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Process for the preparation of donepezil

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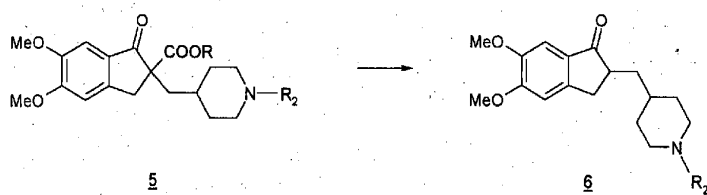
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PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF DONEPEZIL

Abstract of the Disclosure

The invention provides a process for the preparation of a compound of the formula 6 comprising the hydrolysis and decarboxylation of a compound of the formula 5 according to the reaction:



wherein R and R₂ are independently a C₁-C₄ alkyl group or an aralkyl group.

Patents Act

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Related Art:

Invention Title:

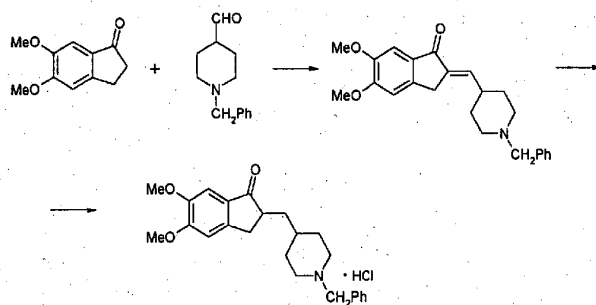
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PROCESS FOR THE PREPARATION OF DONEPEZIL

The present invention relates to a novel process for the preparation 1-benzyl-4-[(5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine (Donepezil) and new intermediates thereof. Donepezil is used in the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

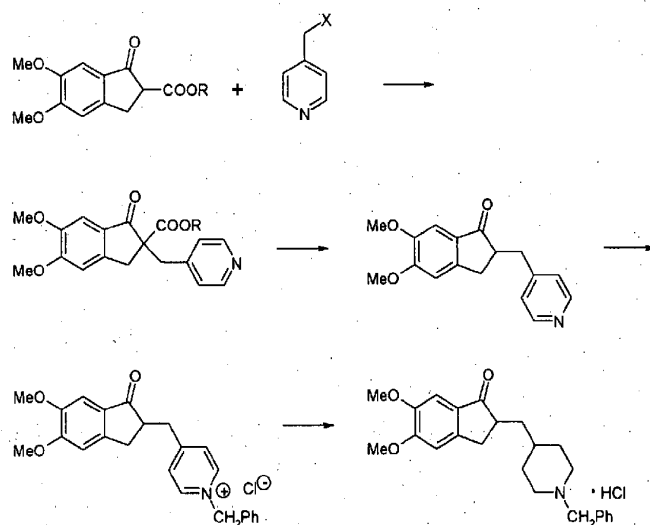
Prior Art:

Donepezil hydrochloride is a useful memory enhancer introduced by the Japanese pharmaceutical company Eisai. Its preparation was described in patent no. EP 296560. In this patent Donepezil was produced by reaction of 5,6-dimethoxy-1-indanone with 1-benzyl-4-formylpiperidine in the presence of a strong base, such as lithium diisopropylamide followed by reduction of the double bond. According to this method, Donepezil was obtained (Scheme 1).



Scheme 1

Patent application WO 99/36405 describes another process for the synthesis of Donepezil. According to this patent, 2-alkoxycarbonyl-1-indanones are reacted with (4-pyridinyl) methyl halide moiety followed by hydrolysis and decarboxylation to give the 2-(4-pyridinyl)methyl-1-indanone derivative. This is followed by reaction with benzyl halides to obtain the corresponding quaternary ammonium salt, and followed by hydrogenation of the pyridine ring to obtain Donepezil (Scheme 2).



