

Design, synthesis, and evaluation of activity against breast cancer cells of new naphthalene derivatives as potential sirtuin enzymes inhibitors

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ABSTRACT

Epigenetic modifications are potentially therapeutic targets because of their reversibility in somatic inheritability patterns. The sirtuin enzyme family is a Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD⁺)-dependent histone deacetylase. Sirtuins have been associated with the pathogenesis of cancer due to their function in gene expression, making them an interesting therapeutic target. In the current study, several naphthalene-containing molecules were designed. The molecular docking Glide software from Schrodinger Inc. was used to evaluate the virtual interactions of the designed compounds with sirtuin enzymes. Compounds with acceptable docking scores were nominated for organic synthesis. The new naphthalene derivatives were synthesized and characterized via FTIR and NMR spectroscopy. A preliminary antiproliferative study over aggressive, poorly differentiated, and multi-treatment resistant triple negative receptor breast cancer cells (AMJ13) showed that compound Y4 has a significant cytotoxicity with an IC₅₀ of 82.8 M, which was comparable to the vorinostat with an IC₅₀ of 85.9 M. The ADMET study indicated that compound Y4 has acceptable pharmacokinetic properties and a drug-like profile.

Keywords: breast cancer, molecular docking, naphthalene, sirtuins

INTRODUCTION

Cancer is the world's second-most common cause of death, involving about 277 distinct forms [1]. Epigenetics is the study of heritable changes in gene expression without DNA sequence changes. Recent investigations demonstrate that epigenetic mechanism modifications play a vital role in disease treatment. Sirtuins (SIRT) are Histone Deacetylase (HDAC) enzyme family members. Seven types of sirtuins (SIRT1–SIRT7) are found throughout cell compartments. They are classified as class III HDACs, and their dependence on Nicotinamide Adenine Dinucleotide (NAD⁺) as a co-substrate gives rise to the name "NAD⁺ dependent HDACs [2, 3]. These proteins were initially identified as silencing mating factors due to a characteristic of a sequence in the ancestral yeast gene Silent Information Regulation 2 (Sir2). Sirtuins in mammals are homologues of the yeast *Saccharomyces cerevisiae*. Sir2 proteins [4]. SIRT1, SIRT6, and SIRT7 are present mostly in the nucleus, whereas SIRT3, SIRT4, and SIRT5 found primarily in the mitochondria [5-7]. SIRT2 is mostly found in the cytoplasm, but it can migrate to the nucleus during mitosis [8]. Sirtuins function in cells through the enzymatic activity of HDAC and/or Adenosine Diphosphate Ribosyltransferase (ADPRT) [9]. Sirtuins have multiple biological functions and have been linked to a variety of diseases, including cancer, metabolic syndrome, and neurological disorders [10]. As sirtuins have been found to be highly expressed in many cancer types, including breast cancer, hepatocellular cancer, prostate cancer, and many others, inhibiting these enzymes appears to be a promising cancer treatment strategy [11]. Sirtinol and salermide are potent and selective naphthalene-based sirtuin inhibitors (Figure 1) [12]. The SIRT1-specific inhibitor of sirtinol inhibited MCF-7 breast cancer cells at an IC₅₀ of 48.6 μM [13]. Salermide is another example of selective SIRT1 and SIRT2 inhibitor. Salermide inhibits various cancer cells through the induction of apoptosis with an IC₅₀ of 20-100 μM [14]. In continuation of our work in developing new molecules that tackle epigenetic abnormalities [15-18], we proposed a new naphthalene-based compounds that showed an acceptable virtual binding affinity with SIRT proteins. The designed molecules were synthesized, and their cytotoxicity against breast cancer cells was studied.

