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(54) **Titre : CONJUGUES D'OLIGOMERE-AGONISTE OPIOIDE**
(54) **Title: OLIGOMER-OPIOID AGONIST CONJUGATES**

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

The invention provides opioid agonists that are chemically modified by covalent attachment of a water-soluble oligomer. A conjugate of the invention, when administered by any of a number of administration routes, exhibits characteristics that are different from those of the opioid agonist not attached to the water-soluble oligomer.



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WO 2008/112288 A3

- 1 -

OLIGOMER-OPIOID AGONIST CONJUGATES**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] This invention provides (among other things) chemically modified opioid agonists that possess certain advantages over opioid agonists lacking the chemical modification. The chemically modified opioid agonists described herein relate to and/or have application(s) in (among others) the fields of drug discovery, pharmacotherapy, physiology, organic chemistry and polymer chemistry.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Opioid agonists, such as morphine, have long been used to treat patients suffering from pain. Opioid agonists exert their analgesic and other pharmacological effects through interactions with opioid receptors, of which, there are three main classes: mu (μ) receptors, kappa (κ) receptors, and delta (δ) receptors. Most of the clinically used opioid agonists are relatively selective for mu receptors, although opioid agonists typically have agonist activity at other opioid receptors (particularly at increased concentrations).

[0004] Opioids exert their effects by selectively inhibiting the release of neurotransmitters, such as acetylcholine, norepinephrine, dopamine, serotonin, and substance P.

[0005] Pharmacologically, opioid agonists represent an important class of agents employed in the management of pain. Unfortunately, the use of opioid agonists is associated with the potential for abuse. In addition, oral administration of opioid agonists often results in significant first pass metabolism. Furthermore, administration of opioid agonists results in significant CNS-mediated effects, such as slowed breathing, which can result in death. Thus, a reduction of any one of these or other characteristics would enhance their desirability as therapeutic drugs.

[0006] The present invention seeks to address these and other needs in the art by providing (among other things) a conjugate of a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer and a opioid agonist.

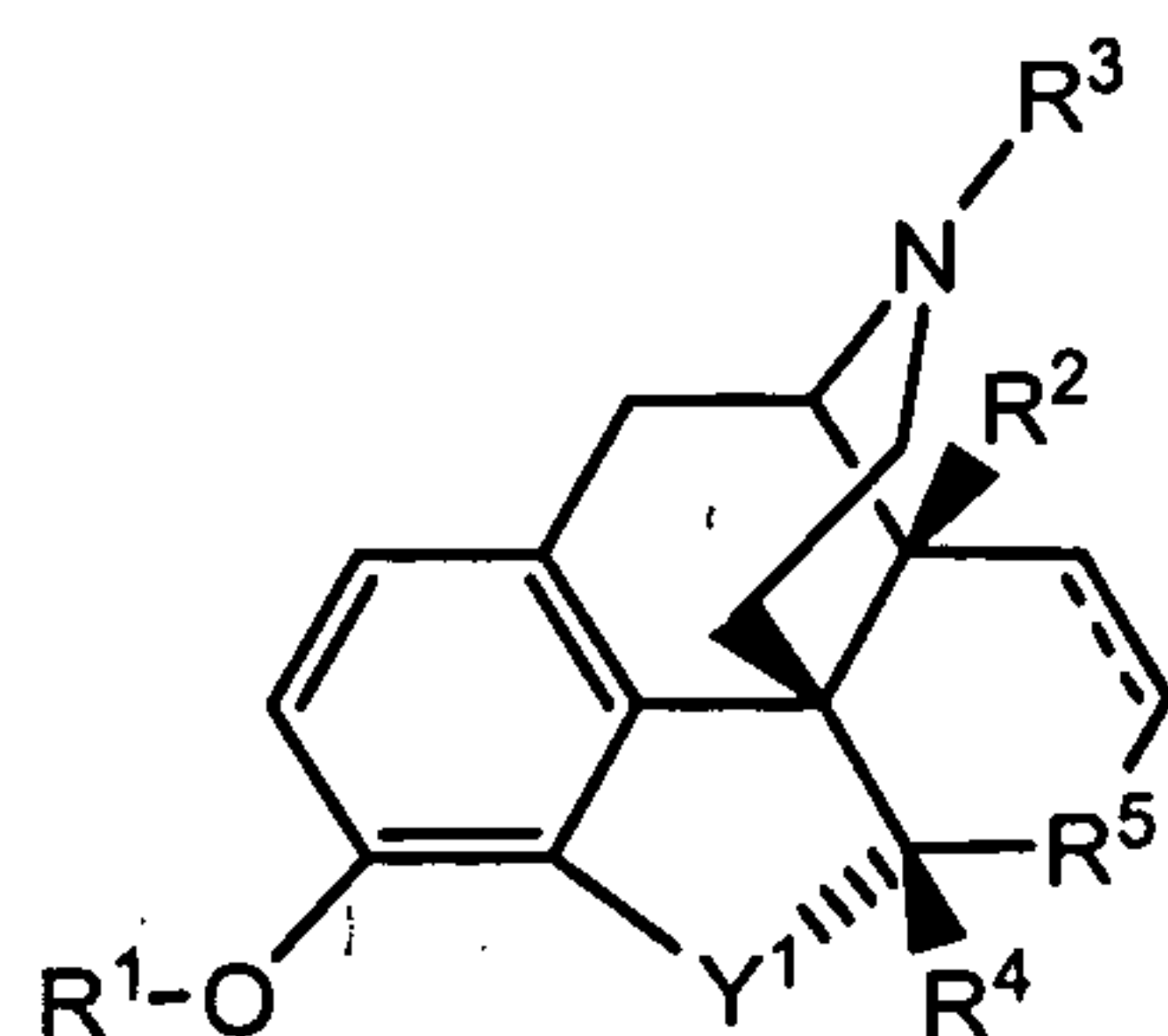
SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0007] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached (preferably via a stable linkage) to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0008] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of a kappa opioid agonist covalently attached (preferably via a stable linkage) to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer [wherein it is understood that a kappa opioid agonist (i) is preferentially selective for kappa opioid receptors over both mu opioid receptors and delta opioid receptors within the same mammalian species, and (ii) will have agonist activity at the kappa receptor].

[0009] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of a mu opioid agonist covalently attached (preferably via a stable linkage) to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer [wherein it is understood that a kappa opioid agonist (i) is preferentially selective for mu opioid receptors over both kappa opioid receptors and delta opioid receptors within the same mammalian species, and (ii) will have agonist activity at the mu receptor].

[0010] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer, wherein the opioid agonist has a structure encompassed by the following formula:



Formula I

wherein:

R^1 is H or an organic radical [such as methyl, ethyl and $-C(O)CH_3$];

R^2 is H or OH;

R^3 is H or an organic radical;

R^4 is H or an organic radical;

the dotted line ("---") represents an optional double bond;

Y^1 is O (oxygen) or S; and

R^5 is selected from the group consisting of $-\overset{\text{O}}{\underset{\text{||}}{\text{C}}}-$, $-\overset{\text{H}}{\underset{\text{OH}}{\text{C}}}-$, and $-\overset{\text{H}}{\underset{\text{OR}^6}{\text{C}}}-$ (without regard to stereochemistry), wherein R^6 is an organic radical [including $\text{C}(\text{O})\text{CH}_3$].

[0011] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable or degradable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer, wherein the opioid agonist is selected from the group consisting of asimadoline, bremazocine, enadoline, ethylketocyclazocine, GR89,696, ICI204448, ICI197067, PD117,302, nalbuphine, pentazocine, quadazocine (WIN 44,441-3), salvinorin A, spiradoline, TRK-820, U50488, and U69593.

[0012] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a composition is provided, the composition comprising:

(i) a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer; and

(ii) optionally, a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.

[0013] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a dosage form is provided, the dosage form comprising a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0014] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising covalently attaching a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer to an opioid agonist.

[0015] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising administering a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0016] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising binding (e.g., selectively binding) mu opioid receptors, wherein said binding is achieved by administering a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer. In one or more embodiments

of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising binding (e.g., selectively binding) mu opioid receptors, wherein said binding is achieved by administering an effective amount to a mammalian patient a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0017] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising binding (e.g., selectively binding) kappa opioid receptors, wherein said binding is achieved by administering a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer. In one or more embodiments of the invention, a method is provided, the method comprising binding (e.g., selectively binding) kappa opioid receptors, wherein said binding is achieved by administering an effective amount to a mammalian patient a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0018] These and other objects, aspects, embodiments and features of the invention will become more fully apparent when read in conjunction with the following detailed description.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0019] As used in this specification, the singular forms "a," "an," and "the" include plural referents unless the context clearly dictates otherwise.

[0020] In describing and claiming the present invention, the following terminology will be used in accordance with the definitions described below.

[0021] "Water soluble, non-peptidic oligomer" indicates an oligomer that is at least 35% (by weight) soluble, preferably greater than 70% (by weight), and more preferably greater than 95% (by weight) soluble, in water at room temperature. Typically, an unfiltered aqueous preparation of a "water-soluble" oligomer transmits at least 75%, more preferably at least 95%, of the amount of light transmitted by the same solution after filtering. It is most preferred, however, that the water-soluble oligomer is at least 95% (by weight) soluble in water or completely soluble in water. With respect to being "non-peptidic," an oligomer is non-peptidic when it has less than 35% (by weight) of amino acid residues.

[0022] The terms "monomer," "monomeric subunit" and "monomeric unit" are used interchangeably herein and refer to one of the basic structural units of a polymer or oligomer. In the case of a homo-oligomer, a single repeating structural unit forms the oligomer. In the case of a co-oligomer, two or more structural units are repeated -- either in a pattern or

randomly -- to form the oligomer. Preferred oligomers used in connection with present the invention are homo-oligomers. The water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer typically comprises one or more monomers serially attached to form a chain of monomers. The oligomer can be formed from a single monomer type (i.e., is homo-oligomeric) or two or three monomer types (i.e., is co-oligomeric).

[0023] An "oligomer" is a molecule possessing from about 2 to about 50 monomers, preferably from about 2 to about 30 monomers. The architecture of an oligomer can vary. Specific oligomers for use in the invention include those having a variety of geometries such as linear, branched, or forked, to be described in greater detail below.

[0024] "PEG" or "polyethylene glycol," as used herein, is meant to encompass any water-soluble poly(ethylene oxide). Unless otherwise indicated, a "PEG oligomer" (also called an oligoethylene glycol) is one in which substantially all (and more preferably all) monomeric subunits are ethylene oxide subunits. The oligomer may, however, contain distinct end capping moieties or functional groups, e.g., for conjugation. Typically, PEG oligomers for use in the present invention will comprise one of the two following structures: $-(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_n-$ or $-(\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})_{n-1}\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2-$, depending upon whether the terminal oxygen(s) has been displaced, e.g., during a synthetic transformation. For PEG oligomers, "n" varies from about 2 to 50, preferably from about 2 to about 30, and the terminal groups and architecture of the overall PEG can vary. When PEG further comprises a functional group, A, for linking to, e.g., a small molecule drug, the functional group when covalently attached to a PEG oligomer does not result in formation of (i) an oxygen-oxygen bond (-O-O-, a peroxide linkage), or (ii) a nitrogen-oxygen bond (N-O, O-N).

[0025] An "end capping group" is generally a non-reactive carbon-containing group attached to a terminal oxygen of a PEG oligomer. Exemplary end capping groups comprise a C_{1-5} alkyl group, such as methyl, ethyl and benzyl), as well as aryl, heteroaryl, cyclo, heterocyclo, and the like. For the purposes of the present invention, the preferred capping groups have relatively low molecular weights such as methyl or ethyl. The end-capping group can also comprise a detectable label. Such labels include, without limitation, fluorescers, chemiluminescers, moieties used in enzyme labeling, colorimetric labels (e.g., dyes), metal ions, and radioactive moieties.

[0026] "Branched", in reference to the geometry or overall structure of an oligomer, refers to an oligomer having two or more polymers representing distinct "arms" that extend from a branch point.

[0027] "Forked" in reference to the geometry or overall structure of an oligomer, refers to an oligomer having two or more functional groups (typically through one or more atoms) extending from a branch point.

[0028] A "branch point" refers to a bifurcation point comprising one or more atoms at which an oligomer branches or forks from a linear structure into one or more additional arms.

[0029] The term "reactive" or "activated" refers to a functional group that reacts readily or at a practical rate under conventional conditions of organic synthesis. This is in contrast to those groups that either do not react or require strong catalysts or impractical reaction conditions in order to react (i.e., a "nonreactive" or "inert" group).

[0030] "Not readily reactive," with reference to a functional group present on a molecule in a reaction mixture, indicates that the group remains largely intact under conditions that are effective to produce a desired reaction in the reaction mixture.

[0031] A "protecting group" is a moiety that prevents or blocks reaction of a particular chemically reactive functional group in a molecule under certain reaction conditions. The protecting group will vary depending upon the type of chemically reactive group being protected as well as the reaction conditions to be employed and the presence of additional reactive or protecting groups in the molecule. Functional groups which may be protected include, by way of example, carboxylic acid groups, amino groups, hydroxyl groups, thiol groups, carbonyl groups and the like. Representative protecting groups for carboxylic acids include esters (such as a *p*-methoxybenzyl ester), amides and hydrazides; for amino groups, carbamates (such as *tert*-butoxycarbonyl) and amides; for hydroxyl groups, ethers and esters; for thiol groups, thioethers and thioesters; for carbonyl groups, acetals and ketals; and the like. Such protecting groups are well-known to those skilled in the art and are described, for example, in T.W. Greene and G.M. Wuts, *Protecting Groups in Organic Synthesis*, Third Edition, Wiley, New York, 1999, and references cited therein.

[0032] A functional group in "protected form" refers to a functional group bearing a protecting group. As used herein, the term "functional group" or any synonym thereof encompasses protected forms thereof.

[0033] A "physiologically cleavable" or "hydrolyzable" or "degradable" bond is a relatively labile bond that reacts with water (i.e., is hydrolyzed) under ordinary physiological conditions. The tendency of a bond to hydrolyze in water under ordinary physiological conditions will depend not only on the general type of linkage connecting two central atoms

but also on the substituents attached to these central atoms. Such bonds are generally recognizable by those of ordinary skill in the art. Appropriate hydrolytically unstable or weak linkages include but are not limited to carboxylate ester, phosphate ester, anhydrides, acetals, ketals, acyloxyalkyl ether, imines, orthoesters, peptides, oligonucleotides, thioesters, and carbonates.

[0034] An "enzymatically degradable linkage" means a linkage that is subject to degradation by one or more enzymes under ordinary physiological conditions.

[0035] A "stable" linkage or bond refers to a chemical moiety or bond, typically a covalent bond, that is substantially stable in water, that is to say, does not undergo hydrolysis under ordinary physiological conditions to any appreciable extent over an extended period of time. Examples of hydrolytically stable linkages include but are not limited to the following: carbon-carbon bonds (e.g., in aliphatic chains), ethers, amides, urethanes, amines, and the like. Generally, a stable linkage is one that exhibits a rate of hydrolysis of less than about 1-2% per day under ordinary physiological conditions. Hydrolysis rates of representative chemical bonds can be found in most standard chemistry textbooks.

[0036] In the context of describing the consistency of oligomers in a given composition, "substantially" or "essentially" means nearly totally or completely, for instance, 95% or greater, more preferably 97% or greater, still more preferably 98% or greater, even more preferably 99% or greater, yet still more preferably 99.9% or greater, with 99.99% or greater being most preferred of some given quantity.

[0037] "Monodisperse" refers to an oligomer composition wherein substantially all of the oligomers in the composition have a well-defined, single molecular weight and defined number of monomers, as determined by chromatography or mass spectrometry. Monodisperse oligomer compositions are in one sense pure, that is, substantially comprising molecules having a single and definable number of monomers rather than several different numbers of monomers (i.e., an oligomer composition having three or more different oligomer sizes). A monodisperse oligomer composition possesses a MW/Mn value of 1.0005 or less, and more preferably, a MW/Mn value of 1.0000. By extension, a composition comprised of monodisperse conjugates means that substantially all oligomers of all conjugates in the composition have a single and definable number (as a whole number) of monomers rather than a distribution and would possess a MW/Mn value of 1.0005, and more preferably, a MW/Mn value of 1.0000 if the oligomer were not attached to the residue of the opioid

agonist. A composition comprised of monodisperse conjugates can include, however, one or more nonconjugate substances such as solvents, reagents, excipients, and so forth.

[0038] "Bimodal," in reference to an oligomer composition, refers to an oligomer composition wherein substantially all oligomers in the composition have one of two definable and different numbers (as whole numbers) of monomers rather than a distribution, and whose distribution of molecular weights, when plotted as a number fraction versus molecular weight, appears as two separate identifiable peaks. Preferably, for a bimodal oligomer composition as described herein, each peak is generally symmetric about its mean, although the size of the two peaks may differ. Ideally, the polydispersity index of each peak in the bimodal distribution, M_w/M_n , is 1.01 or less, more preferably 1.001 or less, and even more preferably 1.0005 or less, and most preferably a M_w/M_n value of 1.0000. By extension, a composition comprised of bimodal conjugates means that substantially all oligomers of all conjugates in the composition have one of two definable and different numbers (as whole numbers) of monomers rather than a large distribution and would possess a M_w/M_n value of 1.01 or less, more preferably 1.001 or less and even more preferably 1.0005 or less, and most preferably a M_w/M_n value of 1.0000 if the oligomer were not attached to the residue of the opioid agonist. A composition comprised of bimodal conjugates can include, however, one or more nonconjugate substances such as solvents, reagents, excipients, and so forth.

[0039] An "opioid agonist" is broadly used herein to refer to an organic, inorganic, or organometallic compound typically having a molecular weight of less than about 1000 Daltons (and typically less than 500 Daltons) and having some degree of activity as a mu and/or kappa agonist. Opioid agonists encompass oligopeptides and other biomolecules having a molecular weight of less than about 1000.

[0040] A "biological membrane" is any membrane, typically made from specialized cells or tissues, that serves as a barrier to at least some foreign entities or otherwise undesirable materials. As used herein a "biological membrane" includes those membranes that are associated with physiological protective barriers including, for example: the blood-brain barrier (BBB); the blood-cerebrospinal fluid barrier; the blood-placental barrier; the blood-milk barrier; the blood-testes barrier; and mucosal barriers including the vaginal mucosa, urethral mucosa, anal mucosa, buccal mucosa, sublingual mucosa, rectal mucosa, and so forth. Unless the context clearly dictates otherwise, the term "biological membrane" does not include those membranes associated with the middle gastro-intestinal tract (e.g., stomach and small intestines).

[0041] A "biological membrane crossing rate," as used herein, provides a measure of a compound's ability to cross a biological membrane (such as the membrane associated with the blood-brain barrier). A variety of methods can be used to assess transport of a molecule across any given biological membrane. Methods to assess the biological membrane crossing rate associated with any given biological barrier (e.g., the blood-cerebrospinal fluid barrier, the blood-placental barrier, the blood-milk barrier, the intestinal barrier, and so forth), are known in the art, described herein and/or in the relevant literature, and/or can be determined by one of ordinary skill in the art.

[0042] A "reduced rate of metabolism" in reference to the present invention, refers to a measurable reduction in the rate of metabolism of a water-soluble oligomer-small molecule drug conjugate as compared to rate of metabolism of the small molecule drug not attached to the water-soluble oligomer (i.e., the small molecule drug itself) or a reference standard material. In the special case of "reduced first pass rate of metabolism," the same "reduced rate of metabolism" is required except that the small molecule drug (or reference standard material) and the corresponding conjugate are administered orally. Orally administered drugs are absorbed from the gastro-intestinal tract into the portal circulation and must pass through the liver prior to reaching the systemic circulation. Because the liver is the primary site of drug metabolism or biotransformation, a substantial amount of drug can be metabolized before it ever reaches the systemic circulation. The degree of first pass metabolism, and thus, any reduction thereof, can be measured by a number of different approaches. For instance, animal blood samples can be collected at timed intervals and the plasma or serum analyzed by liquid chromatography/mass spectrometry for metabolite levels. Other techniques for measuring a "reduced rate of metabolism" associated with the first pass metabolism and other metabolic processes are known in the art, described herein and/or in the relevant literature, and/or can be determined by one of ordinary skill in the art. Preferably, a conjugate of the invention can provide a reduced rate of metabolism reduction satisfying at least one of the following values: at least about 30%; at least about 40%; at least about 50%; at least about 60%; at least about 70%; at least about 80%; and at least about 90%. A compound (such as a small molecule drug or conjugate thereof) that is "orally bioavailable" is one that preferably possesses a bioavailability when administered orally of greater than 25%, and preferably greater than 70%, where a compound's bioavailability is the fraction of administered drug that reaches the systemic circulation in unmetabolized form.

[0043] "Alkyl" refers to a hydrocarbon chain, typically ranging from about 1 to 20 atoms in length. Such hydrocarbon chains are preferably but not necessarily saturated and may be branched or straight chain, although typically straight chain is preferred. Exemplary alkyl groups include methyl, ethyl, propyl, butyl, pentyl, 1-methylbutyl, 1-ethylpropyl, 3-methylpentyl, and the like. As used herein, "alkyl" includes cycloalkyl when three or more carbon atoms are referenced. An "alkenyl" group is an alkyl of 2 to 20 carbon atoms with at least one carbon-carbon double bond.

[0044] The terms "substituted alkyl" or "substituted C_{q-r} alkyl" where q and r are integers identifying the range of carbon atoms contained in the alkyl group, denotes the above alkyl groups that are substituted by one, two or three halo (e.g., F, Cl, Br, I), trifluoromethyl, hydroxy, C₁₋₇ alkyl (e.g., methyl, ethyl, n-propyl, isopropyl, butyl, t-butyl, and so forth), C₁₋₇ alkoxy, C₁₋₇ acyloxy, C₃₋₇ heterocyclic, amino, phenoxy, nitro, carboxy, carboxy, acyl, cyano. The substituted alkyl groups may be substituted once, twice or three times with the same or with different substituents.

[0045] "Lower alkyl" refers to an alkyl group containing from 1 to 6 carbon atoms, and may be straight chain or branched, as exemplified by methyl, ethyl, n-butyl, i-butyl, t-butyl. "Lower alkenyl" refers to a lower alkyl group of 2 to 6 carbon atoms having at least one carbon-carbon double bond.

[0046] "Non-interfering substituents" are those groups that, when present in a molecule, are typically non-reactive with other functional groups contained within the molecule.

[0047] "Alkoxy" refers to an -O-R group, wherein R is alkyl or substituted alkyl, preferably C₁-C₂₀ alkyl (e.g., methoxy, ethoxy, propyloxy, benzyl, etc.), preferably C₁-C₇.

[0048] "Pharmaceutically acceptable excipient" or "pharmaceutically acceptable carrier" refers to component that can be included in the compositions of the invention in order to provide for a composition that has an advantage (e.g., more suited for administration to a patient) over a composition lacking the component and that is recognized as not causing significant adverse toxicological effects to a patient.

[0049] The term "aryl" means an aromatic group having up to 14 carbon atoms. Aryl groups include phenyl, naphthyl, biphenyl, phenanthrenyl, naphthacenyl, and the like. "Substituted phenyl" and "substituted aryl" denote a phenyl group and aryl group, respectively, substituted with one, two, three, four or five (e.g. 1-2, 1-3 or 1-4 substituents)

chosen from halo (F, Cl, Br, I), hydroxy, hydroxy, cyano, nitro, alkyl (e.g., C₁₋₆ alkyl), alkoxy (e.g., C₁₋₆ alkoxy), benzyloxy, carboxy, aryl, and so forth.

[0050] An "aromatic-containing moiety" is a collection of atoms containing at least aryl and optionally one or more atoms. Suitable aromatic-containing moieties are described herein.

[0051] For simplicity, chemical moieties are defined and referred to throughout primarily as univalent chemical moieties (e.g., alkyl, aryl, etc.). Nevertheless, such terms are also used to convey corresponding multivalent moieties under the appropriate structural circumstances clear to those skilled in the art. For example, while an "alkyl" moiety generally refers to a monovalent radical (e.g., CH₃-CH₂-), in certain circumstances a bivalent linking moiety can be "alkyl," in which case those skilled in the art will understand the alkyl to be a divalent radical (e.g., -CH₂-CH₂-), which is equivalent to the term "alkylene." (Similarly, in circumstances in which a divalent moiety is required and is stated as being "aryl," those skilled in the art will understand that the term "aryl" refers to the corresponding divalent moiety, arylene). All atoms are understood to have their normal number of valences for bond formation (i.e., 4 for carbon, 3 for N, 2 for O, and 2, 4, or 6 for S, depending on the oxidation state of the S).

[0052] "Pharmacologically effective amount," "physiologically effective amount," and "therapeutically effective amount" are used interchangeably herein to mean the amount of a water-soluble oligomer-small molecule drug conjugate present in a composition that is needed to provide a threshold level of active agent and/or conjugate in the bloodstream or in the target tissue. The precise amount will depend upon numerous factors, e.g., the particular active agent, the components and physical characteristics of the composition, intended patient population, patient considerations, and the like, and can readily be determined by one skilled in the art, based upon the information provided herein and available in the relevant literature.

[0053] A "difunctional" oligomer is an oligomer having two functional groups contained therein, typically at its termini. When the functional groups are the same, the oligomer is said to be homodifunctional. When the functional groups are different, the oligomer is said to be heterobifunctional.

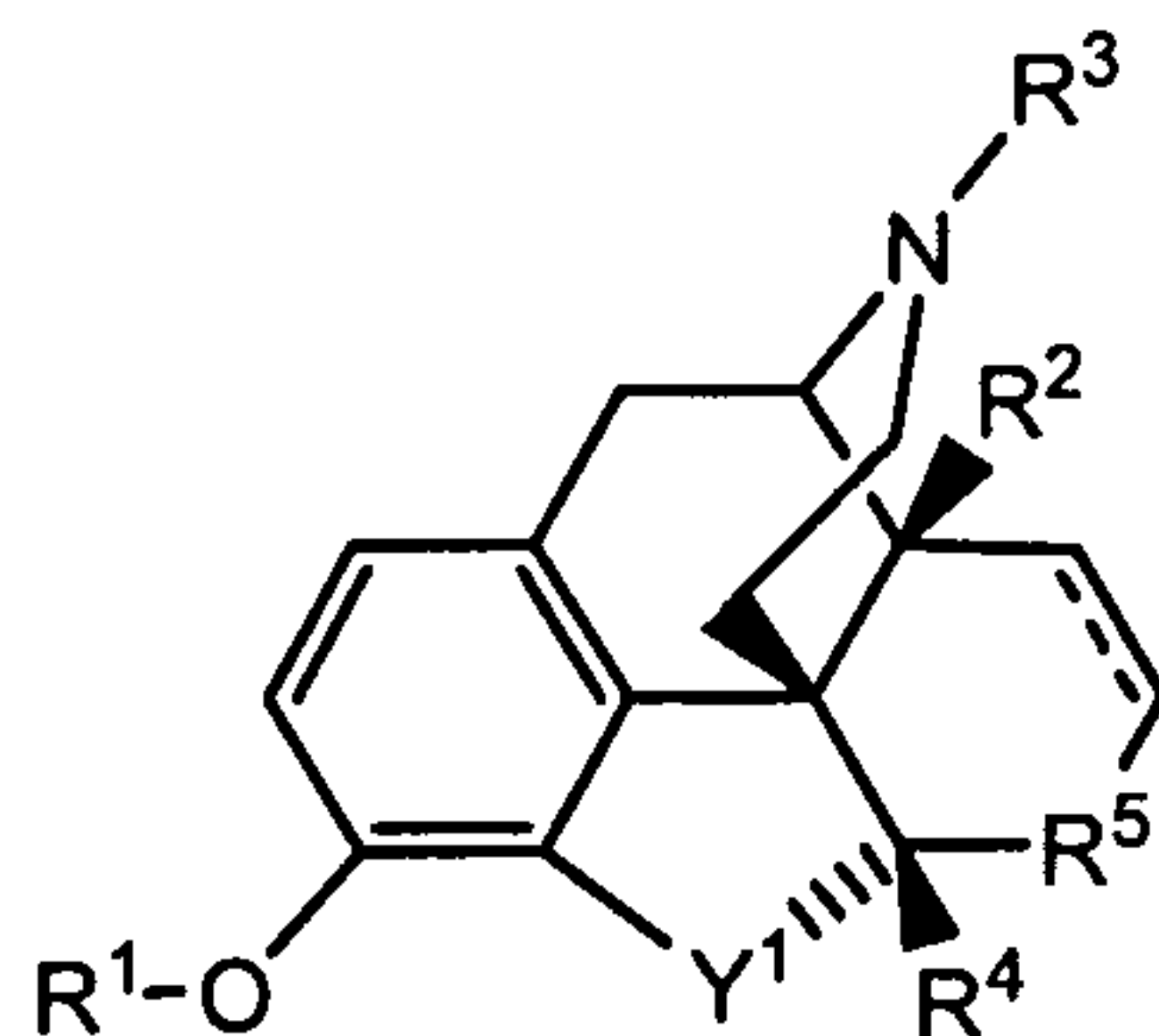
[0054] A basic reactant or an acidic reactant described herein include neutral, charged, and any corresponding salt forms thereof.

[0055] The term "patient," refers to a living organism suffering from or prone to a condition that can be prevented or treated by administration of a conjugate as described herein, typically, but not necessarily, in the form of a water-soluble oligomer-small molecule drug conjugate, and includes both humans and animals.

[0056] "Optional" or "optionally" means that the subsequently described circumstance may but need not necessarily occur, so that the description includes instances where the circumstance occurs and instances where it does not.

[0057] As indicated above, the present invention is directed to (among other things) a compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable or degradable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0058] In one or more embodiments of the invention, a compound is provided, the compound comprising a residue of an opioid agonist covalently attached via a stable or degradable linkage to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer, wherein the opioid agonist has a structure encompassed by the following formula:



Formula I

wherein:

R^1 is H or an organic radical [such as methyl, ethyl and $-C(O)CH_3$];

R^2 is H or OH;

R^3 is H or an organic radical;

R^4 is H or an organic radical;

the dotted line ("---") represents an optional double bond;

Y^1 is O or S; and

R^5 is selected from the group consisting of $-\overset{\overset{O}{\parallel}}{C}-$, $-\overset{\overset{H}{\mid}}{C}-OH$, and $-\overset{\overset{H}{\mid}}{C}-OR^6$ (without regard to stereochemistry), wherein R^6 is an organic radical [including $C(O)CH_3$].

[0059] Examples of specific opioid agonists include those selected from the group consisting acetorphine, acetyldihydrocodeine, acetyldihydrocodeinone, acetylmorphine, alfentanil, allylprodine, alphaprodine, anileridine, benzylmorphine, bezitramide,

buprenorphine, butorphanol, clonitazene, codeine, desomorphine, dextromoramide, dezocine, diampromide, diamorphine, dihydrocodeine, dihydromorphine, dimenoxadol, dimepheptanol, dimethylthiambutene, dioxaphetyl butyrate, dipipanone, eptazocine, ethoheptazine, ethylmethylthiambutene, ethylmorphine, etonitazene, etorphine, dihydroetorphine, fentanyl and derivatives, heroin, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, hydroxypethidine, isomethadone, ketobemidone, levorphanol, levophenacymorphan, lofentanil, meperidine, meptazinol, metazocine, methadone, metopon, morphine, myrophine, narceine, nicomorphine, norlevorphanol, normethadone, nalorphine, nalbuphine, normorphine, norpipanone, opium, oxycodone, oxymorphone, papaveretum, pentazocine, phenadoxone, phenomorphan, phenazocine, phenoperidine, piminodine, piritramide, propheptazine, promedol, properidine, propoxyphene, sufentanil, tilidine, and tramadol. In certain embodiments, the opioid agonist is selected from the group consisting of hydrocodone, morphine, hydromorphone, oxycodone, codeine, levorphanol, meperidine, methadone, oxymorphone, buprenorphine, fentanyl, dipipanone, heroin, tramadol, nalbuphine, etorphine, dihydroetorphine, butorphanol, levorphanol.

[0060] It is believed that an advantage of the compounds of the present invention is their ability to retain some degree of opioid agonist activity while also exhibiting a decrease in metabolism and/or resulting in a decrease of CNS-mediated effects associated with the corresponding opioid agonist in unconjugated form. Although not wishing to be bound by theory, it is believed that the oligomer-containing conjugates described herein -- in contrast to the unconjugated "original" opioid agonist -- are not metabolized as readily because the oligomer serves to reduce the overall affinity of the compound to substrates that can metabolize opioid agonists. In addition (and again, not wishing to be bound by theory), the extra size introduced by the oligomer -- in contrast to the unconjugated "original" opioid agonist -- reduces the ability of the compound to cross the blood-brain barrier.

[0061] Use of oligomers (e.g., from a monodisperse or bimodal composition of oligomers, in contrast to relatively impure compositions) to form the conjugates of the invention can advantageously alter certain properties associated with the corresponding small molecule drug. For instance, a conjugate of the invention, when administered by any of a number of suitable administration routes, such as parenteral, oral, transdermal, buccal, pulmonary, or nasal, exhibits reduced penetration across the blood-brain barrier. It is preferred that the conjugate exhibit slowed, minimal or effectively no crossing of the blood-brain barrier, while still crossing the gastro-intestinal (GI) walls and into the systemic

circulation if oral delivery is intended. Moreover, the conjugates of the invention maintain a degree of bioactivity as well as bioavailability in their conjugated form in comparison to the bioactivity and bioavailability of the compound free of all oligomers.

[0062] With respect to the blood-brain barrier ("BBB"), this barrier restricts the transport of drugs from the blood to the brain. This barrier consists of a continuous layer of unique endothelial cells joined by tight junctions. The cerebral capillaries, which comprise more than 95% of the total surface area of the BBB, represent the principal route for the entry of most solutes and drugs into the central nervous system.

[0063] For compounds whose degree of blood-brain barrier crossing ability is not readily known, such ability can be determined using a suitable animal model such as an *in situ* rat brain perfusion ("RBP") model as described herein. Briefly, the RBP technique involves cannulation of the carotid artery followed by perfusion with a compound solution under controlled conditions, followed by a wash out phase to remove compound remaining in the vascular space. (Such analyses can be conducted, for example, by contract research organizations such as Absorption Systems, Exton, PA). More specifically, in the RBP model, a cannula is placed in the left carotid artery and the side branches are tied off. A physiologic buffer containing the analyte (typically but not necessarily at a 5 micromolar concentration level) is perfused at a flow rate of about 10 mL/minute in a single pass perfusion experiment. After 30 seconds, the perfusion is stopped and the brain vascular contents are washed out with compound-free buffer for an additional 30 seconds. The brain tissue is then removed and analyzed for compound concentrations via liquid chromatograph with tandem mass spectrometry detection (LC/MS/MS). Alternatively, blood-brain barrier permeability can be estimated based upon a calculation of the compound's molecular polar surface area ("PSA"), which is defined as the sum of surface contributions of polar atoms (usually oxygens, nitrogens and attached hydrogens) in a molecule. The PSA has been shown to correlate with compound transport properties such as blood-brain barrier transport. Methods for determining a compound's PSA can be found, e.g., in, Ertl, P., *et al.*, *J. Med. Chem.* 2000, **43**, 3714-3717; and Kelder, J., *et al.*, *Pharm. Res.* 1999, **16**, 1514-1519.

[0064] With respect to the blood-brain barrier, the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer-small molecule drug conjugate exhibits a blood-brain barrier crossing rate that is reduced as compared to the crossing rate of the small molecule drug not attached to the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer. Preferred exemplary reductions in blood-brain barrier crossing rates for the compounds described herein include reductions of: at least about 30%;

at least about 40%; at least about 50%; at least about 60%; at least about 70%; at least about 80%; or at least about 90%, when compared to the blood-brain barrier crossing rate of the small molecule drug not attached to the water-soluble oligomer. A preferred reduction in the blood-brain barrier crossing rate for a conjugate is at least about 20%.

[0065] As indicated above, the compounds of the invention include a residue of an opioid agonist. Assays for determining whether a given compound (regardless of whether the compound is in conjugated form or not) can act as an agonist on a mu receptor or a kappa receptors are described *infra*.

[0066] In some instances, opioid agonists can be obtained from commercial sources. In addition, opioid agonists can be obtained through chemical synthesis. Synthetic approaches for preparing opioid agonists are described in the literature and in, for example, U.S. Patent Nos.: 2,628,962, 2,654,756, 2,649,454, and 2,806,033.

[0067] Each of these (and other) opioid agonists can be covalently attached (either directly or through one or more atoms) to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0068] Small molecule drugs useful in the invention generally have a molecular weight of less than 1000 Da. Exemplary molecular weights of small molecule drugs include molecular weights of: less than about 950; less than about 900; less than about 850; less than about 800; less than about 750; less than about 700; less than about 650; less than about 600; less than about 550; less than about 500; less than about 450; less than about 400; less than about 350; and less than about 300.

[0069] The small molecule drug used in the invention, if chiral, may be in a racemic mixture, or an optically active form, for example, a single optically active enantiomer, or any combination or ratio of enantiomers (i.e., scalemic mixture). In addition, the small molecule drug may possess one or more geometric isomers. With respect to geometric isomers, a composition can comprise a single geometric isomer or a mixture of two or more geometric isomers. A small molecule drug for use in the present invention can be in its customary active form, or may possess some degree of modification. For example, a small molecule drug may have a targeting agent, tag, or transporter attached thereto, prior to or after covalent attachment of an oligomer. Alternatively, the small molecule drug may possess a lipophilic moiety attached thereto, such as a phospholipid (e.g., distearoylphosphatidylethanolamine or "DSPE," dipalmitoylphosphatidylethanolamine or "DPPE," and so forth) or a small fatty acid.

In some instances, however, it is preferred that the small molecule drug moiety does not include attachment to a lipophilic moiety.

[0070] The opioid agonist for coupling to a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer possesses a free hydroxyl, carboxyl, thio, amino group, or the like (i.e., "handle") suitable for covalent attachment to the oligomer. In addition, the opioid agonist can be modified by introduction of a reactive group, preferably by conversion of one of its existing functional groups to a functional group suitable for formation of a stable covalent linkage between the oligomer and the drug.

[0071] Accordingly, each oligomer is composed of up to three different monomer types selected from the group consisting of: alkylene oxide, such as ethylene oxide or propylene oxide; olefinic alcohol, such as vinyl alcohol, 1-propenol or 2-propenol; vinyl pyrrolidone; hydroxyalkyl methacrylamide or hydroxyalkyl methacrylate, where alkyl is preferably methyl; α -hydroxy acid, such as lactic acid or glycolic acid; phosphazene, oxazoline, amino acids, carbohydrates such as monosaccharides, saccharide or mannitol; and N-acryloylmorpholine. Preferred monomer types include alkylene oxide, olefinic alcohol, hydroxyalkyl methacrylamide or methacrylate, N-acryloylmorpholine, and α -hydroxy acid. Preferably, each oligomer is, independently, a co-oligomer of two monomer types selected from this group, or, more preferably, is a homo-oligomer of one monomer type selected from this group.

[0072] The two monomer types in a co-oligomer may be of the same monomer type, for example, two alkylene oxides, such as ethylene oxide and propylene oxide. Preferably, the oligomer is a homo-oligomer of ethylene oxide. Usually, although not necessarily, the terminus (or termini) of the oligomer that is not covalently attached to a small molecule is capped to render it unreactive. Alternatively, the terminus may include a reactive group. When the terminus is a reactive group, the reactive group is either selected such that it is unreactive under the conditions of formation of the final oligomer or during covalent attachment of the oligomer to a small molecule drug, or it is protected as necessary. One common end-functional group is hydroxyl or $-OH$, particularly for oligoethylene oxides.

[0073] The water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer (e.g., "POLY" in various structures provided herein) can have any of a number of different geometries. For example, it can be linear, branched, or forked. Most typically, the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer is linear or is branched, for example, having one branch point. Although much of the discussion

herein is focused upon poly(ethylene oxide) as an illustrative oligomer, the discussion and structures presented herein can be readily extended to encompass any of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomers described above.

[0074] The molecular weight of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer, excluding the linker portion, is generally relatively low. Exemplary values of the molecular weight of the water-soluble polymer include: below about 1500; below about 1450; below about 1400; below about 1350; below about 1300; below about 1250; below about 1200; below about 1150; below about 1100; below about 1050; below about 1000; below about 950; below about 900; below about 850; below about 800; below about 750; below about 700; below about 650; below about 600; below about 550; below about 500; below about 450; below about 400; below about 350; below about 300; below about 250; below about 200; and below about 100 Daltons.

[0075] Exemplary ranges of molecular weights of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer (excluding the linker) include: from about 100 to about 1400 Daltons; from about 100 to about 1200 Daltons; from about 100 to about 800 Daltons; from about 100 to about 500 Daltons; from about 100 to about 400 Daltons; from about 200 to about 500 Daltons; from about 200 to about 400 Daltons; from about 75 to 1000 Daltons; and from about 75 to about 750 Daltons.

[0076] Preferably, the number of monomers in the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer falls within one or more of the following ranges: between about 1 and about 30 (inclusive); between about 1 and about 25; between about 1 and about 20; between about 1 and about 15; between about 1 and about 12; between about 1 and about 10. In certain instances, the number of monomers in series in the oligomer (and the corresponding conjugate) is one of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, or 8. In additional embodiments, the oligomer (and the corresponding conjugate) contains 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, or 20 monomers. In yet further embodiments, the oligomer (and the corresponding conjugate) possesses 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 or 30 monomers in series. Thus, for example, when the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer includes $\text{CH}_3-(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2)_n-$, "n" is an integer that can be 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29 or 30, and can fall within one or more of the following ranges: between about 1 and about 25; between about 1 and about 20; between about 1 and about 15; between about 1 and about 12; between about 1 and about 10.

[0077] When the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer has 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, or 10 monomers, these values correspond to a methoxy end-capped oligo(ethylene oxide) having a molecular weights of about 75, 119, 163, 207, 251, 295, 339, 383, 427, and 471 Daltons, respectively. When the oligomer has 11, 12, 13, 14, or 15 monomers, these values correspond to methoxy end-capped oligo(ethylene oxide) having molecular weights corresponding to about 515, 559, 603, 647, and 691 Daltons, respectively.

[0078] When the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer is attached to the opioid agonist (in contrast to the step-wise addition of one or more monomers to effectively "grow" the oligomer onto the opioid agonist), it is preferred that the composition containing an activated form of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer be monodispersed. In those instances, however, where a bimodal composition is employed, the composition will possess a bimodal distribution centering around any two of the above numbers of monomers. Ideally, the polydispersity index of each peak in the bimodal distribution, M_w/M_n , is 1.01 or less, and even more preferably, is 1.001 or less, and even more preferably is 1.0005 or less. Most preferably, each peak possesses a MW/Mn value of 1.0000. For instance, a bimodal oligomer may have any one of the following exemplary combinations of monomer subunits: 1-2, 1-3, 1-4, 1-5, 1-6, 1-7, 1-8, 1-9, 1-10, and so forth; 2-3, 2-4, 2-5, 2-6, 2-7, 2-8, 2-9, 2-10, and so forth; 3-4, 3-5, 3-6, 3-7, 3-8, 3-9, 3-10, and so forth; 4-5, 4-6, 4-7, 4-8, 4-9, 4-10, and so forth; 5-6, 5-7, 5-8, 5-9, 5-10, and so forth; 6-7, 6-8, 6-9, 6-10, and so forth; 7-8, 7-9, 7-10, and so forth; and 8-9, 8-10, and so forth.