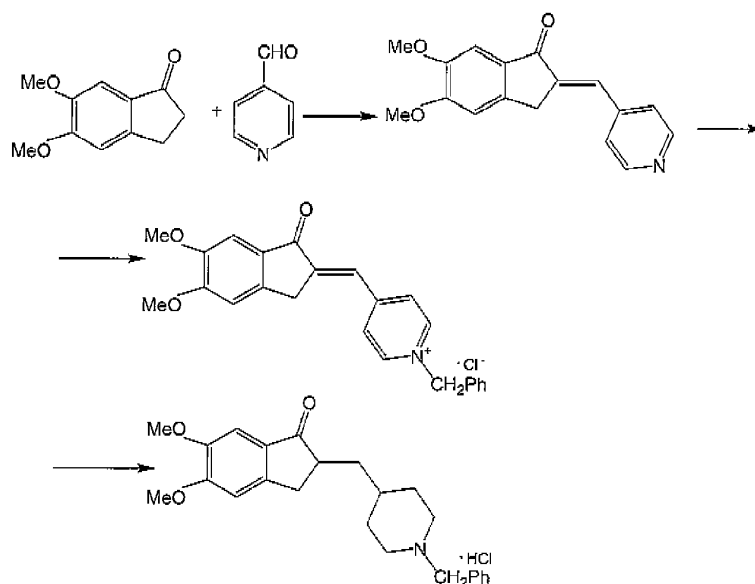
Scheme 2

Patent application WO 97/22584 describes the preparation of Donepezil by reaction of pyridine-4-carboxyaldehyde with malonic acid to give 3-(pyridin-4-yl)-2-propenoic acid, followed by hydrogenation of the double bond to give 3-(piperidin-4-yl)-2-propionic acid. Reaction of this intermediate with methyl chloroformate afforded 3-[N-(methoxycarbonyl) piperidin-4-yl]propionic acid. This was followed by reaction with oxalyl chloride to give methyl 4-(2-chlorocarbonyl)ethyl)piperidin-1-carboxylate. Reaction with 1,2-dimethoxybenzene in the presence of aluminum chloride afforded methyl 4-[3-(3,4-dimethoxyphenyl)-3-oxopropyl]piperidin-1-carboxylate. Reaction with tetramethyldiaminomethane afforded 4-[2-(3,4-dimethoxybenzoyl)allyl]piperidin-1-carboxylate. Reaction with sulfuric acid afforded methyl 4-(5,6-dimethoxy-1-oxoindan-2-yl)methylpiperidin-1-carboxylate. This was followed by treatment with base to give 5,6-dimethoxy-2-(piperidin-4-ylmethyl) indan-1-one, then reaction with benzyl bromide afforded Donepezil (Scheme 3).

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5,6-dimethoxy-2-(pyridin-4-yl)methylene indan-1-one. Reaction with benzyl bromide afforded 1-benzyl-4-(5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-on-2-ylidene)methylpyridinium bromide. Hydrogenation in the presence of platinum oxide afforded Donepezil (Scheme 4).



Scheme 4

A reference herein to a patent document or other matter which is given as prior art is not to be taken as an admission that that document or matter was known or that the 10 information it contains was part of the common general knowledge as at the priority date of any of the claims.

Where the terms "comprise", "comprises", "comprised" or "comprising" are used in this specification (including the claims) they are to be interpreted as specifying the presence of the stated features, integers, steps or components, but not precluding the presence of one or more other features, integers, steps or components, or group

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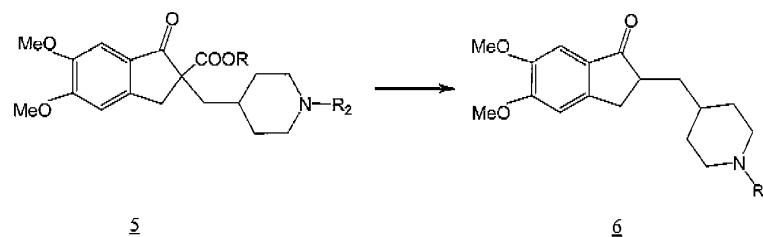
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thereof.

Summary of the invention

The present invention relates to a novel process for the synthesis of 1-benzyl-4-[(5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine (Donepezil).

The present invention also relates to a process for the preparation of a compound of the formula 6 comprising the hydrolysis and decarboxylation of a compound of the formula 5 according to the reaction:



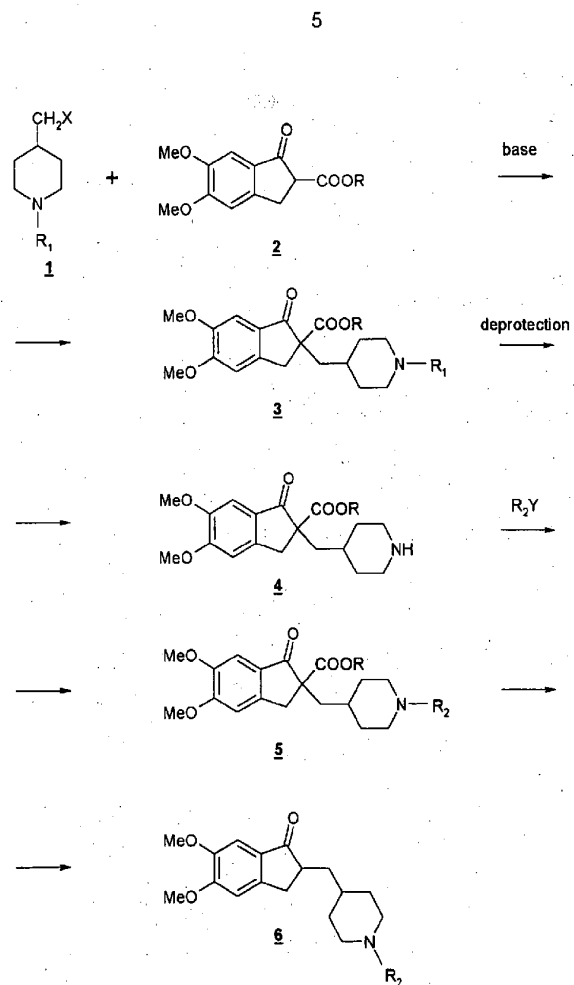
wherein R and R₂ are independently a C₁-C₄ alkyl group or an aralkyl group.

