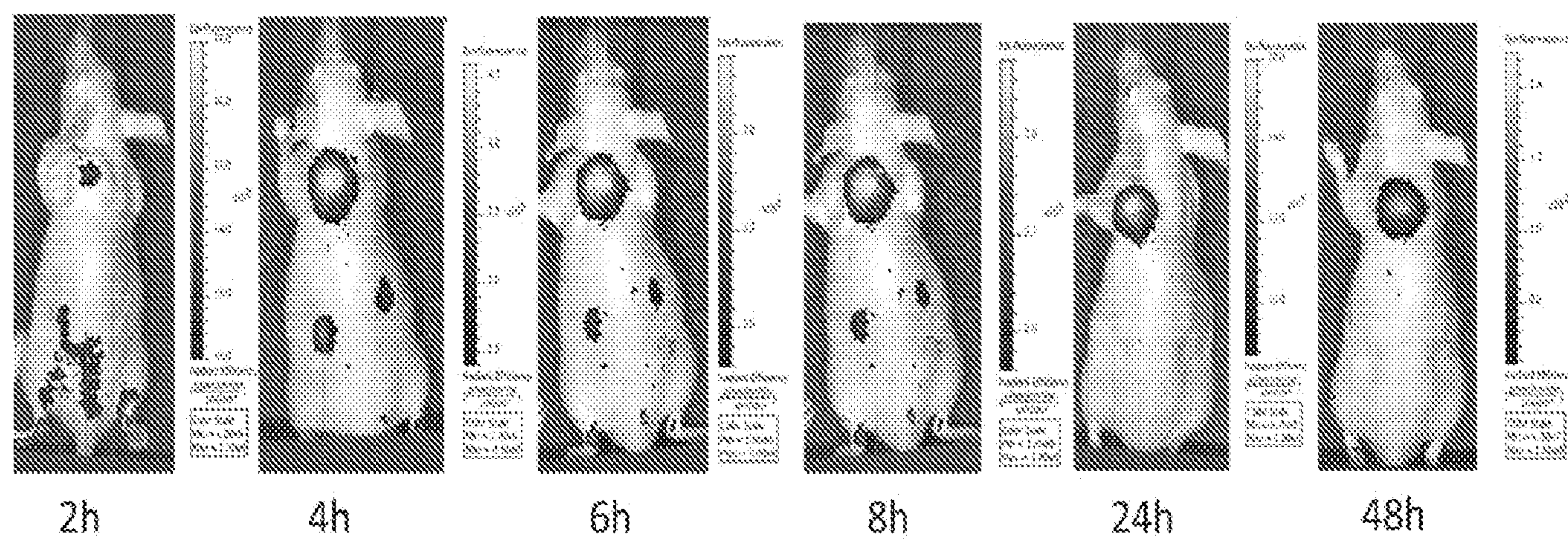


Figure 19

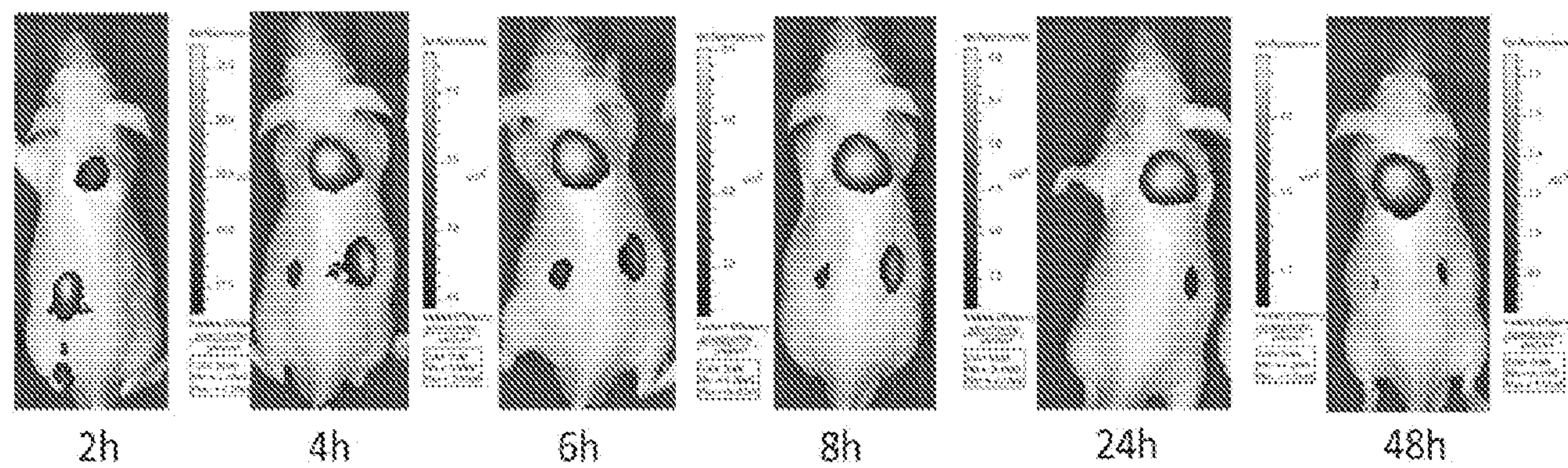


Figure 20