[0079] In some instances, the composition containing an activated form of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer will be trimodal or even tetramodal, possessing a range of monomers units as previously described. Oligomer compositions possessing a well-defined mixture of oligomers (i.e., being bimodal, trimodal, tetramodal, and so forth) can be prepared by mixing purified monodisperse oligomers to obtain a desired profile of oligomers (a mixture of two oligomers differing only in the number of monomers is bimodal; a mixture of three oligomers differing only in the number of monomers is trimodal; a mixture of four oligomers differing only in the number of monomers is tetramodal), or alternatively, can be obtained from column chromatography of a polydisperse oligomer by recovering the "center cut", to obtain a mixture of oligomers in a desired and defined molecular weight range.

[0080] It is preferred that the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer is obtained from a composition that is preferably unimolecular or monodisperse. That is, the oligomers in the composition possess the same discrete molecular weight value rather than a distribution of

molecular weights. Some monodisperse oligomers can be purchased from commercial sources such as those available from Sigma-Aldrich, or alternatively, can be prepared directly from commercially available starting materials such as Sigma-Aldrich. Water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomers can be prepared as described in Chen Y., Baker, G.L., J. Org. Chem., 6870-6873 (1999), WO 02/098949, and U.S. Patent Application Publication 2005/0136031.

[0081] When present, the spacer moiety (through which the water-soluble, non-peptidic polymer is attached to the opioid agonist) may be a single bond, a single atom, such as an oxygen atom or a sulfur atom, two atoms, or a number of atoms. A spacer moiety is typically but is not necessarily linear in nature. The spacer moiety, "X" is preferably hydrolytically stable, and is preferably also enzymatically stable. Preferably, the spacer moiety "X" is one having a chain length of less than about 12 atoms, and preferably less than about 10 atoms, and even more preferably less than about 8 atoms and even more preferably less than about 5 atoms, whereby length is meant the number of atoms in a single chain, not counting substituents. For instance, a urea linkage such as this, $R_{\text{oligomer}}\text{-NH-(C=O)-NH-R'_{\text{drug}}}$, is considered to have a chain length of 3 atoms (-NH-C(O)-NH-). In selected embodiments, the spacer moiety linkage does not comprise further spacer groups.

[0082] In some instances, the spacer moiety "X" comprises an ether, amide, urethane, amine, thioether, urea, or a carbon-carbon bond. Functional groups such as those discussed below, and illustrated in the examples, are typically used for forming the linkages. The spacer moiety may less preferably also comprise (or be adjacent to or flanked by) spacer groups, as described further below.

[0083] More specifically, in selected embodiments, a spacer moiety, X, may be any of the following: "-" (i.e., a covalent bond, that may be stable or degradable, between the residue of the small molecule opioid agonist and the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer), -O-, -NH-, -S-, -C(O)-, C(O)-NH, NH-C(O)-NH, O-C(O)-NH, -C(S)-, -CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -O-CH₂-, -CH₂-O-, -O-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-O-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-O-, -O-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-O-, -O-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-O-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-O-, -C(O)-NH-CH₂-, -C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-, -C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-, -C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-,

-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH -, -NH-C(O)-CH₂-,
 -CH₂-NH-C(O)-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-NH-C(O)-CH₂-, -NH-C(O)-CH₂-CH₂-,
 -CH₂-NH-C(O)-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-NH-C(O)-CH₂-CH₂-, -C(O)-NH-CH₂-,
 -C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -O-C(O)-NH-CH₂-, -O-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -NH-CH₂-,
 -NH-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-NH-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-NH-CH₂-, -C(O)-CH₂-, -C(O)-CH₂-CH₂-,
 -CH₂-C(O)-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-CH₂-CH₂-, -CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-,
 -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-NH-, -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-NH-C(O)-,
 -CH₂-CH₂-CH₂-C(O)-NH-CH₂-CH₂-NH-C(O)-CH₂-, bivalent cycloalkyl group, -N(R⁶)-, R⁶
 is H or an organic radical selected from the group consisting of alkyl, substituted alkyl,
 alkenyl, substituted alkenyl, alkynyl, substituted alkynyl, aryl and substituted aryl.

[0084] For purposes of the present invention, however, a group of atoms is not considered a spacer moiety when it is immediately adjacent to an oligomer segment, and the group of atoms is the same as a monomer of the oligomer such that the group would represent a mere extension of the oligomer chain.

[0085] The linkage "X" between the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer and the small molecule is typically formed by reaction of a functional group on a terminus of the oligomer (or one or more monomers when it is desired to "grow" the oligomer onto the opioid agonist) with a corresponding functional group within the opioid agonist. Illustrative reactions are described briefly below. For example, an amino group on an oligomer may be reacted with a carboxylic acid or an activated carboxylic acid derivative on the small molecule, or vice versa, to produce an amide linkage. Alternatively, reaction of an amine on an oligomer with an activated carbonate (e.g. succinimidyl or benzotriazyl carbonate) on the drug, or vice versa, forms a carbamate linkage. Reaction of an amine on an oligomer with an isocyanate (R-N=C=O) on a drug, or vice versa, forms a urea linkage (R-NH-(C=O)-NH-R'). Further, reaction of an alcohol (alkoxide) group on an oligomer with an alkyl halide, or halide group within a drug, or vice versa, forms an ether linkage. In yet another coupling approach, a small molecule having an aldehyde function is coupled to an oligomer amino group by reductive amination, resulting in formation of a secondary amine linkage between the oligomer and the small molecule.

[0086] A particularly preferred water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer is an oligomer bearing an aldehyde functional group. In this regard, the oligomer will have the following structure: CH₃O-(CH₂-CH₂-O)_n-(CH₂)_p-C(O)H, wherein (n) is one of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 and (p) is one of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7. Preferred (n) values include 3, 5 and 7 and

preferred (p) values 2, 3 and 4. In addition, the carbon atom alpha to the -C(O)H moiety can optionally be substituted with alkyl.

[0087] Typically, the terminus of the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer not bearing a functional group is capped to render it unreactive. When the oligomer does include a further functional group at a terminus other than that intended for formation of a conjugate, that group is either selected such that it is unreactive under the conditions of formation of the linkage "X," or it is protected during the formation of the linkage "X."

[0088] As stated above, the water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer includes at least one functional group prior to conjugation. The functional group typically comprises an electrophilic or nucleophilic group for covalent attachment to a small molecule, depending upon the reactive group contained within or introduced into the small molecule. Examples of nucleophilic groups that may be present in either the oligomer or the small molecule include hydroxyl, amine, hydrazine (-NHNH₂), hydrazide (-C(O)NHNH₂), and thiol. Preferred nucleophiles include amine, hydrazine, hydrazide, and thiol, particularly amine. Most small molecule drugs for covalent attachment to an oligomer will possess a free hydroxyl, amino, thio, aldehyde, ketone, or carboxyl group.

[0089] Examples of electrophilic functional groups that may be present in either the oligomer or the small molecule include carboxylic acid, carboxylic ester, particularly imide esters, orthoester, carbonate, isocyanate, isothiocyanate, aldehyde, ketone, thione, alkenyl, acrylate, methacrylate, acrylamide, sulfone, maleimide, disulfide, iodo, epoxy, sulfonate, thiosulfonate, silane, alkoxysilane, and halosilane. More specific examples of these groups include succinimidyl ester or carbonate, imidazolyl ester or carbonate, benzotriazole ester or carbonate, vinyl sulfone, chloroethylsulfone, vinylpyridine, pyridyl disulfide, iodoacetamide, glyoxal, dione, mesylate, tosylate, and tresylate (2,2,2-trifluoroethanesulfonate).

[0090] Also included are sulfur analogs of several of these groups, such as thione, thione hydrate, thioketal, is 2-thiazolidine thione, etc., as well as hydrates or protected derivatives of any of the above moieties (e.g. aldehyde hydrate, hemiacetal, acetal, ketone hydrate, hemiketal, ketal, thioketal, thioacetal).

[0091] An "activated derivative" of a carboxylic acid refers to a carboxylic acid derivative which reacts readily with nucleophiles, generally much more readily than the underivatized carboxylic acid. Activated carboxylic acids include, for example, acid halides (such as acid chlorides), anhydrides, carbonates, and esters. Such esters include imide esters,

of the general form $-(\text{CO})\text{O}-\text{N}[(\text{CO})-]_2$; for example, N-hydroxysuccinimidyl (NHS) esters or N-hydroxyphthalimidyl esters. Also preferred are imidazolyl esters and benzotriazole esters. Particularly preferred are activated propionic acid or butanoic acid esters, as described in co-owned U.S. Patent No. 5,672,662. These include groups of the form $-(\text{CH}_2)_{2-3}\text{C}(=\text{O})\text{O}-\text{Q}$, where Q is preferably selected from N-succinimide, N-sulfosuccinimide, N-phthalimide, N-glutarimide, N-tetrahydrophthalimide, N-norbornene-2,3-dicarboximide, benzotriazole, 7-azabenzotriazole, and imidazole.

[0092] Other preferred electrophilic groups include succinimidyl carbonate, maleimide, benzotriazole carbonate, glycidyl ether, imidazolyl carbonate, p-nitrophenyl carbonate, acrylate, tresylate, aldehyde, and orthopyridyl disulfide.

[0093] These electrophilic groups are subject to reaction with nucleophiles, e.g. hydroxy, thio, or amino groups, to produce various bond types. Preferred for the present invention are reactions which favor formation of a hydrolytically stable linkage. For example, carboxylic acids and activated derivatives thereof, which include orthoesters, succinimidyl esters, imidazolyl esters, and benzotriazole esters, react with the above types of nucleophiles to form esters, thioesters, and amides, respectively, of which amides are the most hydrolytically stable. Carbonates, including succinimidyl, imidazolyl, and benzotriazole carbonates, react with amino groups to form carbamates. Isocyanates ($\text{R}-\text{N}=\text{C}=\text{O}$) react with hydroxyl or amino groups to form, respectively, carbamate ($\text{RNH}-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{OR}'$) or urea ($\text{RNH}-\text{C}(\text{O})-\text{NHR}'$) linkages. Aldehydes, ketones, glyoxals, diones and their hydrates or alcohol adducts (i.e. aldehyde hydrate, hemiacetal, acetal, ketone hydrate, hemiketal, and ketal) are preferably reacted with amines, followed by reduction of the resulting imine, if desired, to provide an amine linkage (reductive amination).

[0094] Several of the electrophilic functional groups include electrophilic double bonds to which nucleophilic groups, such as thiols, can be added, to form, for example, thioether bonds. These groups include maleimides, vinyl sulfones, vinyl pyridine, acrylates, methacrylates, and acrylamides. Other groups comprise leaving groups that can be displaced by a nucleophile; these include chloroethyl sulfone, pyridyl disulfides (which include a cleavable S-S bond), iodoacetamide, mesylate, tosylate, thiosulfonate, and tresylate. Epoxides react by ring opening by a nucleophile, to form, for example, an ether or amine bond. Reactions involving complementary reactive groups such as those noted above on the oligomer and the small molecule are utilized to prepare the conjugates of the invention.

[0095] In some instances the opioid agonist may not have a functional group suited for conjugation. In this instance, it is possible to modify the "original" opioid agonist so that it does have the desired functional group. For example, if the opioid agonist has an amide group, but an amine group is desired, it is possible to modify the amide group to an amine group by way of a Hofmann rearrangement, Curtius rearrangement (once the amide is converted to an azide) or Lossen rearrangement (once amide is converted to hydroxamide followed by treatment with tolyene-2-sulfonyl chloride/base).

[0096] It is possible to prepare a conjugate of small molecule opioid agonist bearing a carboxyl group wherein the carboxyl group-bearing small molecule opioid agonist is coupled to an amino-terminated oligomeric ethylene glycol, to provide a conjugate having an amide group covalently linking the small molecule opioid agonist to the oligomer. This can be performed, for example, by combining the carboxyl group-bearing small molecule opioid agonist with the amino-terminated oligomeric ethylene glycol in the presence of a coupling reagent, (such as dicyclohexylcarbodiimide or "DCC") in an anhydrous organic solvent.

[0097] Further, it is possible to prepare a conjugate of a small molecule opioid agonist bearing a hydroxyl group wherein the hydroxyl group-bearing small molecule opioid agonist is coupled to an oligomeric ethylene glycol halide to result in an ether (-O-) linked small molecule conjugate. This can be performed, for example, by using sodium hydride to deprotonate the hydroxyl group followed by reaction with a halide-terminated oligomeric ethylene glycol.

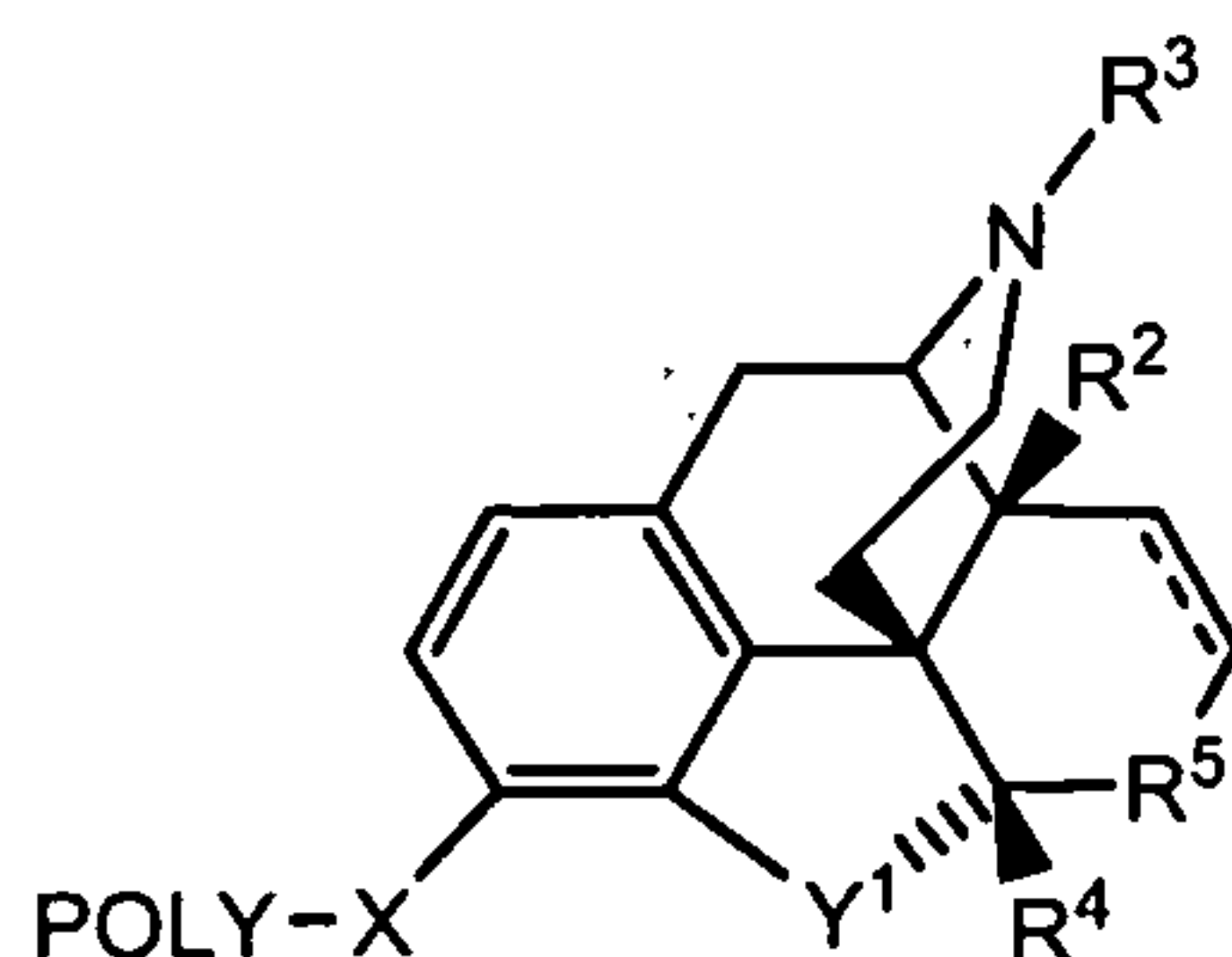
[0098] In another example, it is possible to prepare a conjugate of a small molecule opioid agonist bearing a ketone group by first reducing the ketone group to form the corresponding hydroxyl group. Thereafter, the small molecule opioid agonist now bearing a hydroxyl group can be coupled as described herein.

[0099] In still another instance, it is possible to prepare a conjugate of a small molecule opioid agonist bearing an amine group. In one approach, the amine group-bearing small molecule opioid agonist and an aldehyde-bearing oligomer are dissolved in a suitable buffer after which a suitable reducing agent (e.g., NaCNBH_3) is added. Following reduction, the result is an amine linkage formed between the amine group of the amine group-containing small molecule opioid agonist and the carbonyl carbon of the aldehyde-bearing oligomer.

[0100] In another approach for preparing a conjugate of a small molecule opioid agonist bearing an amine group, a carboxylic acid-bearing oligomer and the amine

group-bearing small molecule opioid agonist are combined, typically in the presence of a coupling reagent (e.g., DCC). The result is an amide linkage formed between the amine group of the amine group-containing small molecule opioid agonist and the carbonyl of the carboxylic acid-bearing oligomer.

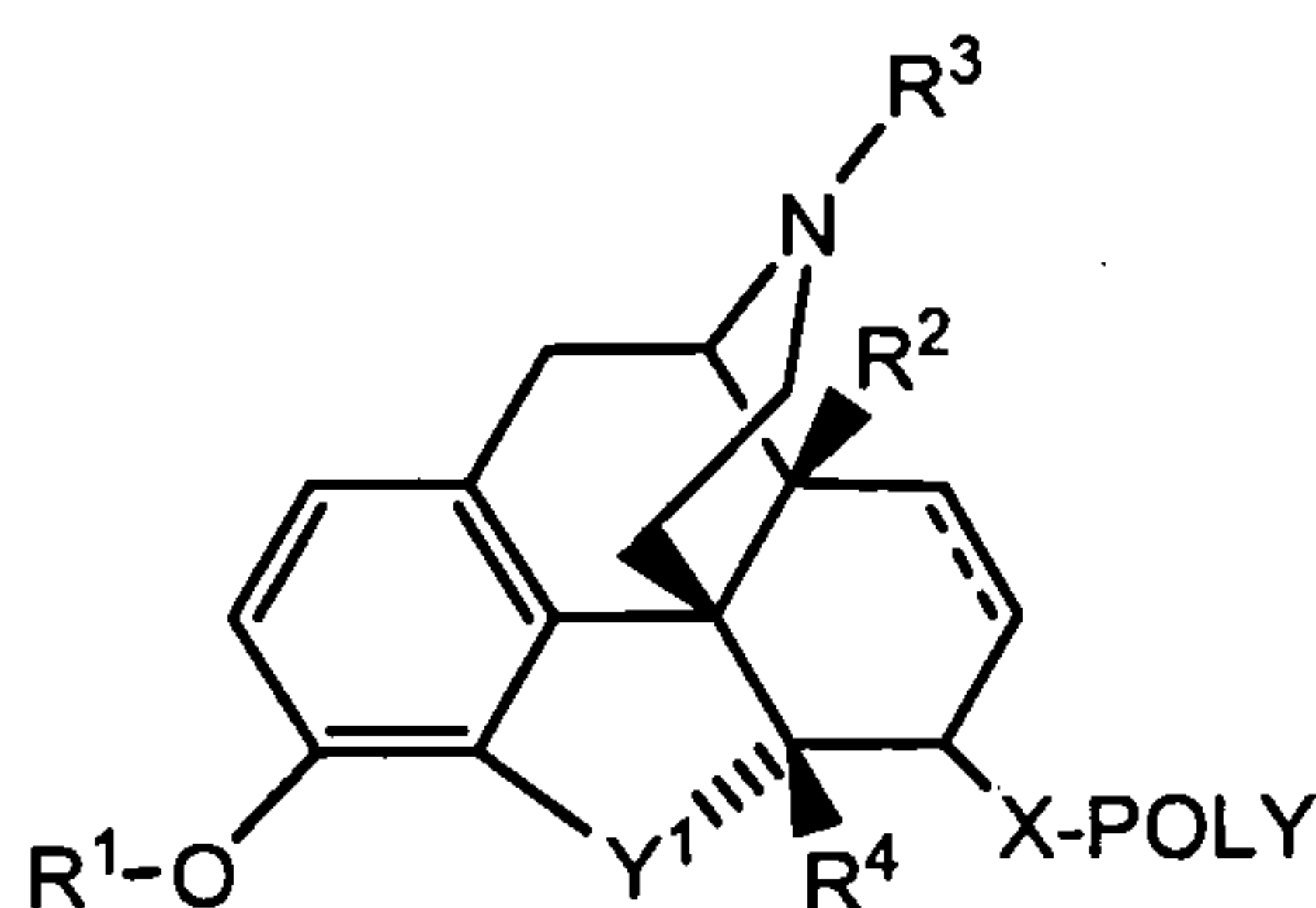
[0101] Exemplary conjugates of the opioid agonists of Formula I include those having the following structure:



Formula I-Ca

wherein each of R^2 , R^3 , R^4 , the dotted line ("---"), Y^1 and R^5 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I, X is a spacer moiety and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

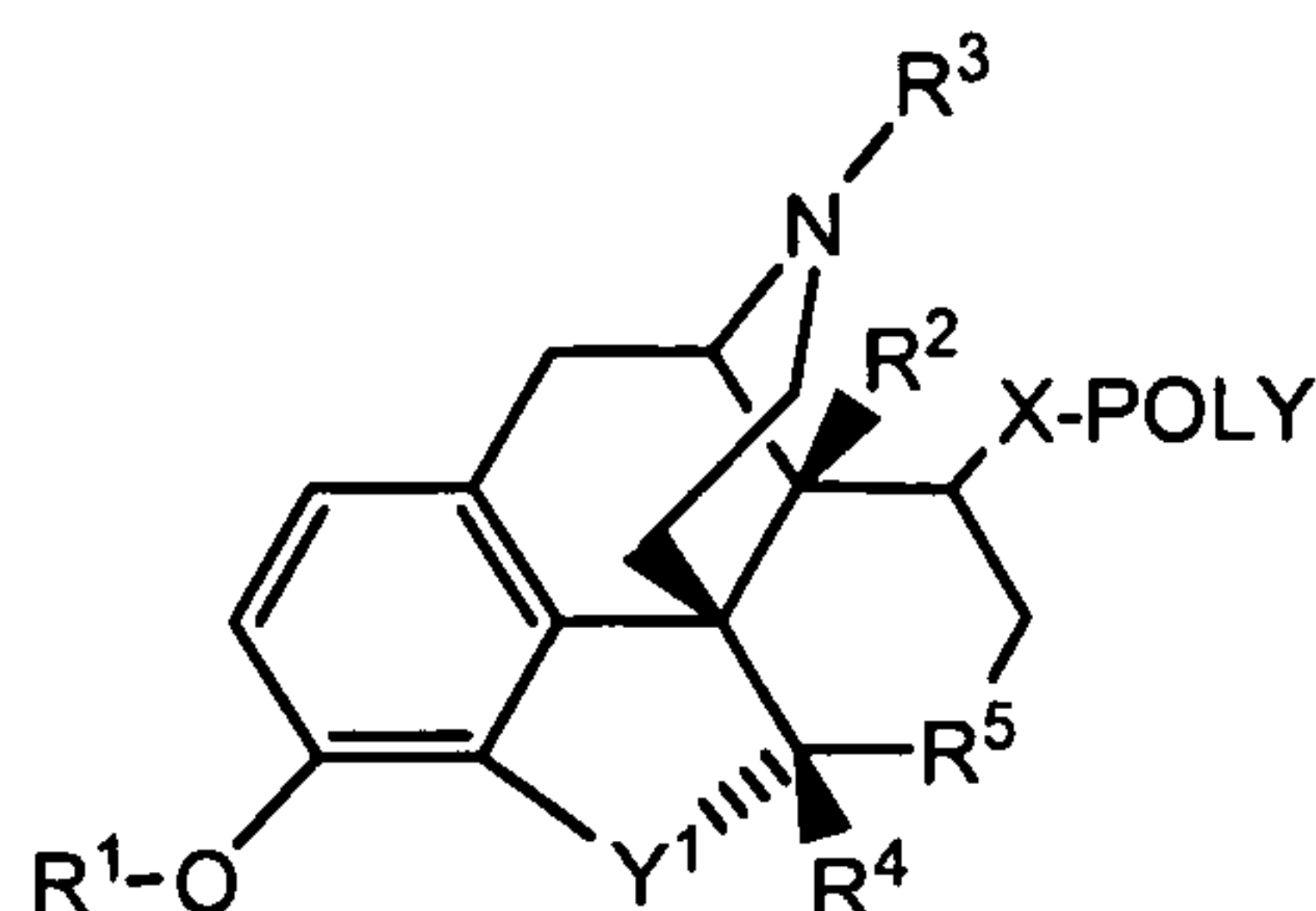
[0102] Additional exemplary conjugates of the opioid agonists of Formula I include those having the following structure:



Formula I-Cb

wherein each of R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^4 , the dotted line ("---"), and Y^1 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I, X is a spacer moiety and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

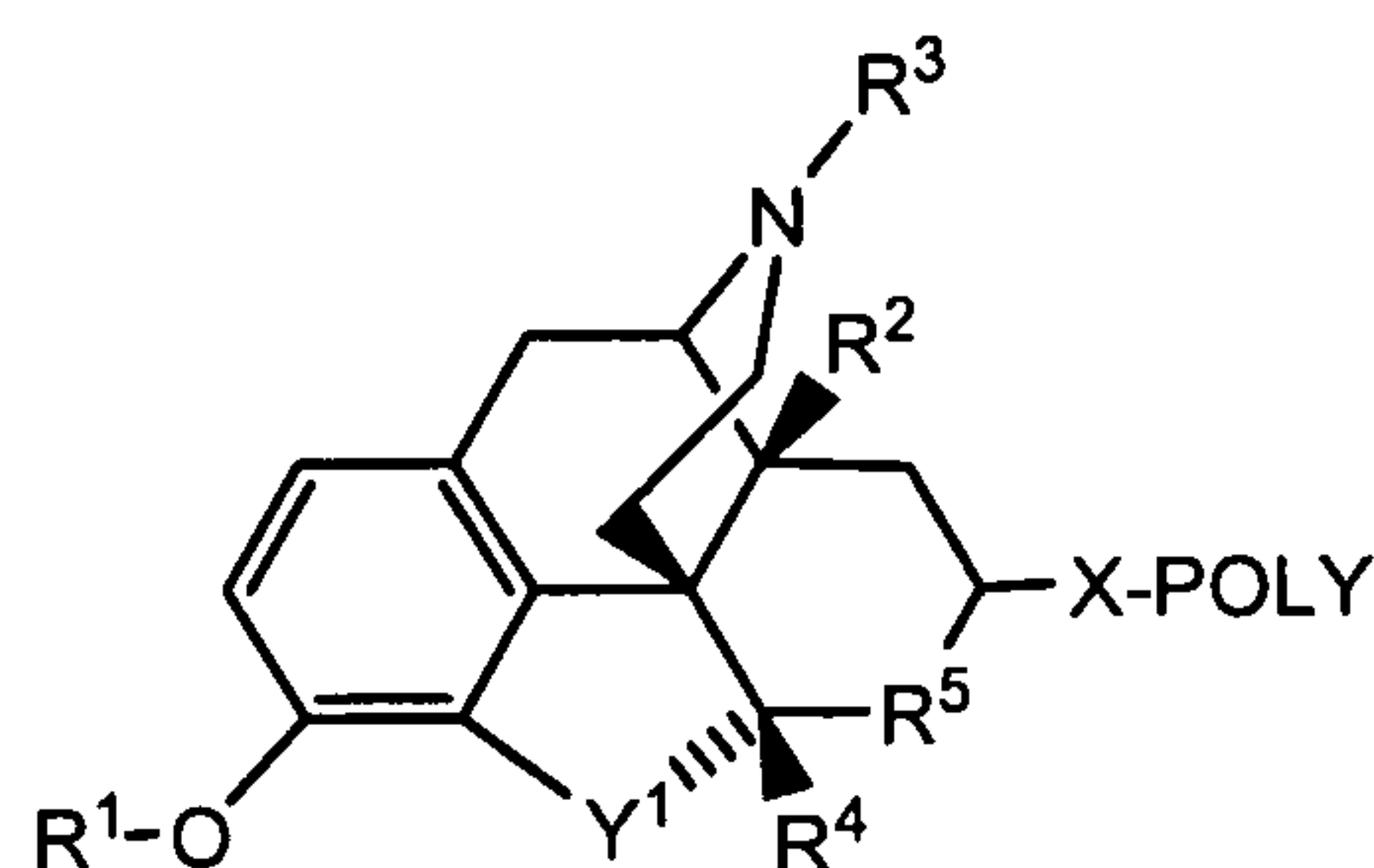
[0103] Further additional exemplary conjugates of the opioid agonists of Formula I include those having the following structure:



Formula I-Cc

wherein each of R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^4 , Y^1 and R^5 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I, X is a spacer moiety and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

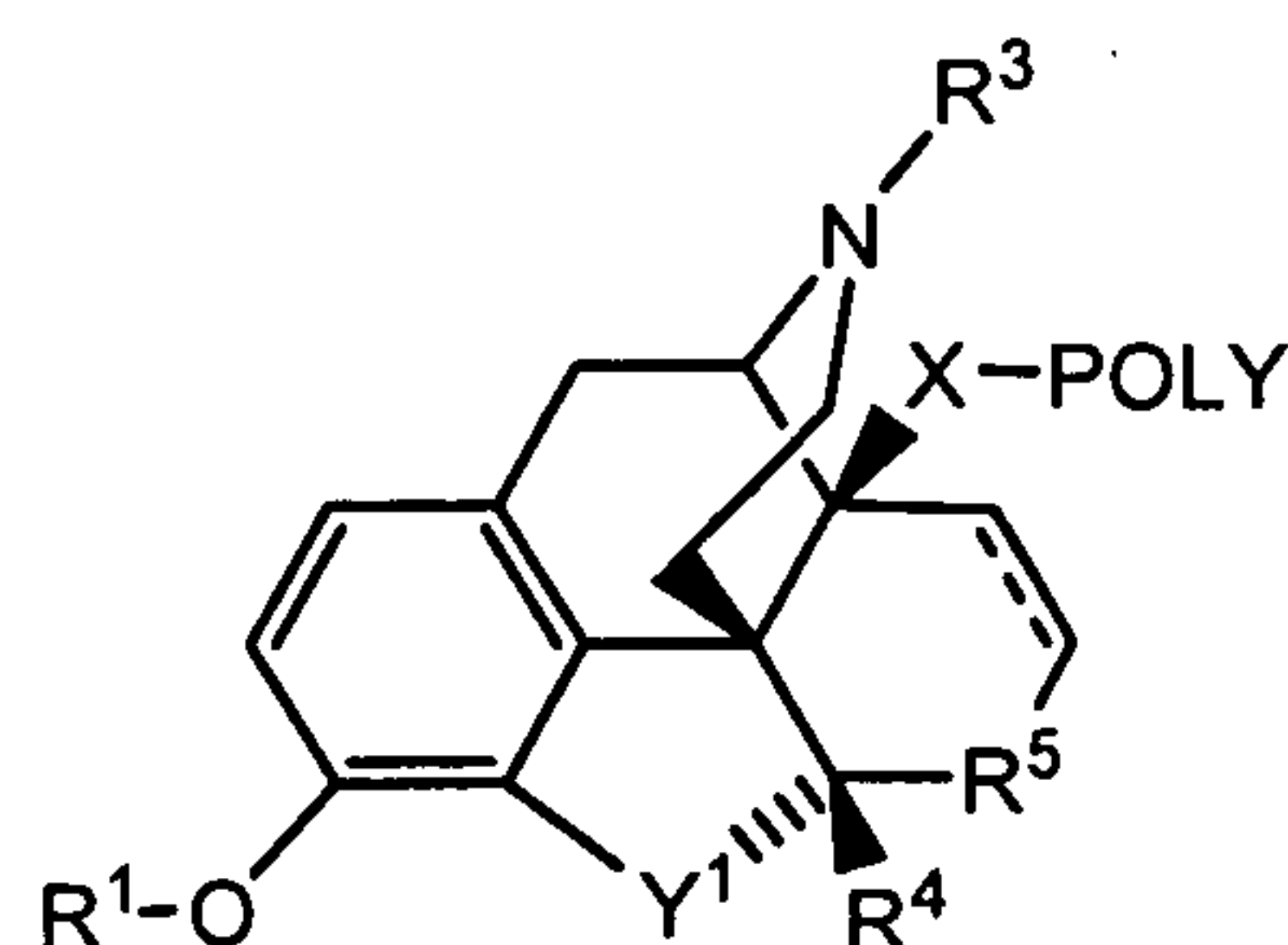
[0104] Still further exemplary conjugates of the opioid agonists of Formula I include those having the following structure:



Formula I-Cd

wherein each of R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^4 , Y^1 and R^5 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I, X is a spacer moiety and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

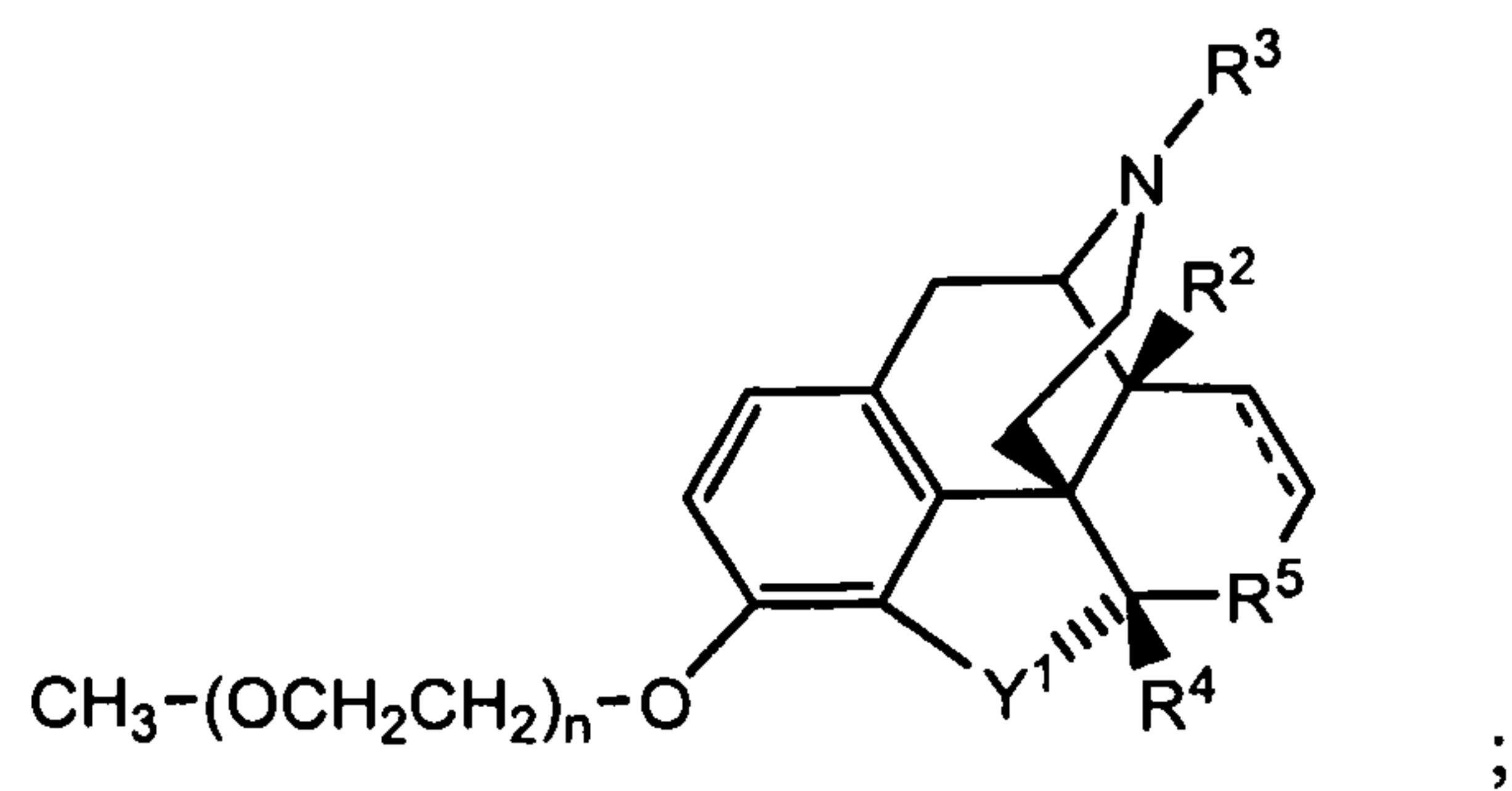
[0105] Additional exemplary conjugates of the opioid agonists of Formula I include those having the following structure:



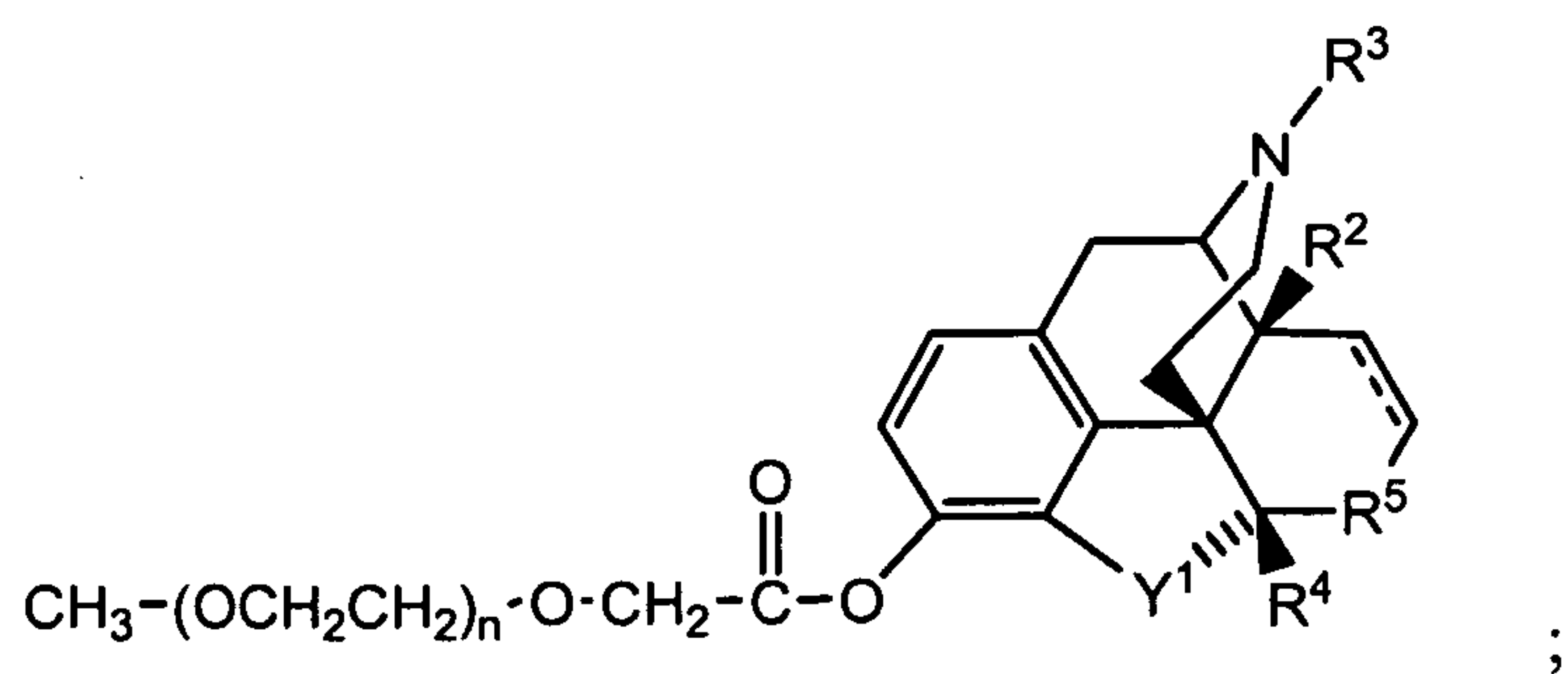
Formula I-Ce

wherein each of R^1 , R^3 , R^4 , the dotted line ("---"), Y^1 and R^5 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I, X is a spacer moiety and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

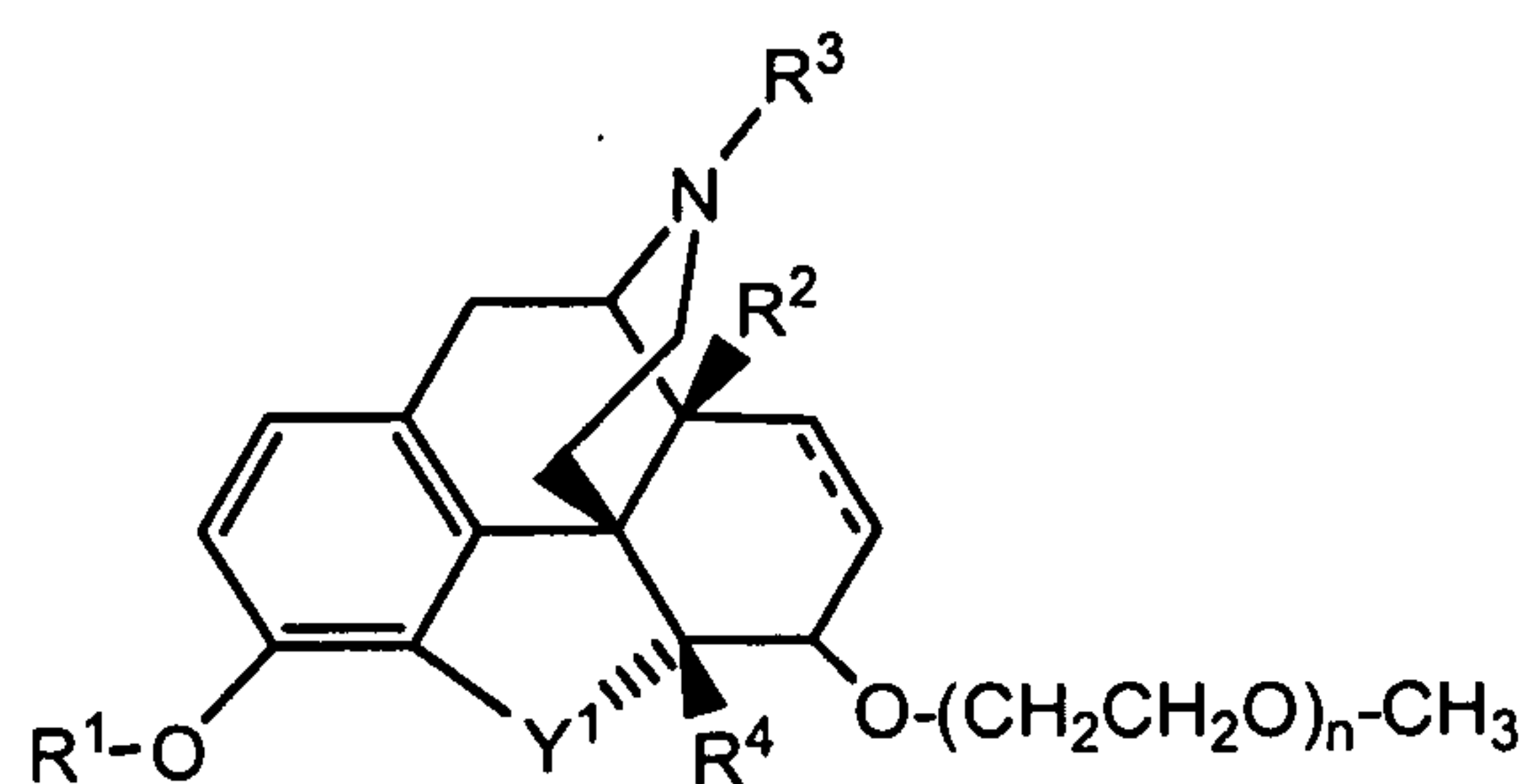
[0106] Additional exemplary conjugates are encompassed by the following formulae:



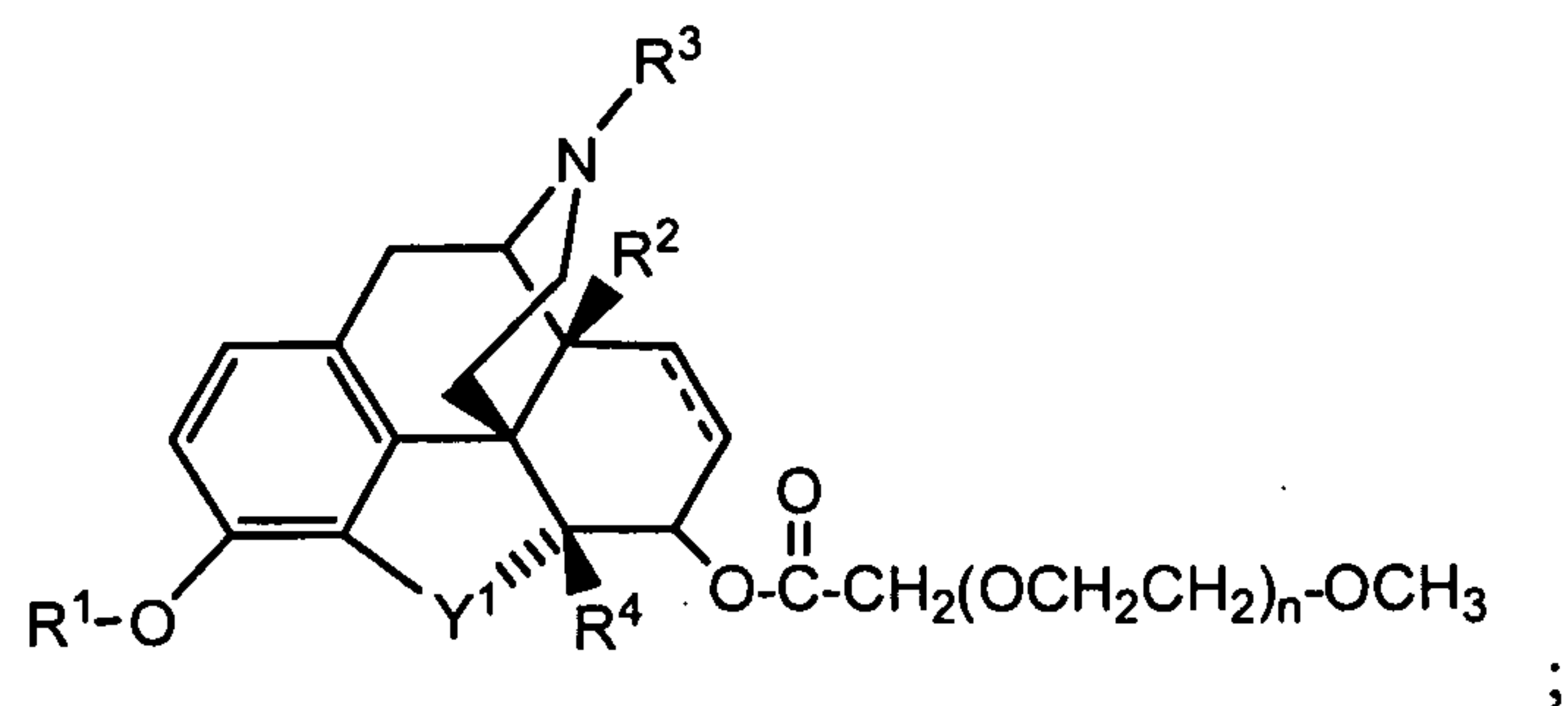
;



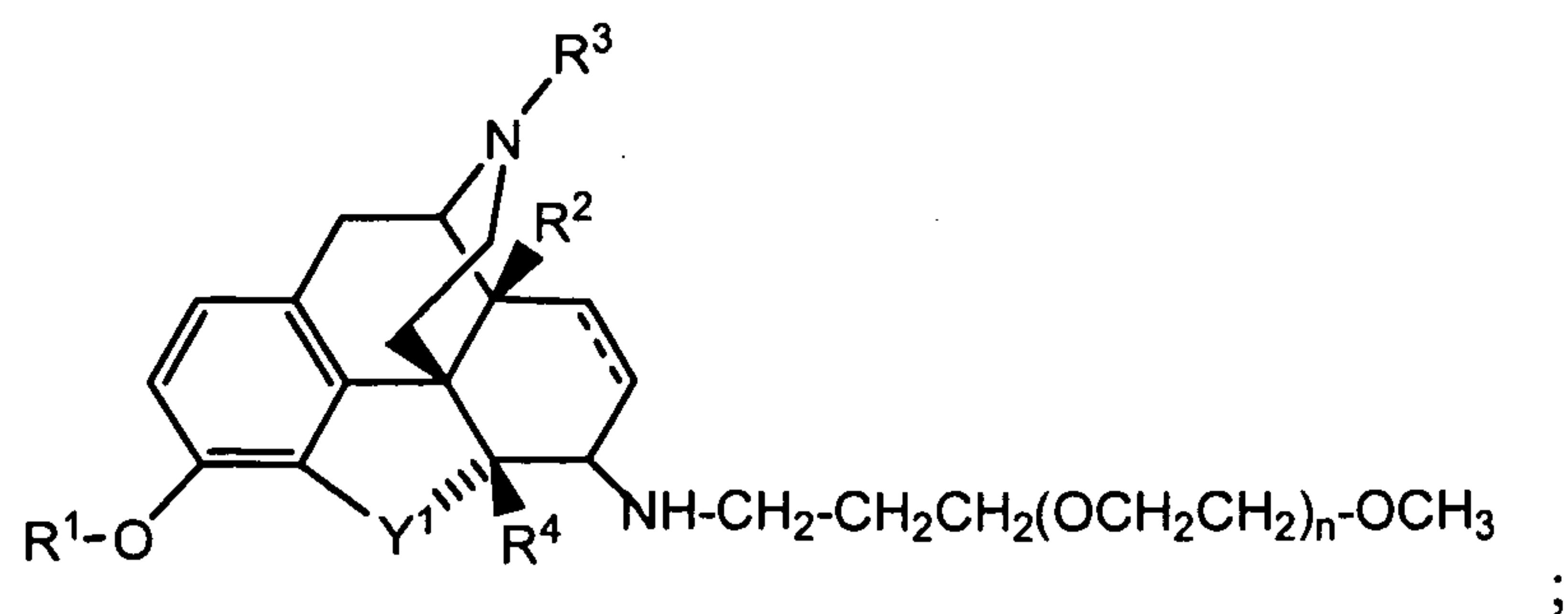
;



;

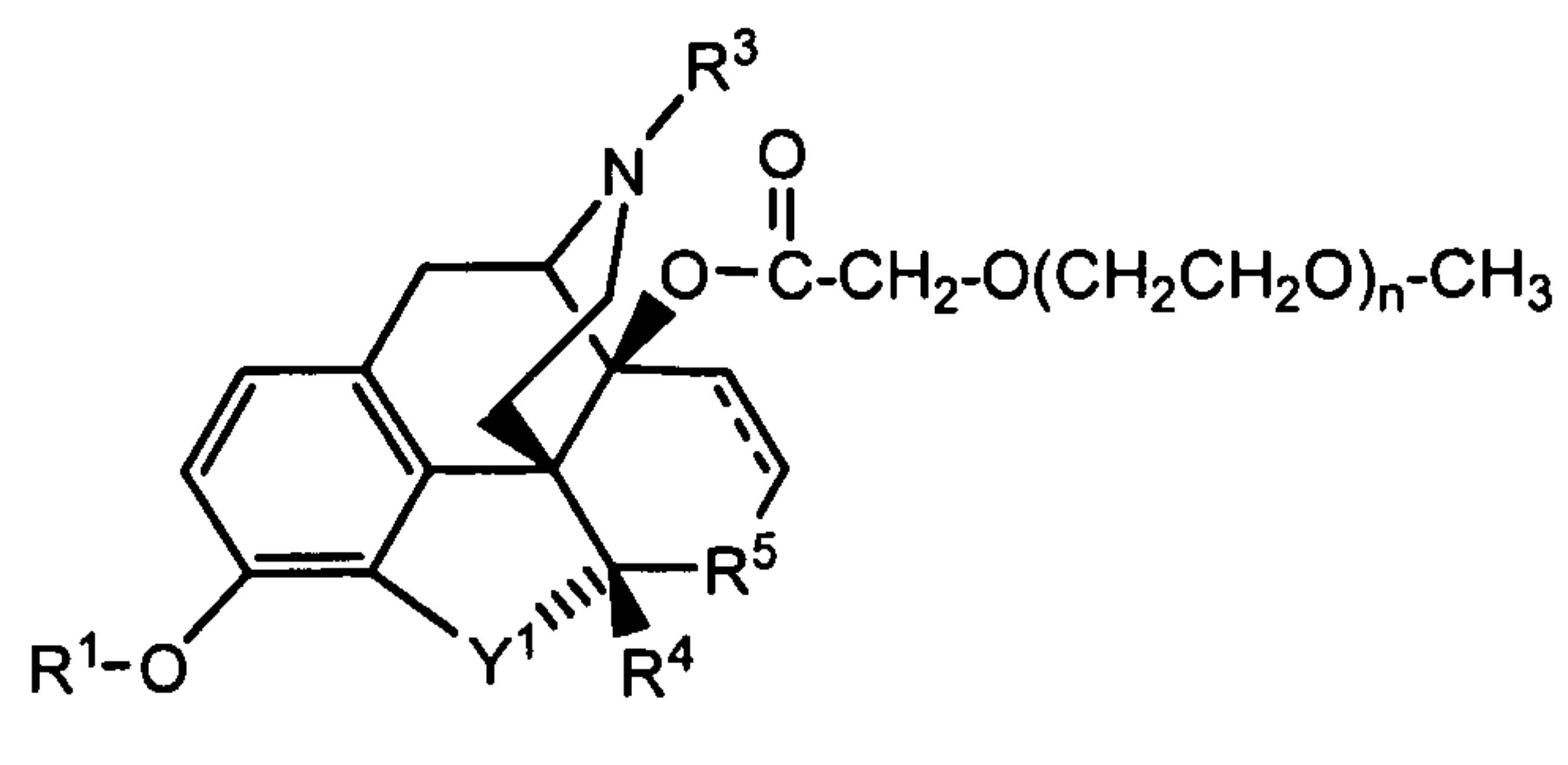
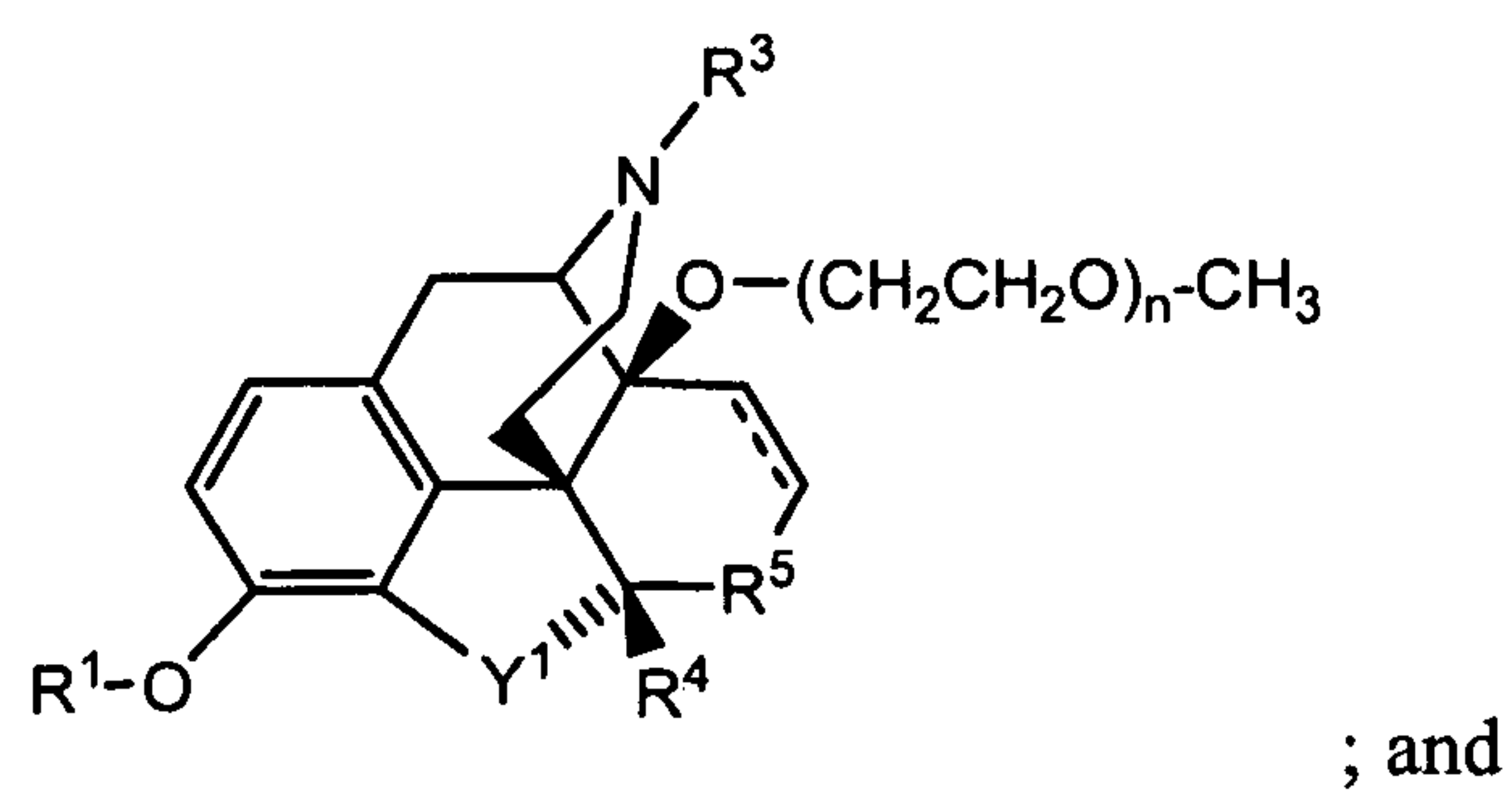
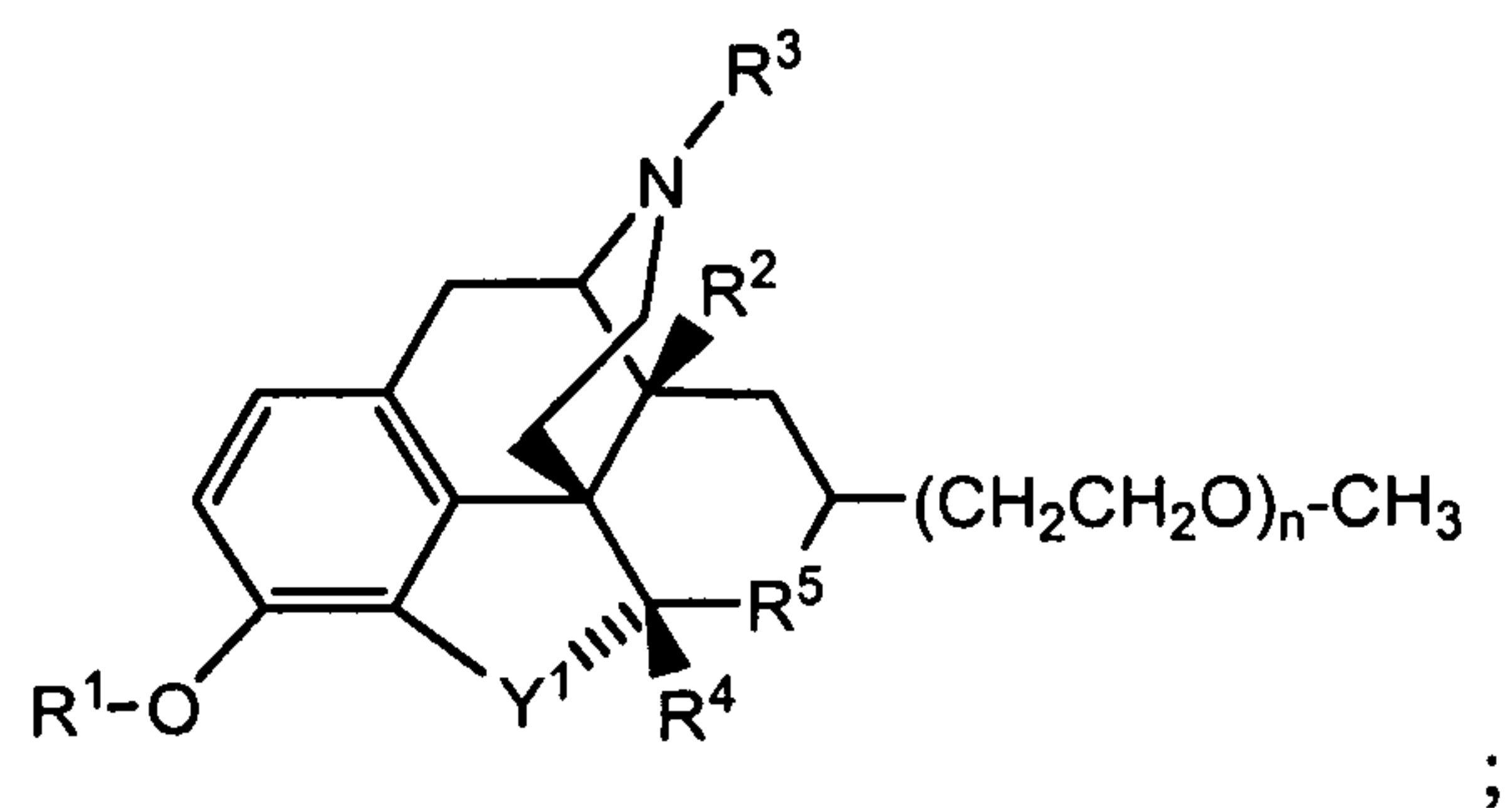
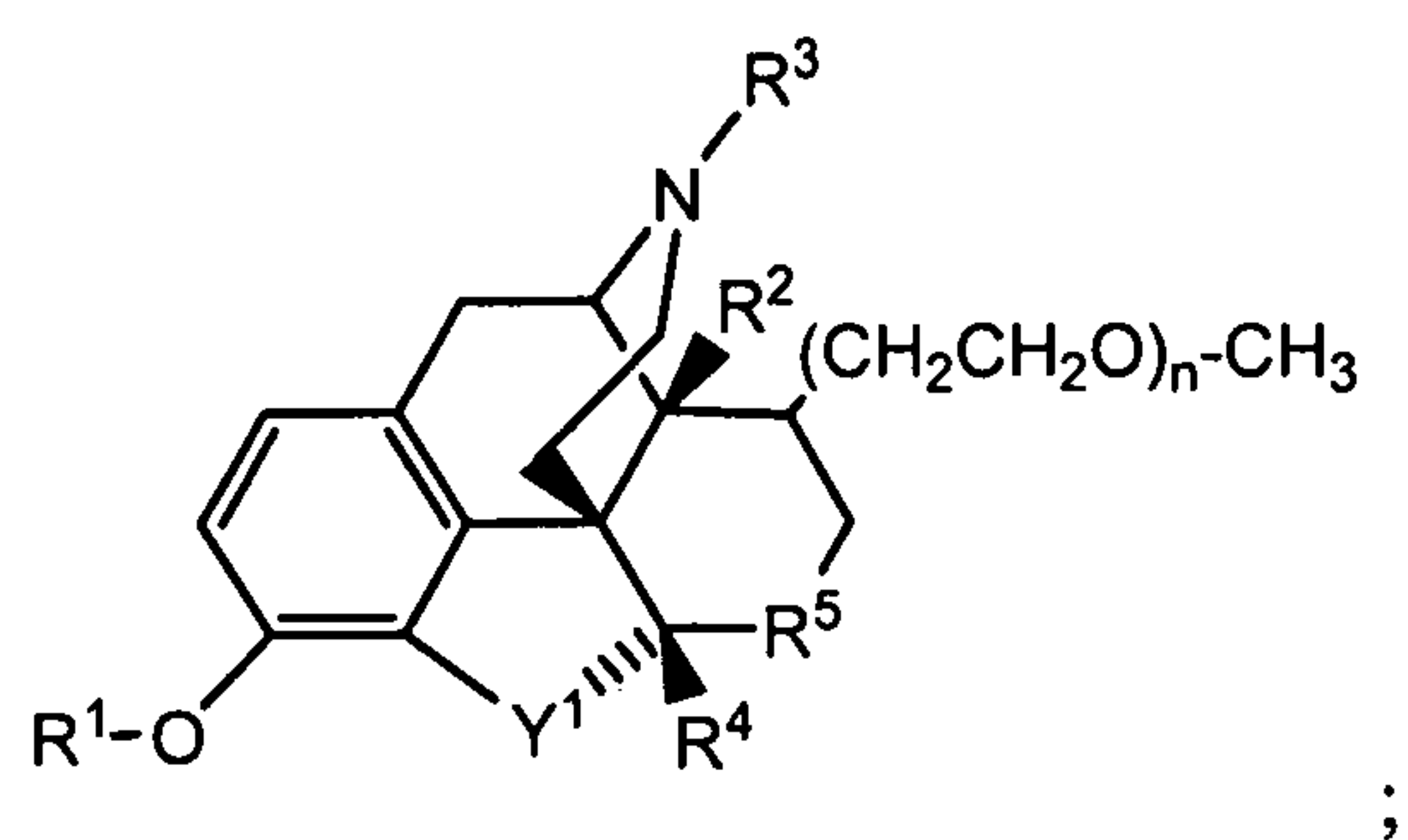
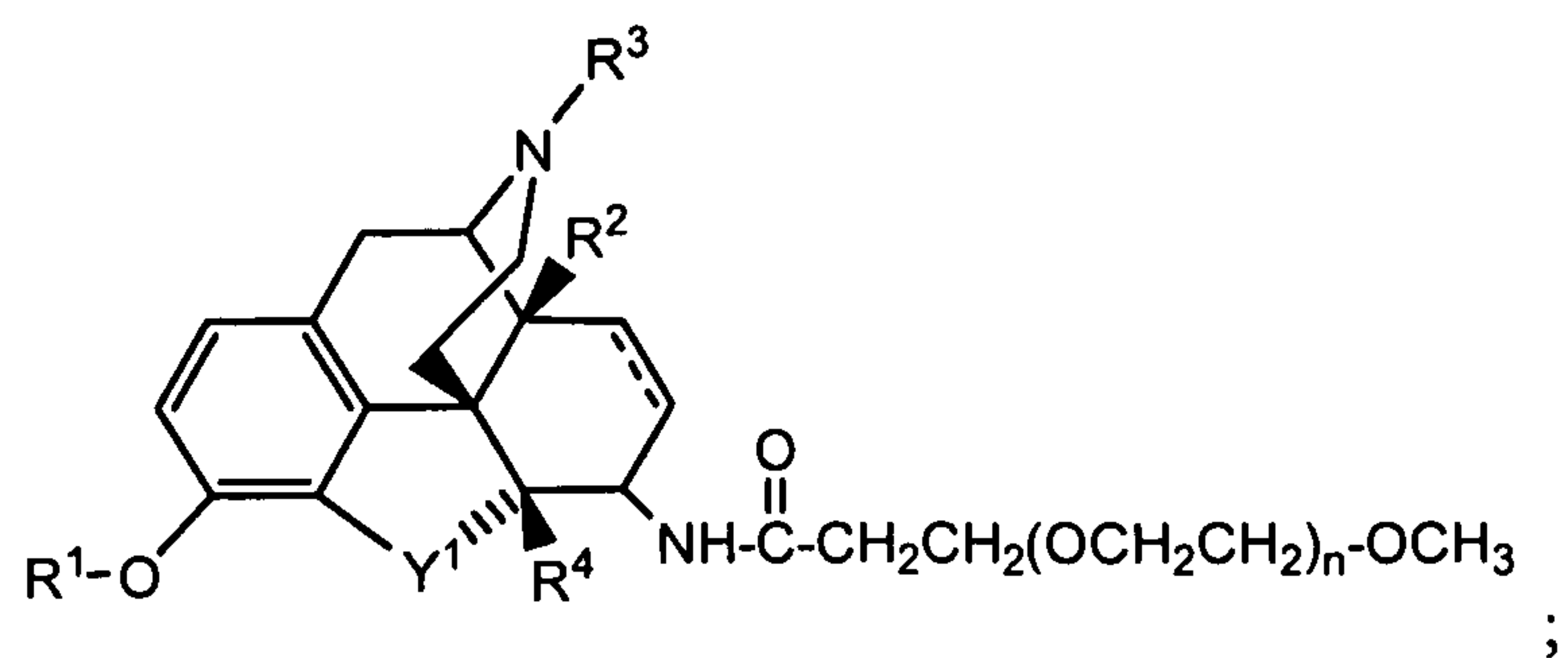


;



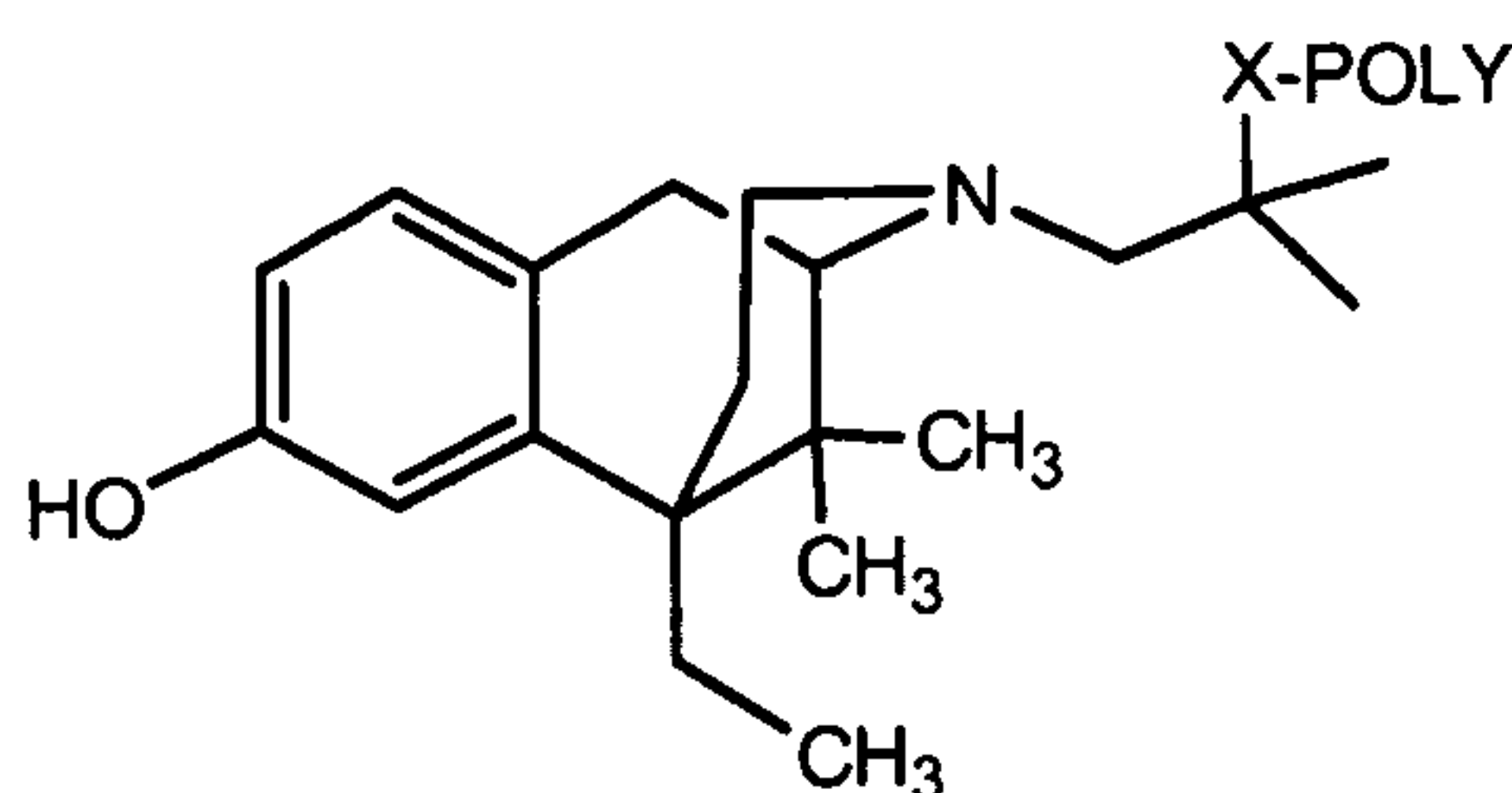
;

- 27 -

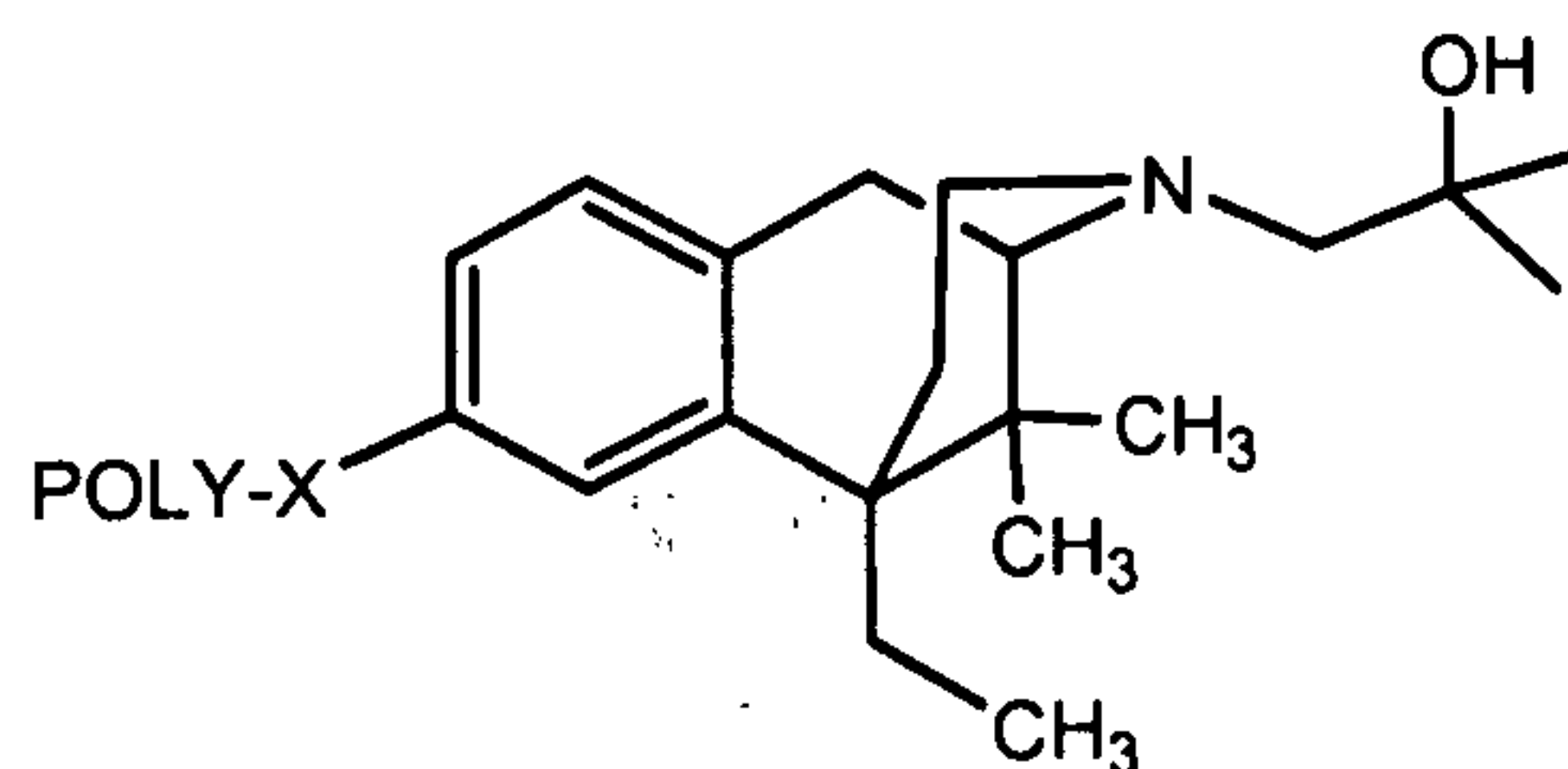


wherein, when present, each of R^1 , R^2 , R^3 , R^4 , the dotted line ("---"), Y^1 and R^5 is as previously defined with respect to Formula I; and the variable "n" is an integer from 1 to 30.

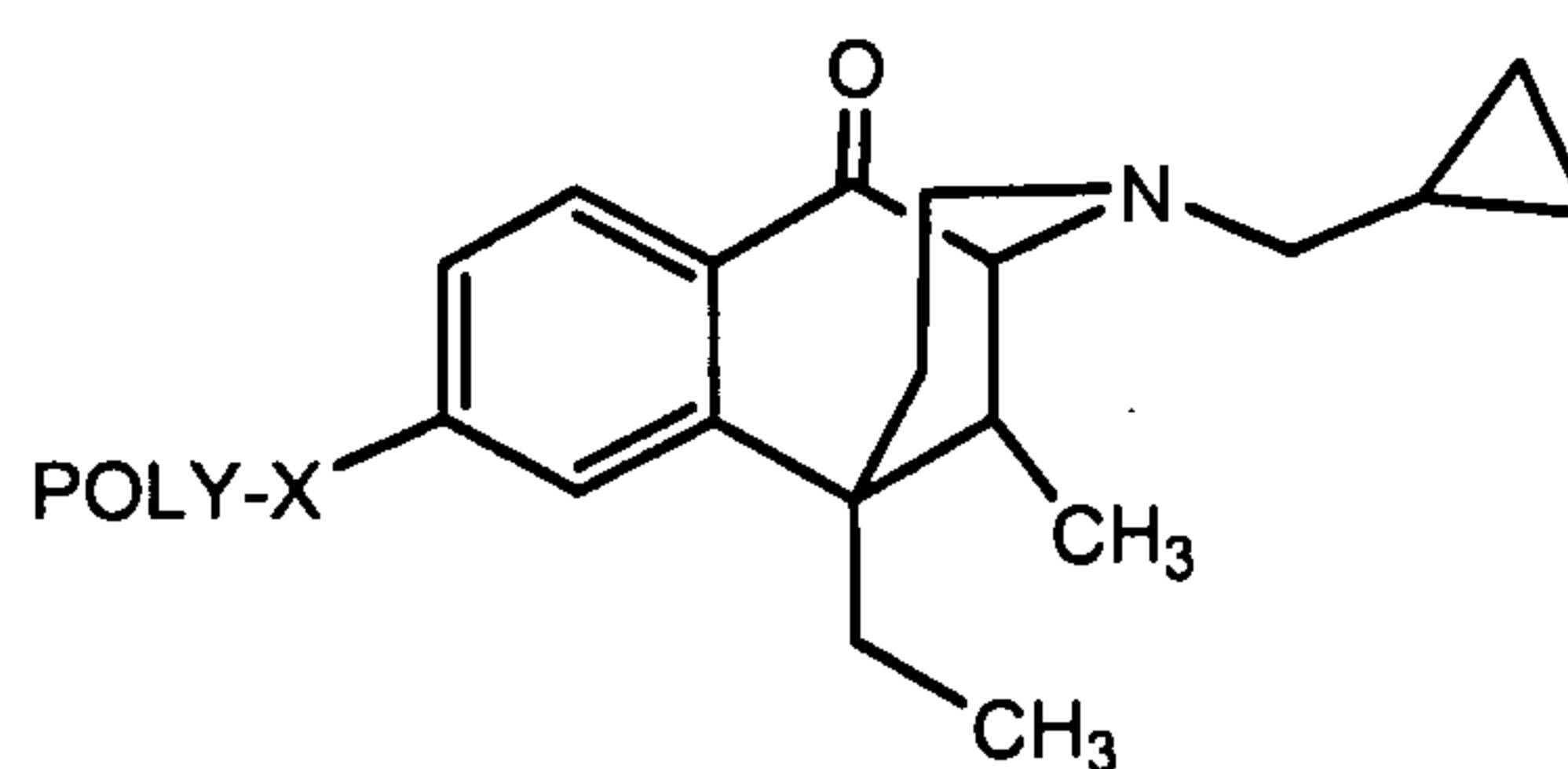
[0107] Additional conjugates include those provided below:



(exemplary bremazocine conjugate)

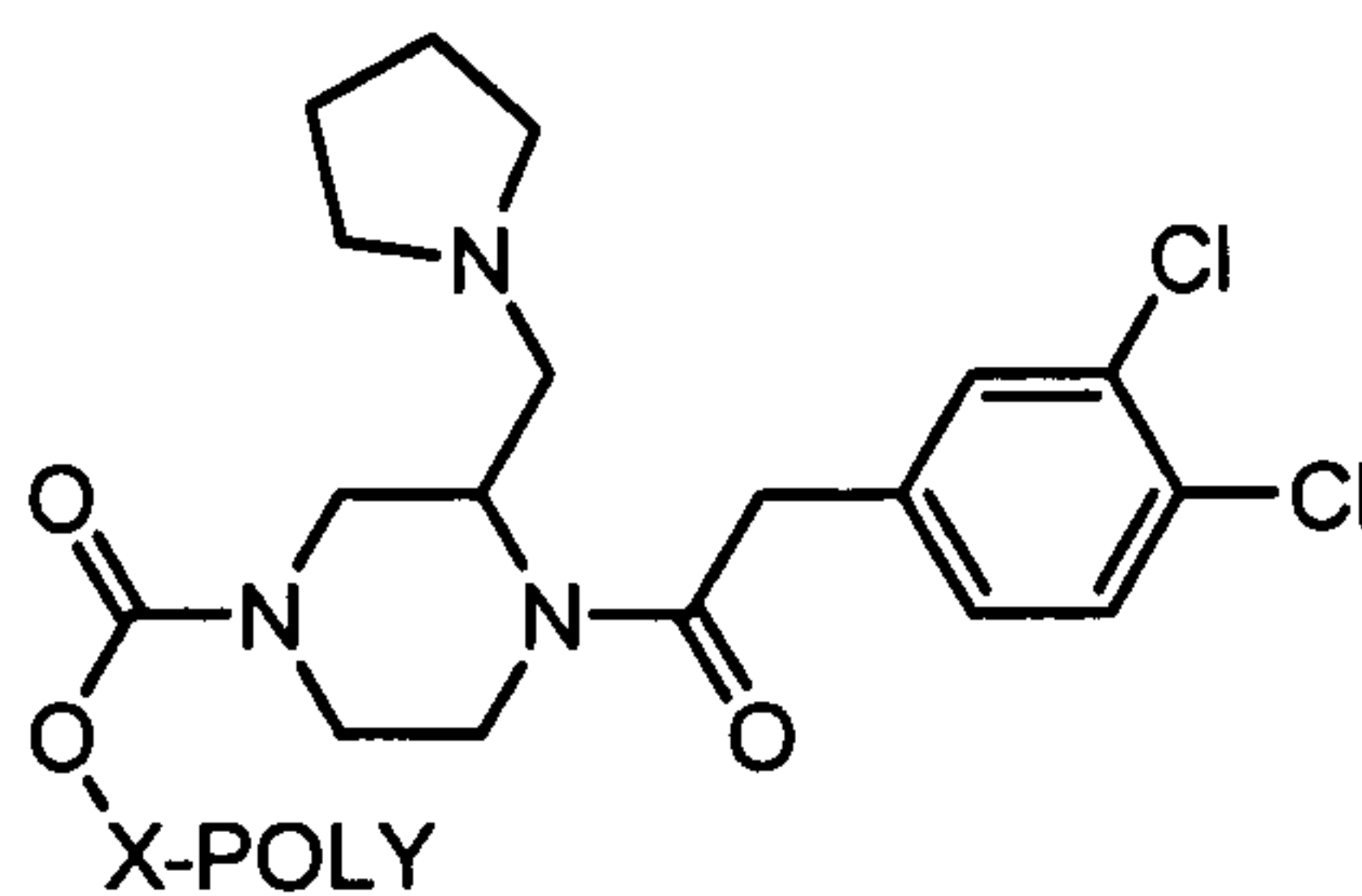


(exemplary bremazocine conjugate)