The present invention also relates to a process for the preparation of Donepezil comprising:

- i. coupling of a compound of general formula 1 with a compound of general formula 2 wherein R, R₁ and X are as herein described.
- ii. deprotection of compound of general formula 3 wherein R and R₁ are as herein described.
- iii. benzylation of a compound of general formula 4 with a compound of formula PhCH₂Y wherein Y is as herein described; and
- iv. hydrolysis and decarboxylation of a compound of general formula 5 wherein R is as herein described and R₂ is benzyl.

Novel intermediates are obtained in the synthetic pathway and are described. Scheme 5 gives in outline of the new process.

<Image>



Scheme 5

N-protected activated 4-methylpiperidine (1) wherein X represents a leaving group and R_1 represents an N-protecting group reacts with 2-alkoxycarbonyl-5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-one (2) wherein R represents a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group or an aralkyl group affording 4-[(2-alkoxycarbonyl-5,6-dimethoxy-indan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]-N-protected piperidine) (3). Compound 3 is deprotected affording

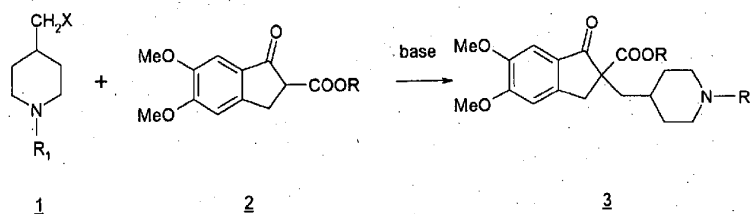
4-[(2-alkoxycarbonyl-5,6-dimethoxy-indan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine having formula 4 wherein R is as defined above. This compound is reacted with a compound of the formula R_2Y wherein R_2 is a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group or an aralkyl group and Y is a leaving group to afford compound of type 5 wherein R_2 is as defined above. Compound 5 is subjected to hydrolysis followed by decarboxylation to afford compound of type 6 wherein R_2 is as defined above. In case where R_2 is a benzyl group compound 6 is Donepezil which is a useful drug for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease.

Novel compounds represented by general formulae 3, 4 and 5 were isolated and identified as intermediates in the said process and are parts of this invention.

The invention is described in more details hereby:

Step 1: Coupling reaction:

A compound of formula 1 is reacted with a compound of formula 2, wherein R is a C_1 - C_4 alkyl group such as methyl, ethyl, t-Bu or an aralkyl group such as (optionally substituted) benzyl group. R_1 is any appropriate N-protecting group, such as t-Butoxycarbonyl (t-BOC), Benzyloxycarbonyl (CBZ), and triphenylmethyl. X is a leaving group, such as halide, mesylate or tosylate, preferably iodide.

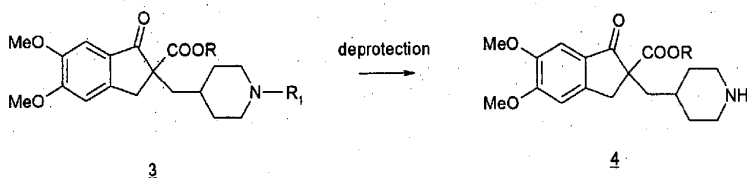


The reaction can be carried out at a temperature range between 0-120°C, preferably at 30-70°C, in the presence of a suitable base, such as alkali metal hydride, alkali metal alkoxide, alkali metal carbonate, alkali metal hydroxide. Potassium carbonate is preferred as base. A variety of solvents can be used,

such as dimethylformamide (DMF), dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO), ethanol, and methanol. DMF is the preferred solvent.

Intermediates described by formula 3 are novel compounds disclosed in this invention and are claimed for.

Step 2: Protecting group removal:



The exact manner for removing the protecting group R_1 depends upon its nature. For example; removal of t-butoxycarbonyl (t-BOC) protecting group is carried out by trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) in an organic solvent like methylene chloride, toluene, chloroform or THF, preferably methylene chloride, while the removal of carbobenzyloxycarbonyl (CBZ) protecting group can be done by hydrolysis using an acid, preferably 30% HBr in acetic acid at elevated temperature, in the presence of a solvent like methylene chloride, toluene, chloroform or THF, preferably toluene, or by catalytic hydrogenation using precious metal catalysis like palladium or platinum, preferably palladium on charcoal, in the presence of a C1-C4 alcohol as a solvent, preferably ethanol.

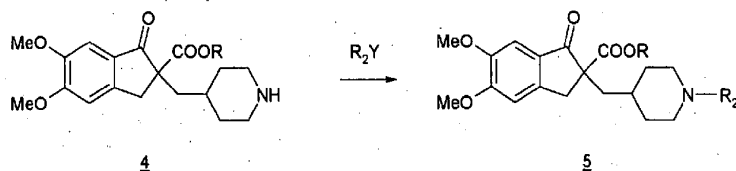
Intermediates represented by general formula 4

{4-[(5,6-dimethoxy-2-alkoxycarbonylindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl] piperidine} are novel compounds disclosed in this invention.