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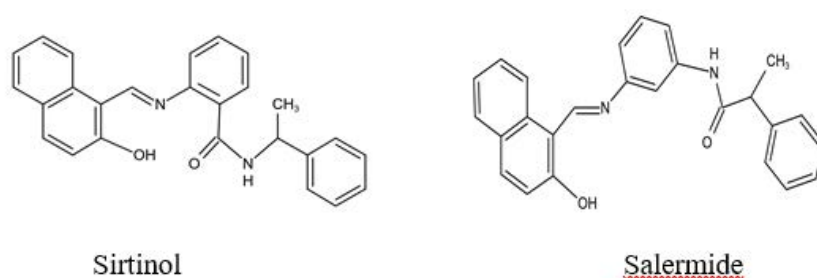


Fig. 1. The chemical structure of representative sirtuin inhibitors

MATERIALS AND METHODS

In Silico study

Protein Preparation and Grid Generation: The crystal structure of homosapien SIRT1-7 proteins was downloaded from the protein data bank (PDB) 4I5I, 5D7P, 4JT8, 5OJN, 2NYR, 6HOY, 5IQZ respectively [19-25]. All the proteins involve NAD in their core as a co-factor and are co-crystallized with a ligand. Proteins were processed using the protein preparation wizard in Schrodinger, New York, NY, 2021, to remove water molecules and non-essential atoms, then the missed atoms in protein residue were added, and finally hydrogen was added, and the hydrogen bonds were optimized by the OLPS_2005 force field. The receptor grid was prepared using the co-crystallized ligand as the center for the boundary box. The dimensions of the boundary box used were 12 Å*12 Å*12 Å [26-27]

Ligand preparation

All ligands were built in chemdraw version 18.0.0.231 and inserted into the prepare ligand module as input files. The ligands energy was minimized using the OLPS_2005 force field in Schrodinger LigPrep software [26].

Molecular docking

The molecular docking experiments were performed using Grid-based Ligand Docking with Energetics (Glide) for receptor-ligand interaction, and ligands were ranked according to the Glide scoring function (G score). The ligands were also evaluated based on potential energy predictions and ligand-binding geometries with SIRT proteins [28]. All compounds docking poses were sorted according to their dock score function and visualized using the Maestro v 13.0.135 interface (Schrodinger, New York, NY, 2021). The extra precision (XP) docking investigation was used to determine the compounds binding poses and binding energies [29].

ADMET study

The compounds were submitted to drug-like property prediction using Lipinski's rule of five and ADMET descriptors calculation in the Schrodinger system using Qikprobe software. Lipinski's rule of five takes into account various molecular features, such as

the number of hydrogen bond acceptors and donors. The study's goal is to learn about the primary pharmacokinetic aspects of substances, such as aqueous solubility, intestinal absorption, systemic distribution, metabolism, excretion, and hepatotoxicity, among many other ADMET descriptors [30].

Chemistry

Materials and equipment:

Starting materials and reagents were provided by different commercial suppliers (Thomas Beaker, Macklin, Glenham, and Merck), and they were used without further purification. Silica gel (60 mm-120 mm) for chromatography and TLC (20*20 cm) plates were supplied by Merck, and ethyl-acetate: n-hexane were used as the solvent system. The FT-IR spectroscopy (Shimadzu, Japan) was carried out at the University of Baghdad/College of Pharmacy. The NMR studies were performed using Bruker Avance III 400 MHz and 100 MHz spectrometers at the University of Basra/College of Education for Pure Science. The cytotoxic study was carried out at the Iraqi Centre for Cancer and Medical Genetic Research, Mustansiriyah University.

Organic synthesis

Synthesis of N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-formylbenzamide (3):