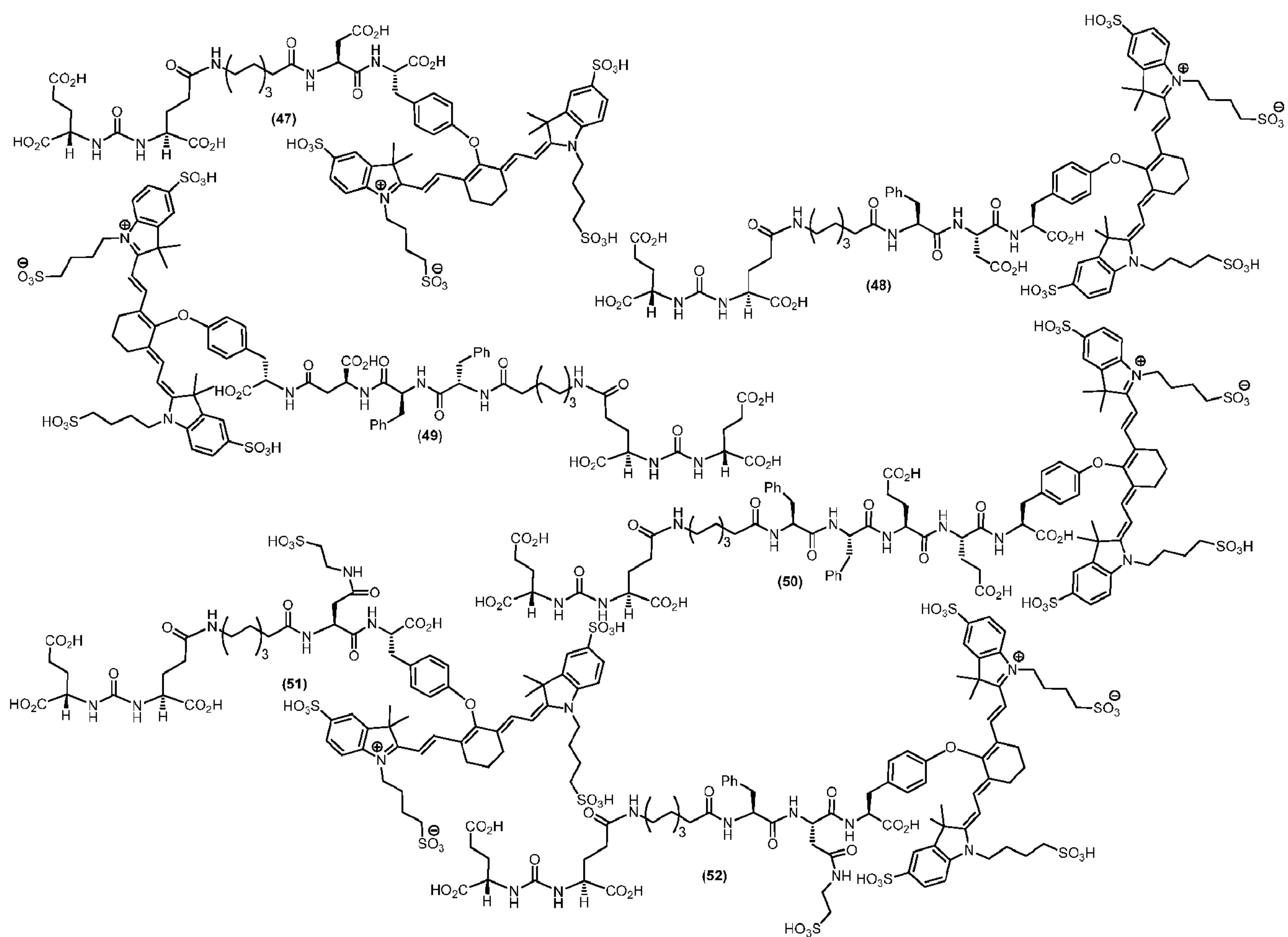
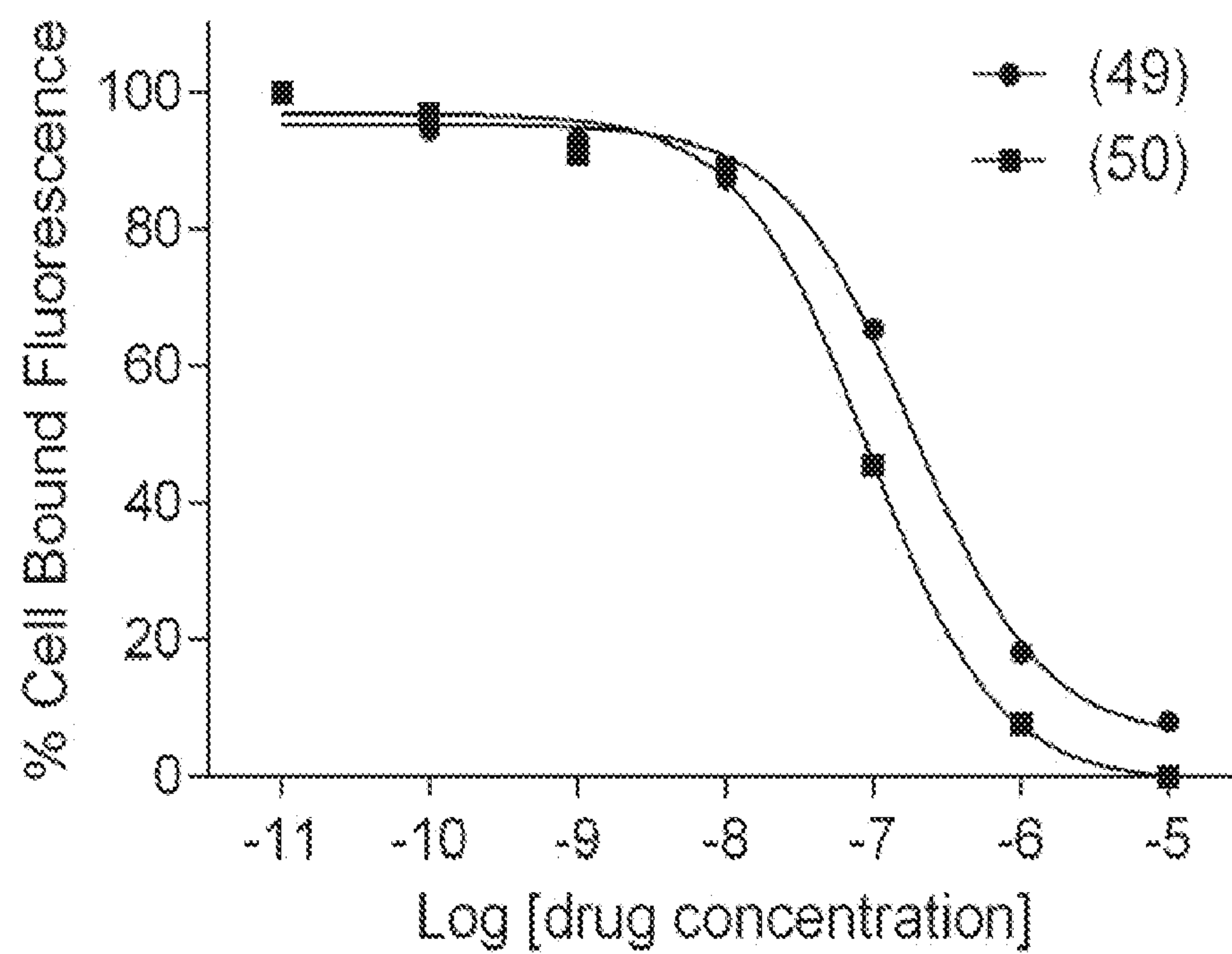
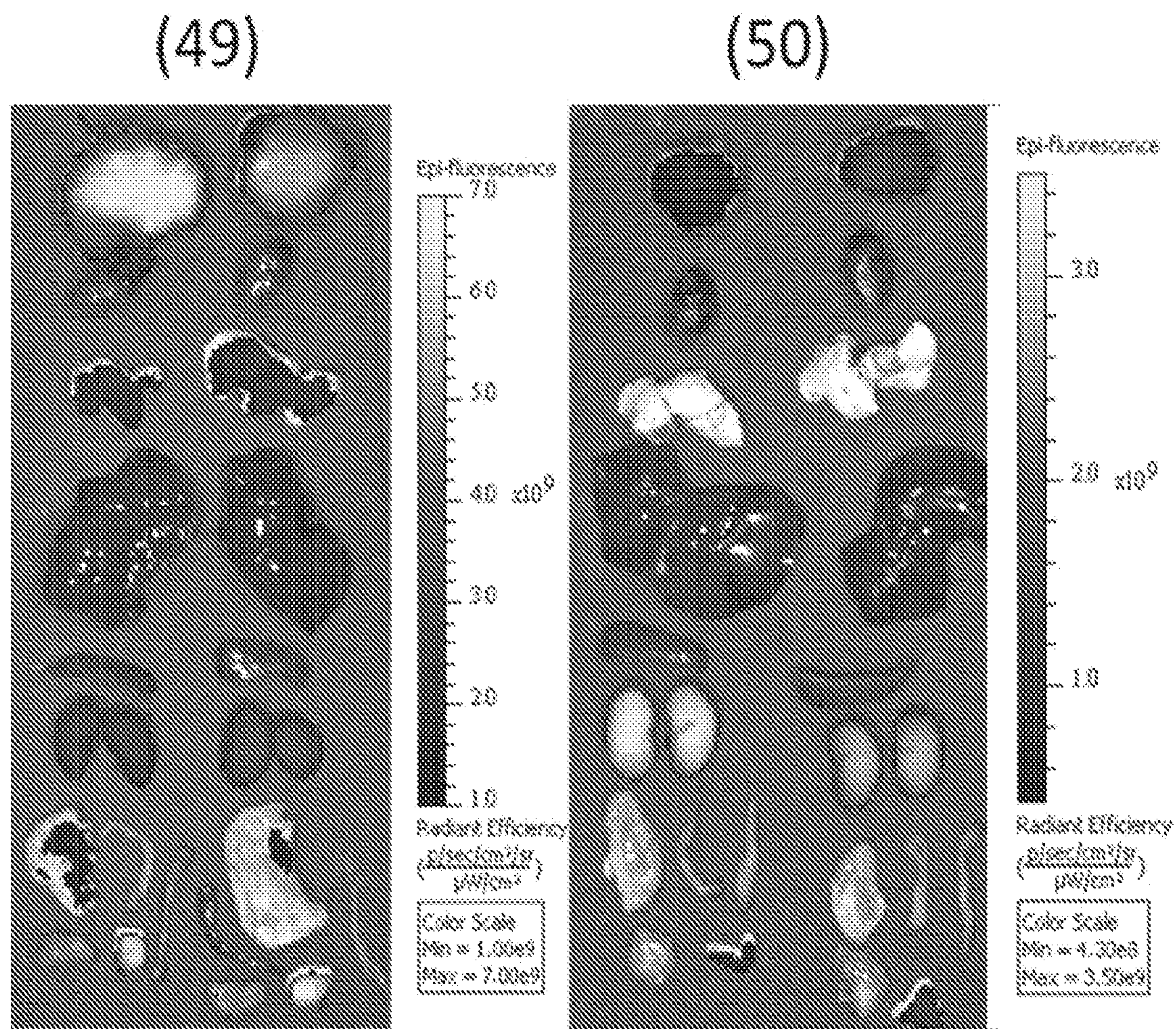