Step 3: Substitution of the nitrogen atom

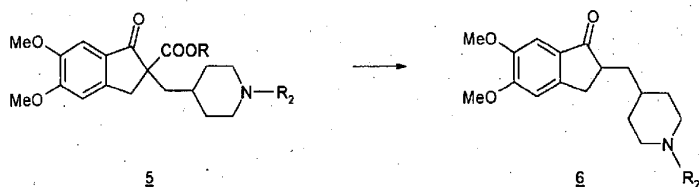
Compounds of type 5 wherein R is C₁-C₄ alkyl group and R_2 is C₁-C₄ alkyl group or an aralkyl group were obtained by reacting of compounds of general formula 4 with a compound of the formula R_2Y wherein R_2 is as defined above and Y is a leaving group such as halide (chloride, bromide or iodide), mesylate or tosylate. The reaction can be carried out at temperature range of 0-100°C, preferably at 20-40°C, and in various solvents like THF, methylene chloride, chloroform,

toluene, or a mixture thereof; methylene chloride is preferred solvent. The reaction is carried out in the presence of an organic or an inorganic base like an alkali metal hydroxide, an alkali metal carbonate or an organic amine, preferably triethylamine.



Intermediates of type 5 are novel compounds disclosed in this invention and are claimed for.

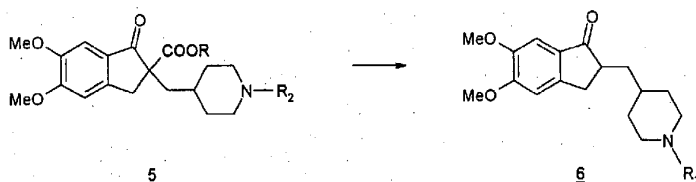
Step 4: Hydrolysis and decarboxylation:



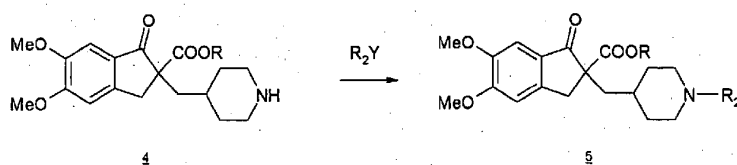
The method for the removal of the R group and decarboxylation depends on the nature of R. Reactions such as acidic or basic hydrolysis can be employed while basic hydrolysis is preferred. Bases like alkali metal hydroxides or carbonates may be employed, potassium carbonate is preferred. If R is a benzyl group catalytic hydrogenolysis can also be employed. Decarboxylation can be accomplished by heating using any appropriate solvent like ethanol, methanol, THF, DMF, DMSO or mixed solvents. Ethanol is the preferred solvent.

The preparation of Donepezil using the invention describes hereby consists of four easy chemical steps. No extreme conditions have to be used and starting materials are readily available. The yields are fair and the invention can be easily upscaled without any technical and safety problems.

Thus according to the present invention there is now provided process for the preparation of a compound of the formula 6 comprising the hydrolysis followed by decarboxylation of a compound of the formula 5 according to the reaction:

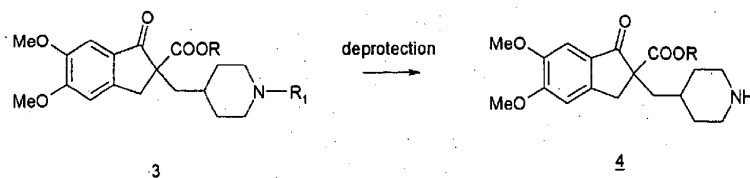


wherein R and R₂ are independently a C₁-C₄ alkyl group or an aralkyl group. In preferred embodiments of the present invention there is provided a process for the preparation of compound 6 as described above further characterized in that the preparation of compound 5 is achieved by the alkylation or aralkylation of compound 4 according to the reaction:



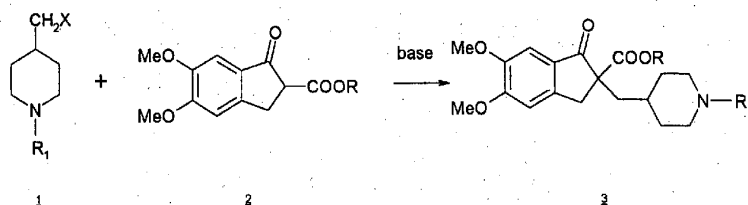
wherein R and R₂ are as defined above and Y is a leaving group.

In especially preferred embodiments of the present invention there is provided a process for the preparation of compound 6 as defined above further characterized that the preparation of compound 4 is achieved by the removal of the N-protecting group of compound 3 according to the reaction



wherein R is as defined above and R₁ is an N-protecting group.

In further especially preferred embodiments of the present invention there is provided a process for the preparation of compound **6** as defined above further characterized that the preparation of compound **3** is achieved by the coupling of compounds **1** and **2** according to the reaction:



wherein R and R₁ are as defined above and X is a leaving group.

While the invention will now be described in connection with certain preferred embodiments in the following examples so aspects thereof may be more fully understood and appreciated, it is not intended to limit the invention to these particular embodiments. On the contrary, it is intended to cover all alternatives, modifications and equivalents as may be included within the scope of the invention as defined by the appended claims. Thus, the following examples, which include preferred embodiments, will serve to illustrate the practice of this invention. It being understood that the particulars shown are by way of example and for purposes of illustrative discussion of preferred embodiments of the present invention only and are presented in the cause of providing what is believed to be the most useful and readily understood description of formulation procedures as well as of the principles and conceptual aspects of the invention.