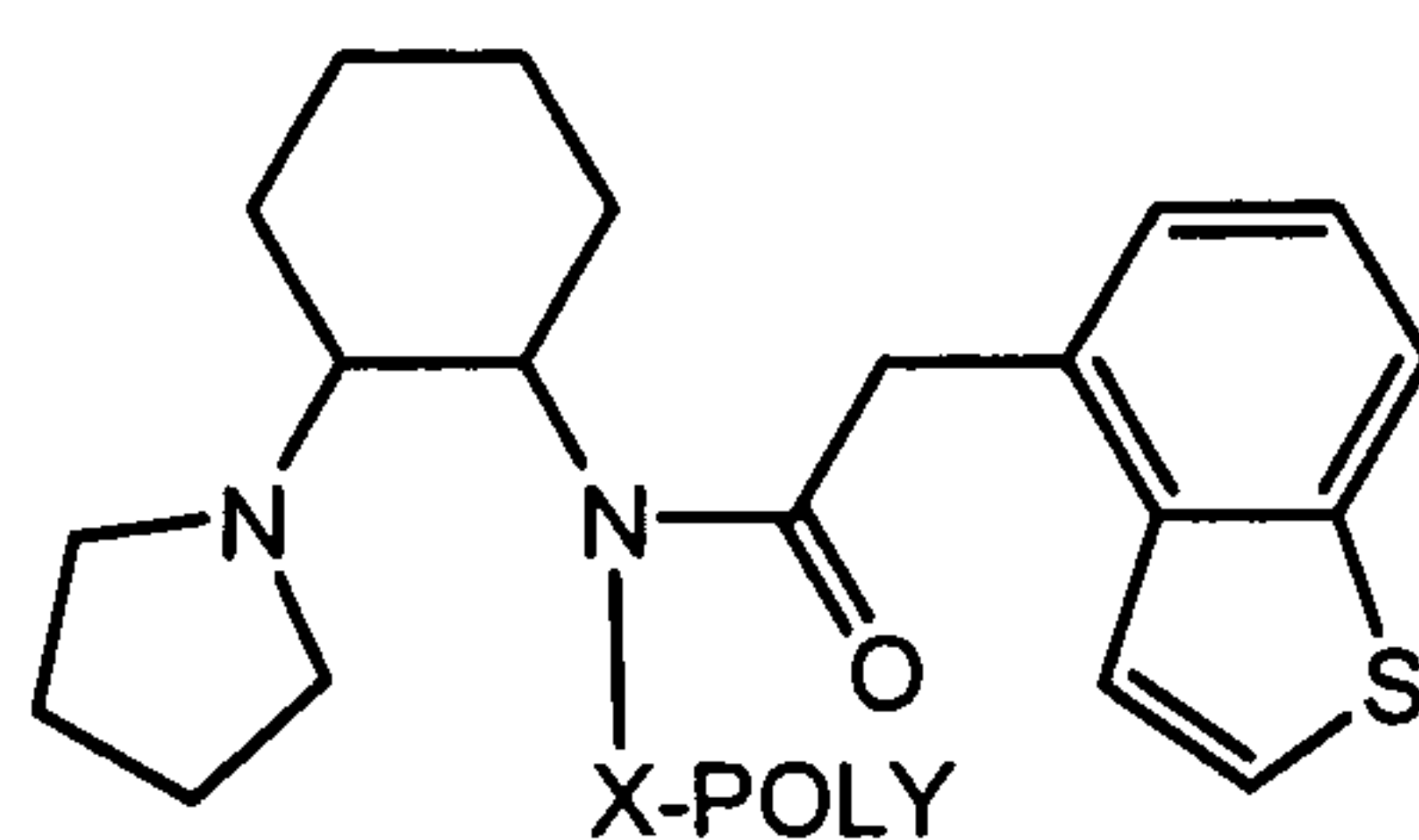


(exemplary ethylketocyclazocine conjugate)

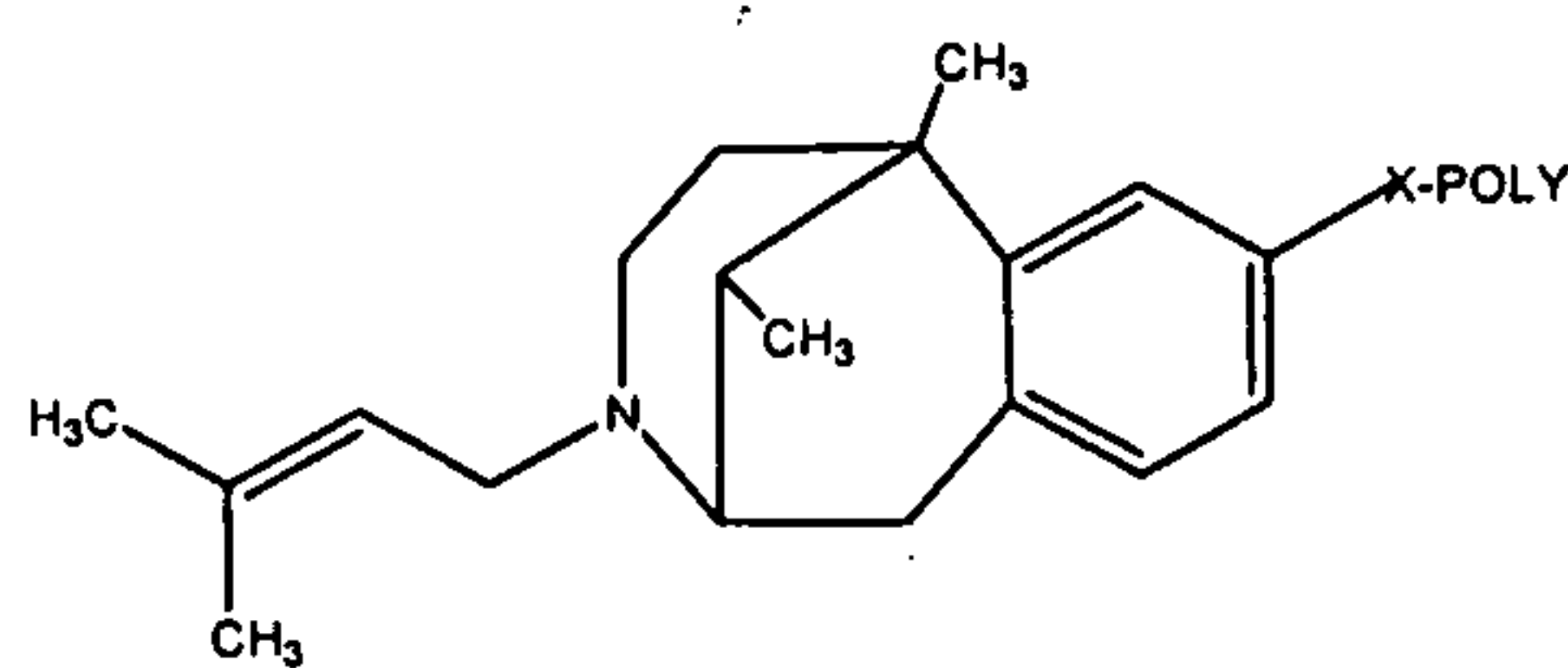
- 29 -



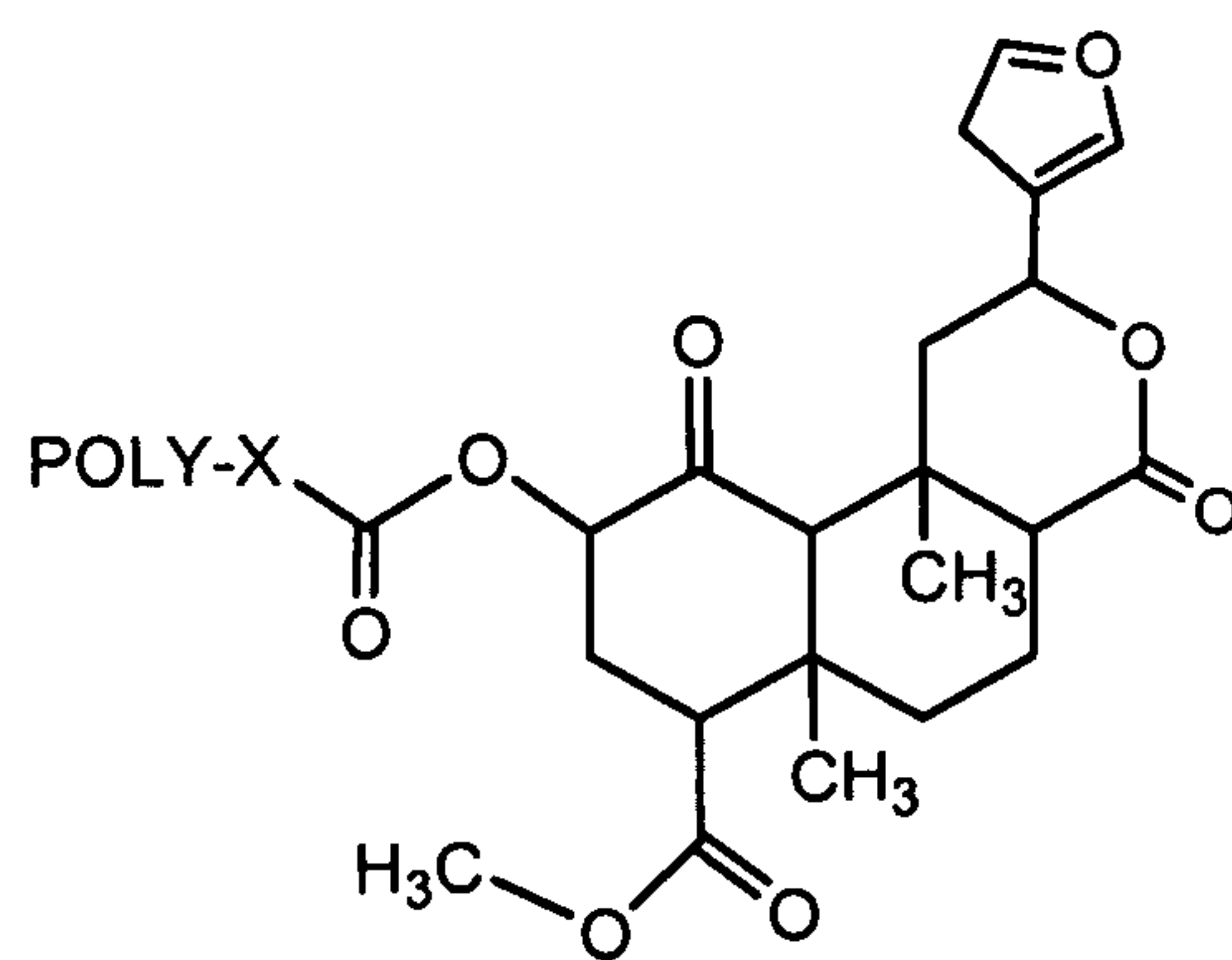
(exemplary GR89,696 conjugate)



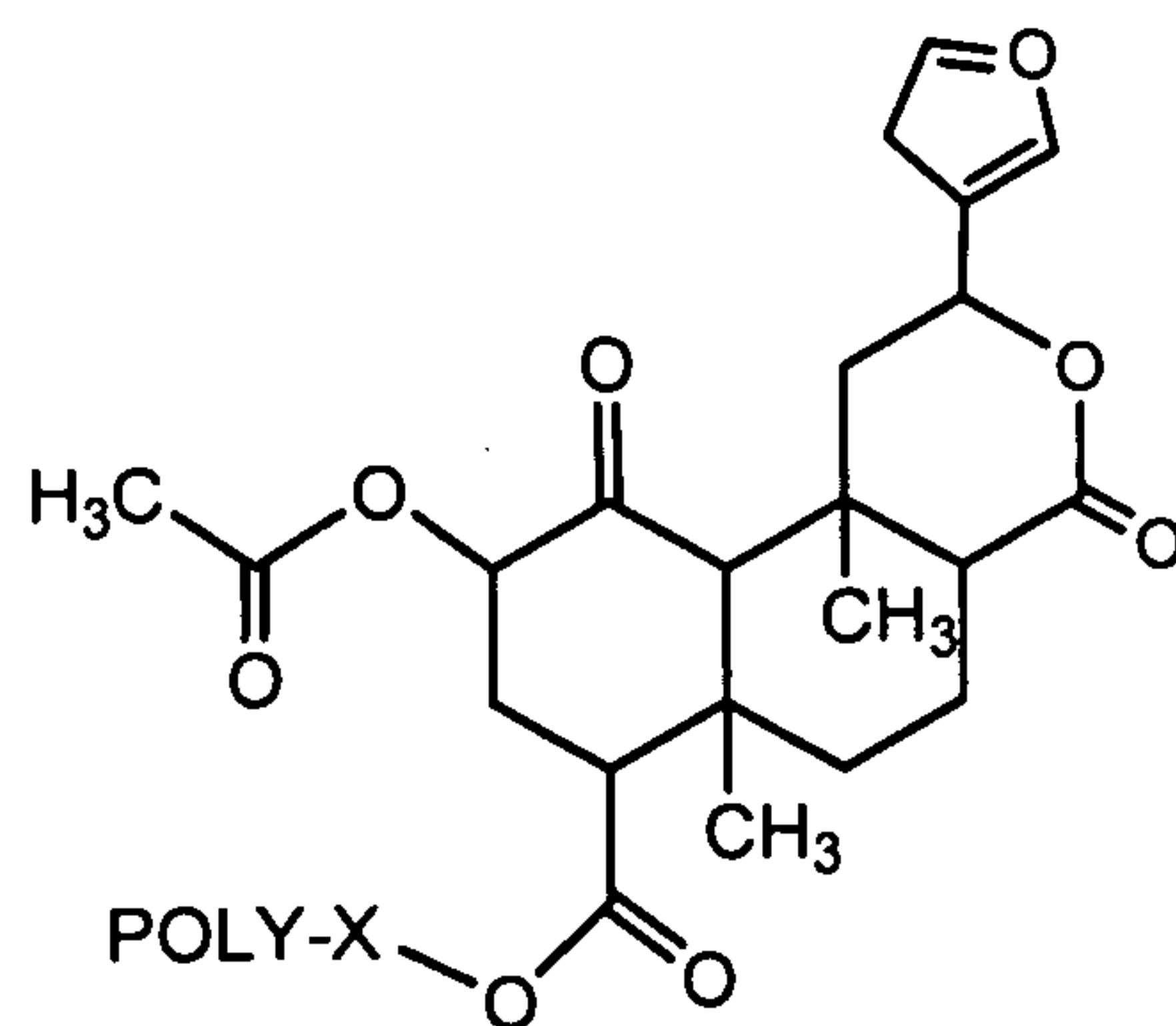
(exemplary PD117,302 conjugate)



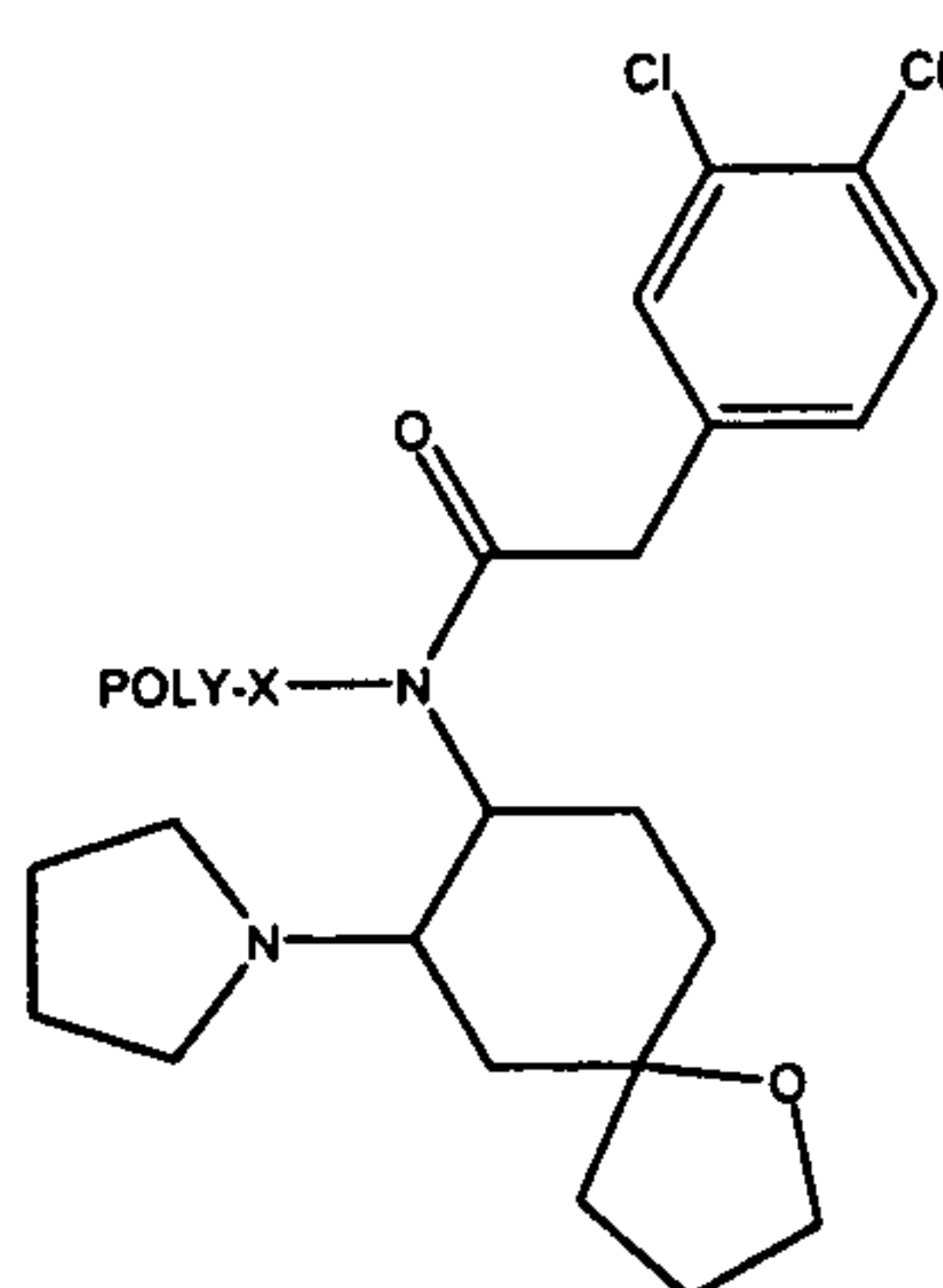
(exemplary pentazocine conjugate)



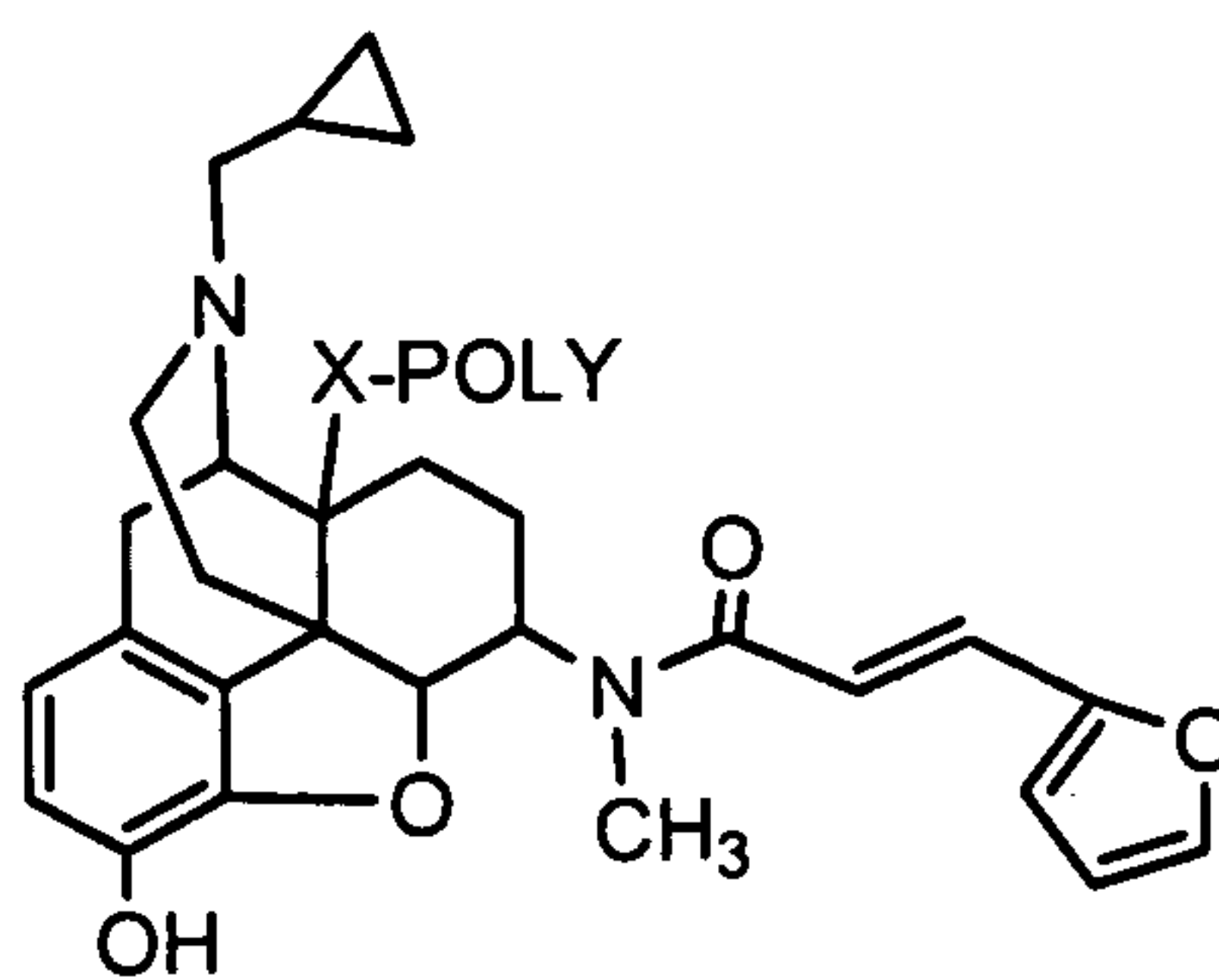
(exemplary salvinorin A conjugate)



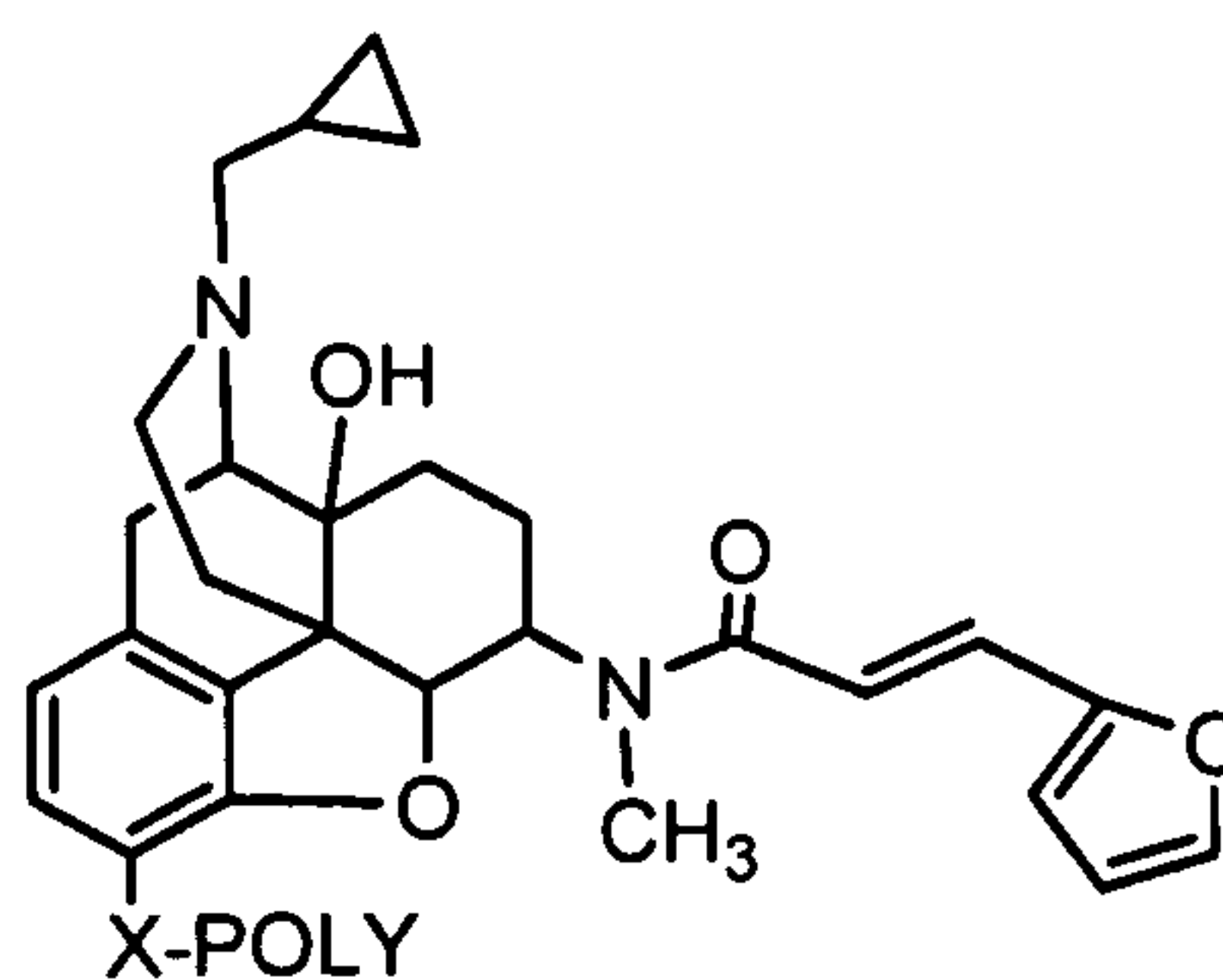
(exemplary salvinorin A conjugate)



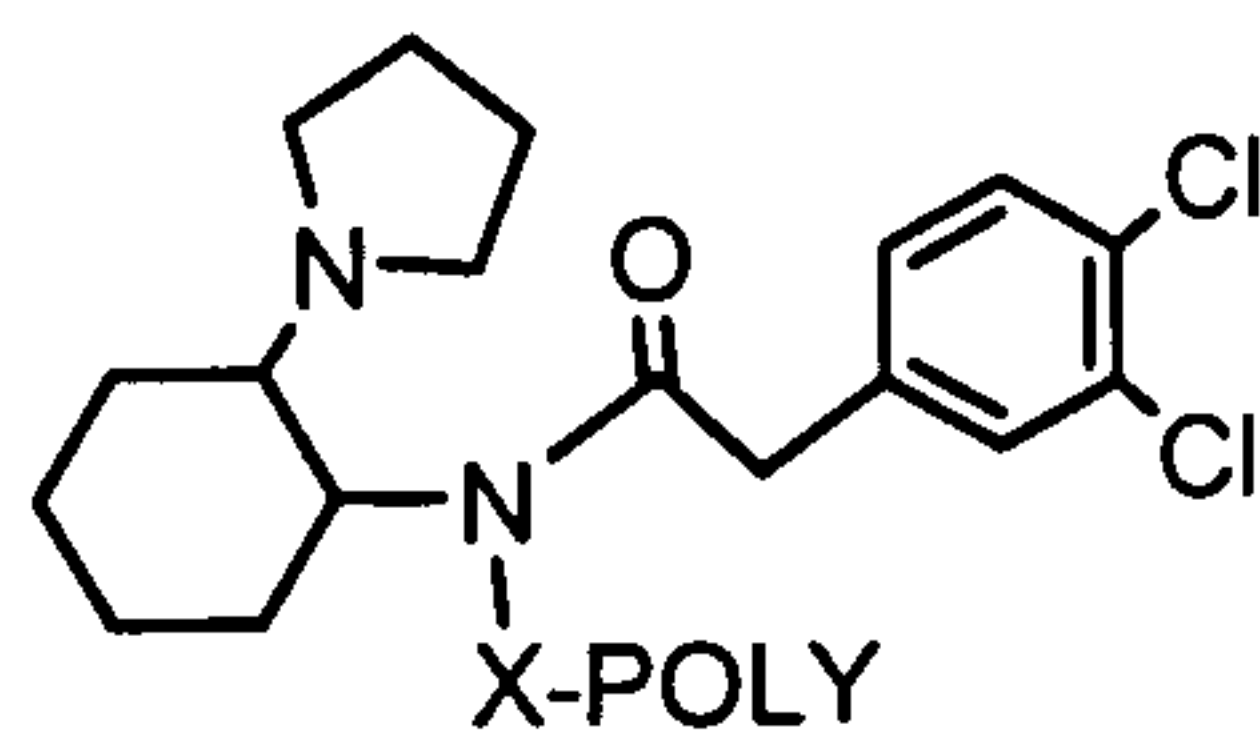
(exemplary spiradoline conjugate)



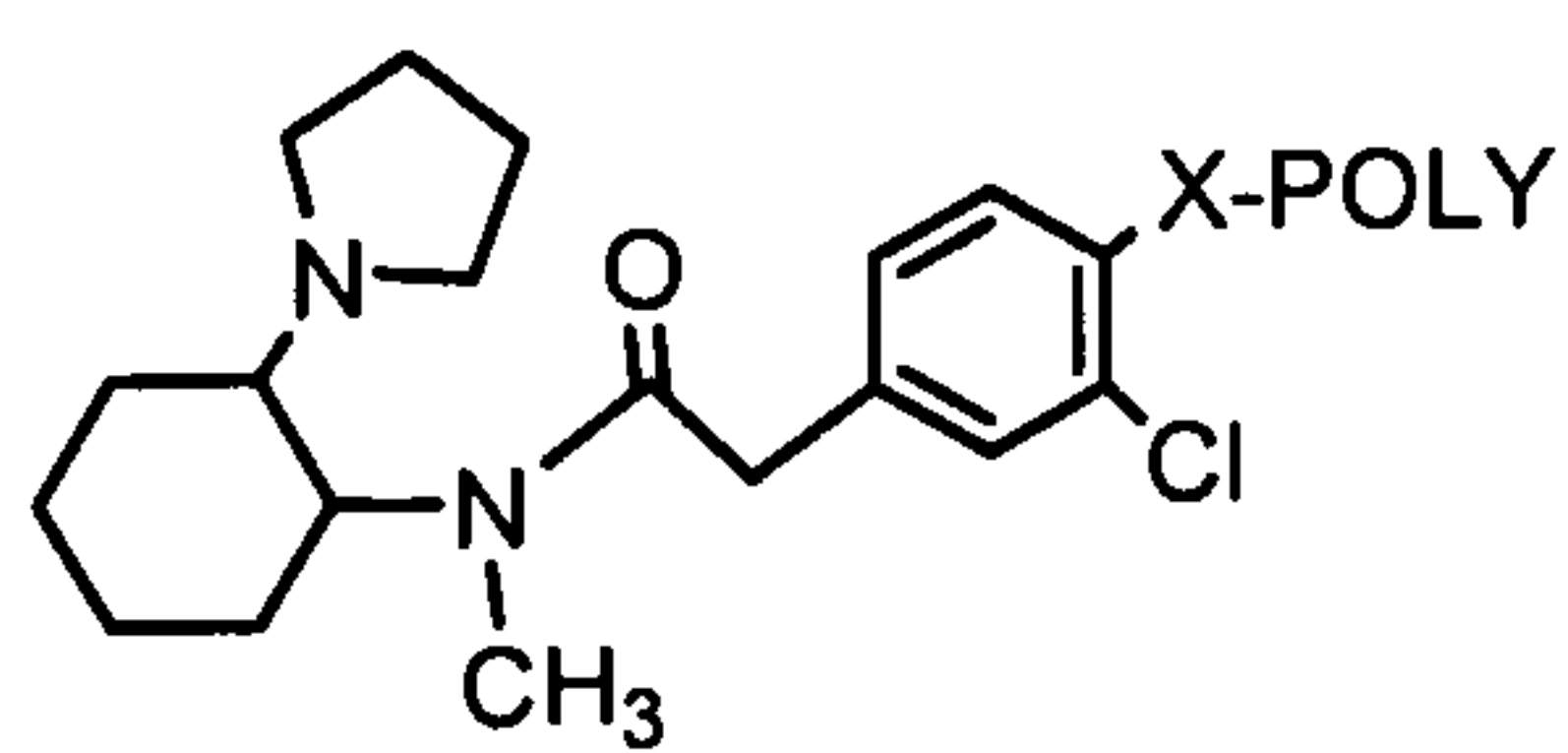
(exemplary TRK-820 conjugate)



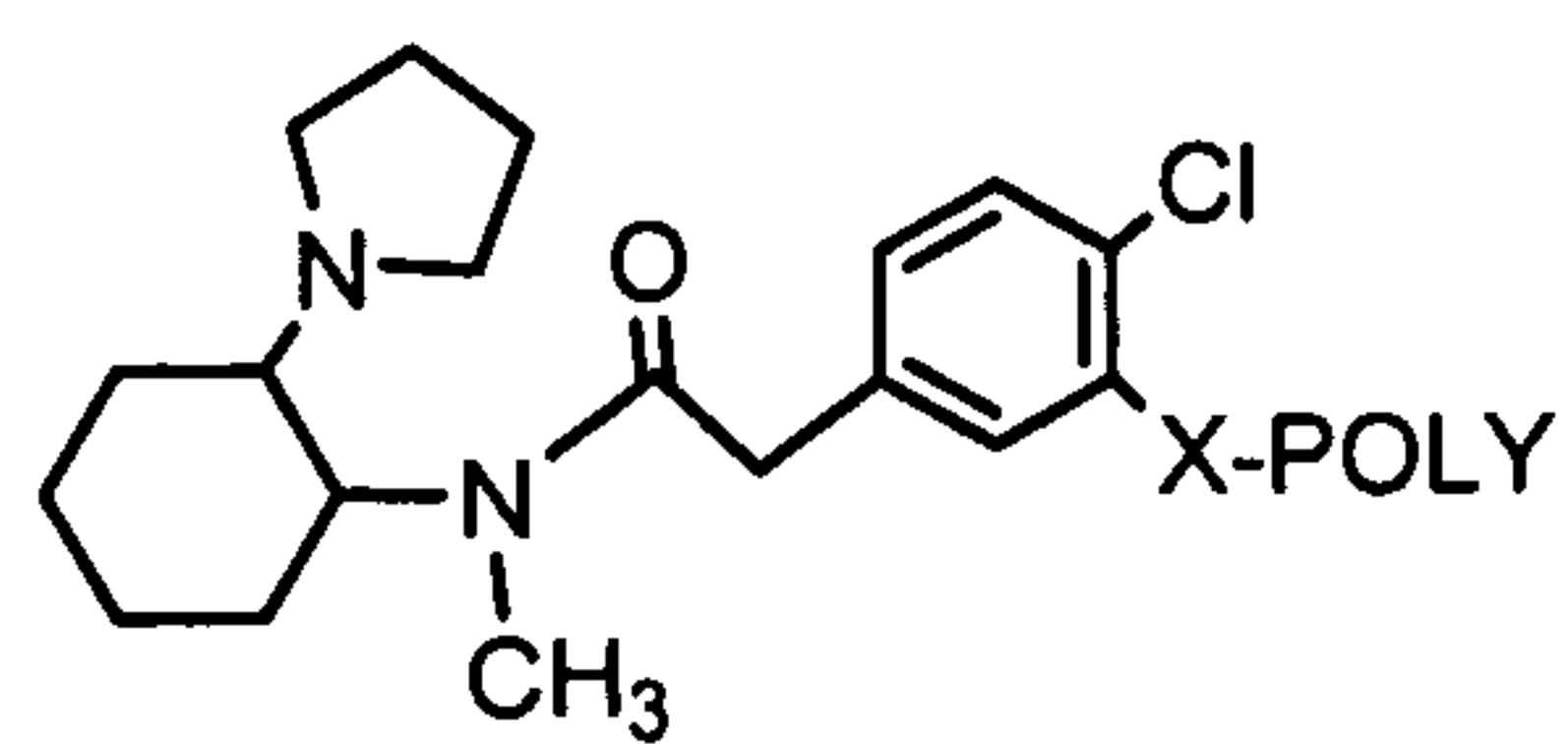
(exemplary TRK-820 conjugate)



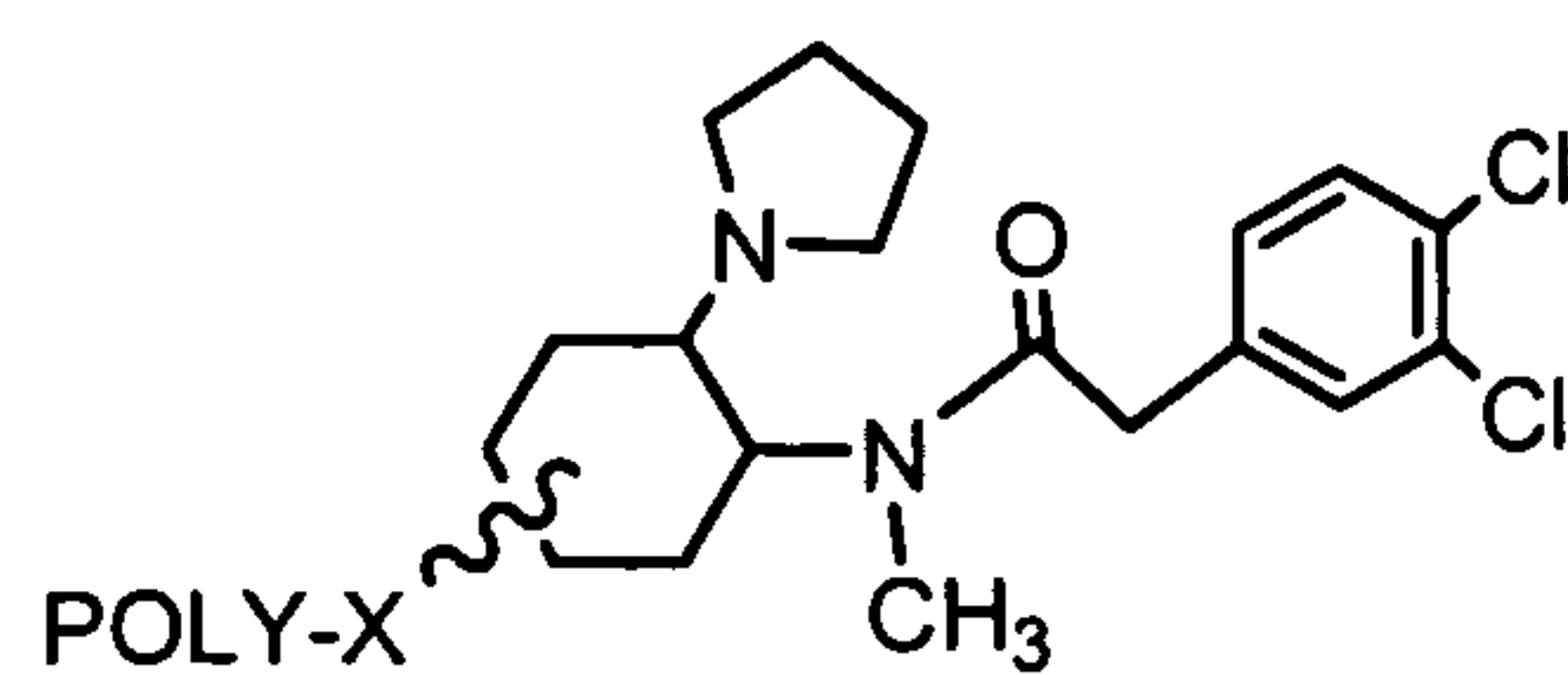
(exemplary U50488 conjugate)



(exemplary U50488 conjugate)

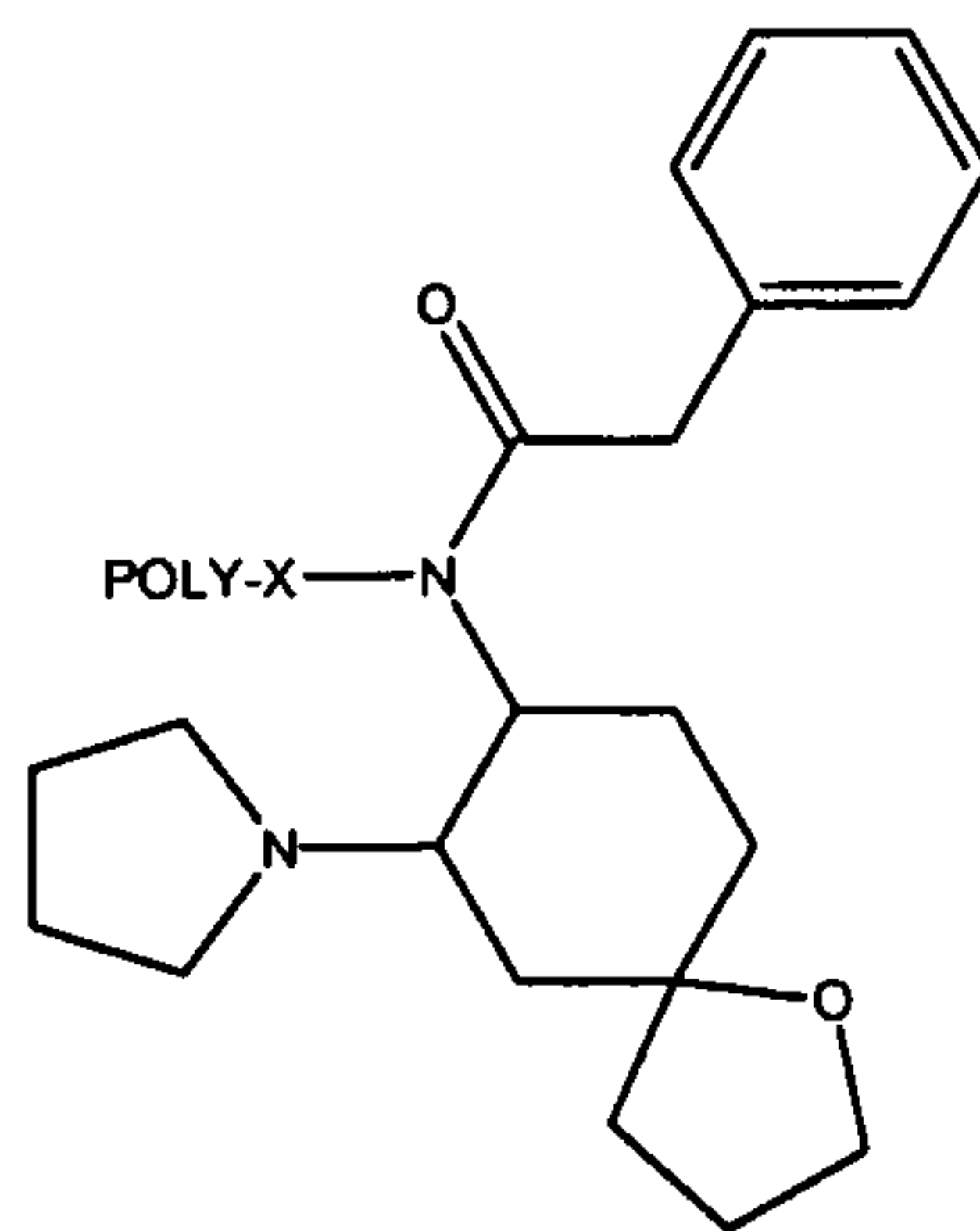


(exemplary U50488 conjugate)