Figure 21



Compound	IC ₅₀ (nM)
49	186.4
50	92

Figure 22



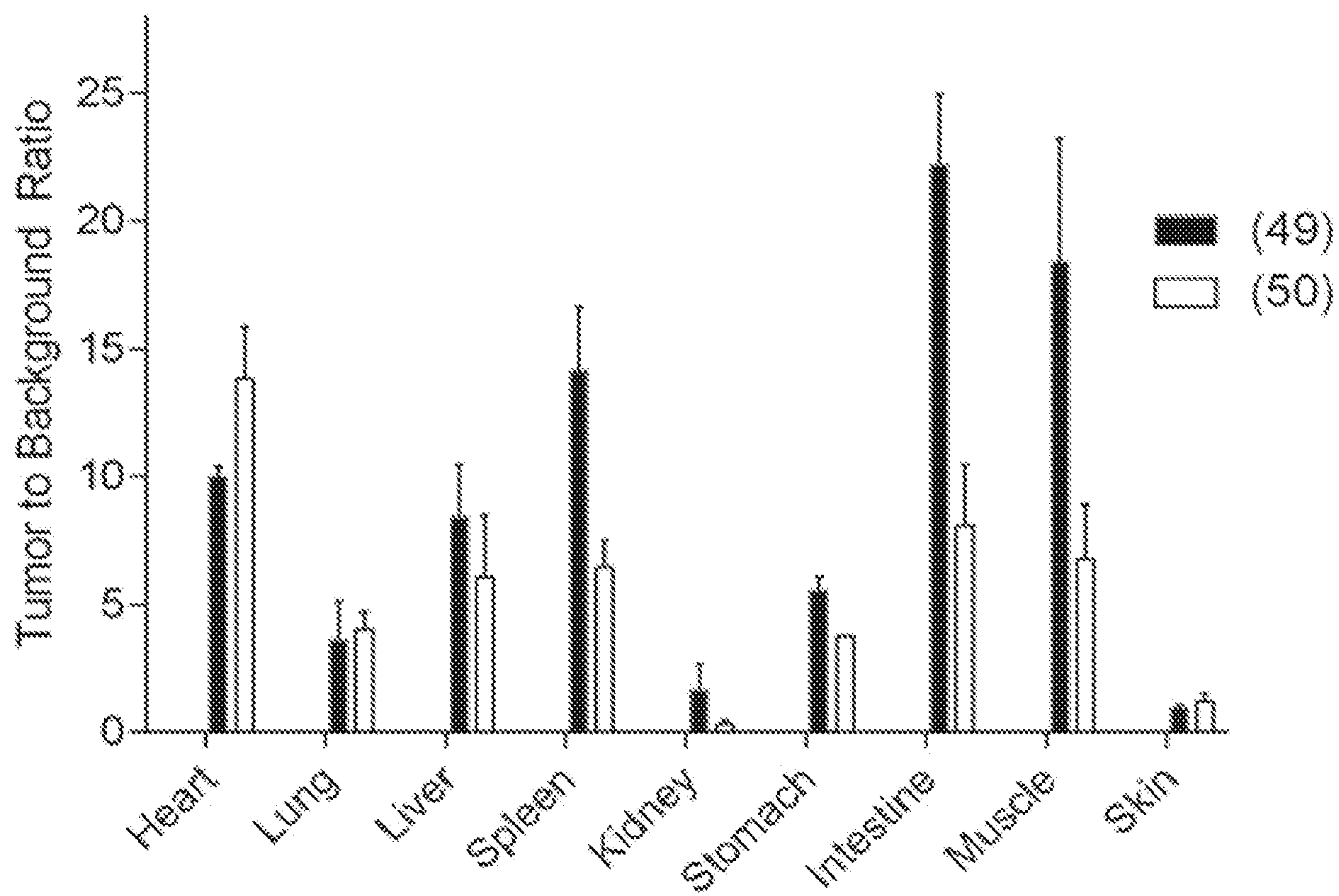


Figure 23

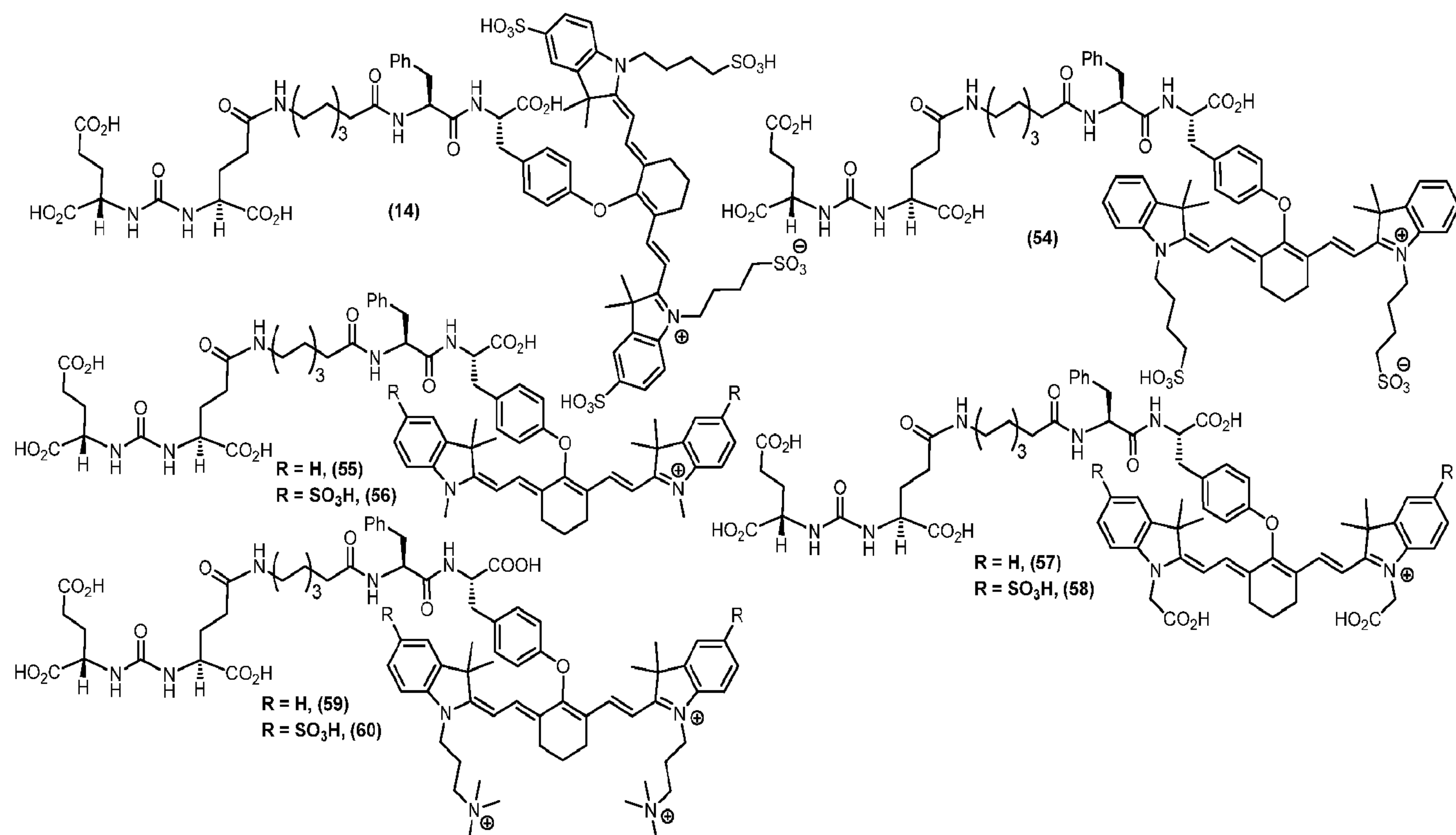


Figure 24