Examples

Reference example 1: 2-ethoxycarbonyl-5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-one

This compound is prepared according to the procedure disclosed in EP 534859. To a suspension of sodium hydride (50% dispersion in oil, 20g) in 240mL of THF, diethyl carbonate was added and the mixture was stirred and refluxed for 90 min. A solution of 5,6-Dimethoxyindan-1-one (40g) in THF (440mL) was added, the mixture was heated under reflux for 3h, then cooled and

concentrated. Ethyl acetate (200mL) was added, the organic layer was washed with water. The organic layer was dried over MgSO_4 , filtered and the ethyl acetate was removed under reduced pressure. The title product was obtained in 98% yield.

Reference example 2: N-CBZ-4-iodomethylpiperidine

This compound is prepared according to the procedure disclosed in US 5538984.

Triphenylphosphine (31.2gr) was added to a mixture of iodine (29.4g) in toluene (1L). After 5min, pyridine (18ml) was added, followed by CBZ-piperidinemethanol (34.6gr). The resulting mixture was heated and stirred at reflux for 1.5h. The reaction mixture was allowed to cool to room temperature, and filtered. The filtrate was washed with saturated sodium metabisulfite and brine. The organic layer was dried over MgSO_4 and evaporated. The crude product was dissolved in ethyl acetate/hexane 1:5, and filtered through silica gel. The filtrate was evaporated under reduced pressure, and the crude product was crystallized from ethyl acetate/hexane.

Example 1

1-t-BOC-[4-((2-ethoxycarbonyl-5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-on)-2-yl)methyl] piperidine:

5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-one (7.68g) was dissolved in DMF (340mL). 1-t-BOC-piperidyl-4-methyl iodide (12.3g) and potassium carbonate (8.0g) were added therein and the mixture was stirred at room temperature overnight. Ethyl acetate (200mL) was added to the reaction mixture followed by water (200mL) and the layers were separated. The organic layer was washed with water (3x50mL) and then with saturated sodium chloride solution (200mL). The organic layer was dried over MgSO_4 , and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The title compound was isolated as a white-yellowish solid and recrystallized from ethyl acetate: hexane. 7.89g (59% yield) of the title product was obtained and found to be pure by HPLC.

Mass spectrum m/e : 462[M+H⁺].

Elemental analysis (calculated for C₂₅H₃₅NO₇):

Calculated: C, 65.06%; H, 7.64%; N, 3.03%.

Found: C, 64.92%; H, 7.32%; N, 3.31%.

¹H-NMR(CDCl₃, δ(ppm)): 7.16(s, 1H), 6.90(s, 1H), 4.21(q, 2H), 3.98(s, 3H), 3.91(s, 3H), 3.67(2H), 2.63(m, 2H), 2.21(m, 2H), 1.74(m, 2H), 1.59(m, 3H), 1.43(s, 9H), 1.26(t, 3H).

¹³C-NMR(CDCl₃, δ(ppm)): 200.6, 171.1, 156.0, 149.7, 148.4, 127.4, 107.1, 104.9, 79.3, 61.7, 60.8, 56.2, 44.0, 41.0, 36.7, 33.5, 28.4, 22.8, 14.0.

Example 2**1-t-BOC-[4-((5,6-dimethoxy-2-methoxycarbonylindan-1-on)-2yl)methyl]piperidine:**

5,6-dimethoxy-2-methoxycarbonylindan-1-one (1.41g) was dissolved in DMF (30mL). Potassium carbonate (1.56g) was added and the mixture was stirred for 30 min at room temperature. A solution of 1-t-BOC-piperidyl-4-methyl iodide (2.2g) dissolved in 10mL DMF was added dropwise within 30min. The mixture was heated gently to (45-50°C) and the reaction mixture was stirred at 50°C for 5 hrs. Ethyl acetate (30mL) was added to the reaction mixture, and the solution was washed with water (3x30mL). The organic layer was separated, dried over MgSO₄ and evaporated to give yellowish solid. The oil obtained was crystallized from ethyl acetate/n-hexane. 1.26g of the title product (49.9% yield) were obtained as yellow crystals.

Mass spectrum *m/e*: 448[M+H⁺].

¹H NMR(CDCl₃, δ(ppm)): 7.16(s, 1H), 6.89(s, 1H), 3.99(s, 3H), 3.90(s, 3H), 3.69(s, 3H).

Example 3**1-CBZ-[4-(5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonyl-1-indanon-2yl)methyl]piperidine:**

5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-one (4.74g) was dissolved in DMF (150mL). Potassium carbonate (4.94g) was added. 1-CBZ-piperidyl-4-methyl iodide (9.09g) dissolved in DMF (50mL) was added dropwise and the mixture was stirred at room temperature overnight. Ethyl acetate (100mL) was added and the mixture was washed with water (100mL) and then with brine (50mL). The organic layer was dried over MgSO₄, filtered and evaporated under reduced pressure. The crude product was crystallized from ethanol to give 4.94g of the title product (59.1% yield).