A mixture of 4-formylbenzoic acid 2 (750 mg, 5 mmol) in dichloromethane (DCM) (20 mL) was added to a round-bottom flask and cooled to 0°C. Subsequently, 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl) carbodiimide (EDC) (852 mg, 5.5 mmol) and a catalytic amount of hydroxy benzotriazole (HOBt) (67.5 mg, 0.5 mmol) were added, followed by the addition of 6-bromonaphthalene amine 1 (1.11 g, 5 mmol), 4-Dimethylaminopyridin (DMAP) (610 mg, 5 mmol), and N, N-Diisopropylethyl (DIPEA) (0.9 g, 7 mmol). The mixture was stirred continuously at 0°C for two hours, then at room temperature for 18 hours. After the reaction was completed, the solvent was removed, and the crude was transferred into a separatory funnel containing 50 mL of cooled distilled water, 50 mL of ethyl acetate, 10 mL of 5% hydrochloric acid (HCl), and 10% of sodium bicarbonate (NaHCO₃). Following separation, the organic layer was collected, filtered, and dried. To obtain the pure amide product, the filtrate was run through silica gel for

column chromatography with (ethyl acetate: n- hexane) as eluent system to obtain a yellow powder with an 80% yield percent. IR (cm⁻¹): 3251 (N-H), 3066 (Ar-H), 2870 (HC=O), 1693 (Ald C=O), 1643 (Amide C=O), 1518 (Ar C=C), 648 (C- 1.Br) cm⁻¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO): δ 10.73 (s, 1H Amide N-H), 10.14 (s, 1H HC=O), 8.52 (d, J=2.0 Hz, 1H), 8.27 – 8.12 (m, 3H), 8.09 (d, J=8.2 Hz, 2H), 7.96 – 7.83 (m, 3H), 7.61 (dd, J=8.7, 2.1 Hz, 1H) (Ar-H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 193.40 (Ald C=O), 165.51 (Amide C=O), 140.23, 138.54, 137.55, 132.32, 131.70, 130.22, 129.96, 129.85, 129.83, 128.96, 128.08, 122.41, 118.36, 117.11(Ar-C) [15,31].

General procedure for the synthesis of imine and hydrazone derivatives:

In a round bottom flask, compound 3 (708 mg, 2 mmol) in 10 mL of absolute ethanol and 5 drops of glacial acetic acid were added, then the mixture was mixed with equimolar amounts of various amines (2 mmol), as shown in Table 1, and the mixture was refluxed at 78°C for 14-18 hrs. The completion of the reaction is being observed by TLC with ethyl-acetate: n-hexane as a solvent system. As the mixture cooled to room temperature and was poured into cold water (20 mL), it yielded a precipitate product that was filtered and recrystallized from absolute methanol [32-34]

Tab. 1. The types of amines used and the related product	Amine	Product
	Para-aminophenol	(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-(((4-hydroxy phenyl) imino) methyl) benzamide (Y1)
	Para-aminobenzamide	(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-(((4-carb amoyl phenyl) imino) methyl) benzamide (Y2)
	Phenyl hydrazine	E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-((2-phenyl hydrazineylidene) methyl) benzamide (Y3)
	2,4-dinitrophenyl hydrazine	(E)-N-(6- bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-((2-(2,4-di-nitro phenyl) hydrazineylidene) methyl) benzamide (Y4)

(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-(((4-hydroxy phenyl) imino) methyl) benzamide (Y1):

IR (cm⁻¹): 3537 (O-H), 3251 (Amide N-H), 3105 (HC=C), 3074 (Ar-H), 1643 (C=O), 1620 (C=N), 1581, 1543 (Ar-C), 1388 (O-H Bending) cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO): δ 10.63 (s, 1H Amide N-H), 9.63 (s, 1H O-H), 8.74 (s, 1H HC=N), 8.52 (s, 1H), 8.22 – 8.10 (m, 3H), 8.07 (d, J=8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.97 – 7.91 (m, 2H), 7.91 – 7.83 (m, 2H), 7.70 – 7.57 (m, 1H), 7.29 (d, J=8.2 Hz, 2H), 6.84 (d, J=8.2 Hz, 2H) (Ar-H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, DMSO): δ 165.78 (C=O), 157.21 (C=N), 156.57, 142.65, 139.71, 137.75, 136.81, 132.36, 131.62, 130.11 (d, J=15.9 Hz), 129.81, 128.64 (d, J=7.6 Hz), 128.01, 123.28, 122.50, 118.24, 117.02, 116.26 (Ar-C).