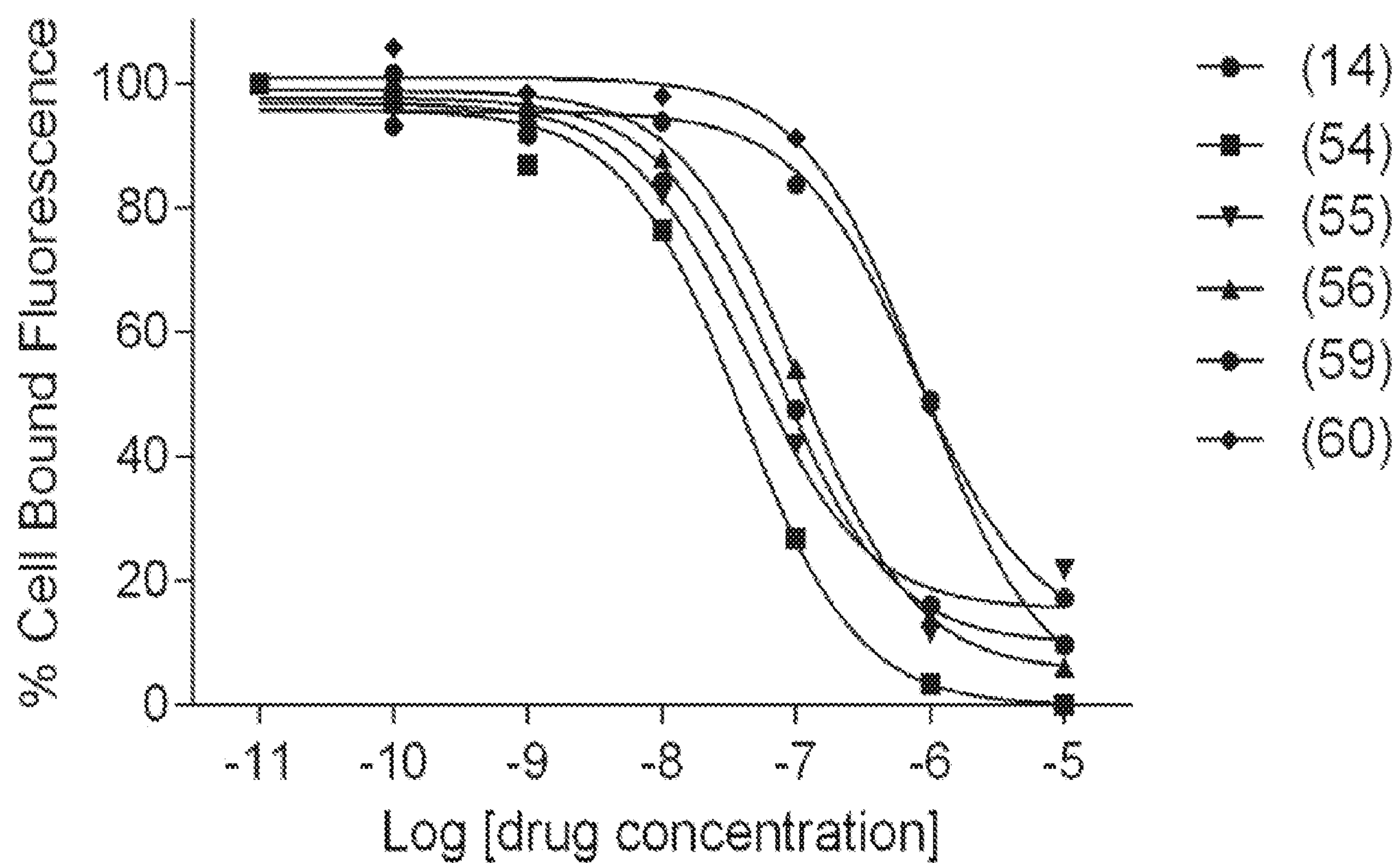


Figure 25

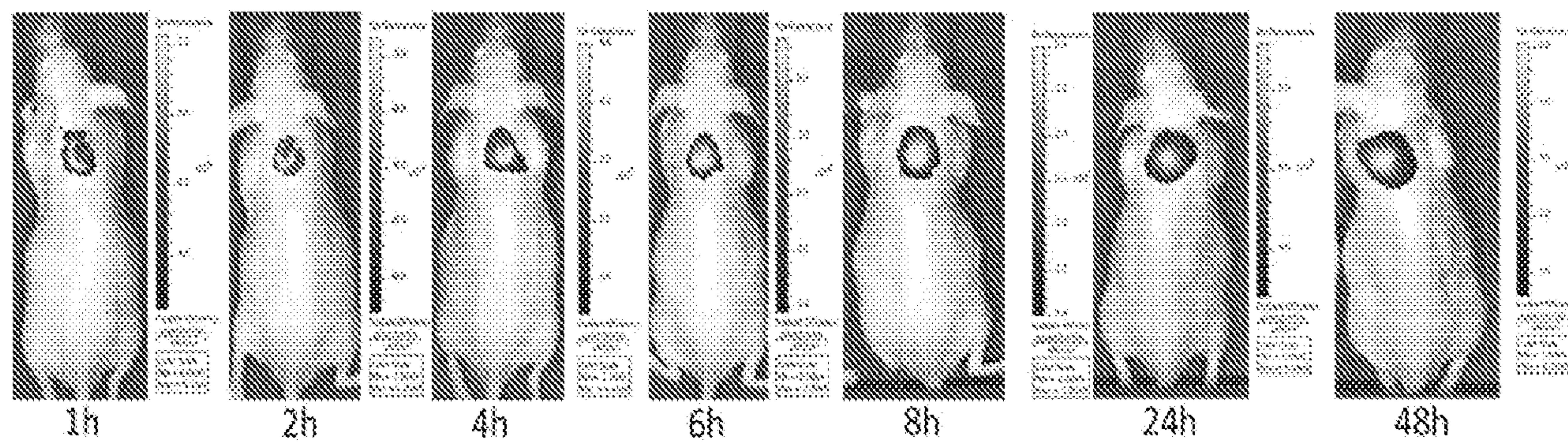


Figure 26

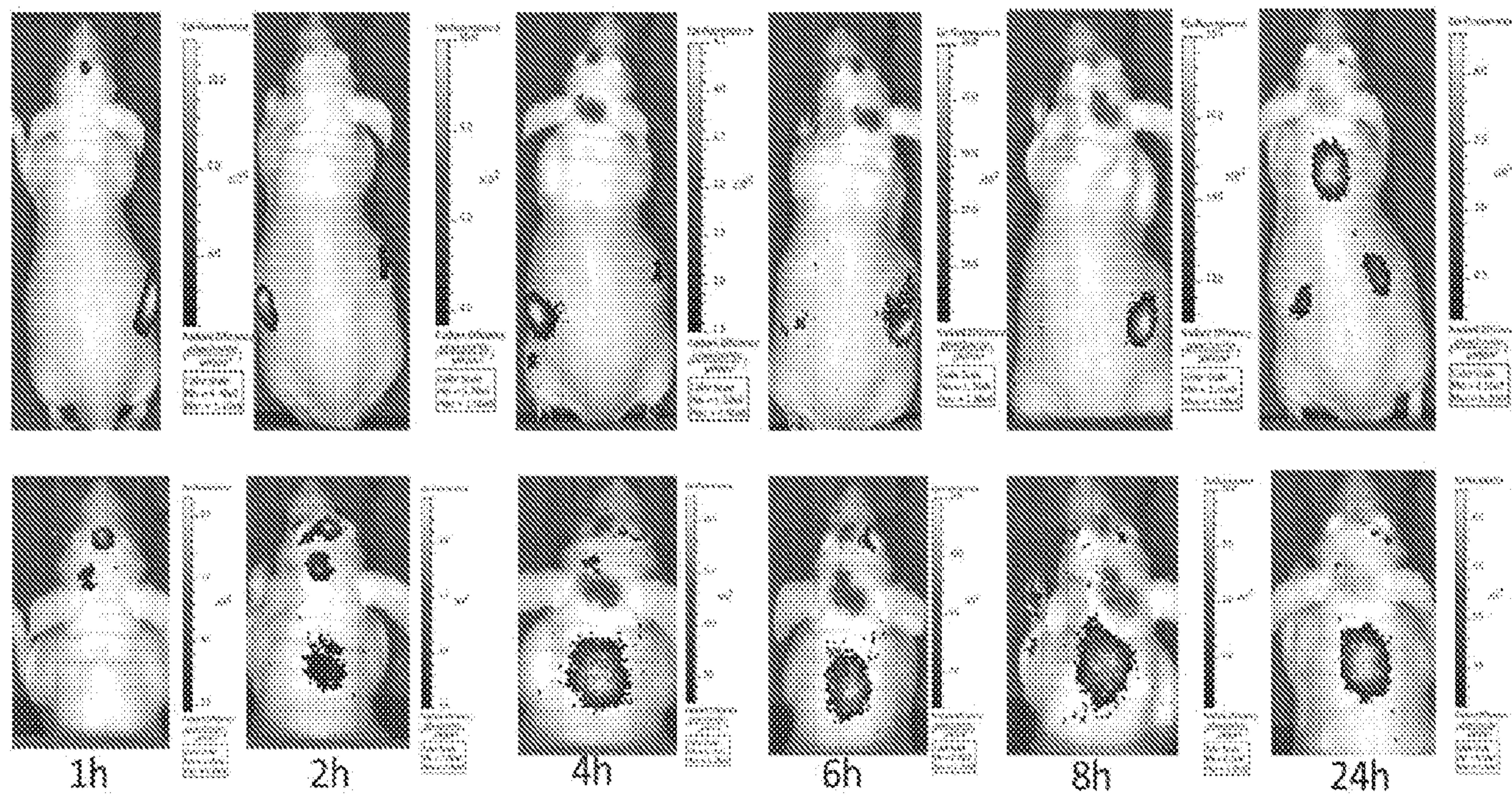


Figure 27