Mass spectrum *m/e*: 496 [M+H⁺].

Elemental analysis (calculated for $C_{28}H_{33}NO_7$):

Calculated: C, 67.86%; H, 6.71%; N, 2.83%.

Found: C, 67.64%; H, 6.68%; N, 3.07%.

NMR ($CDCl_3$, δ (ppm)): 7.34(br s, 5H), 7.23(s, 1H), 6.89(s, 1H), 5.15(s, 2H), 4.21(q, 2H), 4.02(s, 3H), 3.94(s, 3H), 3.66(d, 1H), 3.03(d, 1H), 2.72(br t, 2H), 2.20(m, 2H), 1.57-1.73(m, 7H), 1.26(t, 3H).

Example 4

1-CBZ-[4-(5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine:

To 5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-one (2.28g) dissolved in DMF (80mL), potassium carbonate (2.4g) was added. Then, N-CBZ-piperidyl-4-methyltosylate (5.0g) dissolved in DMF (25mL) was added dropwise within 3hrs. The mixture was stirred at ambient temperature 48h, ethyl acetate (100mL) was added therein and the mixture was rinsed with water (100mL) and then with brine. The organic layer was dried over $MgSO_4$, filtered and evaporated under reduced pressure. The title product was obtained at 23% yield as confirmed by HPLC-MS analysis.

Example 5

1-CBZ-[4-(5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonyl-1-indanon-2-yl)methyl]piperidine:

To 5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-one (2.6g) dissolved in DMF (50mL), potassium carbonate (2.7g) was added. N-CBZ-piperidyl-4-methylmesylate (4.6g) dissolved in DMF (30mL) was added dropwise within 3hrs and the mixture was stirred for 48h at ambient temperature. Ethyl acetate (100mL) was added and the mixture was washed with water (100mL) and then with brine (50mL). The organic layer was dried over $MgSO_4$, filtered and evaporated under

reduced pressure, HPLC of the crude indicate that the coupling product obtained at 5.6% yield and its identity was confirmed by HPLC-MS.

Example 6

4-[(5,6-Dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine:

The product from example 1 (5.3g) was dissolved in methylene chloride (50mL), the solution was cooled to 0°C, trifluoroacetic acid (65.5g) was added, and the solution was stirred at 0-5°C for 30 minute. The methylene chloride and TFA were removed under reduced pressure, toluene (15mL) was added and then removed under reduced pressure. A brownish oily product was obtained. The product was dissolved in a mixture of toluene and water (100mL, 1:1), the mixture was stirred, the layers were allowed to separate and the organic layer was removed. The pH of the aqueous layer was brought to pH 8.0-8.5 with 1N-NaOH. The solution was extracted with ethyl acetate 3x50mL, the organic layers were combined and washed with brine (20mL), dried (MgSO₄) and filtered. The ethyl acetate was removed under reduced pressure. The crude product was crystallized from ethyl acetate/hexane to give 2.4g of the title product (58% yield). The product was pure by HPLC.

Mass spectrum *m/e*: 362[M+H⁺].

¹H-NMR(CDCl₃, δ(ppm)): 7.17(s, 1H), 7.08(s, 1H), 4.06(q, 2H), 3.89(s, 3H), 3.80(s, 3H), 3.21(m, 2H), 2.50(s, 2H), 2.01(m, 2H), 1.73(m, 3H), 1.30(m, 2H), 1.09(t, 3H).

Example 7

[4-(5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-on-2-yl)methyl]piperidine:

The product from example 2 (9.69g) was dissolved in chloroform (100mL), 30% HBr in acetic acid (23mL) was added dropwise within 30 minute. The mixture was gently heated to 40°C until full conversion was occurred (tested by HPLC). To the reaction mixture water (200mL) was added and the mixture was stirred

for 15min. The aqueous solution was separated and washed with chloroform (100mL). Sodium hydroxide solution (20%) was added until pH 10 was reached. The product was extracted with ethyl acetate (50mLx4), the combined organic layer were dried over MgSO_4 and evaporated to obtained 4.9g of the title compound (68.6% yield). the product was found to be pure by HPLC.

Example 8

1-Benzyl-4-(((5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonylindan-1-on)-2-yl)methyl)piperidine:

The product from example 8 (8.23g) was dissolved in toluene (100mL), triethylamine (15mL) and benzyl chloride (2.9mL) were added therein and the reaction mixture was heated to 35°C and stirred overnight. The organic layer was washed with water and brine; then dried over MgSO_4 and evaporated. The crude product was crystallized from ethyl acetate-hexane to give 9.53g of white solid, (89% yield).

Mass spectrum m/e : 452 $[\text{M}+\text{H}^+]$.

^1H NMR (CDCl_3 , $\delta(\text{ppm})$): 7.29(m, 5H), 7.22(s, 1H), 6.88(s, 1H), 4.14(q, 2H), 3.97(s, 3H), 3.89(s, 3H), 3.70(m, 2H), 3.44(s, 2H), 3.01(d, 2H), 2.97(m, 2H), 2.0(m, 2H), 1.37(m, 2H), 1.23(m, 3H), 1.20(t, 3H).