(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-(((4-carb amoyl phenyl) imi-no) methyl) benzamide (Y2): IR (cm⁻¹): 3375 (Asy N-H), 3251 (Amide N-H), 3170 (Sym N-H), 3100 (HC=C), 3066 (Ar-H), 1643 (C=O), 1624 (C=N), 1581 (Ar C=C) cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO): δ 10.68 (s, 1H Amide N-H), 8.78 (s, 1H HC=N), 8.53 (s, 1H), 8.20 – 8.10 (m, 5H), 8.04 – 7.83 (m, 6H), 7.71 – 7.58 (m, 2H) (Ar-H), 7.37 (s, 2H NH₂).

(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-((2-phenyl hydra-zineylidene) methyl) benzamide (Y3):

IR (cm⁻¹): 3298 HN-N), 3263 (Amide N-H), 3105 (HC=N), 1639 (C=O), 1624 (C=N), 1577, 1543 (Ar-C=C) cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO): δ 10.62 (s, 1H HN-N), 10.53 (s, 1H Amide N-H), 8.52 (s, 1H Ar-H), 8.15 (s, 1H HC=N), 8.06 (d, J=8.0 Hz, 2H), 7.93 (d, J=15.3 Hz, 3H), 7.84 (dd, J=12.4, 8.4 Hz, 3H), 7.63 – 7.56 (m, 1H), 7.26 (t, J=7.6 Hz, 2H), 7.15 (d, J=8.0 Hz, 2H), 6.80 (t, J=7.3 Hz, 1H) (Ar-H). ¹³C NMR (101 MHz, DMSO-d₆): δ 165.89 (C=O), 145.40 (C=N), 139.59, 137.91, 135.65, 133.89, 132.39, 131.55, 130.14, 129.81, 129.76, 129.67, 128.70, 127.95, 125.81, 122.55, 119.72, 118.15, 116.92, 112.72 (Ar-C).

(E)-N-(6-bromonaphthalen-2-yl)-4-((2-(2,4-di-nitrophe-nyl) hydrazineylidene) methyl) benzamide (Y4):

IR (cm⁻¹): 3406 (NH-N), 3282 (Amide N-H), 3079 (HC=N), 3032 (Ar-H), 1666 (C=O), 1612 (C=N), 1581 (Asy NO₂), 1531 (Ar C=C), 1327 (Sym NO₂) cm⁻¹. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO): δ 11.78 (s, 1H HN-N), 10.62 (s, 1H Amide N-H), 8.87 (dd, J=8.2, 2.7 Hz, 1H Ar-H), 8.79 (s, 1H HC=N), 8.52 (d, J=11.7 Hz, 1H), 8.41 (dd, J=9.7, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 8.25 (t, J=7.9 Hz, 1H), 8.20 – 7.82 (m, 8H), 7.61 (dd, J= 8.8, 2.1 Hz, 1H) (Ar-H) (Figure 2).