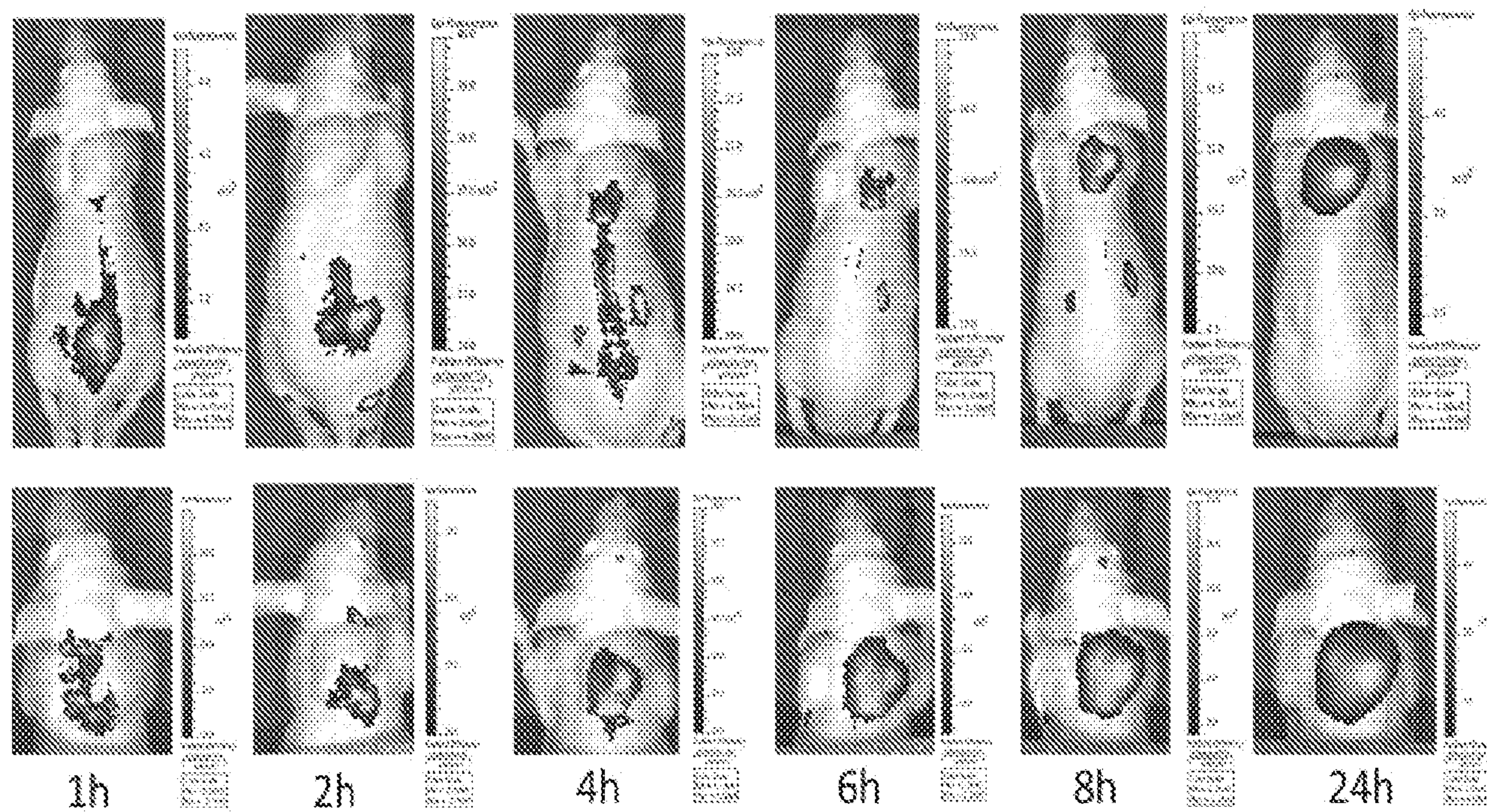


Figure 28

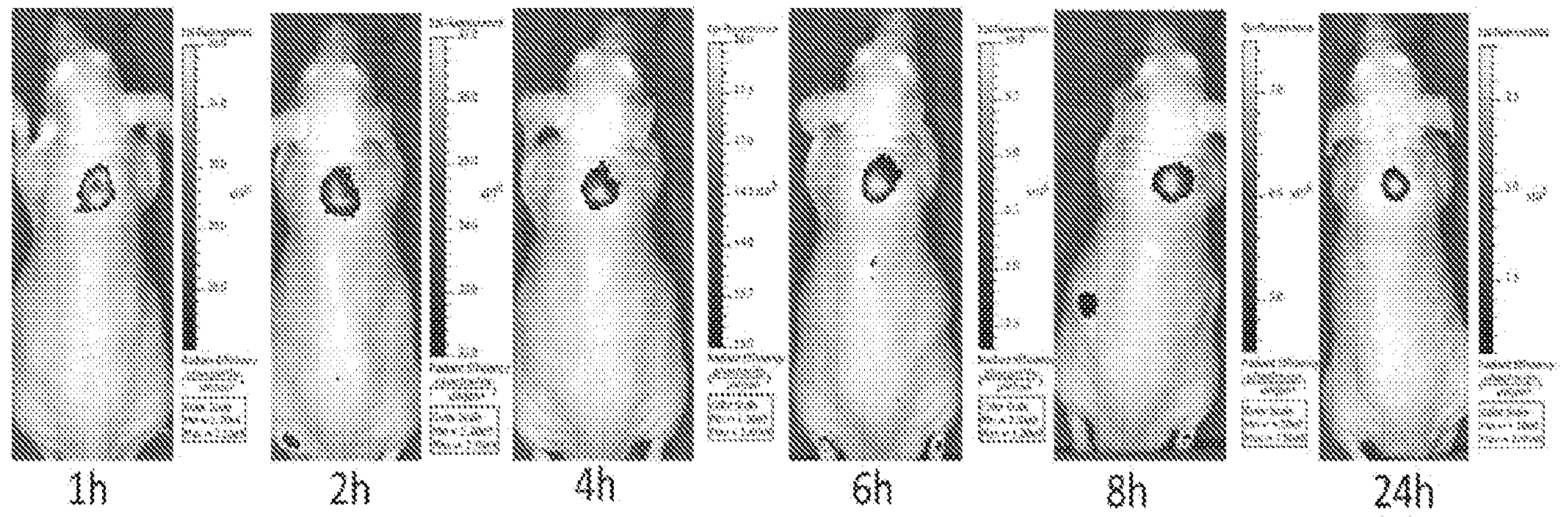


Figure 29

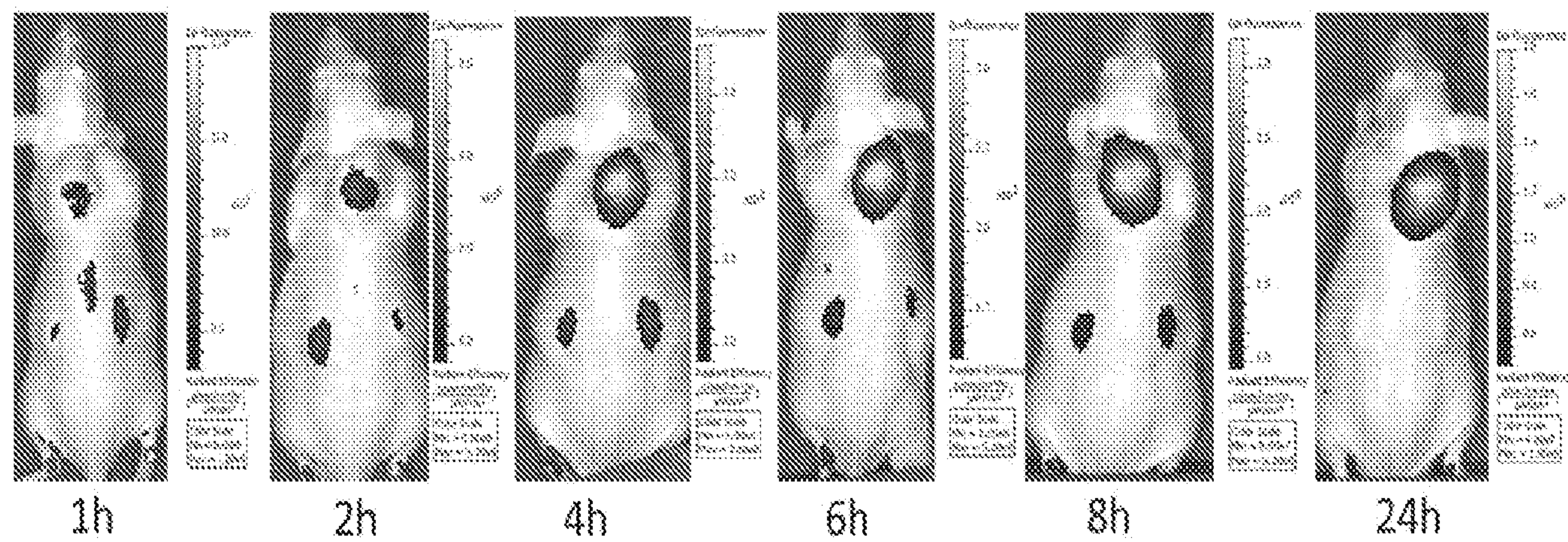


Figure 30