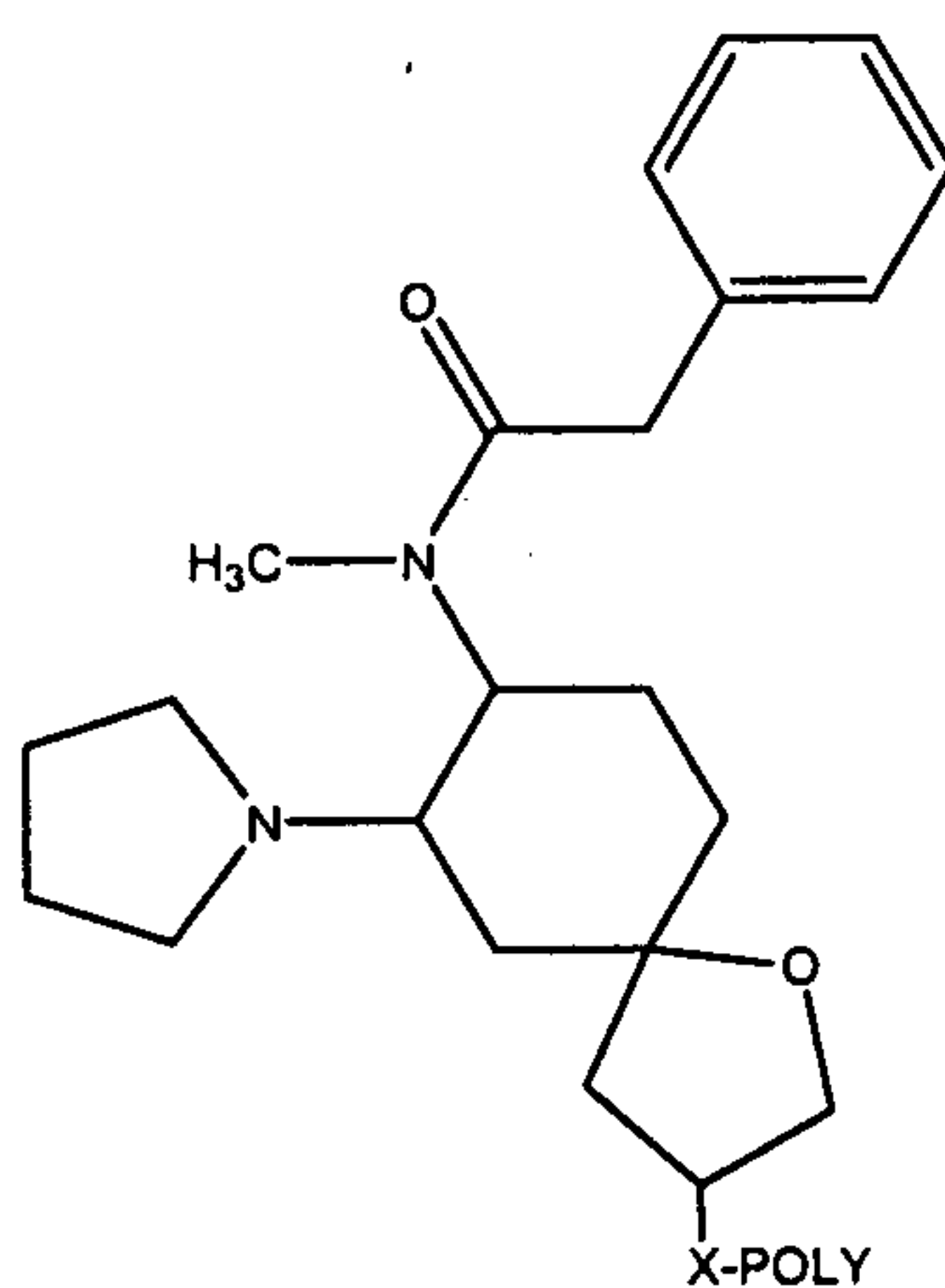


(exemplary U50488 conjugate)

- 32 -



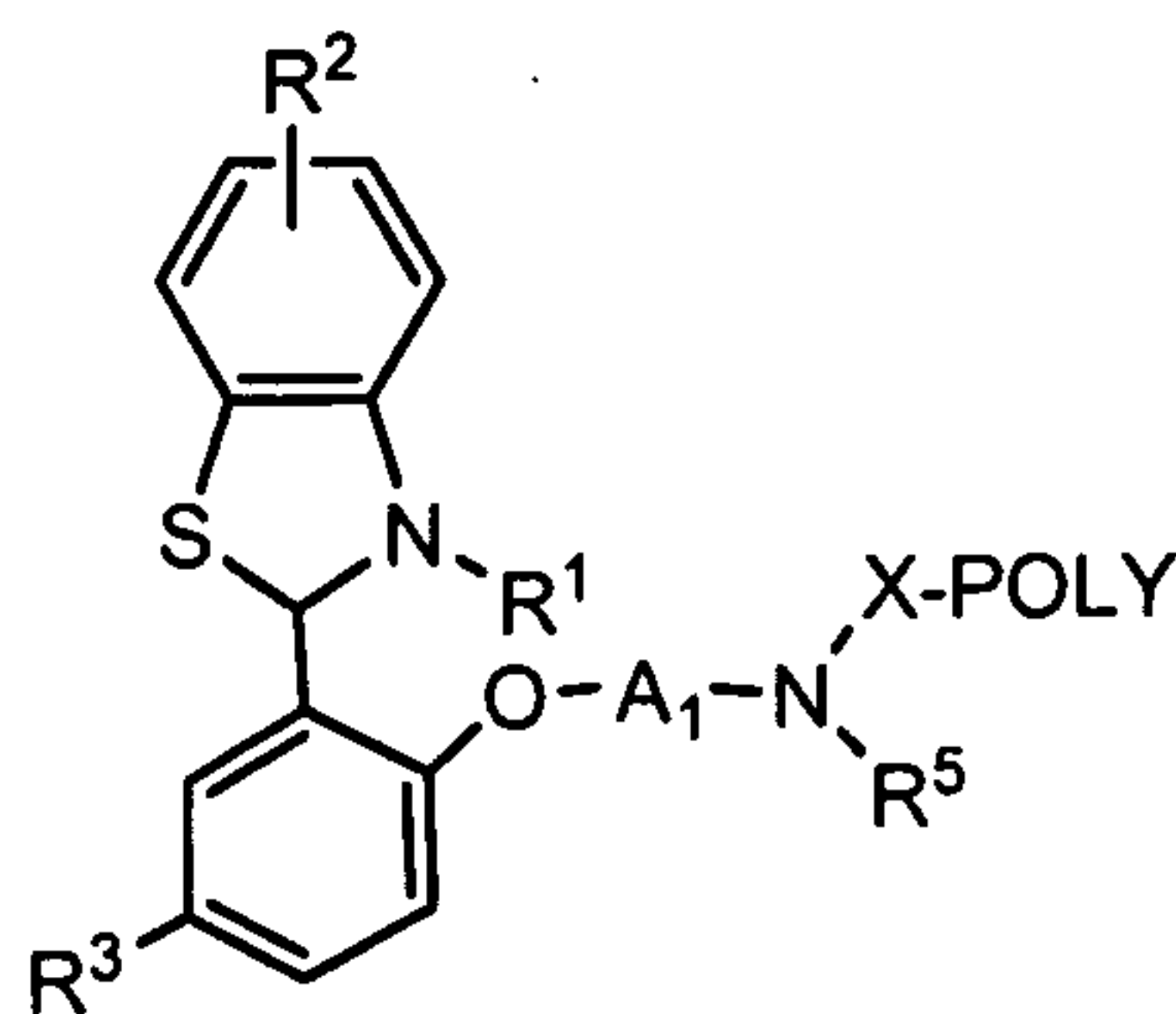
(exemplary U69593 conjugate)



(exemplary U69593 conjugate)

wherein, for each of the above conjugates, X is a linker (e.g., a covalent bond "-" or one or more atoms) and POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0108] An additional conjugate is provided below:



wherein:

R^1 is acyl

R^2 is selected from the group consisting of hydrogen, halogen, unsubstituted alkyl and alkyl substituted by halogen;

R^3 is selected from the group consisting of halogen and alkoxy;

R^5 is selected from the group consisting of hydroxyl, ester, alkoxy, and alkoxyalkyl;

A_1 is alkylene;

X is a linker; and

POLY is a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer.

[0109] The conjugates of the invention can exhibit a reduced blood-brain barrier crossing rate. Moreover, the conjugates maintain at least about 5%, 10%, 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, or more of the bioactivity of the unmodified parent small molecule drug.

[0110] While it is believed that the full scope of the conjugates disclosed herein have been described, an optimally sized oligomer can be determined as follows.

[0111] First, an oligomer obtained from a monodisperse or bimodal water soluble oligomer is conjugated to the small molecule drug. Preferably, the drug is orally bioavailable, and on its own, exhibits a non-negligible blood-brain barrier crossing rate. Next, the ability of the conjugate to cross the blood-brain barrier is determined using an appropriate model and compared to that of the unmodified parent drug. If the results are favorable, that is to say, if, for example, the rate of crossing is significantly reduced, then the bioactivity of conjugate is further evaluated. Preferably, the compounds according to the invention maintain a significant degree of bioactivity relative to the parent drug, i.e., greater than about 30% of the bioactivity of the parent drug, or even more preferably, greater than about 50% of the bioactivity of the parent drug.

[0112] The above steps are repeated one or more times using oligomers of the same monomer type but having a different number of subunits and the results are compared.

[0113] For each conjugate whose ability to cross the blood-brain barrier is reduced in comparison to the non-conjugated small molecule drug, its oral bioavailability is then assessed. Based upon these results, that is to say, based upon the comparison of conjugates of oligomers of varying size to a given small molecule at a given position or location within the small molecule, it is possible to determine the size of the oligomer most effective in providing a conjugate having an optimal balance between reduction in biological membrane crossing, oral bioavailability, and bioactivity. The small size of the oligomers makes such screenings feasible, and allows one to effectively tailor the properties of the resulting

conjugate. By making small, incremental changes in oligomer size, and utilizing an experimental design approach, one can effectively identify a conjugate having a favorable balance of reduction in biological membrane crossing rate, bioactivity, and oral bioavailability. In some instances, attachment of an oligomer as described herein is effective to actually increase oral bioavailability of the drug.

[0114] For example, one of ordinary skill in the art, using routine experimentation, can determine a best suited molecular size and linkage for improving oral bioavailability by first preparing a series of oligomers with different weights and functional groups and then obtaining the necessary clearance profiles by administering the conjugates to a patient and taking periodic blood and/or urine sampling. Once a series of clearance profiles have been obtained for each tested conjugate, a suitable conjugate can be identified.

[0115] Animal models (rodents and dogs) can also be used to study oral drug transport. In addition, non-*in vivo* methods include rodent everted gut excised tissue and Caco-2 cell monolayer tissue-culture models. These models are useful in predicting oral drug bioavailability.

[0116] To determine whether the opioid agonist or the conjugate of an opioid agonist and a water-soluble non-peptidic oligomer has activity as mu opioid receptor agonist, it is possible to test such a compound. For example, K_D (binding affinity) and B_{max} (receptor number) can be determined using an approach modified from that described in Malatynska et al. (1995) *NeuroReport* 6:613-616. Briefly, human mu receptors can be recombinantly expressed in Chinese hamster ovary cells. The radioligand [^3H]-diprenorphine (30-50 Ci/mmol) with a final ligand concentration of [0.3 nM] can be used. Naloxone is used as a non-specific determinate [3.0 nM], a reference compound and positive control. Reactions are carried out in 50 mM TRIS-HCl (pH 7.4) containing 5 mM $MgCl_2$, at 25 °C for 150 minutes. The reaction is terminated by rapid vacuum filtration onto glass fiber filters. Radioactivity trapped onto filters is determined and compared to control values in order to ascertain any interactions of test compound with the cloned mu binding site.

[0117] Similar testing can be performed for kappa opioid receptor agonist. See, for example, Lahti et al. (1985) *Eur. J. Pharmacol.* 109:281-284; Rothman et al. (1992) *Peptides* 13:977-987; Kinouchi et al. (1991) *Eur. J. Pharmacol.* 207:135-141. Briefly, human kappa receptors can be obtained from guinea pig cerebellar membranes. The radioligand [^3H]-U-69593 (40-60 Ci/mmol) with a final ligand concentration of [0.75 nM] can be used. U-69593 is used as a non-specific determinate [1.0 μM], a reference compound and positive control.

Reactions are carried out in 50 mM HEPES (pH 7.4) at 30 °C for 120 minutes. The reaction is terminated by rapid vacuum filtration onto glass fiber filters. Radioactivity trapped onto filters is determined and compared to control values in order to ascertain any interactions of test compound with the cloned kappa binding site.

[0118] The present invention also includes pharmaceutical preparations comprising a conjugate as provided herein in combination with a pharmaceutical excipient. Generally, the conjugate itself will be in a solid form (e.g., a precipitate), which can be combined with a suitable pharmaceutical excipient that can be in either solid or liquid form.

[0119] Exemplary excipients include, without limitation, those selected from the group consisting of carbohydrates, inorganic salts, antimicrobial agents, antioxidants, surfactants, buffers, acids, bases, and combinations thereof.

[0120] A carbohydrate such as a sugar, a derivatized sugar such as an alditol, aldonic acid, an esterified sugar, and/or a sugar polymer may be present as an excipient. Specific carbohydrate excipients include, for example: monosaccharides, such as fructose, maltose, galactose, glucose, D-mannose, sorbose, and the like; disaccharides, such as lactose, sucrose, trehalose, cellobiose, and the like; polysaccharides, such as raffinose, melezitose, maltodextrins, dextrans, starches, and the like; and alditols, such as mannitol, xylitol, maltitol, lactitol, xylitol, sorbitol (glucitol), pyranosyl sorbitol, myoinositol, and the like.

[0121] The excipient can also include an inorganic salt or buffer such as citric acid, sodium chloride, potassium chloride, sodium sulfate, potassium nitrate, sodium phosphate monobasic, sodium phosphate dibasic, and combinations thereof.

[0122] The preparation may also include an antimicrobial agent for preventing or deterring microbial growth. Nonlimiting examples of antimicrobial agents suitable for the present invention include benzalkonium chloride, benzethonium chloride, benzyl alcohol, cetylpyridinium chloride, chlorobutanol, phenol, phenylethyl alcohol, phenylmercuric nitrate, thimersol, and combinations thereof.

[0123] An antioxidant can be present in the preparation as well. Antioxidants are used to prevent oxidation, thereby preventing the deterioration of the conjugate or other components of the preparation. Suitable antioxidants for use in the present invention include, for example, ascorbyl palmitate, butylated hydroxyanisole, butylated hydroxytoluene, hypophosphorous acid, monothioglycerol, propyl gallate, sodium bisulfite, sodium formaldehyde sulfoxylate, sodium metabisulfite, and combinations thereof.

[0124] A surfactant may be present as an excipient. Exemplary surfactants include: polysorbates, such as "Tween 20" and "Tween 80," and pluronics such as F68 and F88 (both of which are available from BASF, Mount Olive, New Jersey); sorbitan esters; lipids, such as phospholipids such as lecithin and other phosphatidylcholines, phosphatidylethanolamines (although preferably not in liposomal form), fatty acids and fatty esters; steroids, such as cholesterol; and chelating agents, such as EDTA, zinc and other such suitable cations.

[0125] Pharmaceutically acceptable acids or bases may be present as an excipient in the preparation. Nonlimiting examples of acids that can be used include those acids selected from the group consisting of hydrochloric acid, acetic acid, phosphoric acid, citric acid, malic acid, lactic acid, formic acid, trichloroacetic acid, nitric acid, perchloric acid, phosphoric acid, sulfuric acid, fumaric acid, and combinations thereof. Examples of suitable bases include, without limitation, bases selected from the group consisting of sodium hydroxide, sodium acetate, ammonium hydroxide, potassium hydroxide, ammonium acetate, potassium acetate, sodium phosphate, potassium phosphate, sodium citrate, sodium formate, sodium sulfate, potassium sulfate, potassium fumarate, and combinations thereof.

[0126] The amount of the conjugate in the composition will vary depending on a number of factors, but will optimally be a therapeutically effective dose when the composition is stored in a unit dose container. A therapeutically effective dose can be determined experimentally by repeated administration of increasing amounts of the conjugate in order to determine which amount produces a clinically desired endpoint.

[0127] The amount of any individual excipient in the composition will vary depending on the activity of the excipient and particular needs of the composition. Typically, the optimal amount of any individual excipient is determined through routine experimentation, i.e., by preparing compositions containing varying amounts of the excipient (ranging from low to high), examining the stability and other parameters, and then determining the range at which optimal performance is attained with no significant adverse effects.

[0128] Generally, however, the excipient will be present in the composition in an amount of about 1% to about 99% by weight, preferably from about 5%-98% by weight, more preferably from about 15-95% by weight of the excipient, with concentrations less than 30% by weight most preferred.

[0129] These foregoing pharmaceutical excipients along with other excipients and general teachings regarding pharmaceutical compositions are described in "Remington: The Science & Practice of Pharmacy", 19th ed., Williams & Williams, (1995), the "Physician's Desk Reference", 52nd ed., Medical Economics, Montvale, NJ (1998), and Kibbe, A.H., Handbook of Pharmaceutical Excipients, 3rd Edition, American Pharmaceutical Association, Washington, D.C., 2000.

[0130] The pharmaceutical compositions can take any number of forms and the invention is not limited in this regard. Exemplary preparations are most preferably in a form suitable for oral administration such as a tablet, caplet, capsule, gel cap, troche, dispersion, suspension, solution, elixir, syrup, lozenge, transdermal patch, spray, suppository, and powder.

[0131] Oral dosage forms are preferred for those conjugates that are orally active, and include tablets, caplets, capsules, gel caps, suspensions, solutions, elixirs, and syrups, and can also comprise a plurality of granules, beads, powders or pellets that are optionally encapsulated. Such dosage forms are prepared using conventional methods known to those in the field of pharmaceutical formulation and described in the pertinent texts.

[0132] Tablets and caplets, for example, can be manufactured using standard tablet processing procedures and equipment. Direct compression and granulation techniques are preferred when preparing tablets or caplets containing the conjugates described herein. In addition to the conjugate, the tablets and caplets will generally contain inactive, pharmaceutically acceptable carrier materials such as binders, lubricants, disintegrants, fillers, stabilizers, surfactants, coloring agents, and the like. Binders are used to impart cohesive qualities to a tablet, and thus ensure that the tablet remains intact. Suitable binder materials include, but are not limited to, starch (including corn starch and pregelatinized starch), gelatin, sugars (including sucrose, glucose, dextrose and lactose), polyethylene glycol, waxes, and natural and synthetic gums, e.g., acacia sodium alginate, polyvinylpyrrolidone, cellulosic polymers (including hydroxypropyl cellulose, hydroxypropyl methylcellulose, methyl cellulose, microcrystalline cellulose, ethyl cellulose, hydroxyethyl cellulose, and the like), and Veegum. Lubricants are used to facilitate tablet manufacture, promoting powder flow and preventing particle capping (i.e., particle breakage) when pressure is relieved. Useful lubricants are magnesium stearate, calcium stearate, and stearic acid. Disintegrants are used to facilitate disintegration of the tablet, and are generally starches, clays, celluloses, algin, gums, or crosslinked polymers. Fillers include, for

example, materials such as silicon dioxide, titanium dioxide, alumina, talc, kaolin, powdered cellulose, and microcrystalline cellulose, as well as soluble materials such as mannitol, urea, sucrose, lactose, dextrose, sodium chloride, and sorbitol. Stabilizers, as well known in the art, are used to inhibit or retard drug decomposition reactions that include, by way of example, oxidative reactions.

[0133] Capsules are also preferred oral dosage forms, in which case the conjugate-containing composition can be encapsulated in the form of a liquid or gel (e.g., in the case of a gel cap) or solid (including particulates such as granules, beads, powders or pellets). Suitable capsules include hard and soft capsules, and are generally made of gelatin, starch, or a cellulosic material. Two-piece hard gelatin capsules are preferably sealed, such as with gelatin bands or the like.

[0134] Included are parenteral formulations in the substantially dry form (typically as a lyophilizate or precipitate, which can be in the form of a powder or cake), as well as formulations prepared for injection, which are typically liquid and requires the step of reconstituting the dry form of parenteral formulation. Examples of suitable diluents for reconstituting solid compositions prior to injection include bacteriostatic water for injection, dextrose 5% in water, phosphate-buffered saline, Ringer's solution, saline, sterile water, deionized water, and combinations thereof.

[0135] In some cases, compositions intended for parenteral administration can take the form of nonaqueous solutions, suspensions, or emulsions, each typically being sterile. Examples of nonaqueous solvents or vehicles are propylene glycol, polyethylene glycol, vegetable oils, such as olive oil and corn oil, gelatin, and injectable organic esters such as ethyl oleate.

[0136] The parenteral formulations described herein can also contain adjuvants such as preserving, wetting, emulsifying, and dispersing agents. The formulations are rendered sterile by incorporation of a sterilizing agent, filtration through a bacteria-retaining filter, irradiation, or heat.

[0137] The conjugate can also be administered through the skin using conventional transdermal patch or other transdermal delivery system, wherein the conjugate is contained within a laminated structure that serves as a drug delivery device to be affixed to the skin. In such a structure, the conjugate is contained in a layer, or "reservoir," underlying an upper

backing layer. The laminated structure can contain a single reservoir, or it can contain multiple reservoirs.

[0138] The conjugate can also be formulated into a suppository for rectal administration. With respect to suppositories, the conjugate is mixed with a suppository base material which is (e.g., an excipient that remains solid at room temperature but softens, melts or dissolves at body temperature) such as cocoa butter (theobroma oil), polyethylene glycols, glycerinated gelatin, fatty acids, and combinations thereof. Suppositories can be prepared by, for example, performing the following steps (not necessarily in the order presented): melting the suppository base material to form a melt; incorporating the conjugate (either before or after melting of the suppository base material); pouring the melt into a mold; cooling the melt (e.g., placing the melt-containing mold in a room temperature environment) to thereby form suppositories; and removing the suppositories from the mold.

[0139] The invention also provides a method for administering a conjugate as provided herein to a patient suffering from a condition that is responsive to treatment with the conjugate. The method comprises administering, generally orally, a therapeutically effective amount of the conjugate (preferably provided as part of a pharmaceutical preparation). Other modes of administration are also contemplated, such as pulmonary, nasal, buccal, rectal, sublingual, transdermal, and parenteral. As used herein, the term "parenteral" includes subcutaneous, intravenous, intra-arterial, intraperitoneal, intracardiac, intrathecal, and intramuscular injection, as well as infusion injections.

[0140] In instances where parenteral administration is utilized, it may be necessary to employ somewhat bigger oligomers than those described previously, with molecular weights ranging from about 500 to 30K Daltons (e.g., having molecular weights of about 500, 1000, 2000, 2500, 3000, 5000, 7500, 10000, 15000, 20000, 25000, 30000 or even more).

[0141] The method of administering may be used to treat any condition that can be remedied or prevented by administration of the particular conjugate. Those of ordinary skill in the art appreciate which conditions a specific conjugate can effectively treat. The actual dose to be administered will vary depend upon the age, weight, and general condition of the subject as well as the severity of the condition being treated, the judgment of the health care professional, and conjugate being administered. Therapeutically effective amounts are known to those skilled in the art and/or are described in the pertinent reference texts and literature. Generally, a therapeutically effective amount will range from about 0.001 mg to

1000 mg, preferably in doses from 0.01 mg/day to 750 mg/day, and more preferably in doses from 0.10 mg/day to 500 mg/day.

[0142] The unit dosage of any given conjugate (again, preferably provided as part of a pharmaceutical preparation) can be administered in a variety of dosing schedules depending on the judgment of the clinician, needs of the patient, and so forth. The specific dosing schedule will be known by those of ordinary skill in the art or can be determined experimentally using routine methods. Exemplary dosing schedules include, without limitation, administration five times a day, four times a day, three times a day, twice daily, once daily, three times weekly, twice weekly, once weekly, twice monthly, once monthly, and any combination thereof. Once the clinical endpoint has been achieved, dosing of the composition is halted.

[0143] One advantage of administering the conjugates of the present invention is that a reduction in first pass metabolism may be achieved relative to the parent drug. Such a result is advantageous for many orally administered drugs that are substantially metabolized by passage through the gut. In this way, clearance of the conjugate can be modulated by selecting the oligomer molecular size, linkage, and position of covalent attachment providing the desired clearance properties. One of ordinary skill in the art can determine the ideal molecular size of the oligomer based upon the teachings herein. Preferred reductions in first pass metabolism for a conjugate as compared to the corresponding nonconjugated small drug molecule include : at least about 10%, at least about 20%, at least about 30; at least about 40; at least about 50%; at least about 60%, at least about 70%, at least about 80% and at least about 90%.

[0144] Thus, the invention provides a method for reducing the metabolism of an active agent. The method comprises the steps of: providing monodisperse or bimodal conjugates, each conjugate comprised of a moiety derived from a small molecule drug covalently attached by a stable linkage to a water-soluble oligomer, wherein said conjugate exhibits a reduced rate of metabolism as compared to the rate of metabolism of the small molecule drug not attached to the water-soluble oligomer; and administering the conjugate to a patient. Typically, administration is carried out via one type of administration selected from the group consisting of oral administration, transdermal administration, buccal administration, transmucosal administration, vaginal administration, rectal administration, parenteral administration, and pulmonary administration.

- 41 -

[0145] Although useful in reducing many types of metabolism (including both Phase I and Phase II metabolism) can be reduced, the conjugates are particularly useful when the small molecule drug is metabolized by a hepatic enzyme (e.g., one or more of the cytochrome P450 isoforms) and/or by one or more intestinal enzymes.

EXPERIMENTAL

[0147] It is to be understood that while the invention has been described in conjunction with certain preferred and specific embodiments, the foregoing description as well as the examples that follow are intended to illustrate and not limit the scope of the invention. Other aspects, advantages and modifications within the scope of the invention will be apparent to those skilled in the art to which the invention pertains.

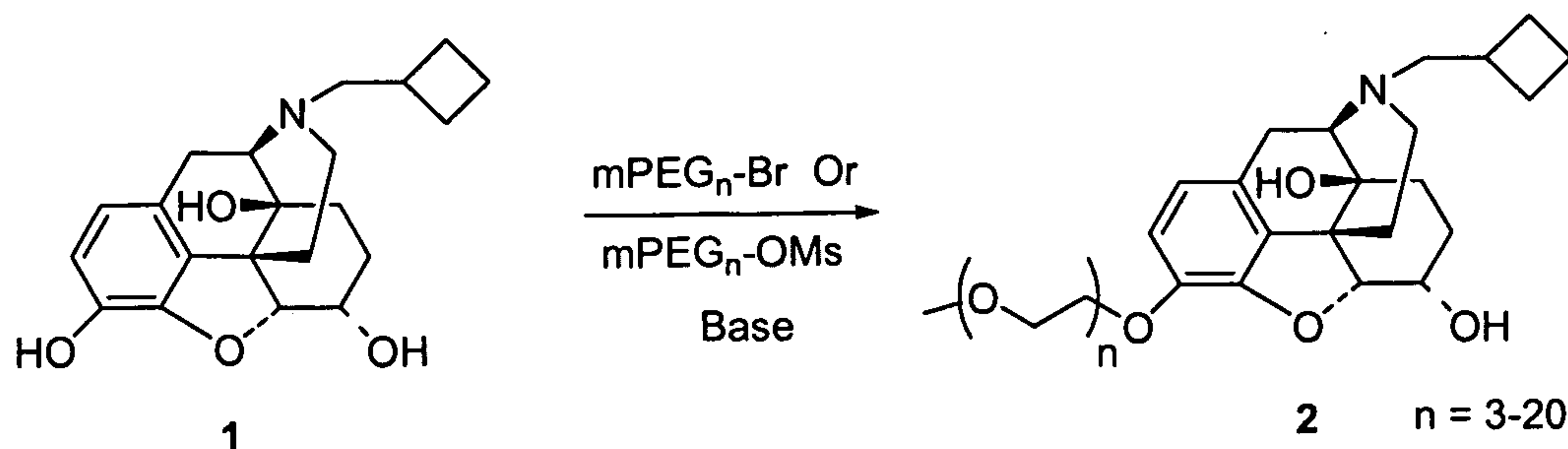
[0148] All chemical reagents referred to in the appended examples are commercially available unless otherwise indicated. The preparation of PEG-mers is described in, for example, U.S. Patent Application Publication No. 2005/0136031.

[0149] All ^1H NMR (nuclear magnetic resonance) data was generated by a NMR spectrometer manufactured by Bruker (MHz $\geq$ 300). A list of certain compounds as well as the source of the compounds is provided below.

EXAMPLE 1

Preparation of an Oligomer-Nalbuphine Conjugates - "Approach A"

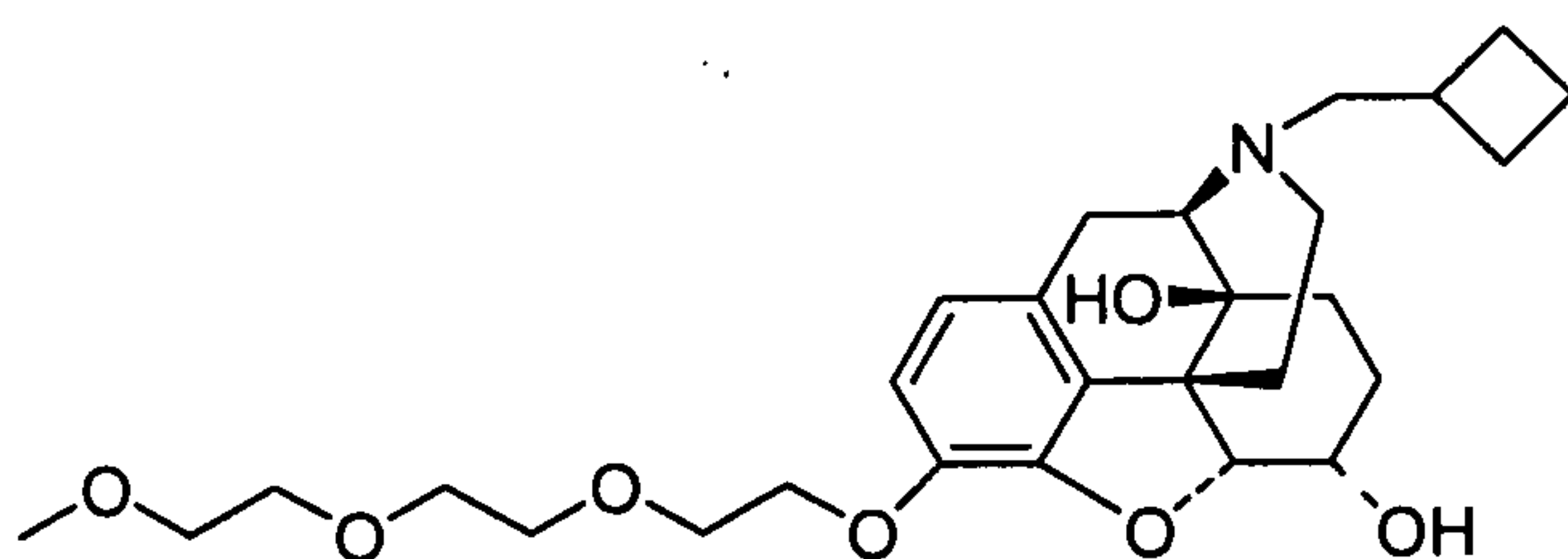
[0150] PEG-Nalbuphine was prepared using a first approach. Schematically, the approach followed for this example is shown below.



[0151] Desalting of Nalbuphine Hydrochloride Dihydrate:

[0152] Nalbuphine hydrochloride dihydrate (600 mg, from Sigma) was dissolved in water (100 mL). Saturated aqueous K_2CO_3 was added and then adjusted the pH to 9.3 with 1 N HCl solution, saturated with sodium chloride. The solution was extracted with dichloromethane (5 x 25 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine (100 mL), dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated to dryness and dried under high vacuum to yield nalbuphine (483.4 mg, 97% recovery). The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$ in CDCl_3 .

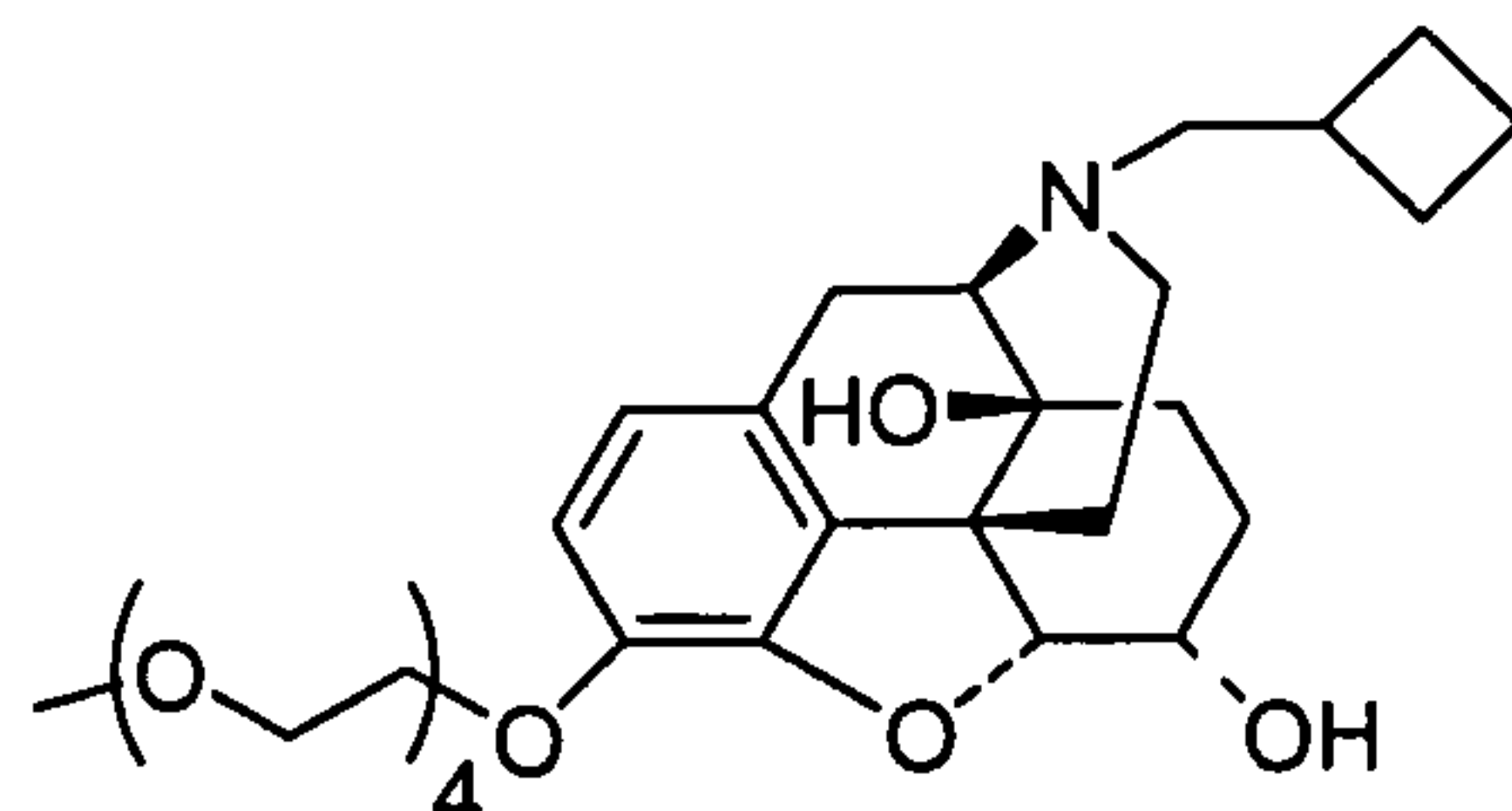
[0153] Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₃-Nalbuphine (2) (n = 3):



[0154] Nalbuphine (28.5 mg, 0.08 mmol) was dissolved in a mixture of acetone (2 mL) and toluene (1.5 mL). Potassium carbonate (21 mg, 0.15 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of mPEG₃-Br (44.5 mg, 0.20 mmol) at room temperature. The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 27.5 hours. More potassium carbonate (24 mg, 0.17 mmol) was added. The mixture was heated with CEM microwave such that 60 °C for 20 minutes was achieved, and then such that 100 °C for 30 minutes was achieved. DMF (0.2 mL) was added. The mixture was heated with microwave at 60 °C for 20 minutes, at 100 °C for 30 minutes. The reaction was concentrated to remove the organic solvents, the residue was mixed with water (10 mL), extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The crude product was checked with HPLC and LC-MS. The residue was mixed again with water (10 mL), adjusted the pH to 2.3 with 1N HCl, washed with dichloromethane (2 x 15 mL). The aqueous solution was adjusted to pH 10.4 with 0.2 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 15

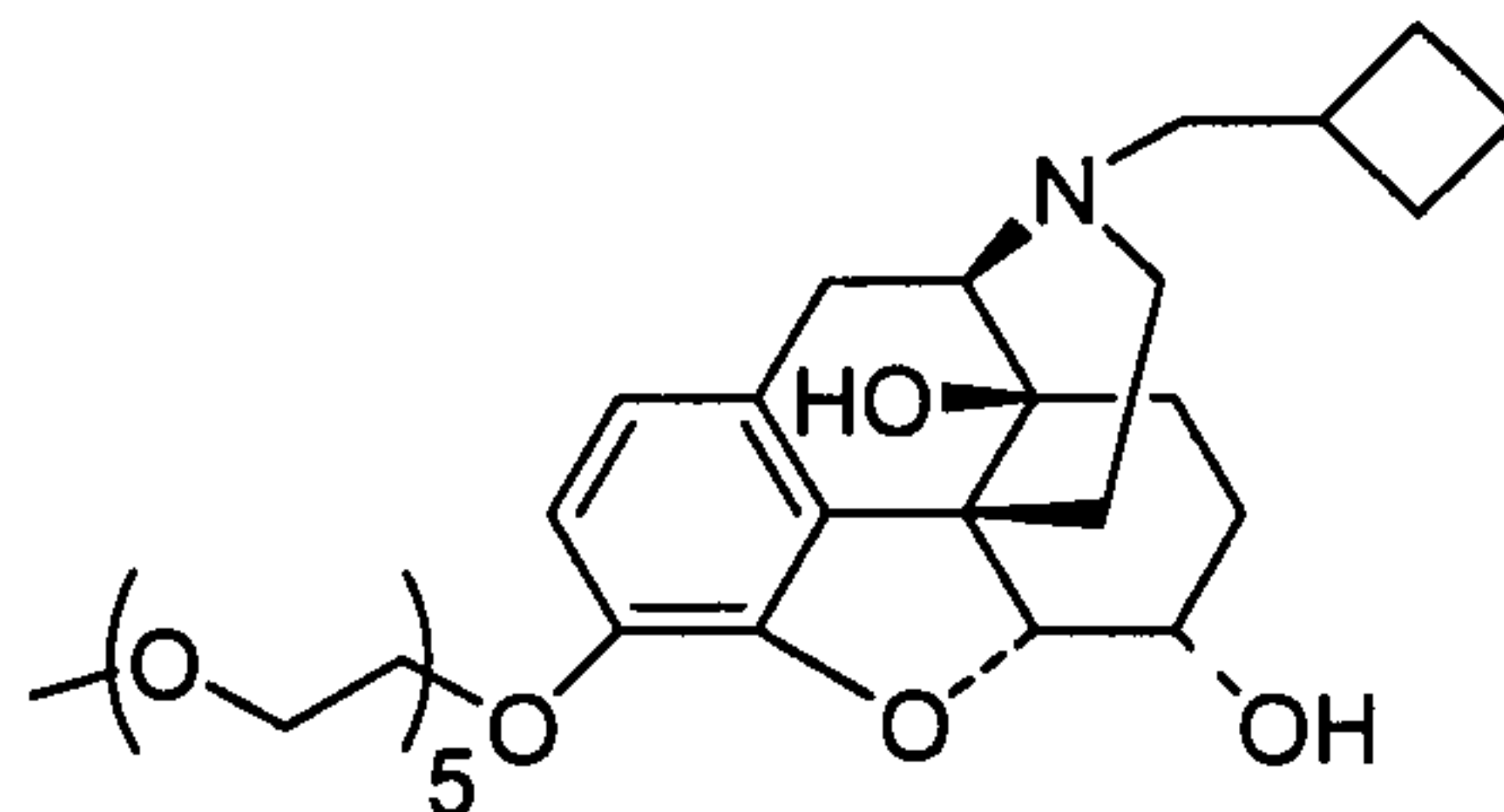
mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The residue was purified by Biotage flash column chromatography with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane resulting in the desired product 3-O-mPEG₃-nalbuphine (2) ($n = 3$) (32.7 mg) in 81% yield. The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$, LC-MS.

[0155] Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₄-Nalbuphine (2) ($n = 4$):



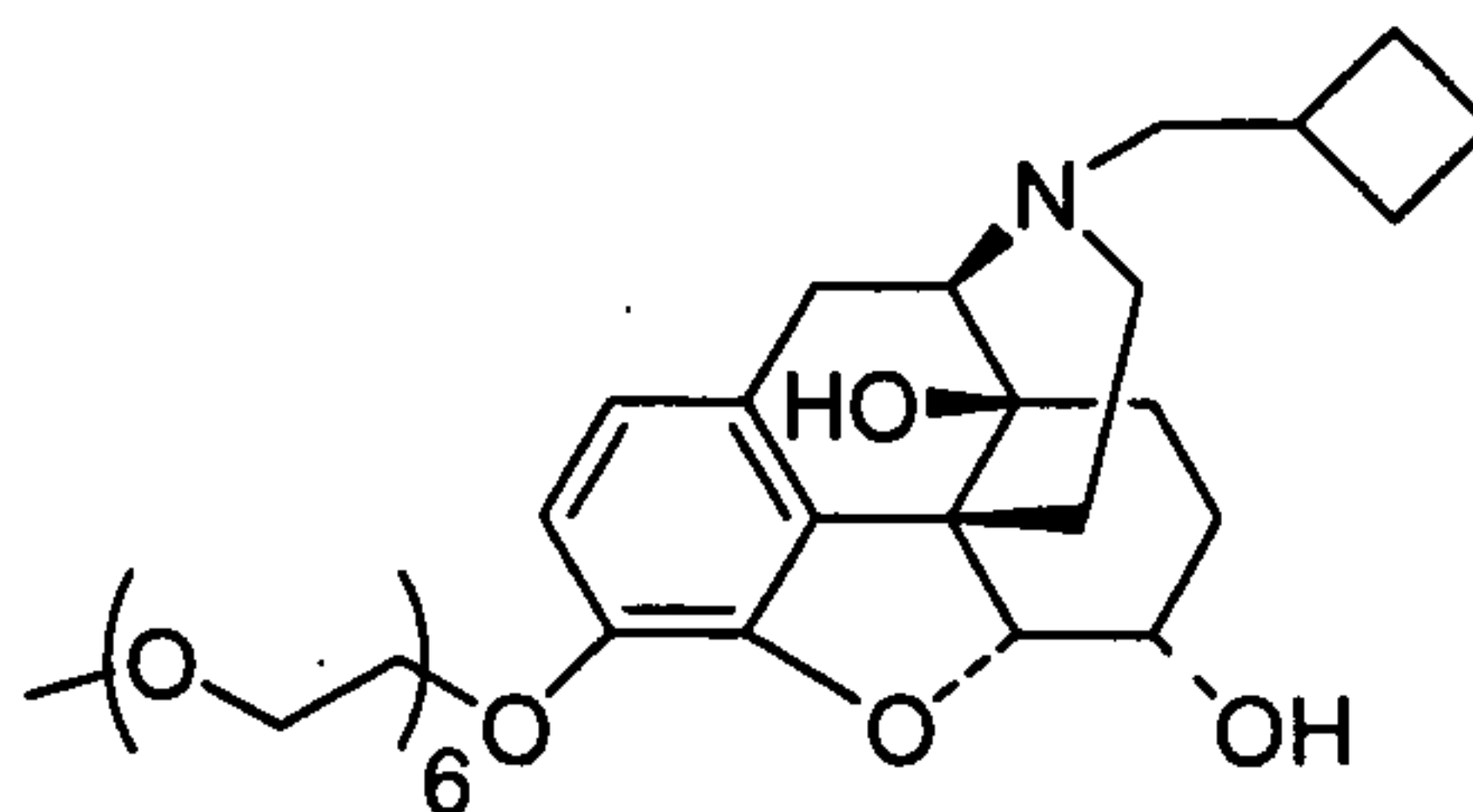
[0156] A mixture of nalbuphine (96 mg, 0.27 mmol) and mPEG₄-OMs (131 mg, 0.46 mmol) in acetone (8 mL) in the presence of potassium carbonate (113 mg, 0.82 mmol) was heated to reflux for 16 hours, cooled to room temperature, filtered and the solid was washed with acetone and DCM. The solution was collected and concentrated to dryness. The residue was purified by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-mPEG₄-nalbuphine 2 ($n = 4$) (109 mg) in 74% yield. The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$, LC-MS.