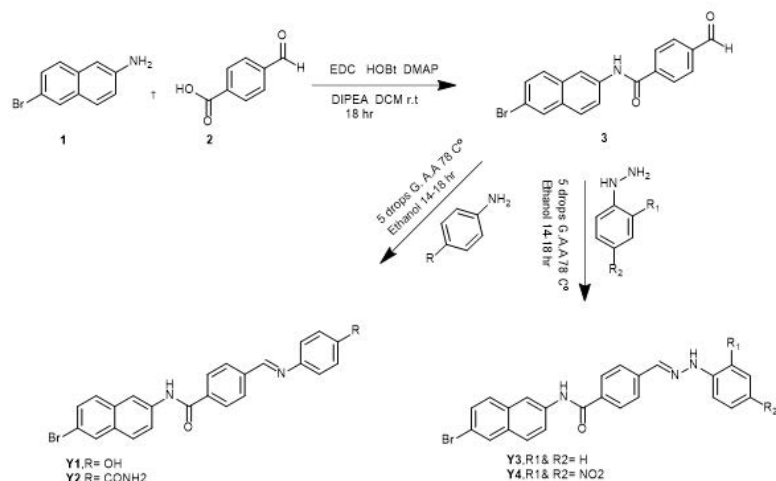


Fig. 2. The organic synthesis for the final compounds

Anti-proliferative study

The final compounds underwent a cancer cell growth inhibition study in comparison with vorinostat. The breast cancer cell line AMJ13 that has been established from an Iraqi patient was used in this study [35]. The stock solution was prepared by dissolving 5 mg of compounds in 1 mL of DMSO to get 5 mg/mL. The stock solution has been filtered by syringe filter paper, and then five dilutions (1 mM, 5 mM, 10 mM, 50 mM, and 100 mM in 200 ml) are prepared using fetal bovine serum 10% (FBS) as a diluent. The dilutions were added to the cells and incubated for 48 hours at 37°C. A control, untreated AMJ13 cell was prepared, as well as a control for the highest concentration of DMSO. The medium of culture was removed when the exposure time was over, then the cell was washed, crystal violet staining solution was added, and it was incubated for 20 minutes. The cell wells were washed to get rid of any extra stain. The optical density of each well at 570 nm (OD570) was measured with a plate reader to compare with the blank and the control of untreated AMJ-13 cells to figure out the percentage of living cells, and then the percentage of inhibition was calculated (36) by using following equation.

$$\% \text{ viability} = (\text{AT} - \text{AB}) / (\text{AC} - \text{AB}) \times 100\%$$

Where, AT=Absorbance of treated cells (compounds).

AB=Absorbance of blank (only medium).

AC=Absorbance of control (untreated).

% Inhibition=100-% viability

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Docking Study

Generally, all the designed compounds show no significant virtual binding activity for SIRT 1, 2, 3, 7 enzymes. In contrast, the designed compounds exhibited a decent interaction with SIRT 4,5,6. Compound Y4 was highly interacting with SIRT 4,5,6 with acceptable docking scores (Table 1). The virtual interaction of compound Y4 with SIRT4 indicated that the naphthalene moiety was forming a cationic- π interaction with Arg 86 with bond length 5.88 Å and π - π stacking with Tyr 104 with bond length 3.3 Å. The amide carbonyl group that links the naphthalene moiety with the middle benzene ring forms a hydrogen bond with Ile 89 with a bond length of 2.6 Å. Most interestingly, the dinitro moieties of Y4 were composing salt bridge interactions with the Arg 103 and Asp 208 residues with bond lengths of 3.4 Å and 3.8 Å, respectively. These superior virtual interactions between Y4 and SIRT4 might explain the promising antitumor activity of Y4 with breast cancer cells (AMJ14) (Figure 3 and 4) (Table 2).