^{13}C NMR(CDCl_3 , $\delta(\text{ppm})$): 200, 171, 149,148, 138, 129-126, 107, 105, 63, 61.3, 58, 56, 53, 41, 36, 33, 18, 14.

IR(NaCl, Nujol) $\nu(\text{cm}^{-1})$: 2923, 2853, 1701(C=O), 1591, 1499, 1459, 1376.

UV (MeOH) $\lambda_{\text{max}}(\text{nm})$: 207, 232, 272, 318.

Example 9

1-Methyl-4-((5,6-dimethoxy-2-ethoxycarbonyl-1-indanone)-2-yl)methylpiperidine:

Following the procedure described in example 8, the product obtained in example 2 (1.7g), triethylamine (4mL), CH_2Cl_2 (10mL), and methyl iodide (0.67g)

in CH_2Cl_2 (10mL) were reacted. After crystallization, 1.41g of the title compound was obtained as white crystals in 80% yield.

Mass spectrum m/e : 376 $[\text{M}+\text{H}^+]$.

Example 10

1-Benzyl-[4-((5,6-dimethoxyindan-1-one)-2-yl)methyl]piperidine (Donepezil):

The product from example 8 (3.55g,) was dissolved in ethanol-water mixture (5:1). Potassium hydroxide (2.05g) was added and the solution was refluxed for 60min. Water (50ml) was added. And a yellowish precipitation was formed. Ethyl acetate was added, and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. Donepezil free base was obtained as white solid. The product was crystallized from ethanol to obtain 2.3g of the product (80% yield).

Mass spectrum m/e : 380 $[\text{M}+\text{H}^+]$.

$^1\text{H-NMR}$ (CDCl_3 , δ (ppm)): 7.63(brs, 2H), 7.44(brs, 3H), 7.11(s, 1H), 6.85(s, 1H), 4.16(s, 2H), 3.95(s, 3H), 3.89(s, 3H), 3.40(m, 2H), 3.25(m, 1H), 2.66(m, 4H), 2.06-1.96(m, 6H), 1.51(m, 1H).

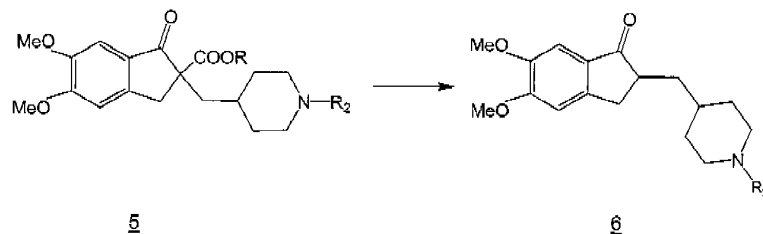
It will be evident to those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to the details of the foregoing illustrative examples and that the present invention may be embodied in other specific forms without departing from the essential attributes thereof, and it is therefore desired that the present embodiments and examples be considered in all respects as illustrative and not restrictive, reference being made to the appended claims, rather than to the foregoing description, and all changes which come within the meaning and range of equivalency of the claims are therefore intended to be embraced therein.

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THE CLAIMS DEFINING THE INVENTION ARE AS FOLLOWS:

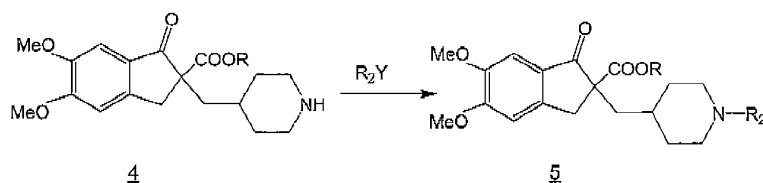
1. A process for the preparation of a compound of the formula 6 comprising the hydrolysis and decarboxylation of a compound of the formula 5 according to the reaction:



- 10 wherein R and R₂ are independently a C₁-C₄ alkyl group or an aralkyl group.

2. A process for the preparation of a compound 6 according to claim 1 wherein the preparation of compound 5 is achieved by the alkylation or aralkylation of compound 4 according to the reaction:

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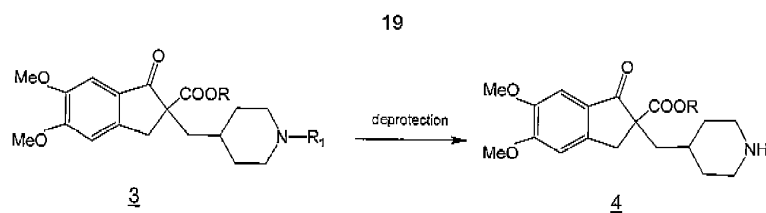
wherein R and R₂ are as defined in Claim 1 and Y is a leaving group.