[0157] Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₅-Nalbuphine (2) ($n = 5$):



[0158] A mixture of nalbuphine (78.3 mg, 0.22 mmol) and mPEG₅-OMs (118 mg, 0.36 mmol) in acetone (8 mL) in the presence of potassium carbonate (93 mg, 0.67 mmol) was heated to reflux for 16 hours, cooled to room temperature, filtered and the solid was washed with acetone and DCM. The solution was collected and concentrated to dryness. The residue was purified by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-mPEG₅-nalbuphine (2) ($n = 5$) (101 mg) in 76% yield. The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$, LC-MS.

[0159] Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₆-Nalbuphine (2) ($n = 6$):

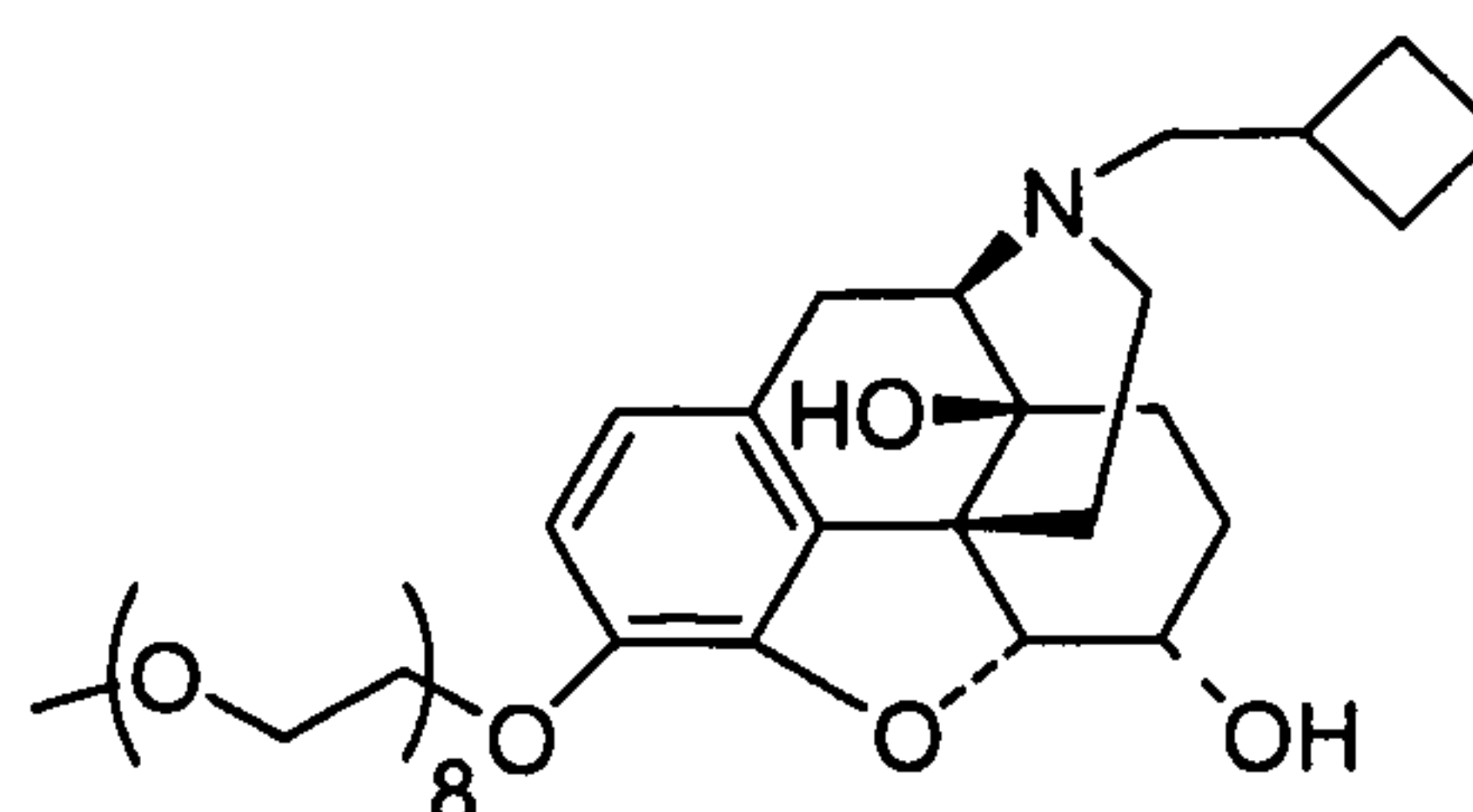


[0160] A mixture of nalbuphine (89.6 mg, 0.25 mmol) and mPEG₆-OMs (164 mg, 0.44 mmol) in acetone (8 mL) in the presence of potassium carbonate (98 mg, 0.71 mmol) was heated to reflux for 18 hours, cooled to room temperature, filtered and the solid washed with acetone and DCM. The solution was collected and concentrated to dryness. The residue was purified by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-mPEG₆-nalbuphine (2) (n = 6) (144 mg) in 91% yield. The product was confirmed by ¹H-NMR, LC-MS.

[0161] **Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₇-Nalbuphine (2) (n = 7):**

[0162] A mixture of nalbuphine (67 mg, 0.19 mmol) and mPEG₇-Br (131 mg, 0.33 mmol) in acetone (10 mL) in presence of potassium carbonate (67 mg, 0.49 mmol) was heated to reflux for 6 hours, cooled to room temperature, filtered and the solid washed and dichloromethane. The solution was concentrated to dryness. The residue was purified by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 2-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-mPEG₇-nalbuphine (2) (n = 7) (40.6 mg). The product was confirmed by ¹H-NMR, LC-MS.

[0163] **Synthesis of 3-O-mPEG₈-Nalbuphine (2) (n = 8):**



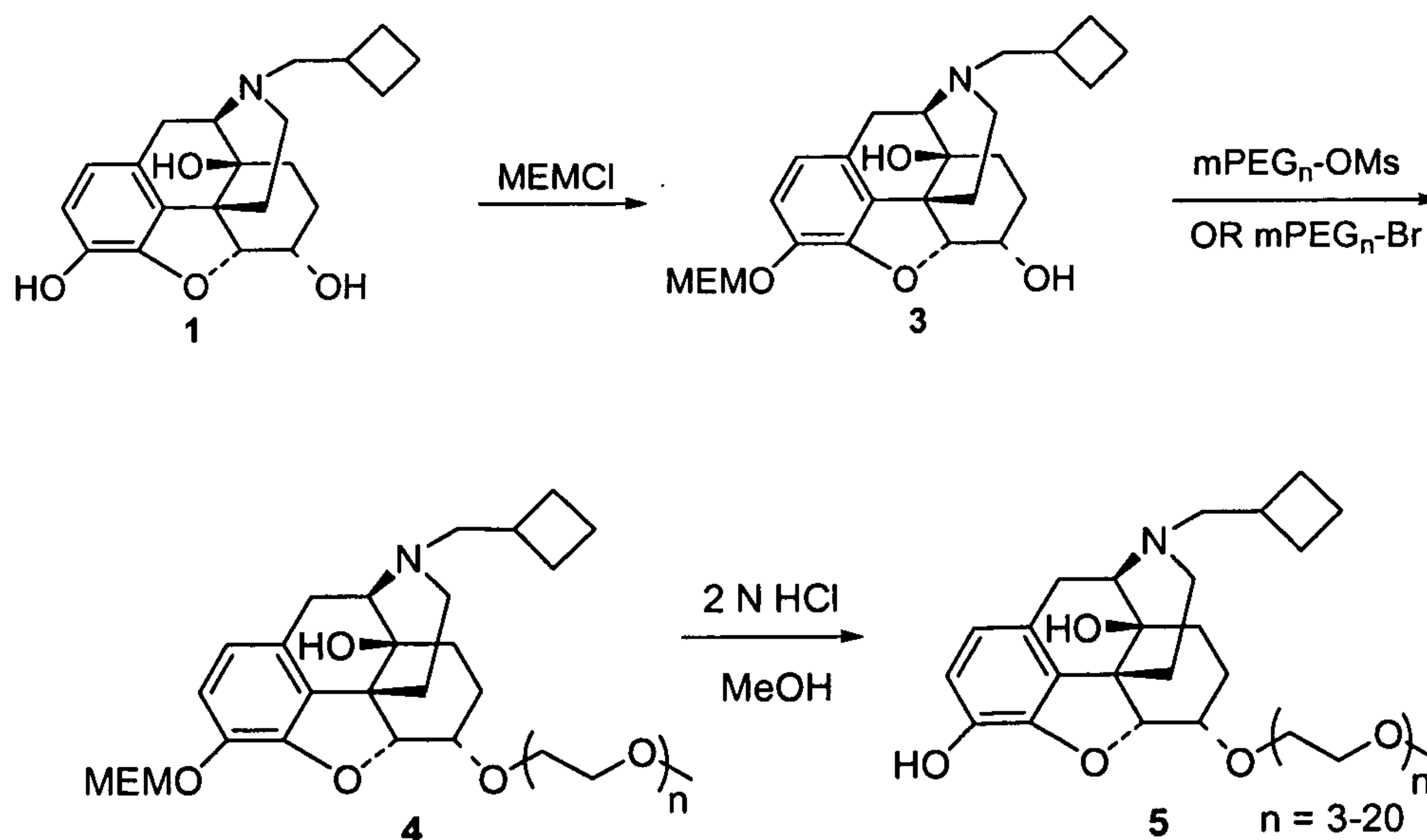
[0164] A mixture of nalbuphine (60 mg, 0.17 mmol) and mPEG₈-Br (105.7 mg, 0.24 mmol) in the presence of potassium carbonate (40.8 mg, 0.30 mmol) in toluene/DMF (3 mL/0.3 mL) was heated with CEM microwave such that 100 °C for 30 minutes was achieved. Then acetone (1 mL) was added. After the mixture was heated with CEM microwave such that 100 °C for 90 minutes was achieved, more of K₂CO₃ (31 mg, 0.22 mmol) and mPEG₈-Br (100 mg, 0.22 mmol) were added. The mixture was heated with CEM microwave such that 100 °C for 60 minutes was achieved. mPEG₈-Br (95 mg, 0.21 mmol) was added again. The

mixture was heated again with CEM microwave such that 100 °C for 30 minutes was achieved. The reaction mixture was concentrated under reduce pressure. The residue was mixed with water (2 mL) and brine (10 mL). The pH of the solution was adjusted to 1.56 with 1 N HCl, extracted with dichloromethane (3 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was dried with Na₂SO₄, concentrated to yield residue I (a mixture of the desired product and precursor material). The aqueous solution was changed to pH 10.13 with 0.2 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 15 mL). The organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated to result in residue II (19.4 mg), which contained the product and the starting material nalbuphine. The residue I was purified by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 2-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-mPEG₈-nalbuphine (**2**) (n = 8) (44.6 mg). The product was confirmed by ¹H-NMR, LC-MS.

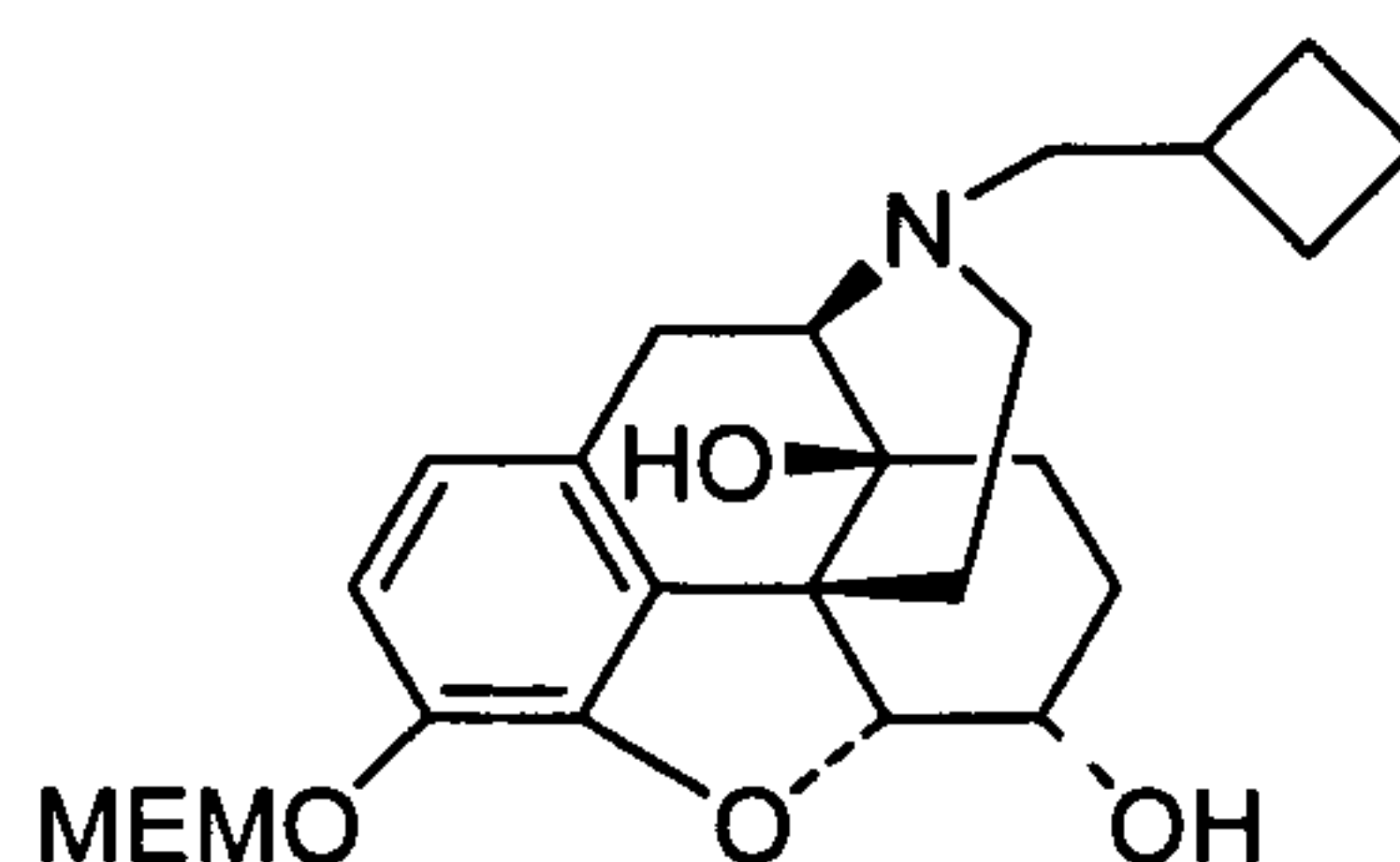
EXAMPLE 2

Preparation of an Oligomer-Nalbuphine Conjugates - "Approach B"

[0165] PEG-Nalbuphine was prepared using a second approach. Schematically, the approach followed for this example is shown below.

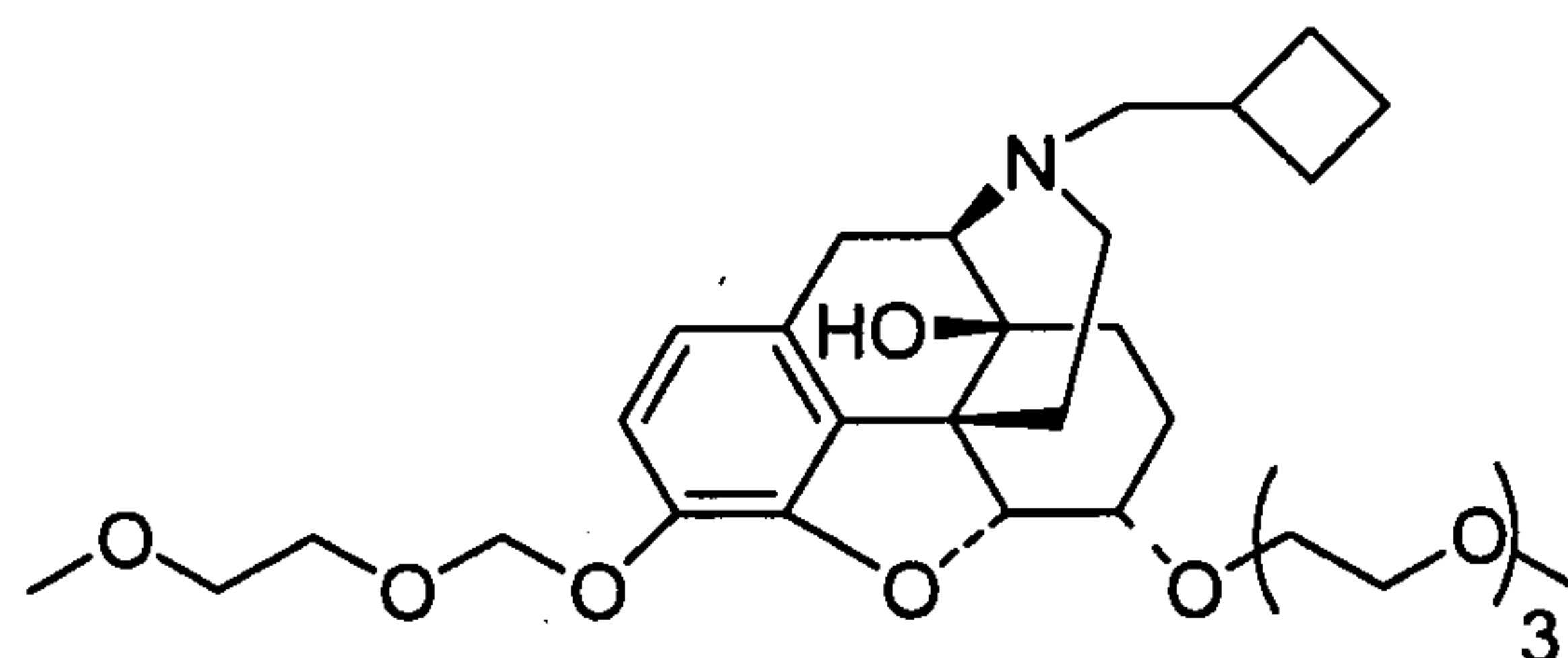


[0166] **Synthesis of 3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (3):**



[0167] Nalbuphine (321.9 mg, 0.9 mmol) was dissolved in acetone/toluene (19 mL/8 mL). Then potassium carbonate (338 mg, 2.45 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of MEMCl (160 μ L, 1.41 mmol). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 21 hours. MeOH (0.3 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The reaction mixture was concentrated under reduced pressure to dryness. The residue was mixed with water (5 mL) and brine (15 mL), extracted with dichloromethane (3 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The residue was separated by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 2-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (341 mg) and the starting material nalbuphine (19.3 mg). The product was confirmed by ^1H -NMR, LC-MS.

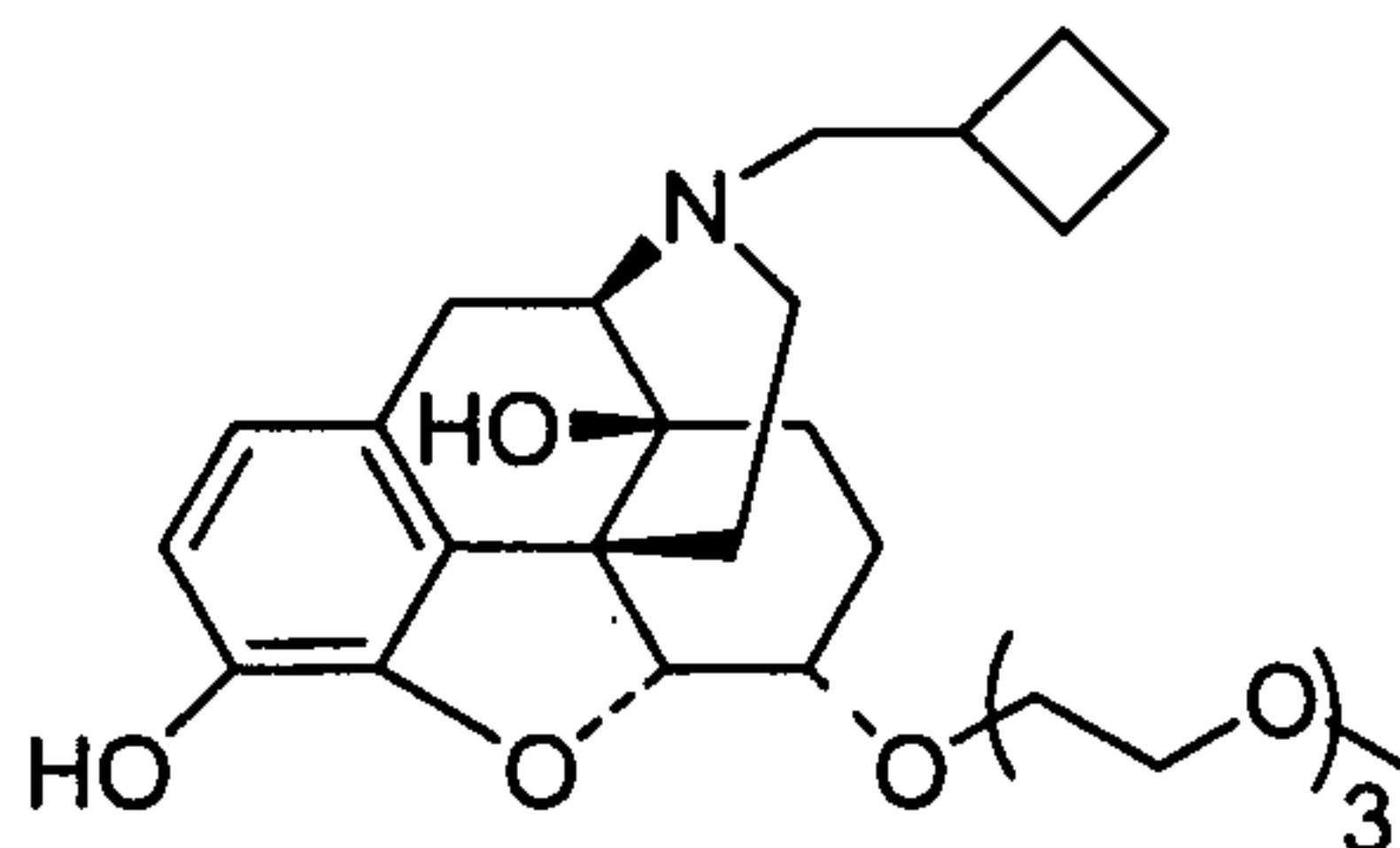
[0168] **Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₃-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (**4**) (n = 3):**



[0169] A 20-mL vial was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (85 mg, 0.19 mmol) and toluene (15 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove 7 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL) was added. The vial was flashed with nitrogen. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 21 mg, 0.53 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of mPEG₃-OMs (94 mg, 0.39 mmol). After the resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 22.5 hours, more of NaH (22 mg, 0.55 mmol) was added. The mixture was heated at 45 °C for another six hours, NaH (24 mg) was added and the mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 19 hours. When the mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (1 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was diluted with water (10 mL), extracted with EtOAc (4 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The residue was separated by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₃-3-O-MEM-

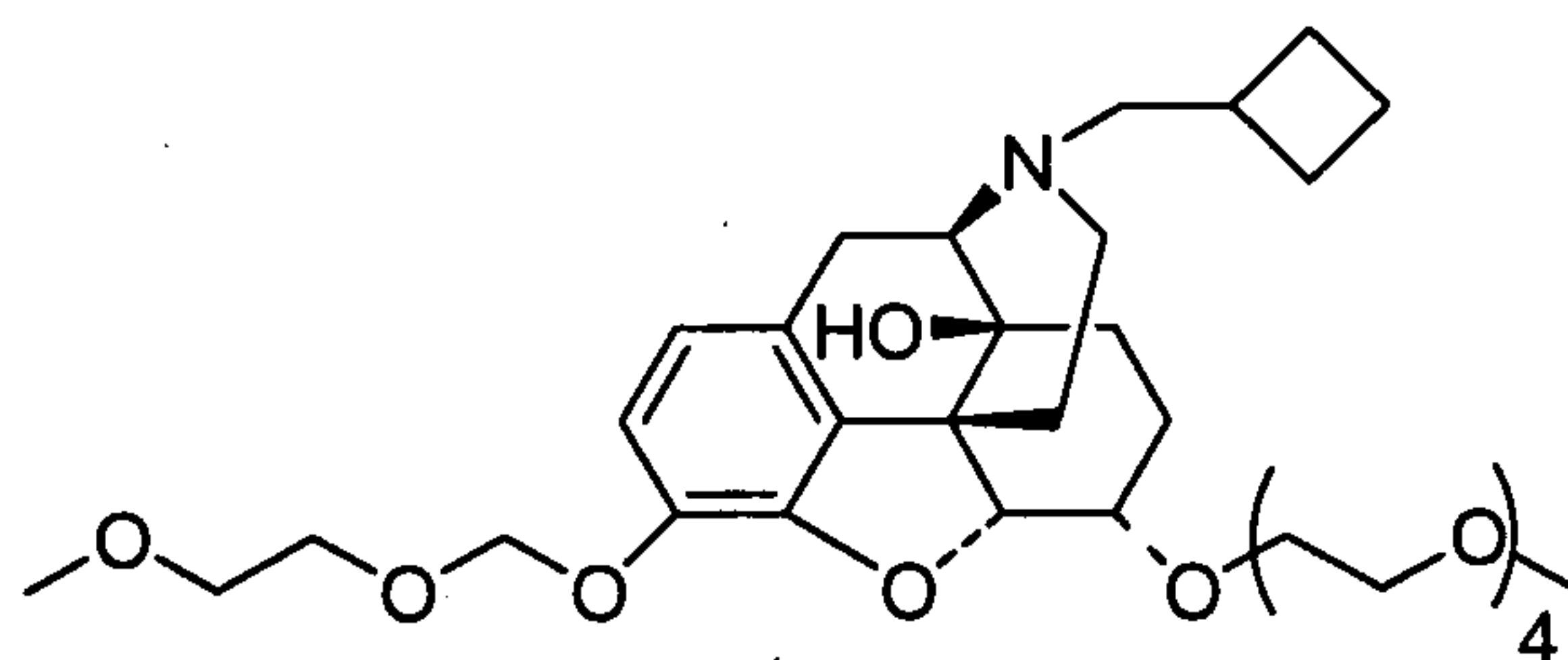
nalbuphine (**4**) ($n = 3$) (79.4 mg) in 71% yield. The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$, LC-MS.

[0170] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₃-Nalbuphine (5**) ($n = 3$):**



[0171] 6-O-mPEG₃-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**4**) (79.4 mg) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol at room temperature for six hours. The mixture was diluted with water (5 mL), and concentrated to removed the methanol. The aqueous solution was washed with dichloromethane (5 mL), and the pH of the solution was adjusted to 9.35 with 0.2 N NaOH and solid NaHCO₃, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 30 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₃-nalbuphine (**5**) ($n = 3$) (62.5 mg) in 93% yield. The product was confirmed by $^1\text{H-NMR}$, LC-MS.

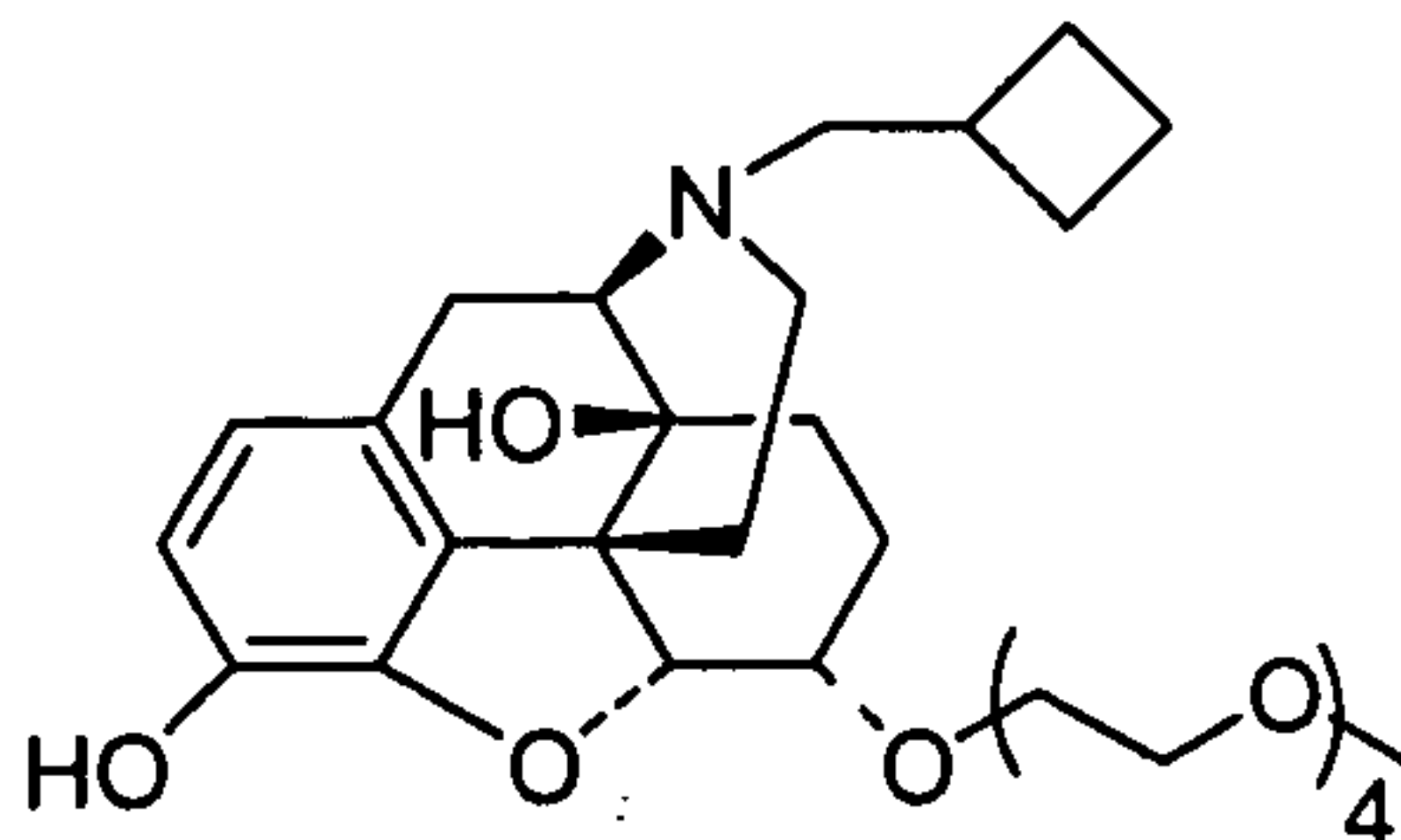
[0172] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₄-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4**) ($n = 4$):**



[0173] A 50-mL round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (133.8 mg, 0.3 mmol) and mPEG₄-OMs (145 mg, 0.51 mmol) and toluene (20 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 12 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL) was added. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 61 mg, 1.52 mmol) was added. After the resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 21.5 hours, more of NaH (30 mg, 0.75 mmol) was added. The mixture was heated at 45 °C for another five hours. When the mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (1 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was diluted with water (15 mL), and extracted with EtOAc (4 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was separated by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography on silica gel with 0-10% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₄-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine

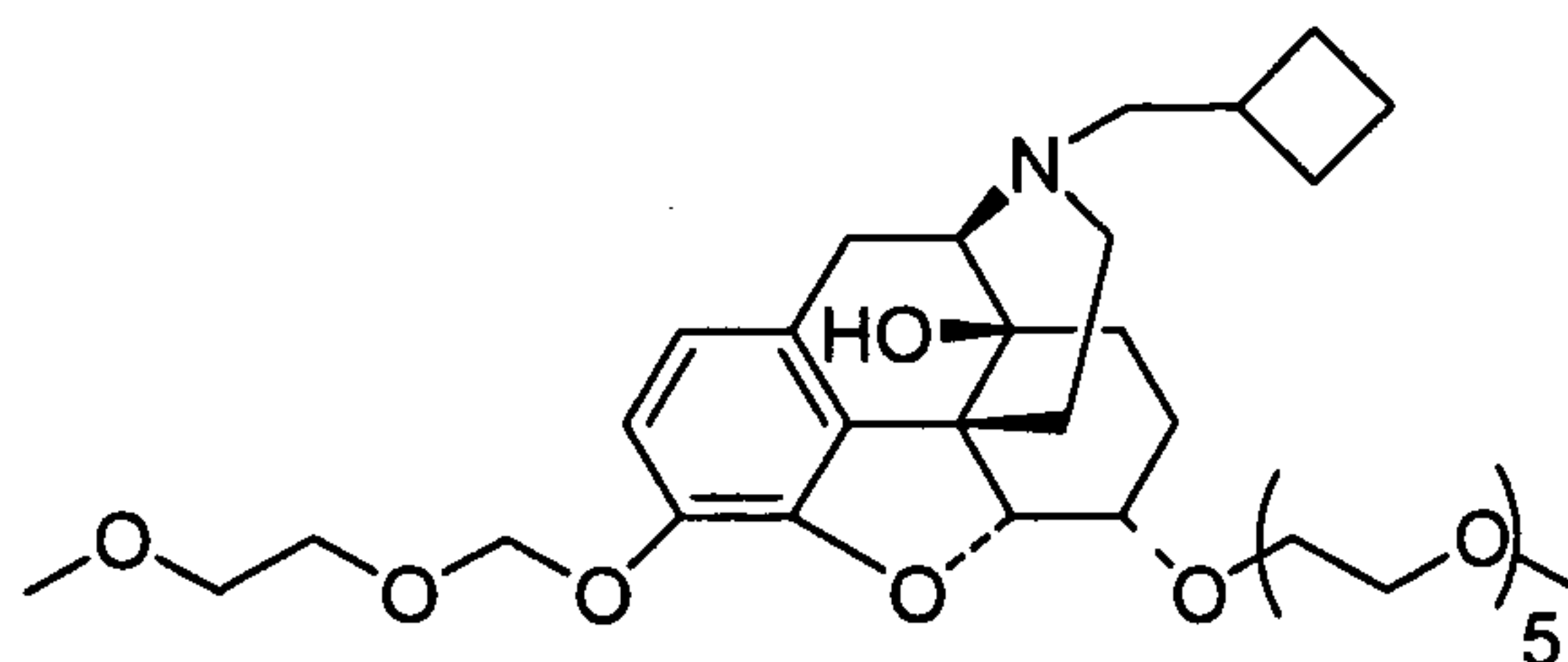
(4) ($n = 4$) (214.4 mg). The ^1H -NMR showed some mPEG₄-OMs in the product. No attempt was made for further purification. The product was confirmed by ^1H -NMR, LC-MS.

[0174] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₄-Nalbuphine (5) ($n = 4$):



[0175] 6-O-mPEG₄-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (4) (214.4 mg) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (30 mL) at room temperature for 6 hours. The mixture was diluted with water (5 mL), and concentrated to removed the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.17 with 1 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 25 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel using 3-8% MeOH/DCM (Biotage) to result in the pure product 6-O-mPEG₄-nalbuphine (5) ($n = 4$) (90.7 mg), along with some impure product. The product was confirmed by ^1H -NMR, LC-MS. The impure part was dissolved in DCM (~1.5 mL). 1 N HCl in ether (20 mL) was added, centrifuged. The residue was collected and redissolved in DCM (25 mL). The DCM solution was washed with aq. 5% NaHCO₃ (20 mL), brine (2 x 30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated to afford another part pure product (24.8 mg).

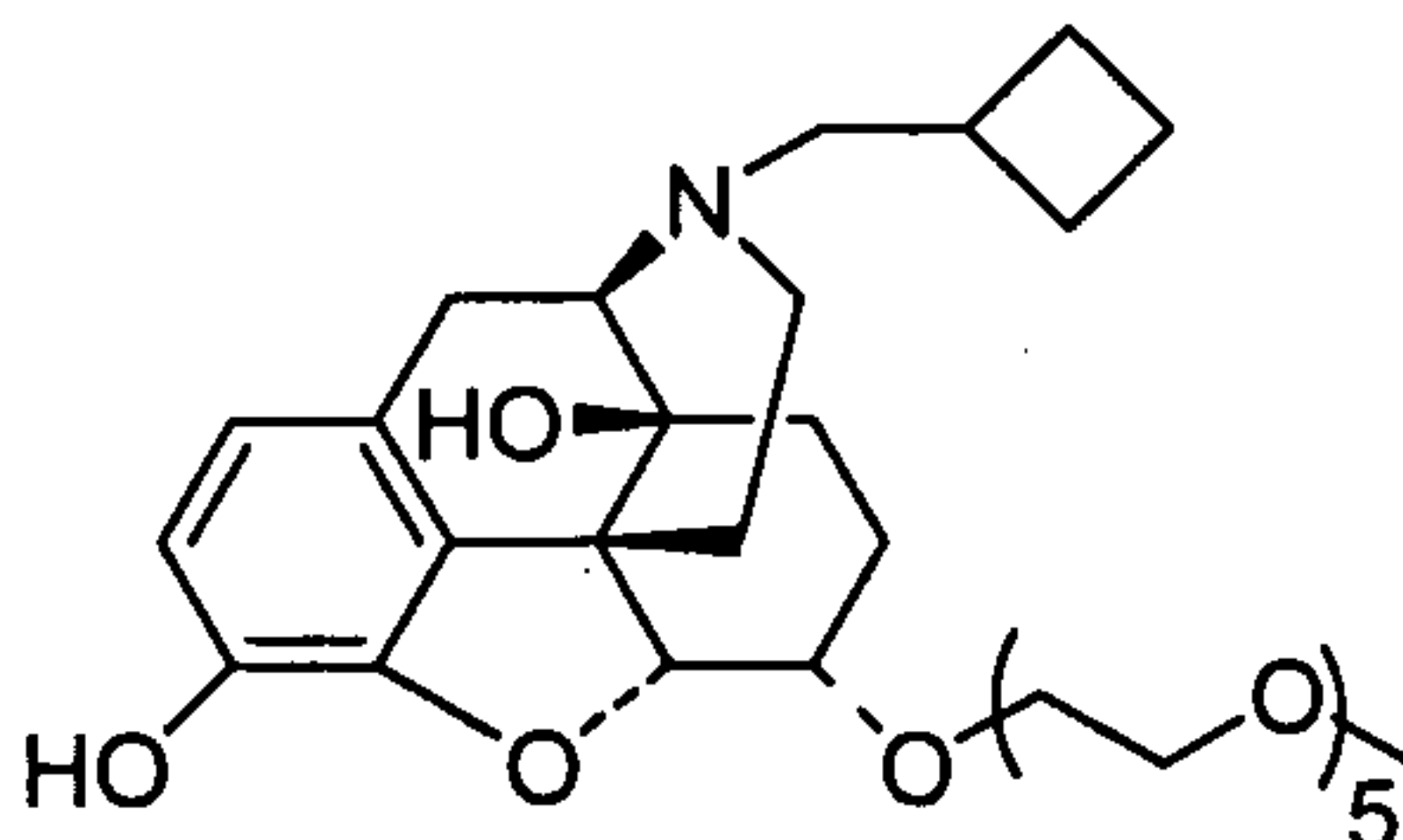
[0176] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₅-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4) ($n = 5$):



[0177] A 50-mL round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (3) (103.9 mg, 0.23 mmol), mPEG₅-OMs (151 mg, 0.46 mmol) and toluene (38 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 20 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.5 mL) was added. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 102 mg, 2.55 mmol) was added. After the resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 18 hours, more of NaH (105 mg) was added. The mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 5.5 hours. NaH (87 mg) was added and the mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 17.5 hours. When the mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl

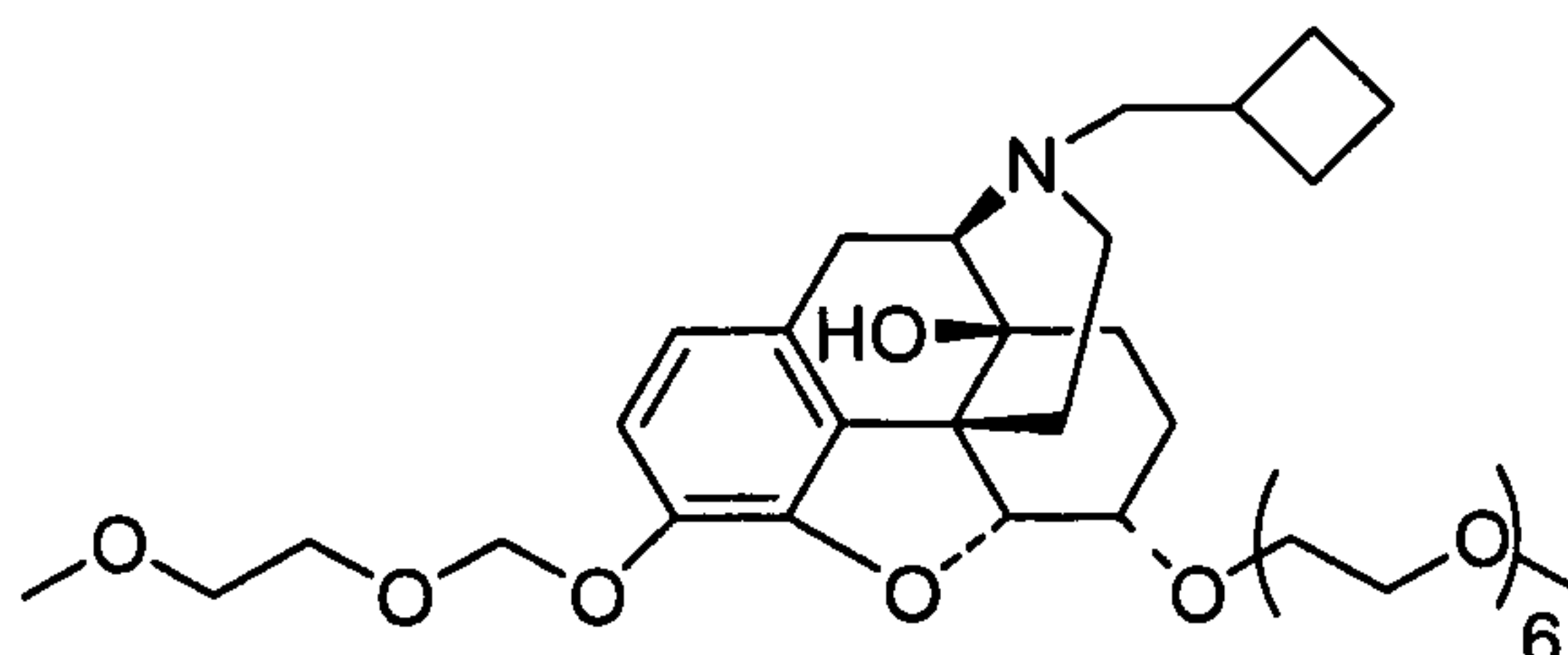
aqueous solution (3 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was diluted with water (10 mL), extracted with EtOAc (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was separated by Biotage automatic flash column chromatography on silica gel with 3-8% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₅-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**4**) (n = 5).