Tab. 2. Show the XP docking score with sirtuins proteins

Comp No	Docking score (kcal/mol)		
	SIRT4	SIRT5	SIRT6
Comp Y4	-4.35	-5.3	-4.85

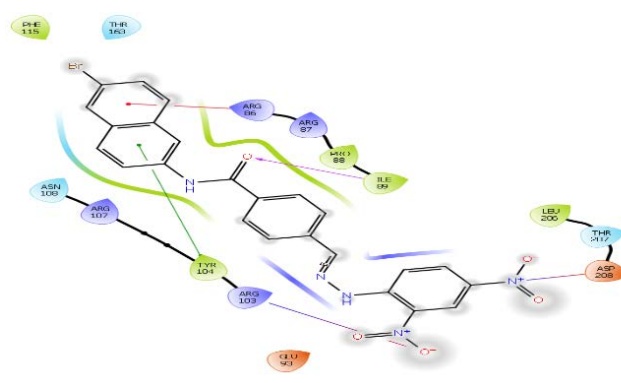


Fig. 3. The 2D interaction of compound Y4 with SIRT4 enzyme

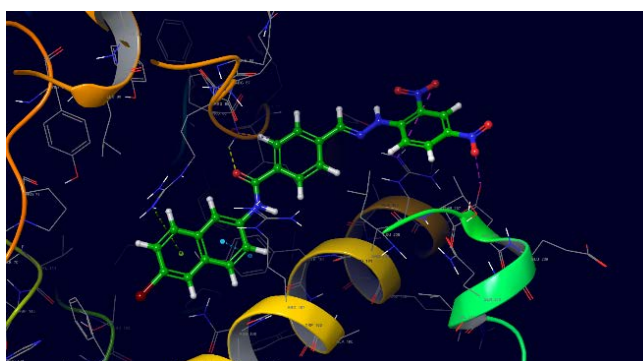


Fig. 4. The 3D interaction of compound Y4 with SIRT4 enzyme

ADMET study

All the compounds obey the Lipinski rule of five and also rule of

three of violate Jorgensen's criterion, so all the compounds show an acceptable drug likeness profile as shown in (Table 3).

Tab. 3. Drug likeness properties of proposed compounds

Compound no.	Rule of five	Rule of three	Mw.t g/mol	TPSA	Clog p	Oral absorption	PCaco	rtvFG
Y1	0	0	444	68.301	4.439	3	932.797	0
Y2	0	0	471	74.67	4.699	3	981.235	0
Y3	0	0	443	57.954	3.57	3	2252.704	0
Y4	1	0	533	145.183	4.279	2	244.065	0

Proposed compounds synthesis

The synthesis of target compounds started with the amide formation reaction between 4-formylbenzoic acid and 6-bromonaphthalene in the presence of EDC, DMAP, HOBt, and DIPEA to form amide 3 (31, 37). The use of EDC instead of DCC for the difficulty of removal of the N, N-dicyclohexylurea by-product rather than the water-soluble EDC by-product. The next step in the formation of an imine bond was carried out by the reaction of the aldehyde group of compound 3 with various amine derivatives in acidic media supported by reflux at 78 °C to obtain the final compounds (Scheme 1) [33].

Cancer cell line study

The breast cancer cells (AMJ-13) used in this study are aggressive, poorly differentiated, and multiply rapidly since it classified as triple

negative breast cancer cell and graded as 3/3 according to Nottingham modification of the Bloom–Richardson system and T2, N0, Mx on TNM staging [35-38]. The observed cells exhibited an elongated multipolar epithelial-like morphology, characterized by nuclear polymorphism and the presence of numerous nuclei in the majority of the cell (Figure 5) [35]. Post-exposure results show inhibition of breast cancer cell growth and lysis of most cells (Figure 5. B, C). Compounds Y1 and Y2 showed moderate antiproliferative activity with a high IC₅₀, while compound Y3 had no activity at the highest concentration of 100 mM. Interestingly, compounds Y4 revealed promising cytotoxic activity with an IC₅₀ of (82.8 mM) which is comparable to the FDA-approved HDAC inhibitor vorinostat IC₅₀ of 85.9 mM (Figure 6). A linear regression equation was employed to compute the correlation co-efficient value which is near one so, the inhibition of breast cancer cells is significant (Table 4).

Tab. 4. IC50 values and p-values of vorinostat and the synthesized compounds

Compound	IC ₅₀
Vorinostat	85.9 μM
Y1	98 μM
Y2	95.3 μM
Y3	No activity up to 100 μM
Y4	82.8 μM