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3. A process for the preparation of compound 6 according to claim 1 or claim 2 wherein the preparation of compound 4 is achieved by the removal of the N-protecting group of compound 3 according to the reaction

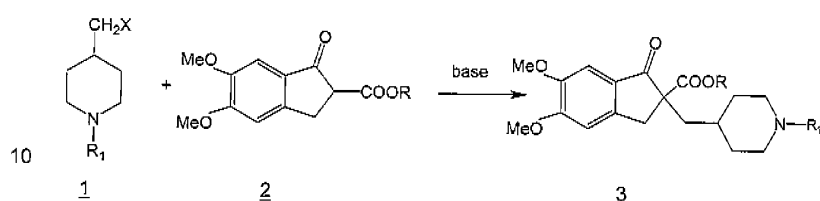
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wherein R is as defined in Claim 1 and R₁ is an N-protecting group,

4. A process for the preparation of compound 6 according to any one of claims 1, 2 and 3 wherein the preparation of compound 3 is achieved by the coupling of compounds 1 and 2 according to the reaction:



wherein R and R₁ are as defined in Claims 1 and 3 and X is a leaving group.

5. A process according to claim 1 wherein the hydrolysis and decarboxylation are carried out in a solution, at elevated temperature and in the presence of a base.

6. A process according to claim 5 wherein the temperature is in the range of 60-100°C.

7. A process according to claim 5 wherein the base is hydroxide or carbonate of an alkali metal.

8. A process according to claim 7 wherein said base is potassium hydroxide.

9. A process according to claim 5 wherein the reaction is carried out in a mixture of a C₁-C₆ alcohol and water.

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10. A process according to claim 9 wherein the reaction is carried out in the presence of ethanol and water.
- 5 11. A process according to claim 2 wherein the reaction is carried out in a solution, in the presence of an organic or an inorganic base.
12. A process according to claim 11 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of toluene, methylene chloride, chloroform and tetrahydrofuran (THF).
- 10 13. A process according to claim 11 wherein said solvent is methylene chloride.
14. A process according to claim 11 wherein the base is an alkali metal hydroxide or an alkali metal carbonate or an amine.
- 15 15. A process according to claim 11 wherein said base is triethylamine.
16. A process according to claim 3 wherein R₁ is benzyloxycarbonyl (CBZ).
17. A process according to claim 16 wherein the deprotection reaction is carried out in the presence of solvent, at elevated temperature using acid as catalyst.
- 20 18. A process according to claim 16 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of toluene, methylene chloride, chloroform and tetrahydrofuran.
- 25 19. A process according to claim 18 wherein the solvent is toluene.
20. A process according to claim 16 wherein the acid is 30% solution of HBr in acetic acid.
- 30 21. A process according to claim 16 wherein the deprotection reaction is carried out in a solvent by hydrogenolysis in the presence of a precious metal catalyst.
22. A process according to claim 21 wherein the solvent is a C₁-C₈ alcohol.

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23. 23. A process according to claim 22 wherein the solvent is ethanol.
24. A process according to claim 21 wherein the catalyst is a supported palladium or platinum catalyst.
25. A process according to claim 24 wherein the catalyst is palladium on charcoal A.
26. A process according to claim 3 wherein R_1 is t-butoxycarbonyl (t-BOC).
27. A process according to claim 26 wherein the deprotection is carried out in a solution in a presence of an acid.
28. A process according to claim 27 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of toluene, methylene chloride, chloroform and tetrahydrofuran.
29. A process according to claim 28 wherein the solvent is methylene chloride.
30. A process according to claim 28 wherein the acid is trifluoroacetic acid.
31. A process according to claim 4 wherein the coupling reaction is carried out in a solution, at elevated temperature and in the presence of a base.
32. A process according to claim 31 wherein the solvent is selected from the group consisting of dimethylformamide (DMF), dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO), ethanol and methanol.
33. A process according to claim 32 wherein the solvent is dimethylformamide.
34. A process according to claim 31 wherein the base is an alkali metal carbonate, alkali metal hydroxide, alkali metal hydride or alkali metal alkoxide.
35. A process according to claim 34 wherein the base is potassium carbonate.

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36. A process according to claim 31 wherein the reaction is carried out within a temperature range of 30-70°C.
37. A process for the preparation of Donepezil comprising:
- i. coupling of a compound of general formula 1 with a compound of general formula 2 wherein R, R₁ and X are as defined in claim 4;
 - ii. deprotection of compound of general formula 3 wherein R and R₁ are as defined in claim 3;
 - iii. benzylation of a compound of general formula 4 with a compound of formula PhCH₂Y wherein Y is as defined in claim 2; and
 - iv. hydrolysis and decarboxylation of a compound of general formula 5 wherein R is as defined in claim 1 and R₂ is benzyl.
38. A process according to claim 37 wherein step c is carried out with a benzylhalide.
39. Donepezil or salts thereof produced according to the process of claim 37.
40. Compounds of general formula 3 wherein R and R₁ are as defined in claim 4.
41. Compounds according to claim 40 wherein R is methyl or ethyl group and R₁ is CBZ or t-BOC group.
42. Compounds of general formula 4 or salts thereof wherein R is as defined in claim 3.
43. Compounds according to claim 34 wherein R is methyl or ethyl group.
44. Compounds of general formula 5 or salts thereof wherein R and R₂ are as defined in claim 2.
45. Compounds according to claim 44 wherein R₂ is benzyl group and R is ethyl or methyl group.

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46. A process according to claim 1 or claim 37 substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any of the Examples.

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