[0178] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₅-Nalbuphine (5) (n = 5):



[0179] The above 6-O-mPEG₅-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**4**) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (30 mL) at room temperature for 2.5 hour. The mixture was diluted with water (5 mL), concentrated to removed the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.19 with 1 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. After purification with flash column chromatography on silica, mPEG₅-OMs was observed in ¹H-NMR. The residue was dissolved in DCM (~1 mL). 1 N HCl in ether (18 mL) was added, centrifuged. The residue was collected and redissolved in DCM (25 mL). The DCM solution was washed with aq. 5% NaHCO₃ (2 x 20 mL), brine (2 x 30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was separated by Biotage automatically flash column chromatography on silica gel with 4-8% MeOH in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₅-nalbuphine (**5**) (n = 5) (55 mg).

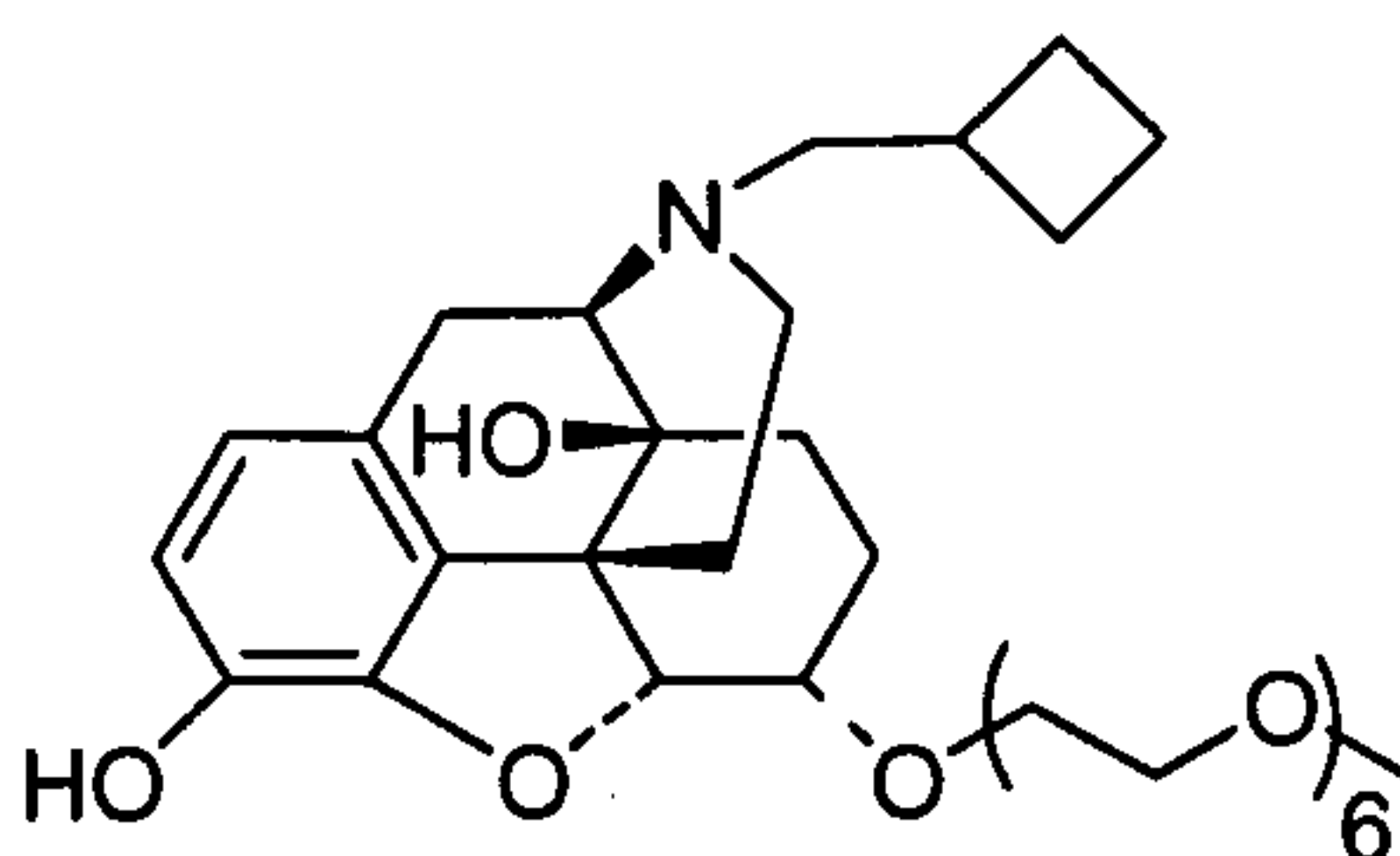
[0180] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₆-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4) (n = 6):



[0181] 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (77.6 mg, 0.17 mmol) and mPEG₆-OMs (199 mg, 0.53 mmol) was dissolved in toluene (20 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 12 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL) was added, followed by an addition of NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 41 mg, 1.03 mmol). After the resulting mixture was

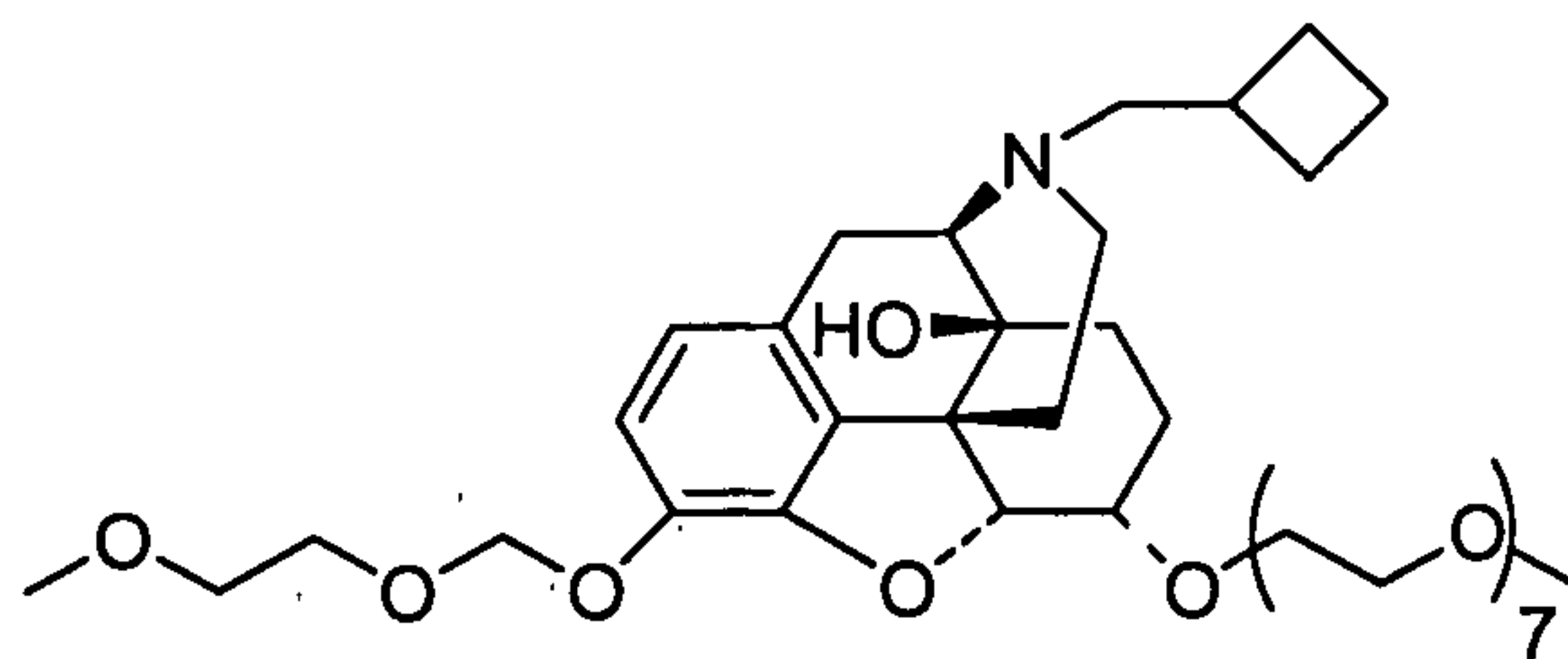
heated at 45 °C for 23 hours, more of NaH (46 mg) was added. The mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 24 hours. When the mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (5 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was diluted with water (10 mL), extracted with EtOAc (4 x 15 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was directly used for the next step.

[0182] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₆-Nalbuphine (5) (n = 6):



[0183] The above 6-O-mPEG₆-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (4) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (30 mL) at room temperature for 20 hours. The mixture was diluted with water (5 mL), concentrated to removed the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.30 with 1 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (5 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was dissolved in DCM (~1 mL). 1 N HCl in ether (20 mL) was added, centrifuged. The residue was collected and redissolved in DCM (40 mL). The DCM solution was washed with aq. 5% NaHCO₃ (2 x 20 mL), water (30 mL), brine (2 x 30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₆-nalbuphine (5) (n = 6) (68 mg).

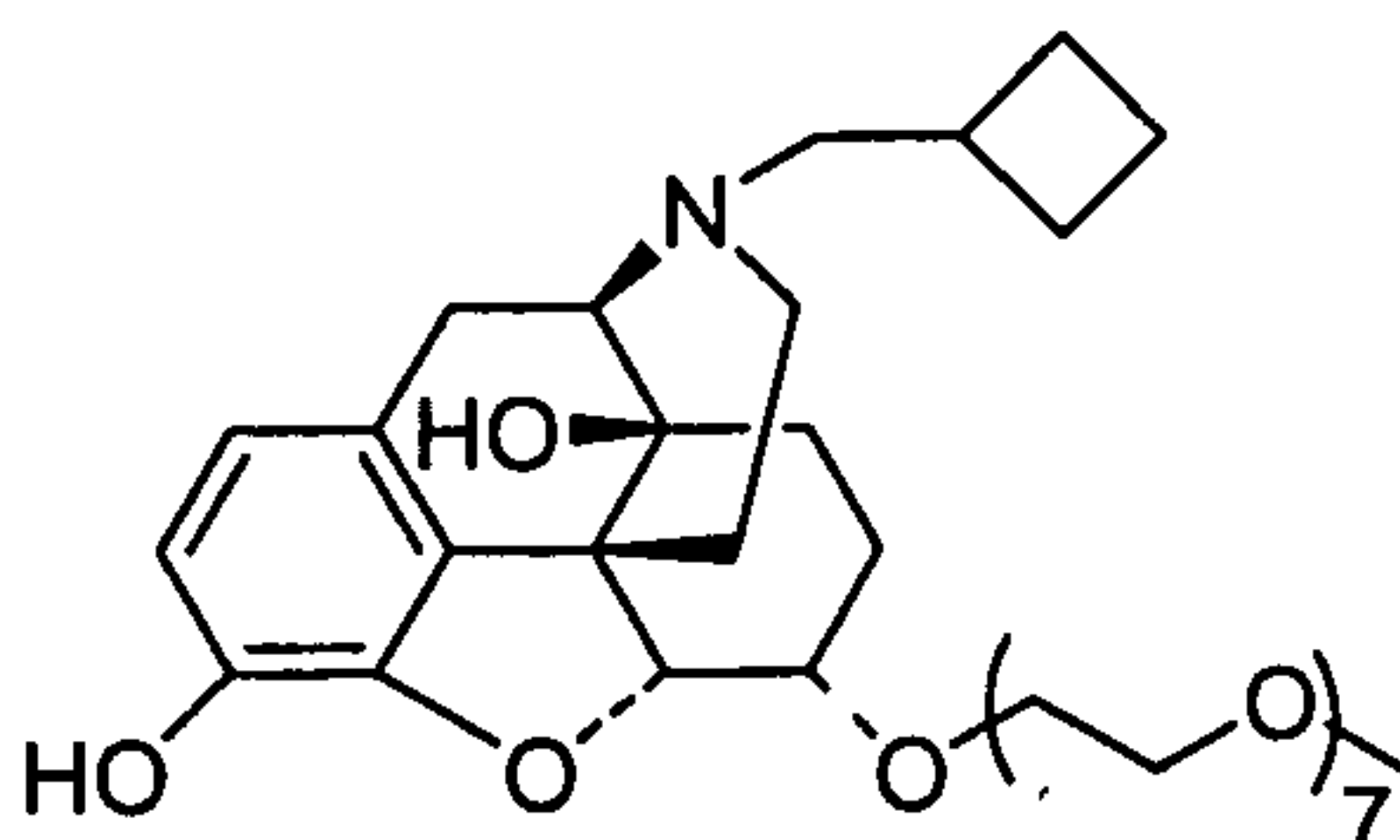
[0184] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₇-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4, n = 7):



[0185] A 50-mL round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (3) (82.8 mg, 0.186 mmol), mPEG₇-Br (151 mg, 0.46 mmol) and toluene (15 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 9 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL) was added. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 50 mg, 1.25 mmol) was added. After the resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 22.5 hours, more of NaH (38 mg, 0.94 mmol) was added. The mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 5 hours. When the mixture was cooled to room

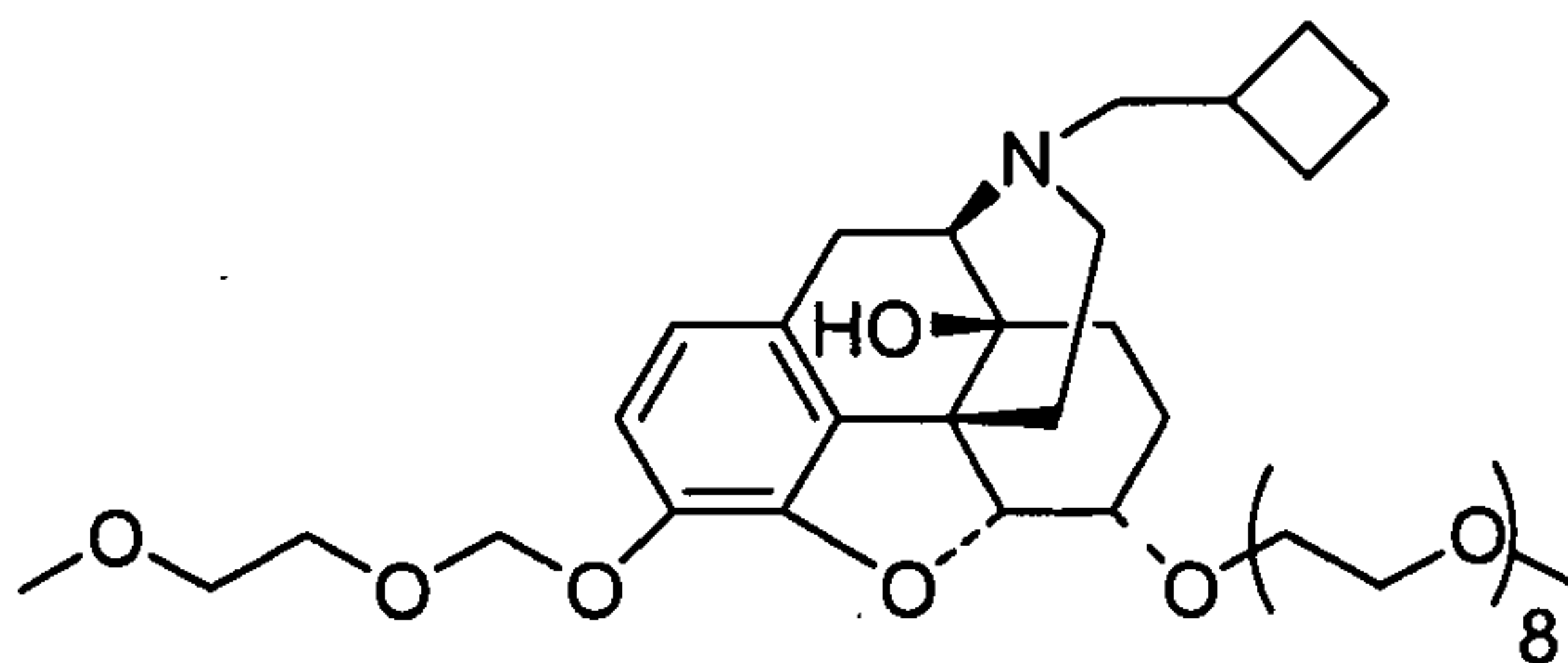
temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (5 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was diluted with water (10 mL), and extracted with EtOAc (4 x 10 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was directly used for the next step.

[0186] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₇-Nalbuphine (5) (n = 7):



[0187] The above 6-O-mPEG₇-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (4) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (20 mL) at room temperature for 20 hours. The mixture was diluted with water, and concentrated to remove the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.30 with NaHCO₃ and 0.2 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was purified with flash column chromatography on silica gel and washed with DCM at acidic condition, adjusted the pH to 9.35, extracted with DCM. The product was still contaminated with small PEG. The residue was dissolved in DCM (~2 mL). 1 N HCl in ether (10 mL) was added, centrifuged. The residue was collected and redissolved in DCM (10 mL). The DCM solution was washed with aq. 5% NaHCO₃, brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₇-nalbuphine (5) (n = 7) (49 mg).

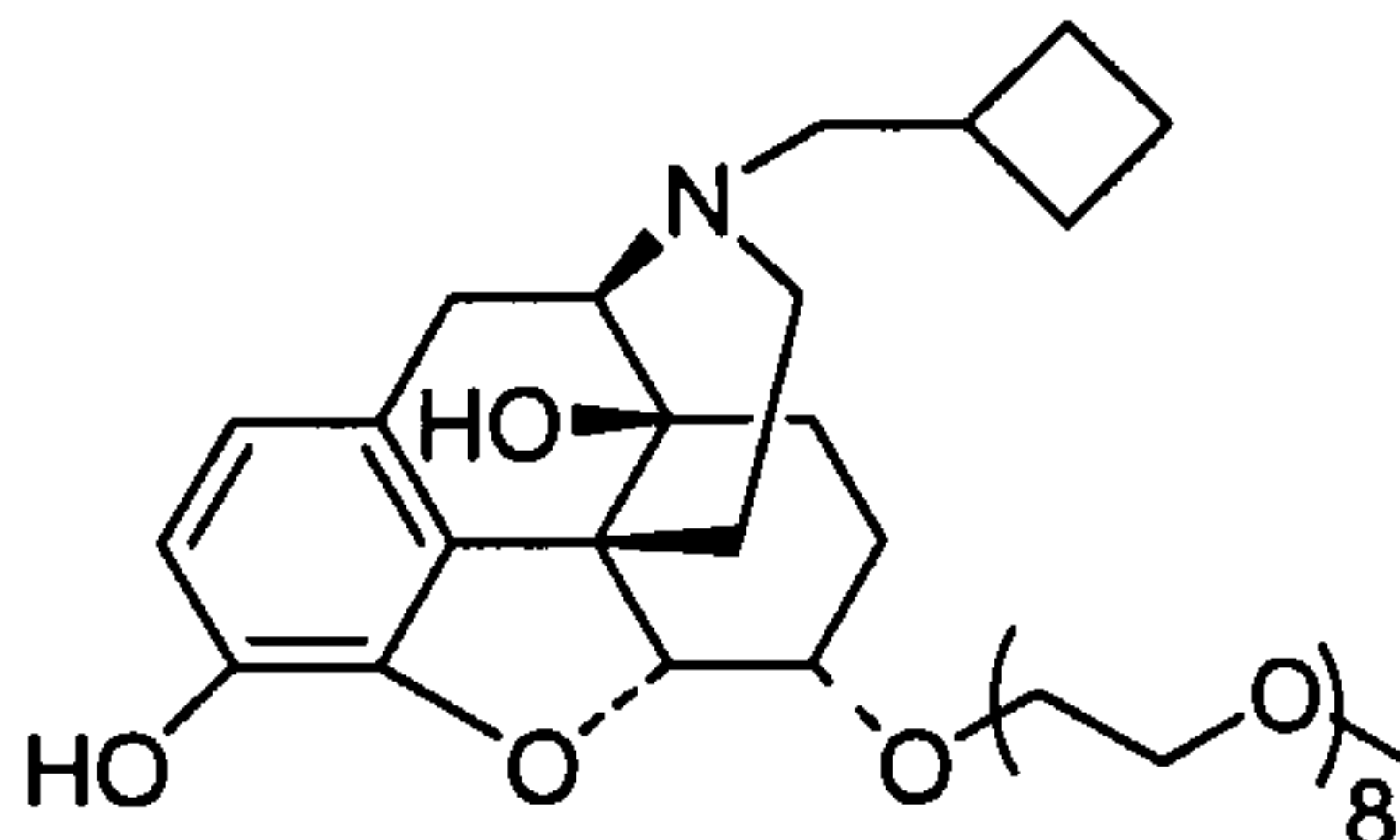
[0188] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₈-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4) (n = 8):



[0189] A 50-mL round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (3) (80.5 mg, 0.181 mmol), mPEG₈-Br (250 mg, 0.56 mmol) and toluene (15 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 6 mL of toluene. Anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL) was added. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 49 mg, 1.23 mmol) was added. The resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 23 hours, the mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (5 mL) and water (10 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture

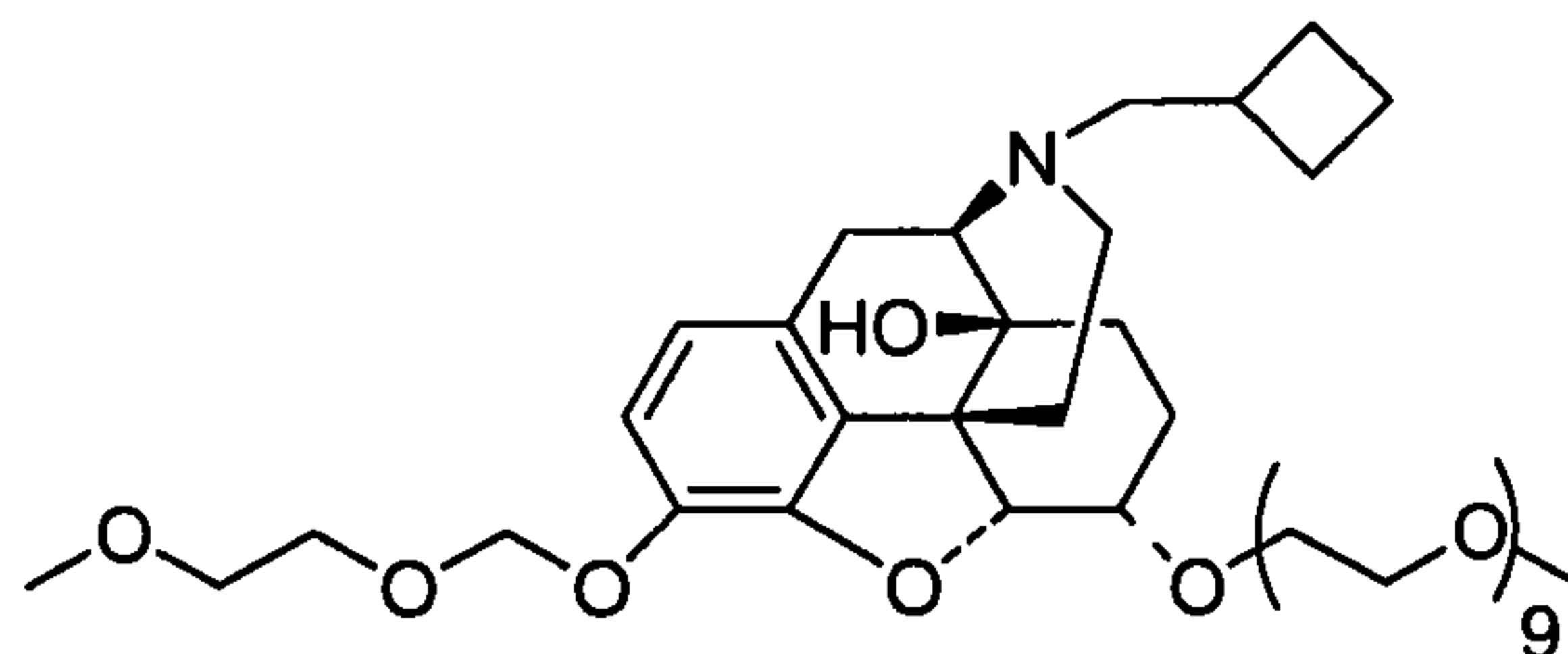
was extracted with EtOAc (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was directly used for the next step.

[0190] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₈-Nalbuphine (5) (n = 8):



[0191] The above 6-O-mPEG₈-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (4) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (20 mL) at room temperature for 17 hours. The mixture was diluted with water, concentrated to remove the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.32 with NaHCO₃ and 0.2 N NaOH, extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was dissolved in DCM (~1 mL). 1 N HCl in ether (20 mL) was added, centrifuged. The residue was collected and redissolved in DCM (30 mL). The DCM solution was washed with aq. 5% NaHCO₃ (60 mL), water (30 mL), brine (30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was purified with flash column chromatography on silica gel using 0-10% methanol in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₈-nalbuphine (5) (n = 8) (78.4 mg).

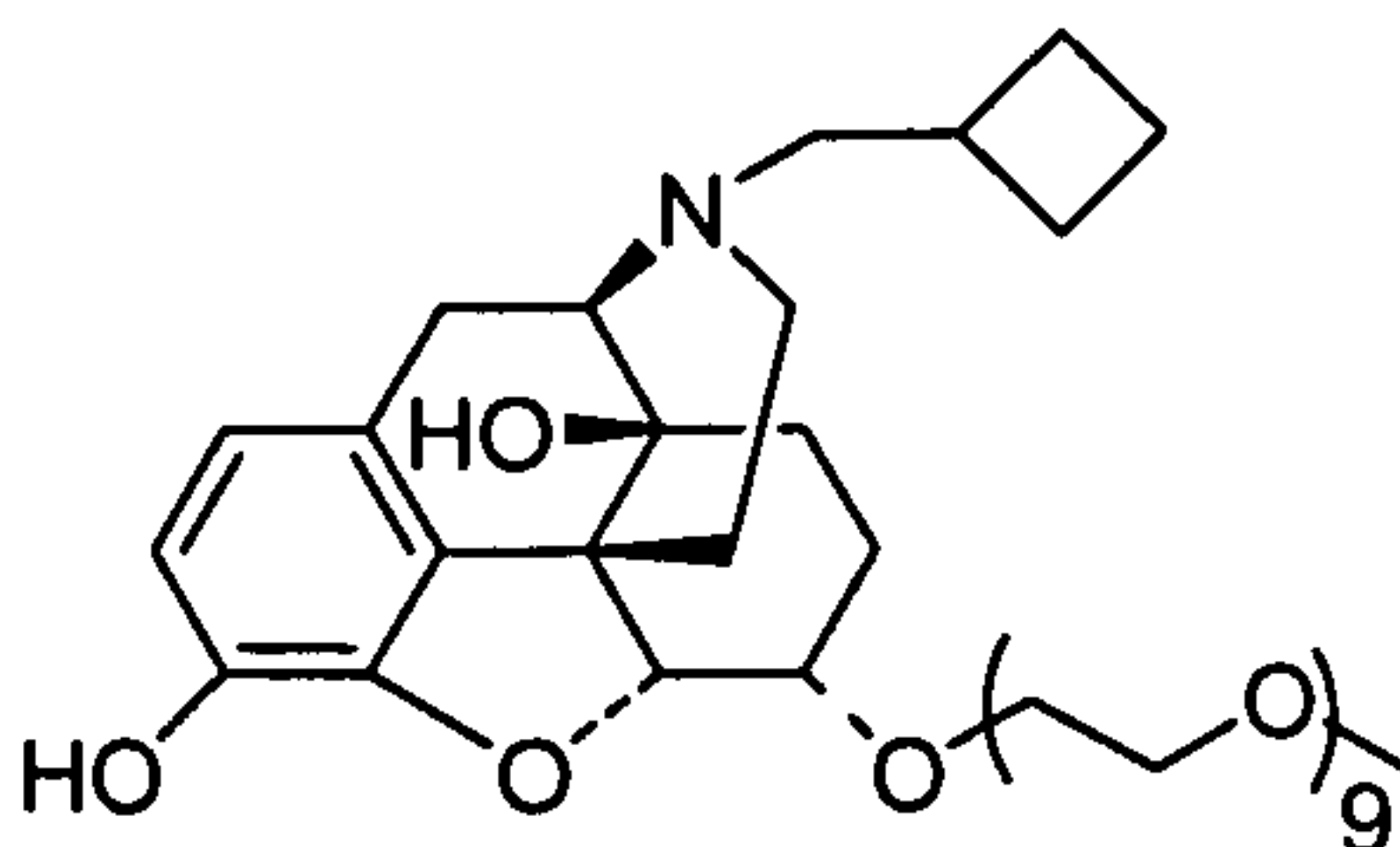
[0192] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₉-3-O-MEM-Nalbuphine (4) (n = 9):



[0193] A 50-mL round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (3) (120 mg, 0.27 mmol), mPEG₉-OMs (245 mg, 0.48 mmol) and toluene (20 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 10 mL of toluene. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 63 mg, 1.57 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of anhydrous DMF (0.5 mL). The resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 17 hours. More of NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 60 mg) was added based on the HPLC results, and then the mixture was heated at 45 °C for another 5.5 hours. The mixture was cooled to room temperature, saturated NaCl aqueous solution (2 mL) and water (15 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was extracted with EtOAc (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine,

dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel using 3-8% methanol in dichloromethane (biotage) to afford the product 6-O-mPEG₉-3-MEM-O-nalbuphine (207 mg) in 90% yield.

[0194] Synthesis of 6-O-mPEG₉-Nalbuphine (5) (n = 9):

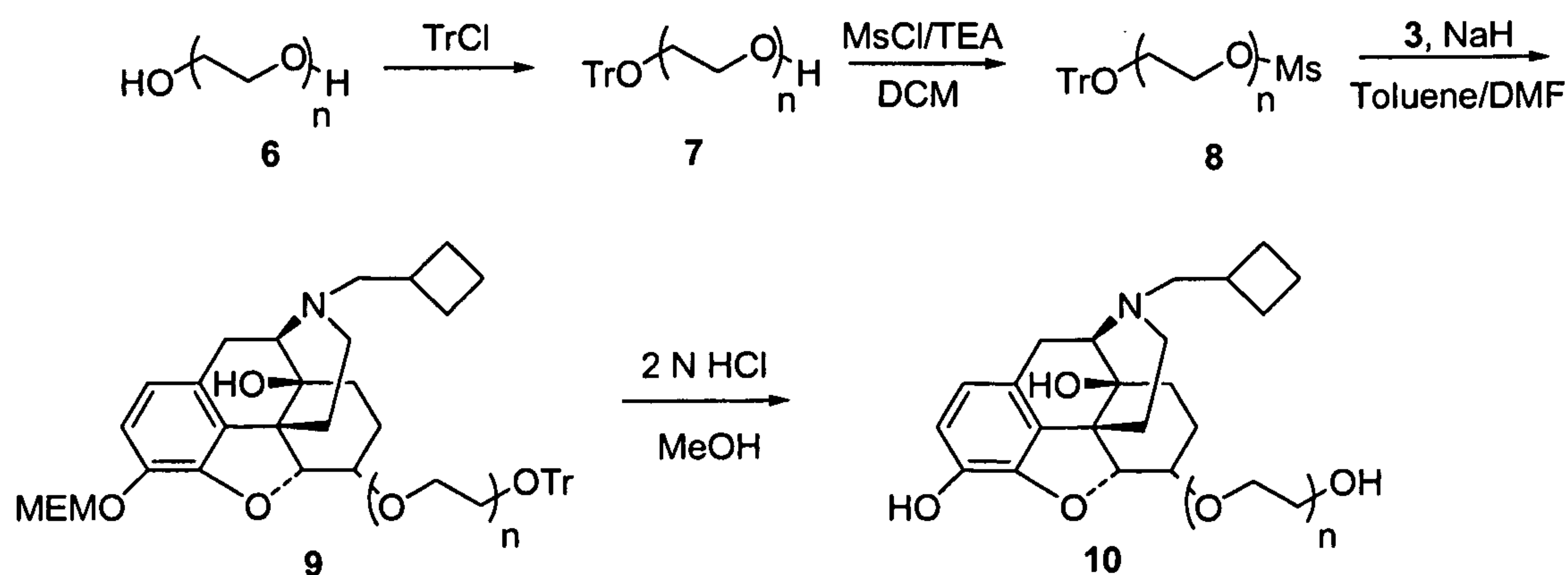


[0195] The above 6-O-mPEG₉-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**4**) (207 mg, 0.24 mmol) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (33 mL) at room temperature for 17 hours. The mixture was diluted with water, and concentrated to remove the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to 9.16 with 1 N NaOH, and extracted with dichloromethane (4 x 25 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na_2SO_4 , concentrated. The residue was purified with flash column chromatography on silica gel using 3-8% methanol in dichloromethane to result in the product 6-O-mPEG₉-nalbuphine (**4**) (n = 9) (129.3 mg) in 70% yield.

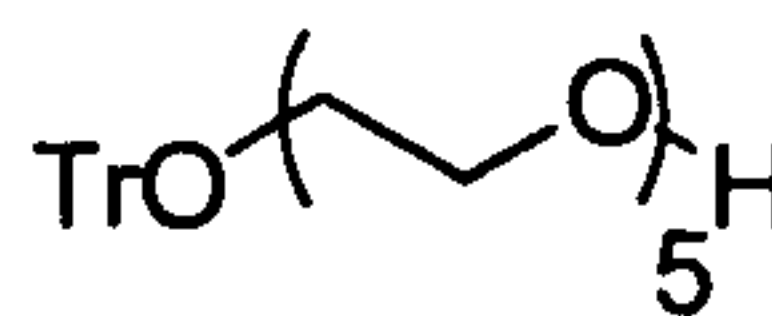
EXAMPLE 3

Preparation of an Oligomer-Nalbuphine Conjugates - "Approach C"

[0196] PEG-Nalbuphine was prepared using a third approach. Schematically, the approach followed for this example is shown below.



[0197]

Synthesis of TrO-PEG₅-OH (7) (n = 5):

[0198]

PEG₅-di-OH (6) (n = 5) (5.88 g, 24.19 mmol) was dissolved in toluene (30 mL), and concentrated to remove toluene under reduced pressure. The residue was dried under high vacuum. Anhydrous DMF (40 mL) was added, followed by an addition of DMAP (0.91 g, 7.29 mmol) and TrCl (trityl chloride) (1.66 g, 5.84 mmol). The resulting mixture was heated at 50 °C for 22 hours. The reaction was concentrated to remove the solvents (high vacuum, 50 °C). The residue was mixed with water, and extracted with EtOAc (3 x 25 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂CO₃, concentrated. The residue was purified with flash column chromatography on silica gel to result in 1.29 g of product in 46 % yield. The product was confirmed with ¹H-NMR in CDCl₃.

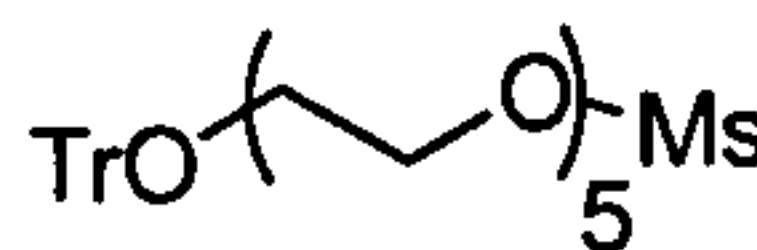
[0199]

Synthesis of TrO-PEG_n-OH (7) (n = various):

[0200]

Following a similar procedure for the preparation of TrO-PEG₅-OH, other TrO-PEG_n-OH were synthesized from the corresponding PEG_n-di-OH.

[0201]

Synthesis of TrO-PEG₅-OMs (8) (n = 5):

[0202]

Methanesulfonyl chloride (0.35 mL, 4.48 mmol) was added dropwise to a stirred solution of TrO-PEG₅-OH (8) (n = 5) (1.29 g, 2.68 mmol) and triethylamine (0.9 mL, 6.46 mmol) in dichloromethane (15 mL) at 0 °C. After the addition, the resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 16.5 hours. Water was added to quench the reaction. The organic phase was separated and the aqueous solution was extracted with dichloromethane (10 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine (3 x 30 mL), dried over Na₂SO₄ and concentrated to afford the product as oil (1.16 g) in 78% yield. The product (8) (n = 5) was confirmed with ¹H-NMR in CDCl₃.

[0203]

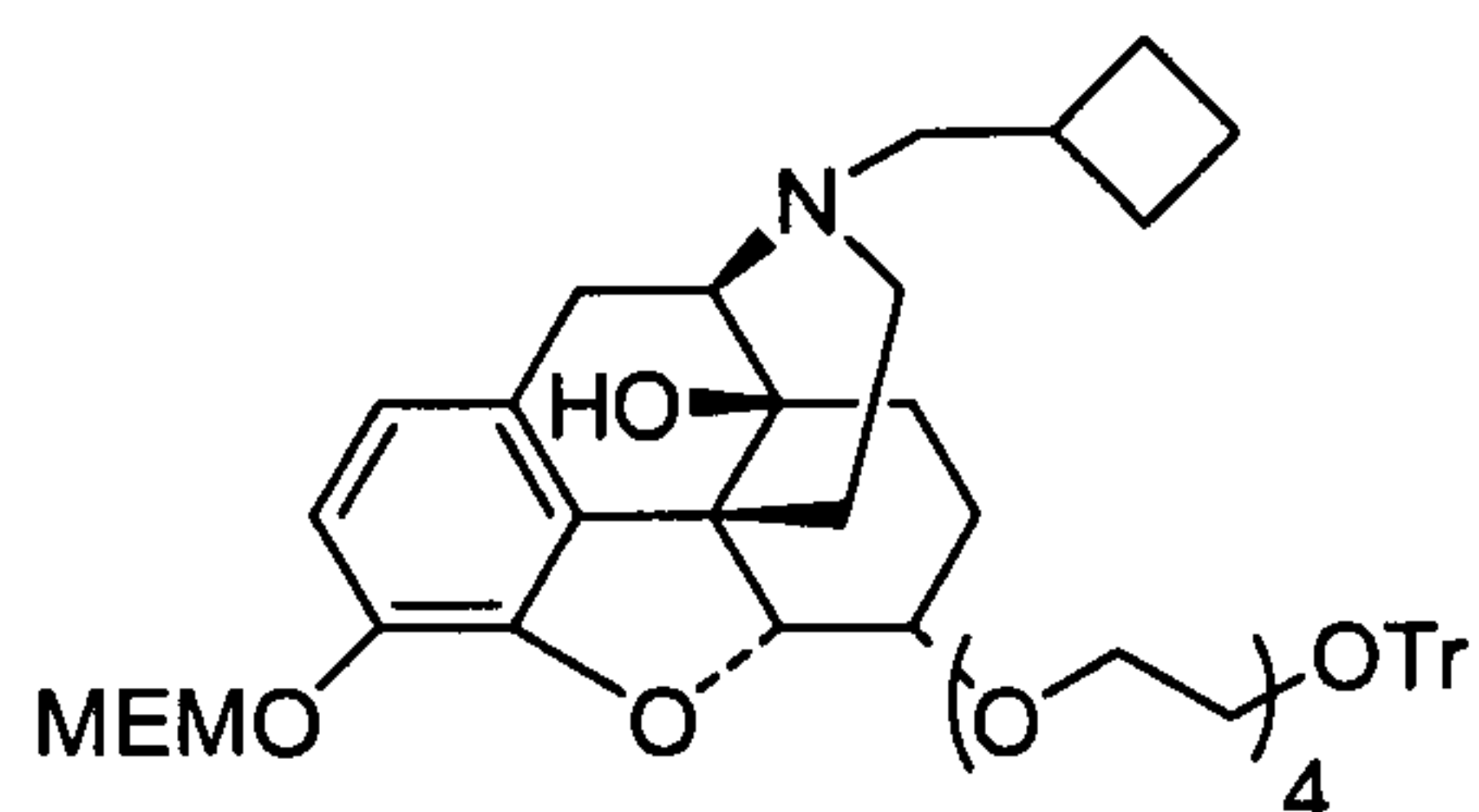
Synthesis of TrO-PEG_n-OMs (8) (n = various):

[0204]

Following a similar procedure for the preparation of TrO-PEG₅-OMs, other TrO-PEG_n-OMs were synthesized from the corresponding TrO-PEG_n-OH.