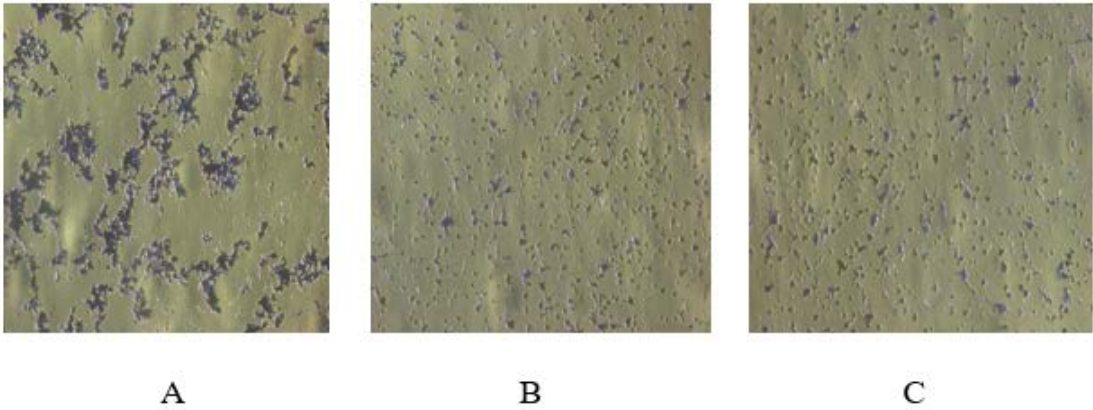


Fig. 5. (A) AMJ13 cancer cell (B) AMJ13 cancer cell treated with Y4 (C) AMJ13 cancer cell treated with vorinostat

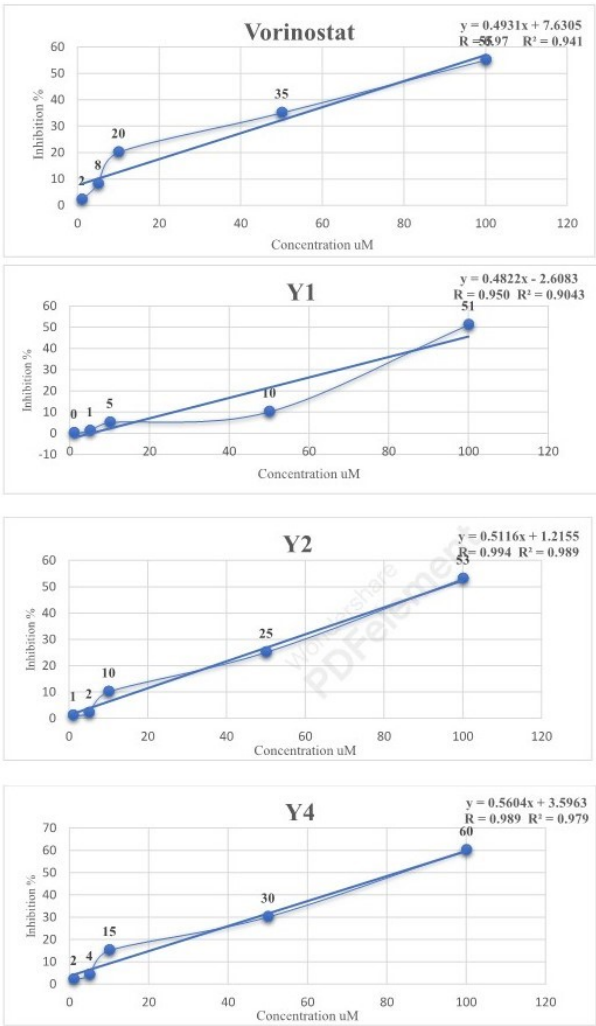


Fig. 6. Plots of the inhibition percent of vorinostat and the synthesized compounds

CONCLUSION

Sirtuin enzymes are prospective therapeutic targets for cancer treatment. New derivatives of the naphthalene moiety were developed using both ligand-based and structure-based drug design. The docking study indicates that the designed molecules bind to SIRT enzymes through various virtual interactions with acceptable docking scores. The final products were successfully synthesized and characterized. The antiproliferative activity against breast cancer cells (AMJ-13) indicates that compound Y4 exhibits a promising inhibition activity that is comparable to the activity of the FDA-approved drug vorinostat. The sirtuin enzymes in-

hibition activity might be carried out in the future to investigate the potency and selectivity for the synthesized molecules against sirtuins.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

There are no conflicts to declare.

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