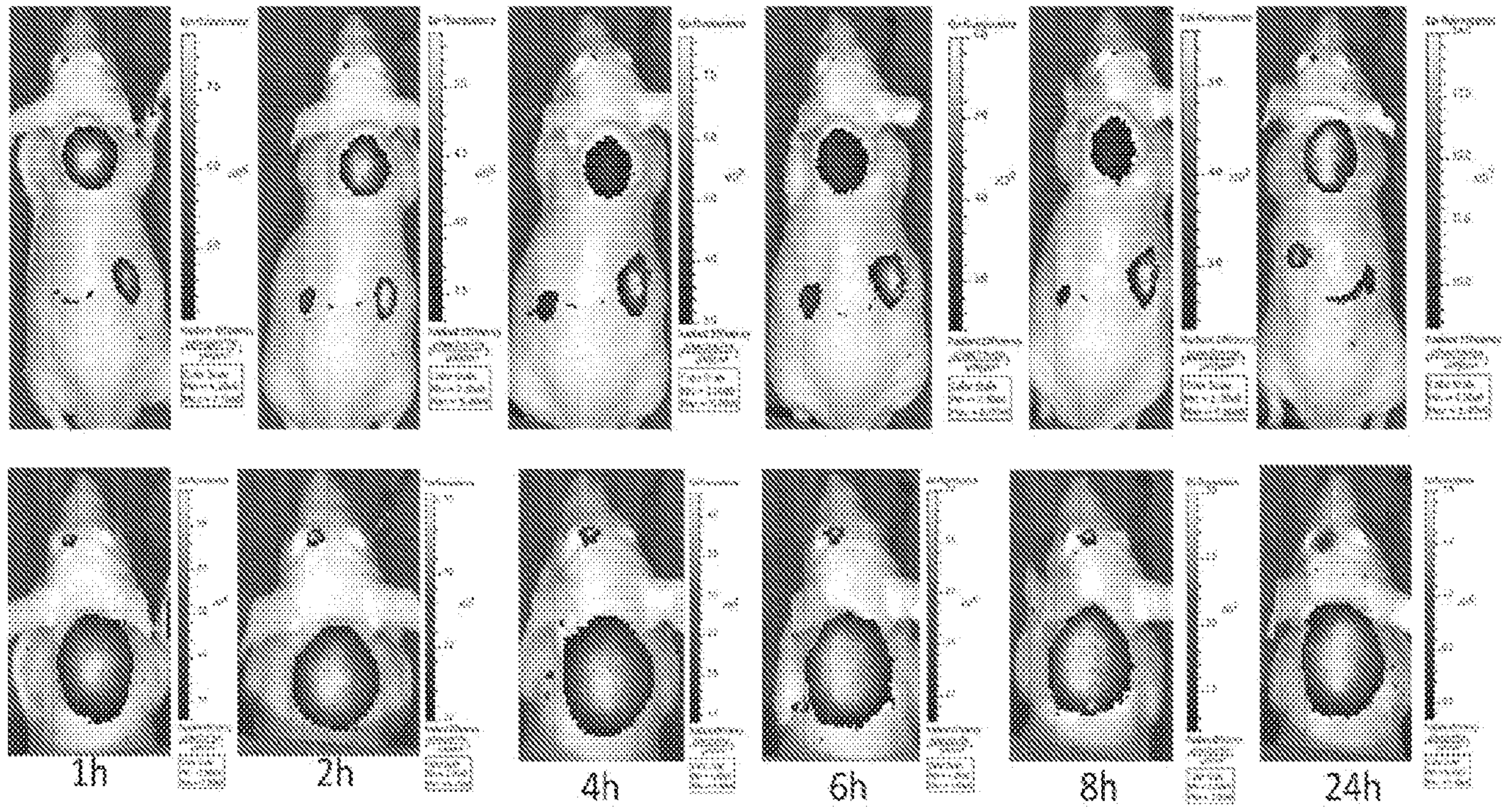


Figure 31

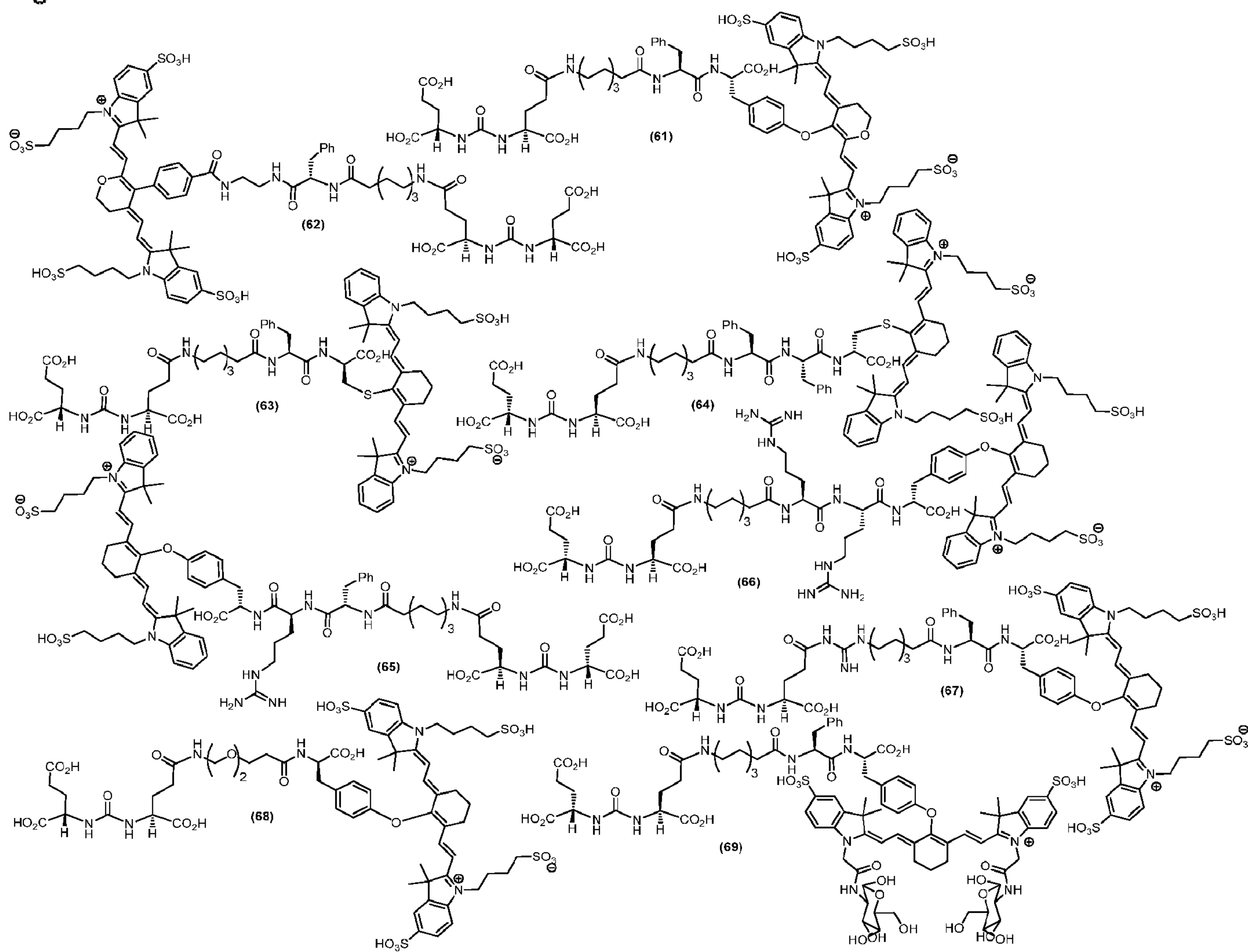


Figure 32

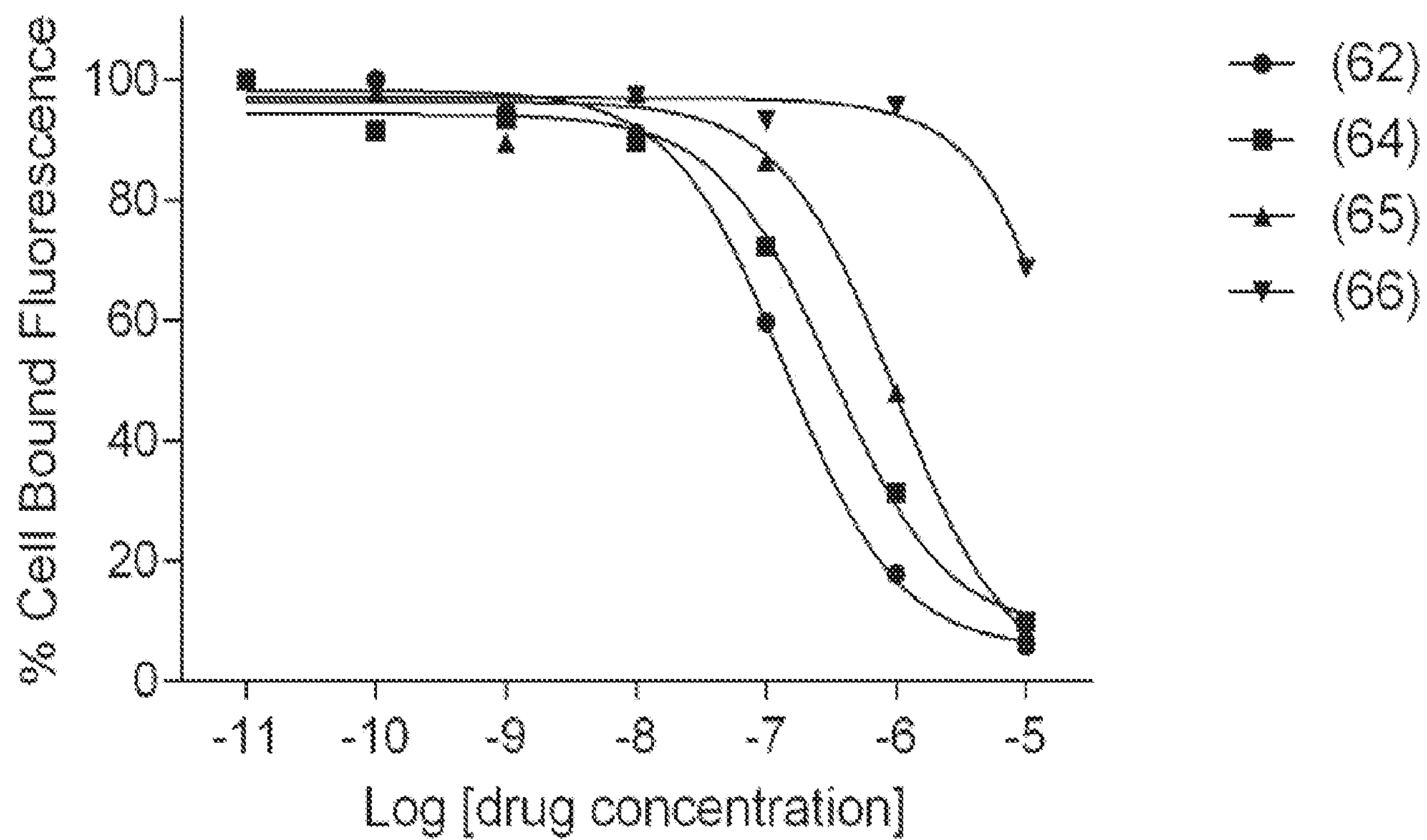


Figure 33

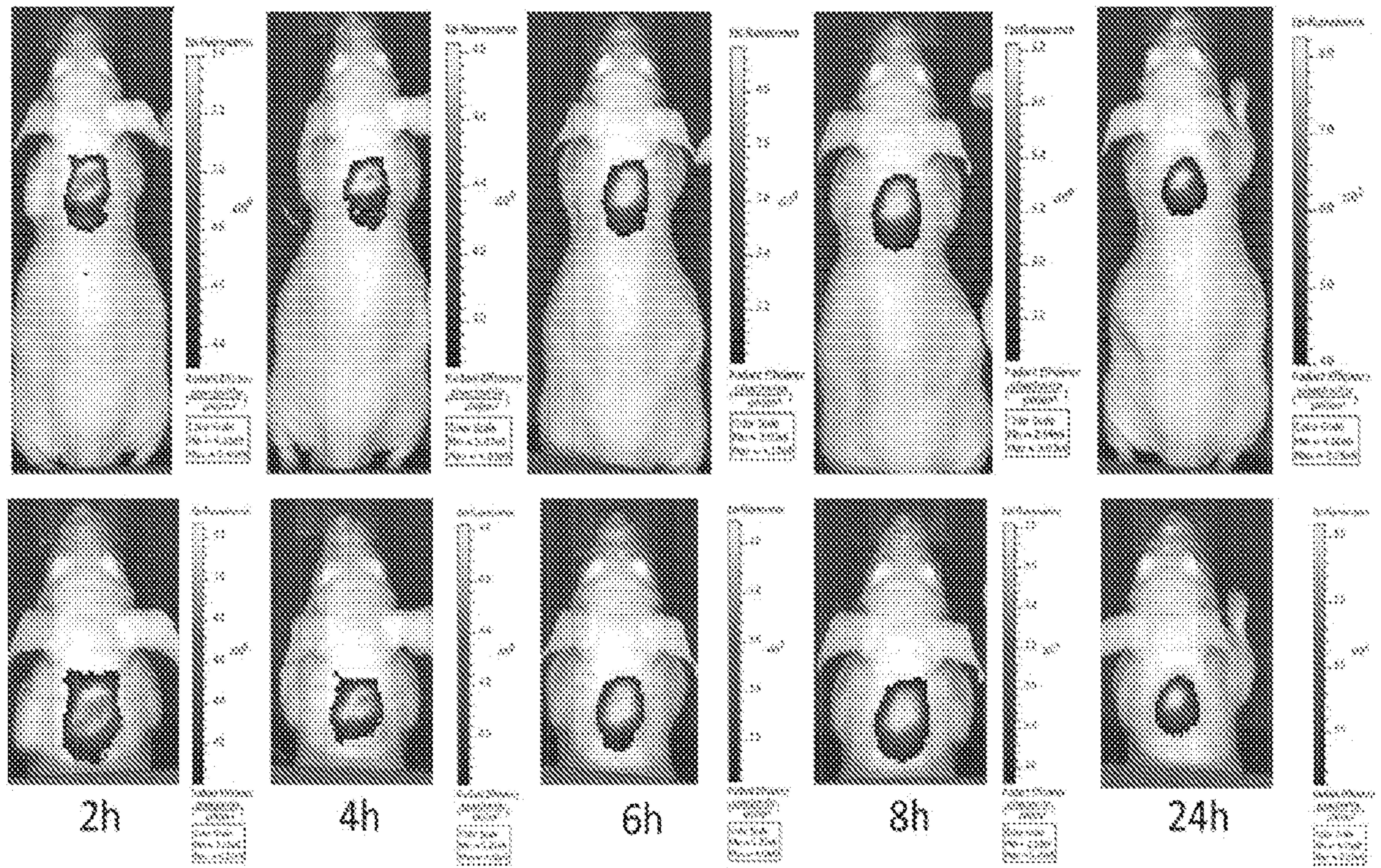