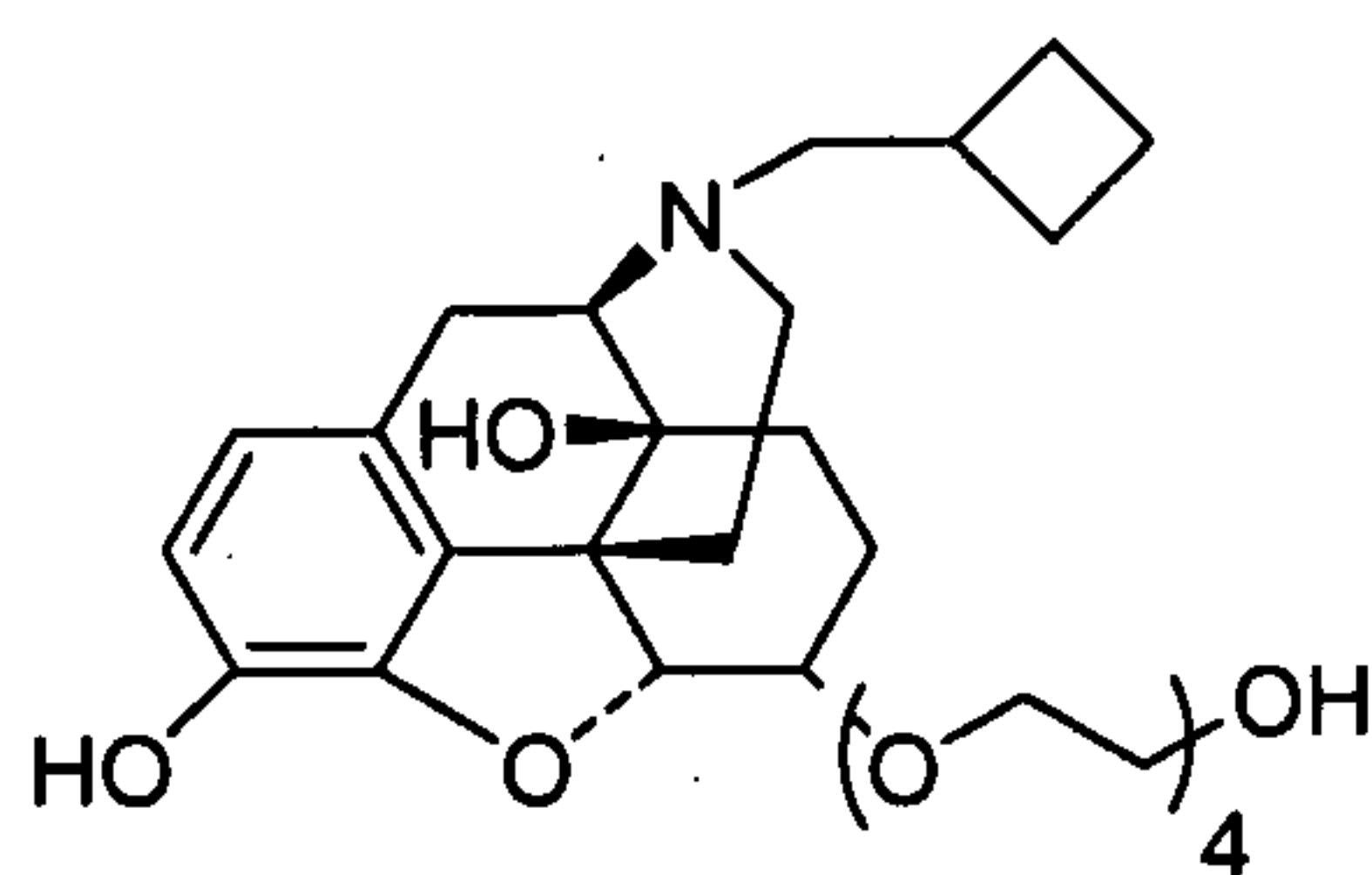
[0205]

Synthesis of 3-O-MEM-6-O-TrO-PEG₄-nalbuphine (9) (n = 4):



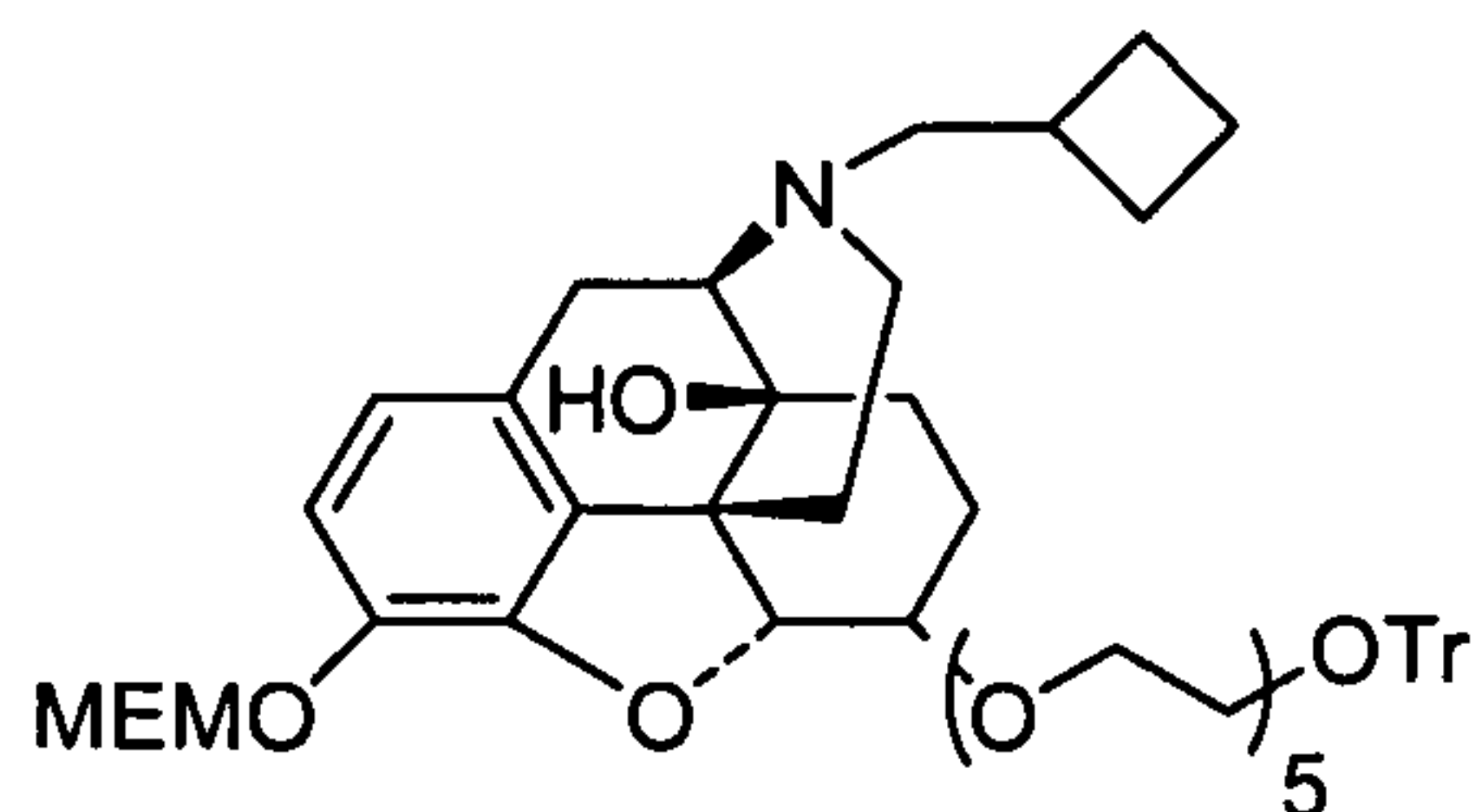
[0206] A round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (120 mg, 0.27 mmol) [previously prepared in accordance with the synthesis of compound (**3**) provided in Example 2], TrO-PEG₄-OMs (**8**) (n = 4) (143.4 mg, 0.28 mmol) and toluene (40 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 30 mL of toluene. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 150 mg, 3.75 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of anhydrous DMF (0.2 mL). The resulting mixture was heated at 45 °C for 4.5 hours. More of NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 146 mg) was added, and the mixture was stirred at 45 °C for another 18 hours. The mixture was cooled to room temperature, was saturated with NaCl aqueous solution (2 mL), and water (15 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The mixture was extracted with EtOAc (4 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel using 0-10% methanol in dichloromethane (Biotage) to afford the product 3-O-MEM-6-O-TrO-PEG₄-nalbuphine (**9**) (n = 4) (~150 mg).

[0207] **Synthesis of 6-O-HO-PEG₄-Nalbuphine (10) (n = 4):**



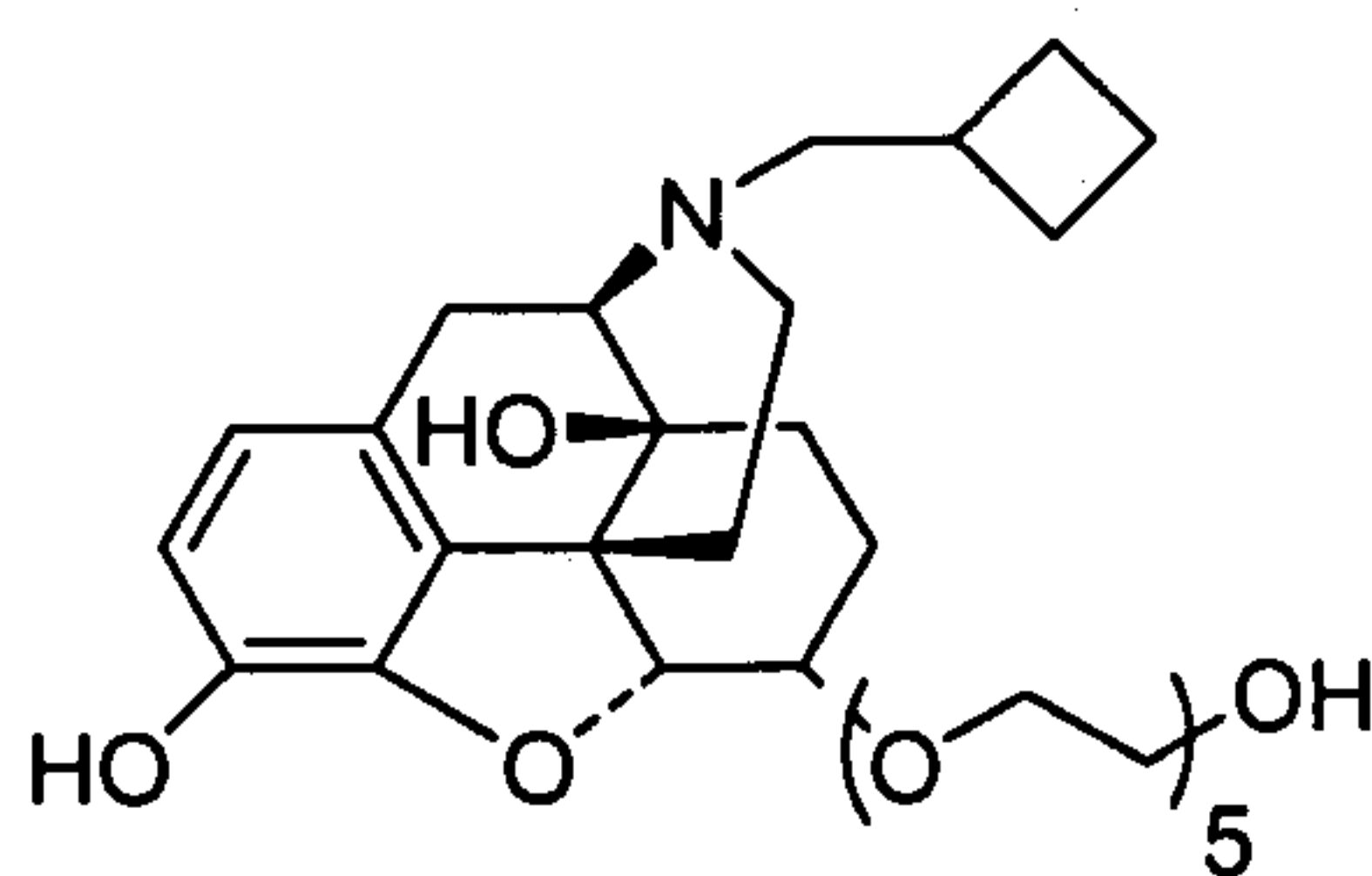
[0208] The above 6-O-TrO-PEG₄-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**9**) (n = 4) (150 mg) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (12 mL) at room temperature for one day. The mixture was diluted with water, and concentrated to remove the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to PH 9.08 with NaOH, and extracted with EtOAc (3 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated. The residue was purified with flash column chromatography on silica gel to result in the product 6-O-OH-PEG₄-nalbuphine (**10**) (n = 4) (26.9 mg). The product was analyzed with ¹H-NMR, LC-Ms, HPLC.

[0209] **Synthesis of 3-O-MEM-6-O-TrO-PEG₅-nalbuphine (9) (n = 5):**



[0210] A round-flask was placed with 3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**3**) (318 mg, 0.71 mmol) [previously prepared in accordance with the synthesis of compound (**3**) provided in Example 2], TrO-PEG₅-OMs (**8**) (n = 5) (518.5 mg, 0.93 mmol) and toluene (100 mL). The mixture was concentrated to remove about 75 mL of toluene. NaH (60% dispersion in mineral oil, 313 mg, 7.8 mmol) was added, followed by an addition of anhydrous DMF (1.0 mL). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 30 minutes, and then at 60 °C for 19.5 hours. The mixture was cooled to room temperature, was saturated with NaCl aqueous solution (5 mL), and water (5 mL) was added to quench the reaction. The organic phase was separated and the aqueous was extracted with EtOAc. The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, concentrated. The residue was purified by flash column chromatography on silica gel using 0-10% methanol in dichloromethane (Biotage) to afford the product 3-O-MEM-6-O-TrO-PEG₅-nalbuphine (718 mg). The product (**9**) (n = 5) was impure, was used for the next step without further purification.

[0211] **Synthesis of 6-O-HO-PEG₅-Nalbuphine (**10**) (n = 5):**



[0212] The above 6-O-TrO-PEG₅-3-O-MEM-nalbuphine (**9**) (n = 5) (718 mg) was stirred in 2 M HCl in methanol (30 mL) at room temperature for 19 hours. The mixture was diluted with water, and concentrated to remove the methanol. The aqueous solution was adjusted to PH 9.16 with NaOH, extracted with DCM (3 x 20 mL). The combined organic solution was washed with brine, dried over Na₂SO₄, and concentrated. The residue was purified twice with flash column chromatography on silica gel to afford very pure product 6-O-HO-PEG₅-nalbuphine **10** (n = 5) (139 mg) and less pure product (48 mg). The product was analyzed with ¹H-NMR, LC-MS, HPLC.

EXAMPLE 4**Binding Activity Data**

[0213] Using conventional binding affinity techniques, several molecules were assayed to determine binding activity at kappa, mu and delta opioid subtypes of opioid receptors. The results are provided in Table 1.

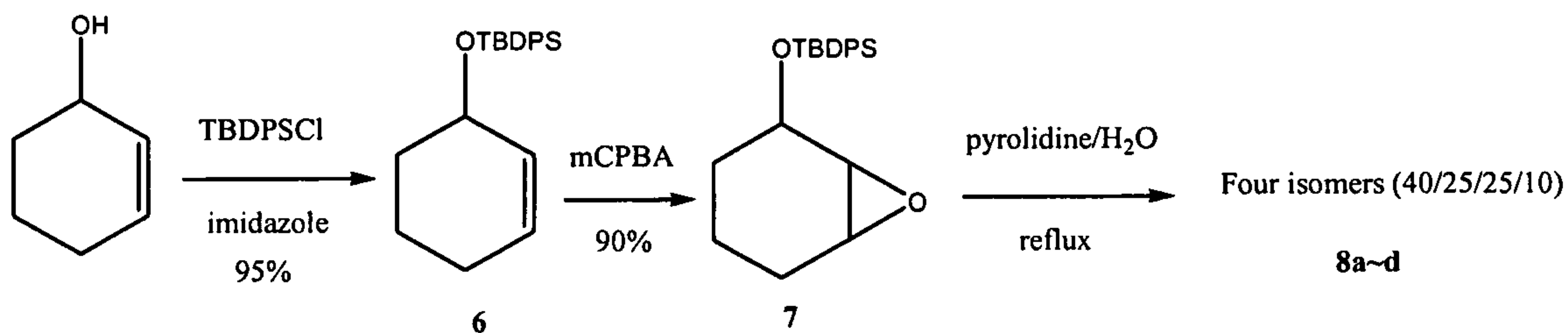
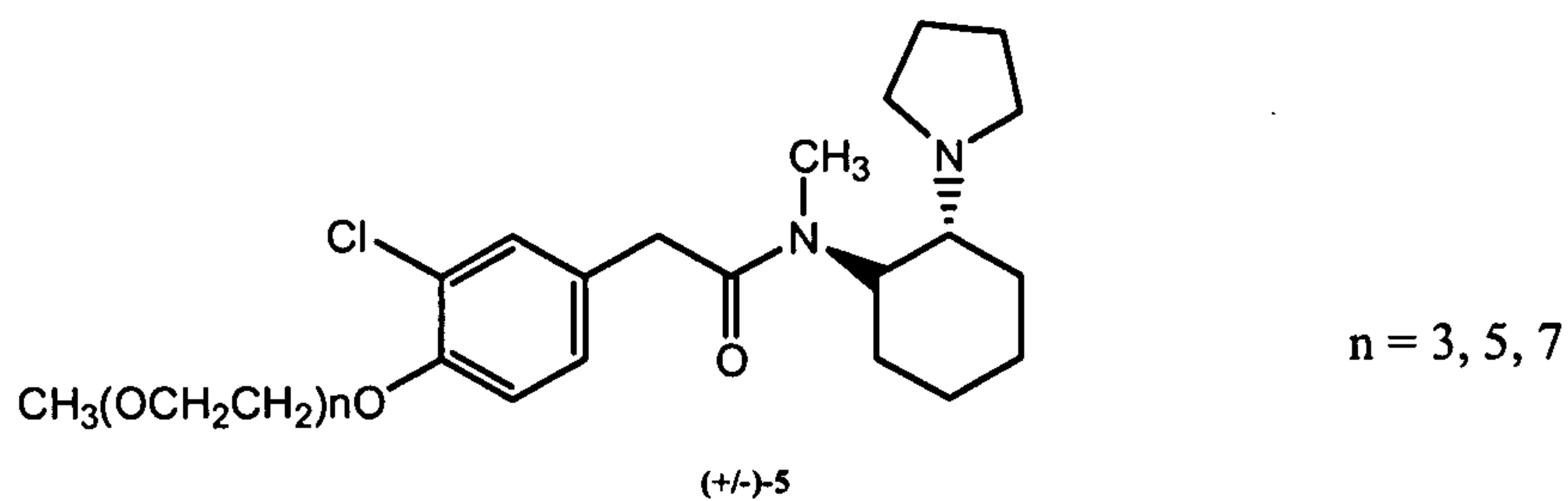
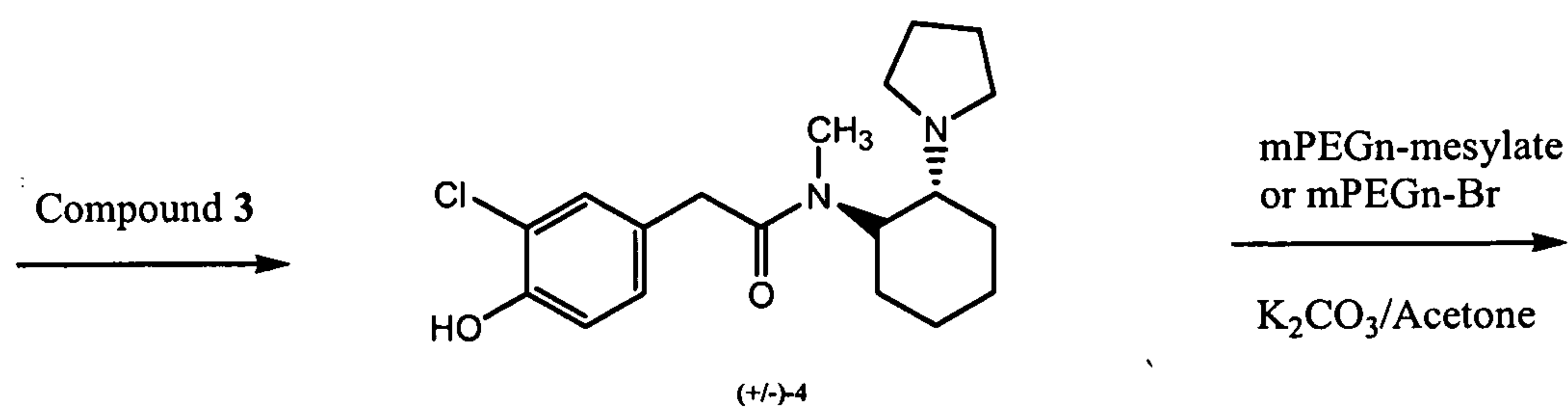
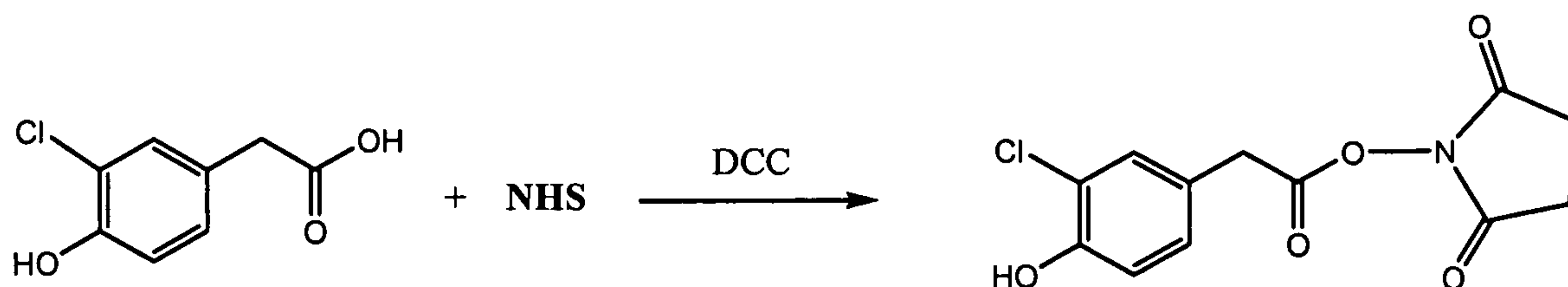
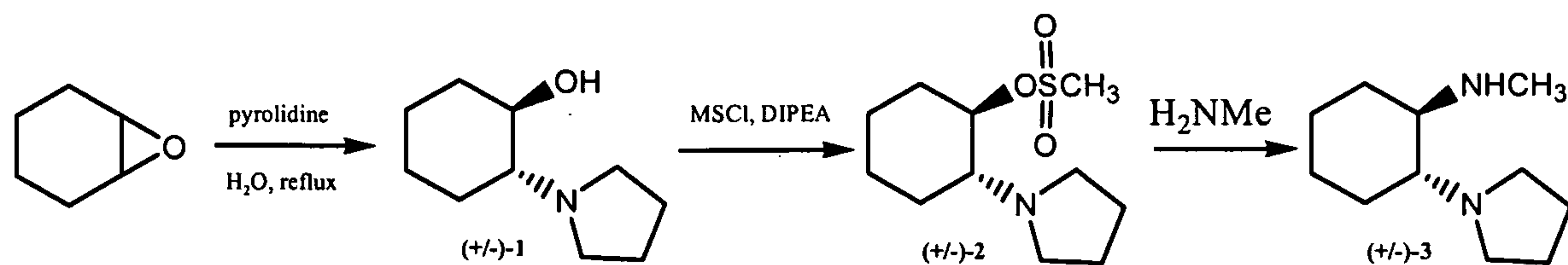
Table 1
Binding Activities

Molecule	Ki at KAPPA receptors (nM)	Fold vs Nalbuphine at KAPPA	Ki at MU Receptors (nM)	Fold vs Nalbuphine At MU	Ki at DELTA Receptors (nM)	Fold vs Nalbuphine At DELTA
Nalbuphine	37.54; 14.36	1	6.74; 16.92; 23.89; 9.67	1	187.10; 323.8; 619.3; 145.20	1
3-O-mPEG _n -Nalbuphine*	-	-	-	-	-	-
6-O-mPEG ₃ -Nalbuphine	218.1	5.8	27.4	4.1	163.30	0.9
6-O-mPEG ₄ -Nalbuphine			17.54	0.7	148.90	0.5
6-O-mPEG ₅ -Nalbuphine	35.56	2.5	35.09	5.2	147.70	0.5
6-O-mPEG ₆ -Nalbuphine	246.9	6.6	44.28	1.9	130.00	0.9
6-O-mPEG ₇ -Nalbuphine	346.1	9.2	77.94	4.6	313.80	0.5
6-O-mPEG ₈ -Nalbuphine	282.2	7.5	79.55	8.2	167.50	1.2
6-O-mPEG ₉ -Nalbuphine	186.1	13.0	122.30	7.2	157.70	1.1

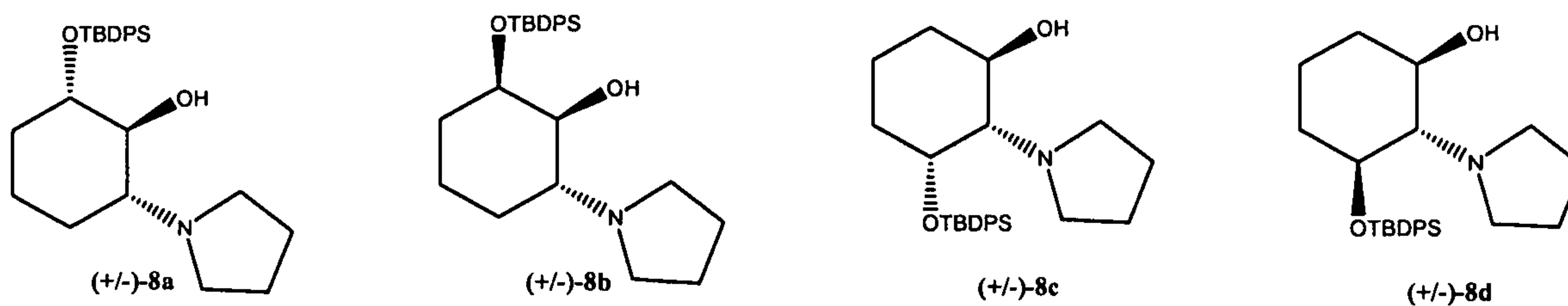
* The "3-O-mPEG_n-nalbuphine" series of molecules prepared in Example 1 showed no detectable binding activity; molecules wherein a water-soluble, non-peptidic oligomer is covalently attached at the 3-O position are believed to have value when, for example, the covalent linkage is a degradable form of linkage.

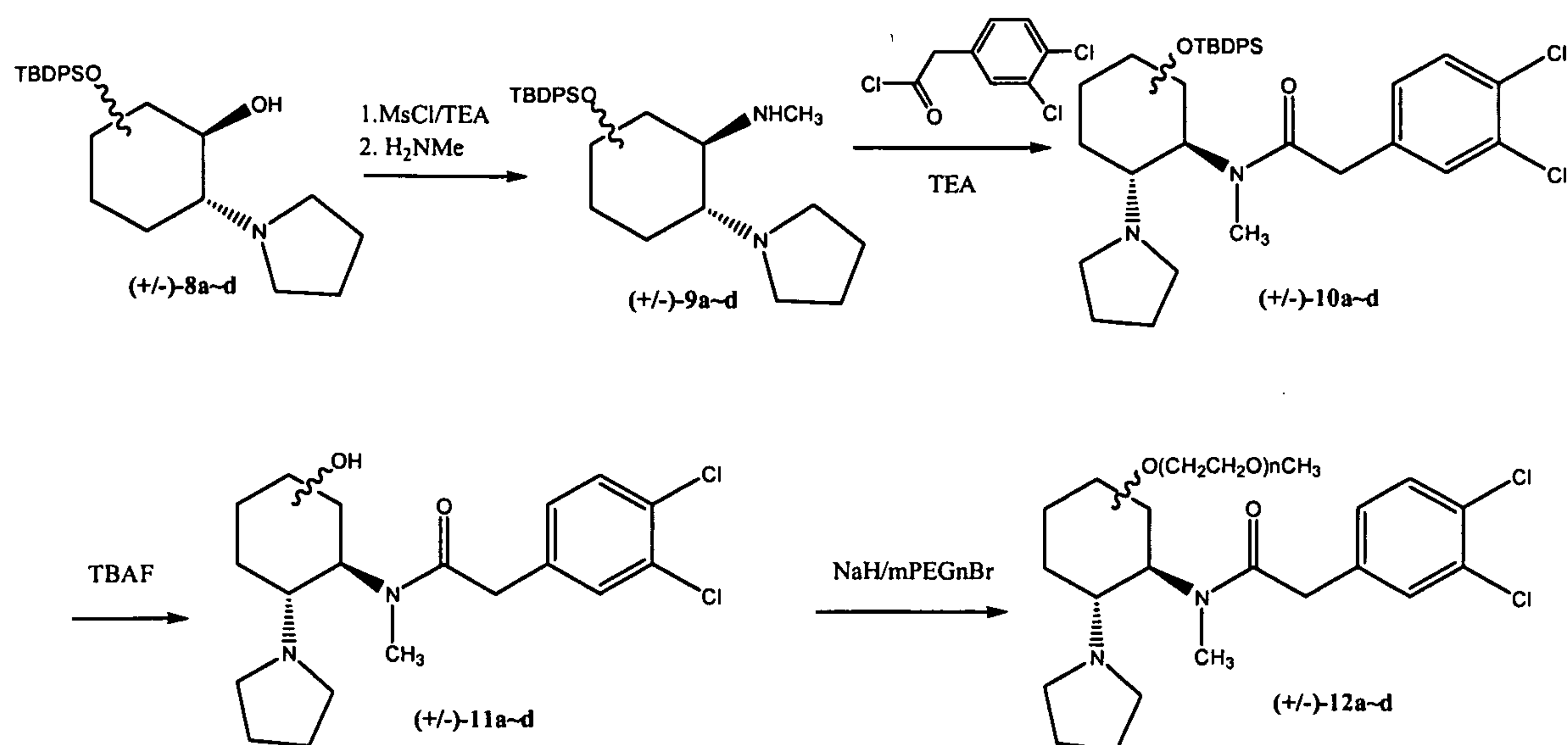
EXAMPLE 5**Preparation of an Oligomer-U50488 Conjugates**

[0214] PEG-U50488 can be prepared following the approach schematically shown below. Conventional organic synthetic techniques are used in carrying out the approach.

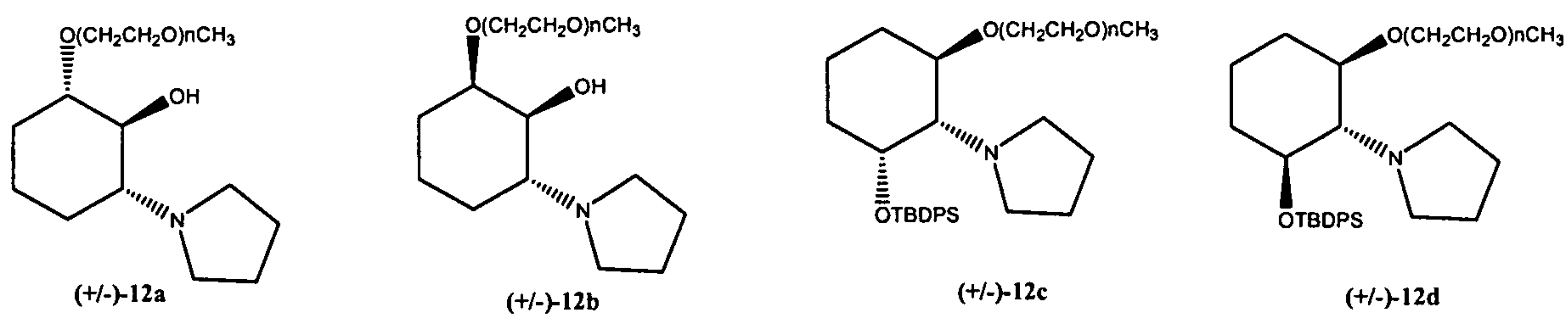


8a~d:





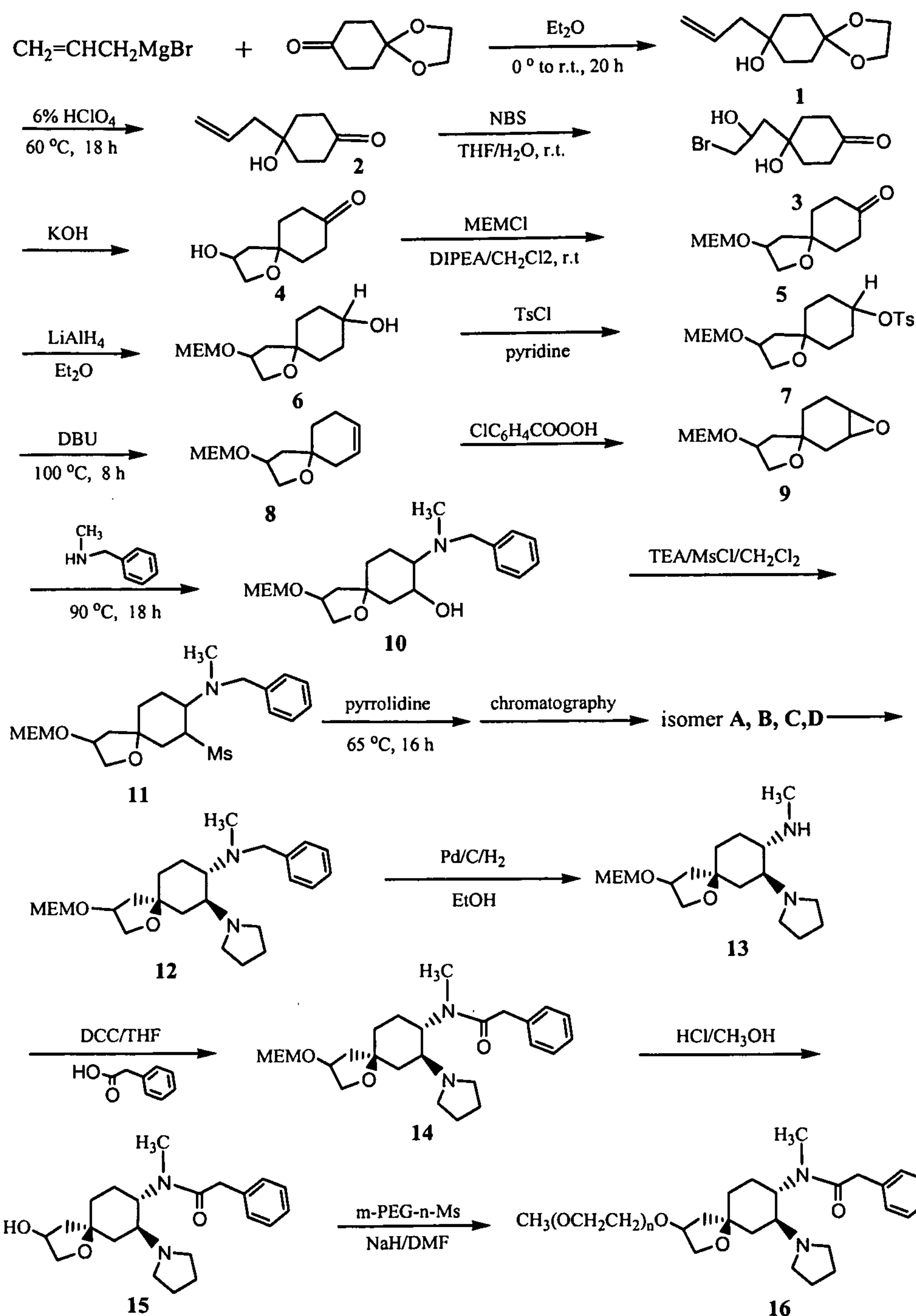
12a~d:



EXAMPLE 6

Preparation of an Oligomer-U69593 Conjugates

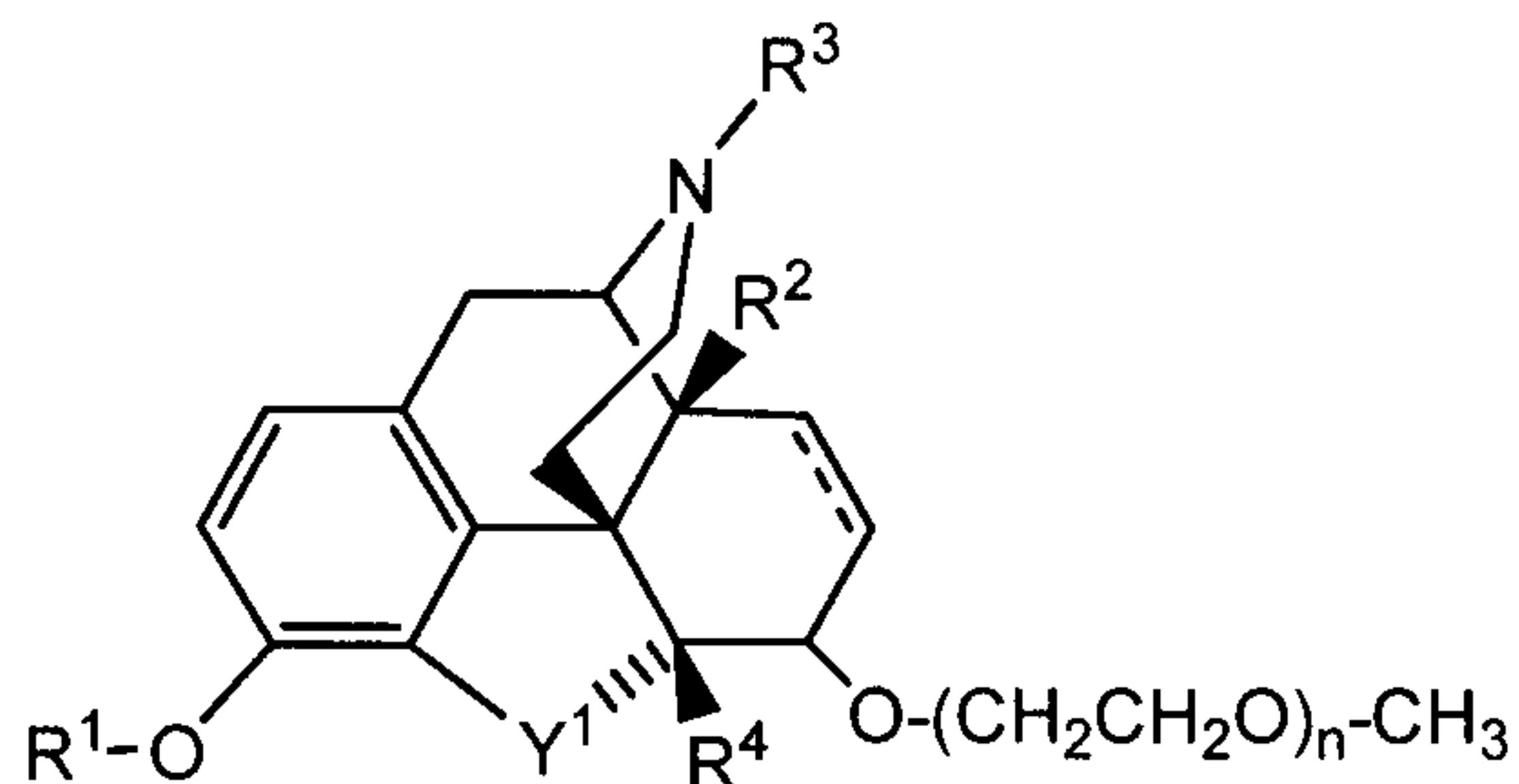
[0215] PEG-U69593 can be prepared following the approach schematically shown below. Conventional organic synthetic techniques are used in carrying out the approach.

**EXAMPLE 7****Preparation of Conjugates Other Than With Nalbuphine, U50488, and U69593**

[0216] Conjugates of opioid agonists other than nalbuphine, U50488 and U69593 can be prepared wherein the general synthetic scheme and procedures set forth in Example 1 can be followed except that an opioid agonist of Formula I is substituted for nalbuphine, U50488 and U69593.

CLAIMS:

1. An opioid agonist compound, having the following structure:



wherein:

R^1 is H, methyl, ethyl or $-C(O)CH_3$;

R^2 is H or OH;

R^3 is H, methyl, ethyl or cyclobutylmethyl;

R^4 is H or methyl;

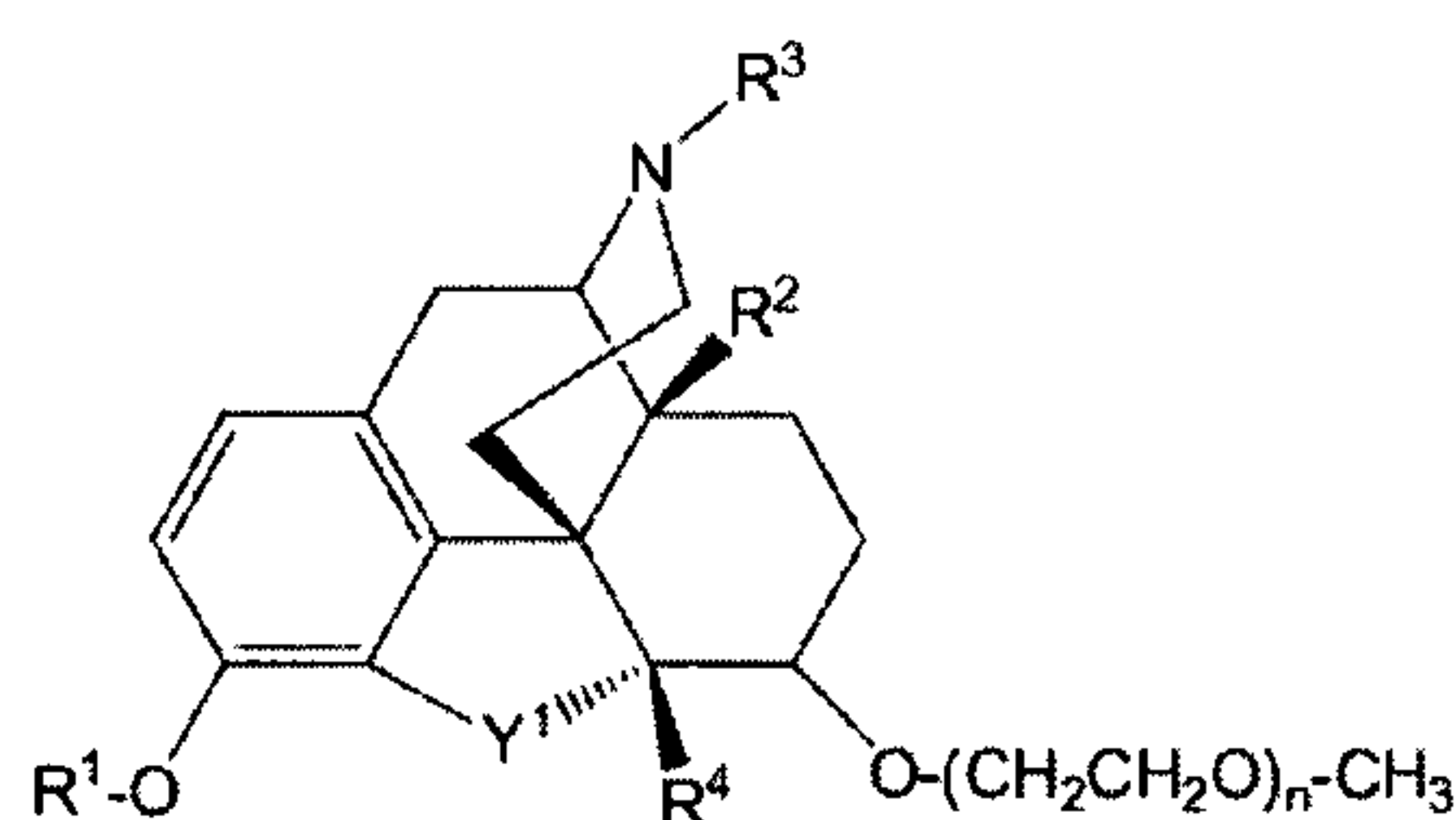
the dotted line ("---") represents an optional double bond;

Y^1 is O;

and n is an integer from 1 to 30.

2. The compound of claim 1, wherein R^2 is OH.
3. The compound of claim 1, wherein R^3 is selected from the group consisting of H and cyclobutylmethyl.
4. The compound of claim 1, wherein R^4 is H.
5. The compound of claim 1, wherein the optional double bond is not present.
6. The compound of claim 4, wherein n is an integer from 1 to 10.

7. A composition comprising the opioid agonist compound defined in any one of claims 1 to 6 and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.
8. A pharmaceutical dosage form comprising the opioid agonist compound defined in any one of claims 1 to 6.
9. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1 to 6 for treating pain.
10. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 1 to 6 for preparing a medicament for treating pain.
11. An opioid agonist compound having the formula:



wherein:

- R¹ is methyl;
- R² is OH;
- R³ is methyl;
- R⁴ is hydrogen;
- Y¹ is oxygen; and
- n is an integer from 1 to 30.

12. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is an integer from 1 to 10.
13. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 2.
14. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 3.

15. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 4.
16. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 5.
17. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 6.
18. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 7.
19. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 8.
20. The compound of claim 11, wherein n is 9.
21. A composition comprising the compound defined in any one of claims 11 to 20, and a pharmaceutically acceptable excipient.
22. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 11 to 20 or the composition defined in claim 21, for the treatment of pain.
23. A use of the compound defined in any one of claims 11 to 20 or the composition defined in claim 21 for preparing a medicament for treating pain.