Figure 34

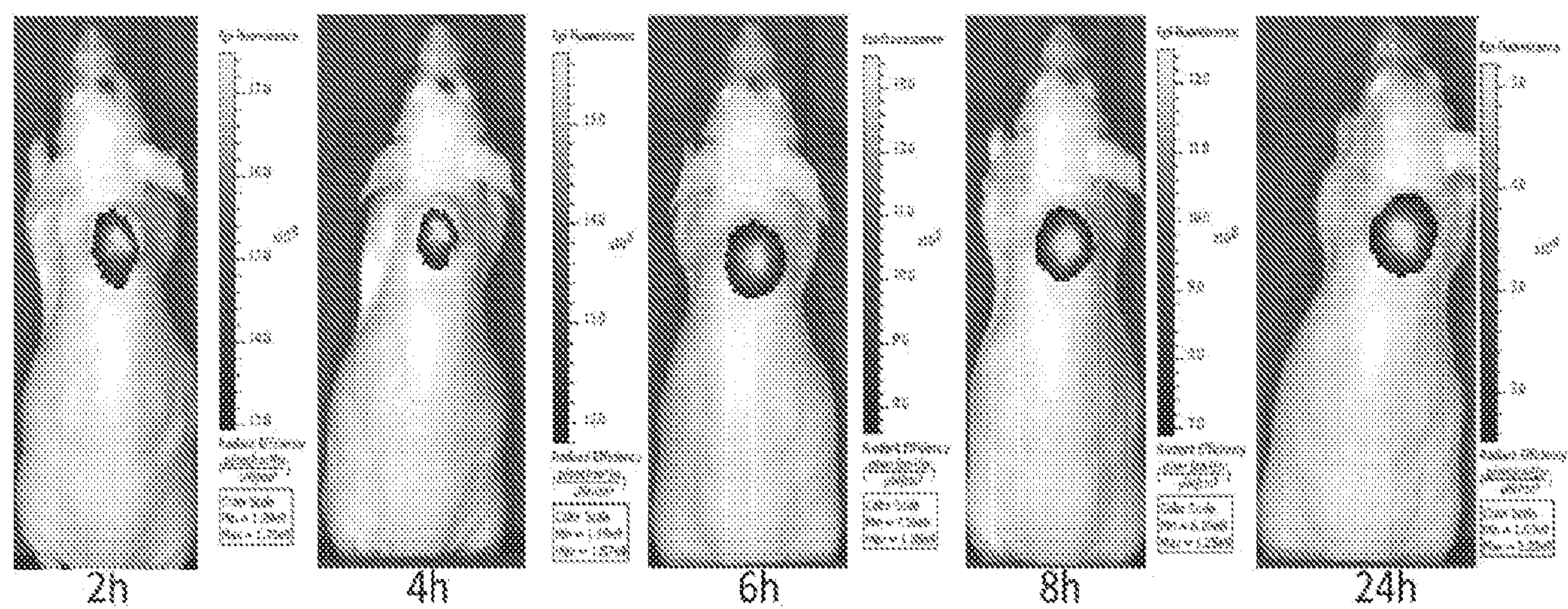


Figure 35

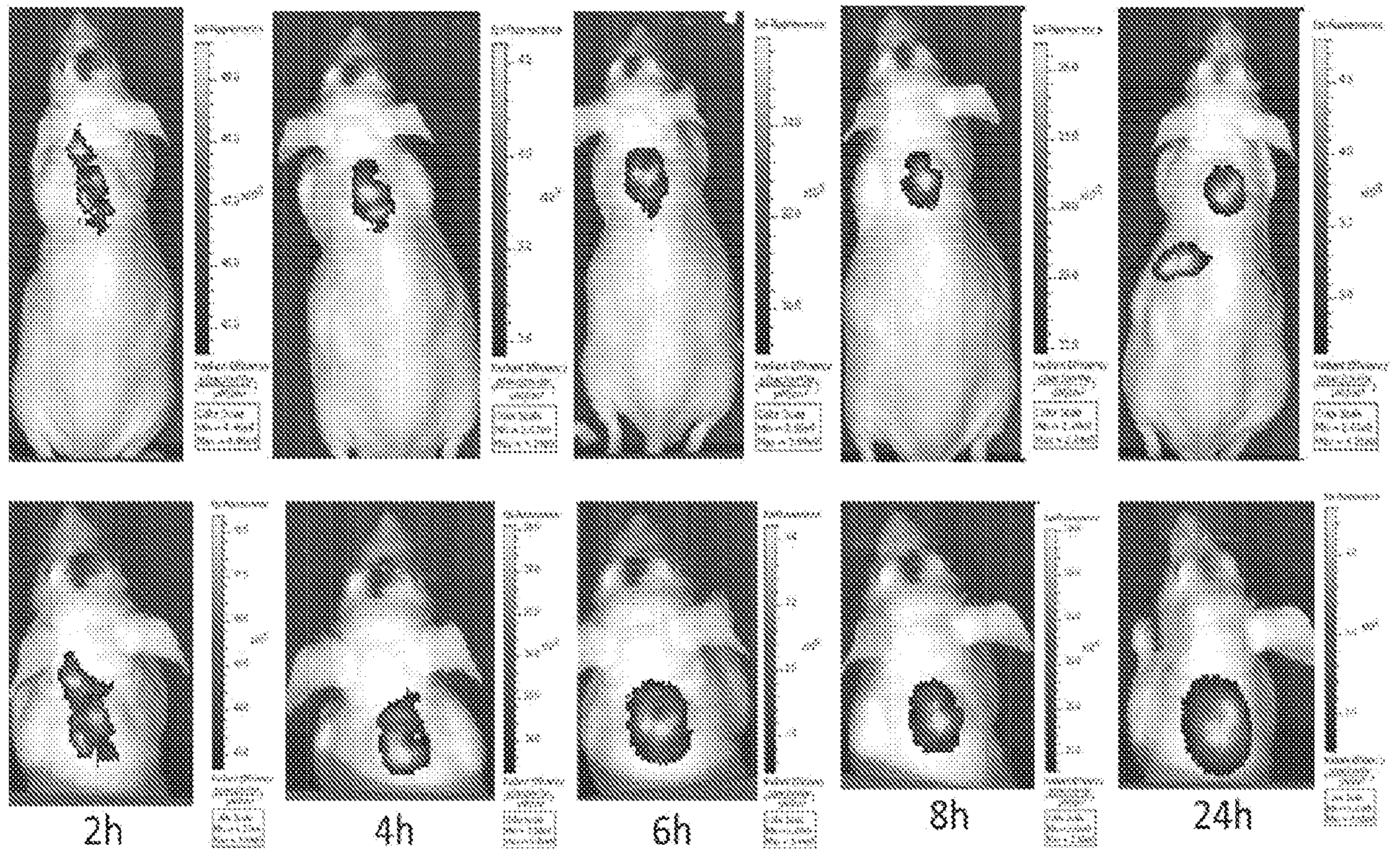


Figure 36

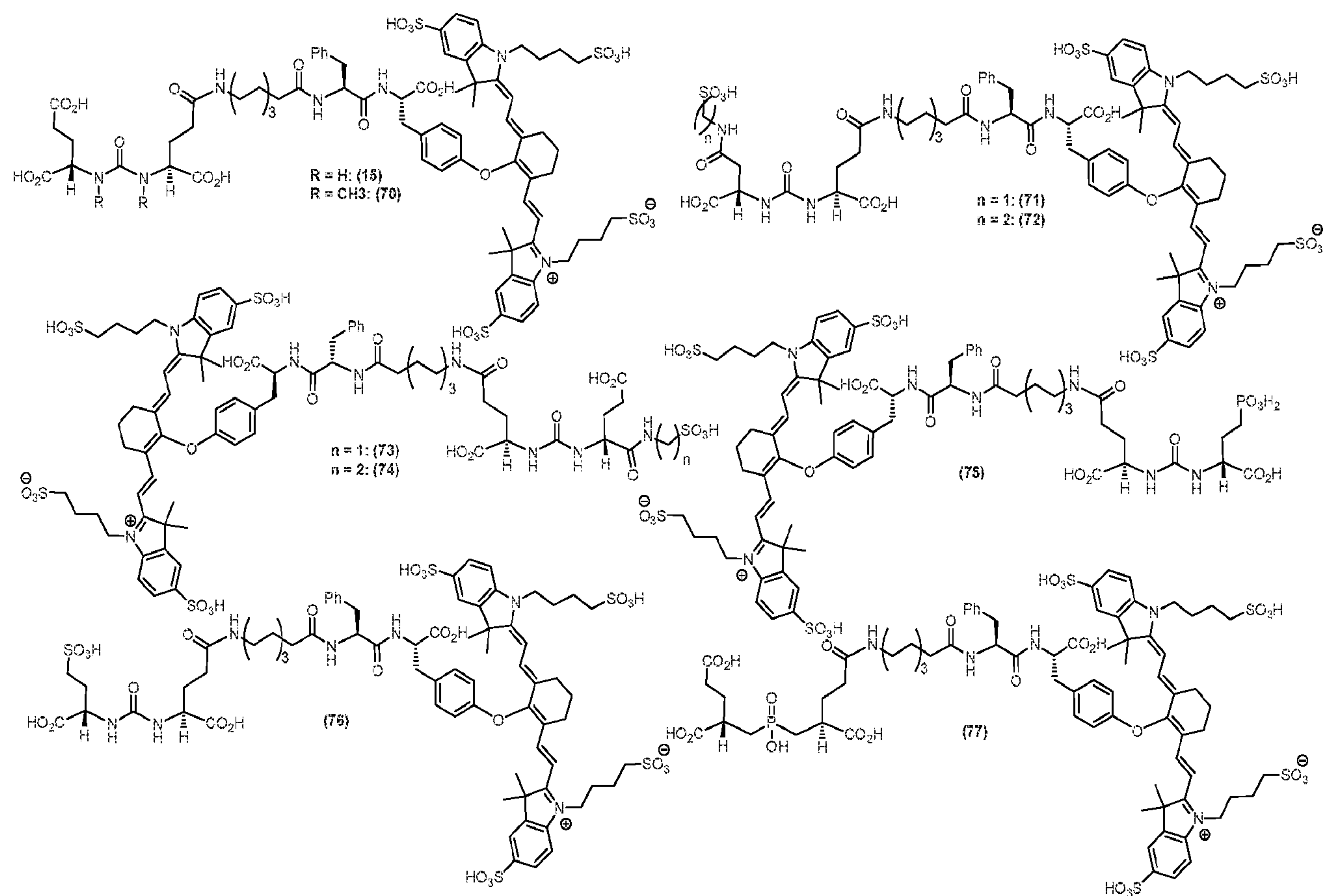


Figure 37

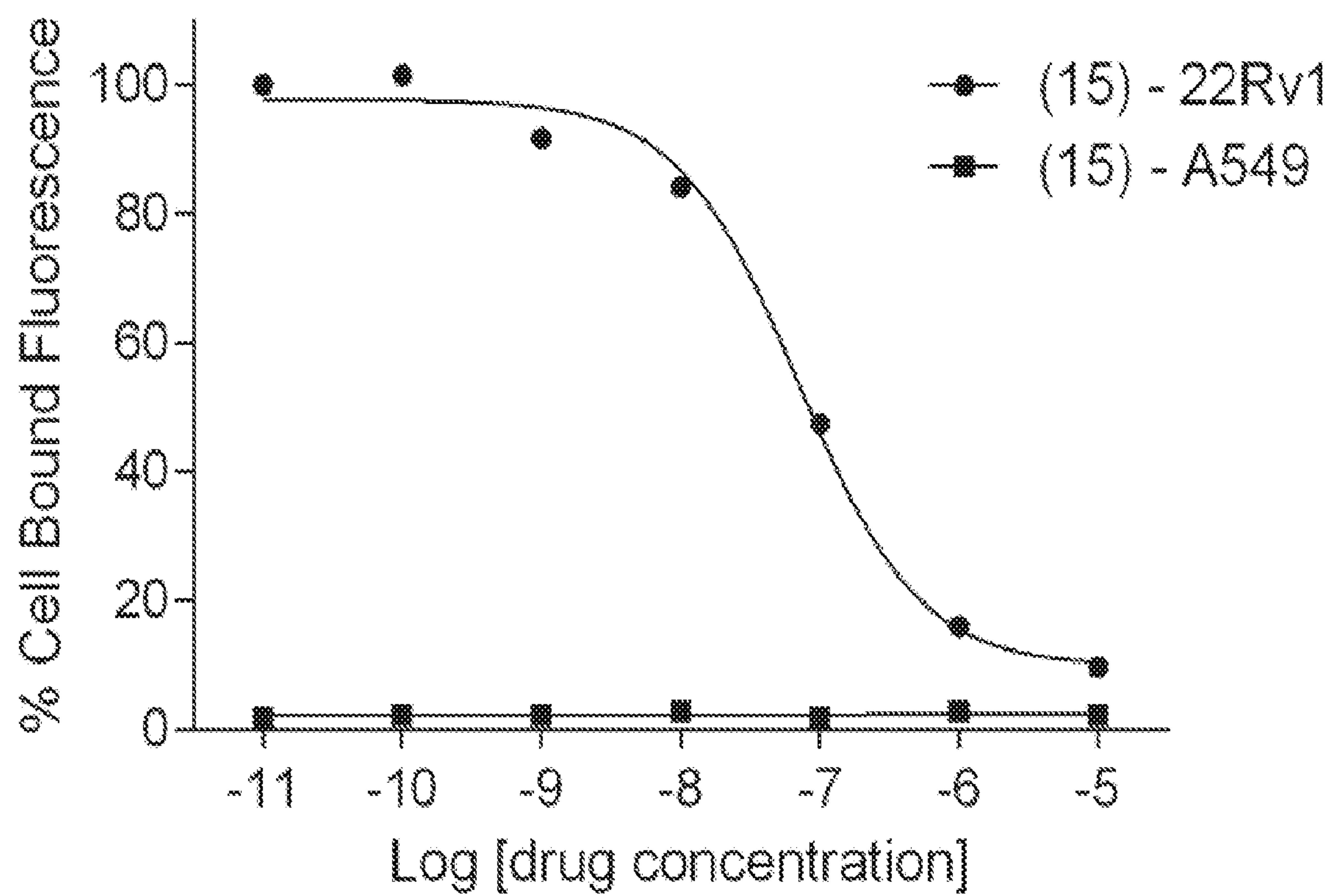


Figure 38

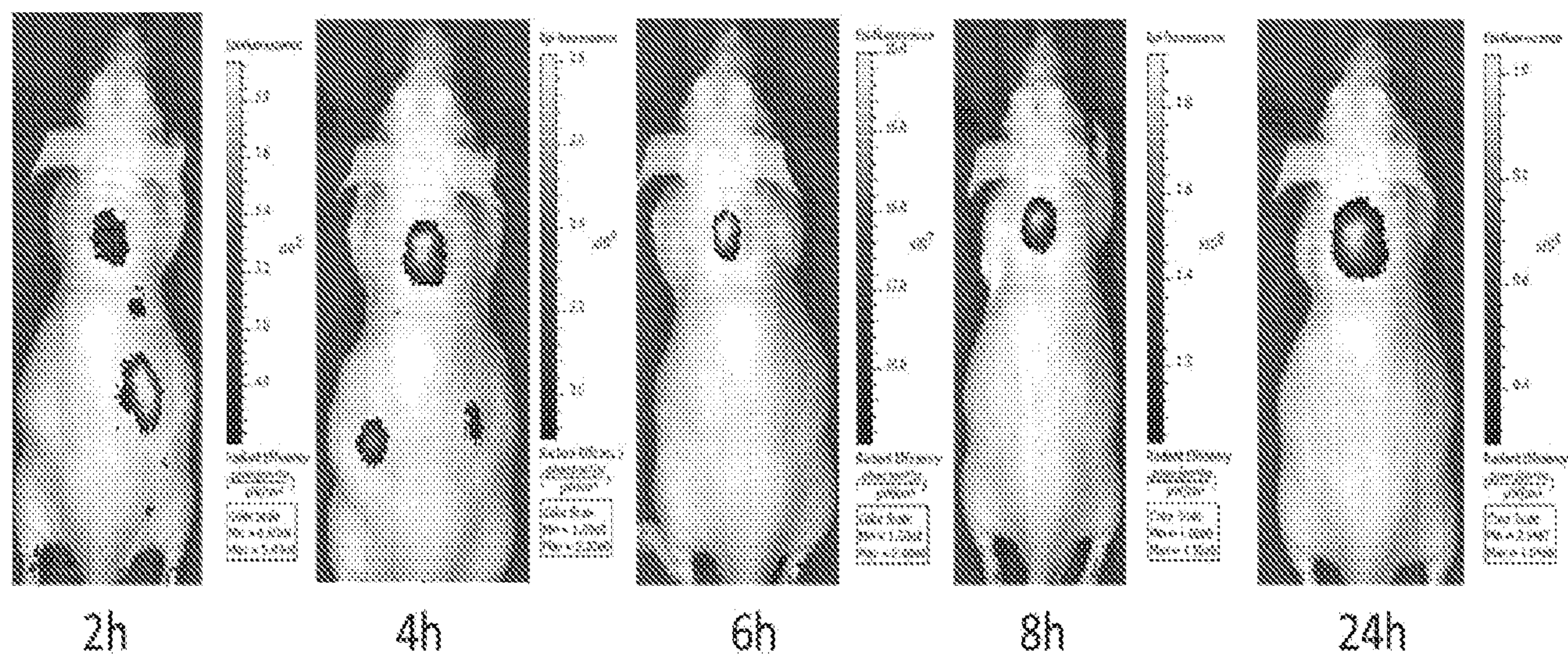


Figure 1:

(a) Synthesis of DUPA-Linker-NIR dye conjugates

