



Supporting Information

for

Experimental and theoretical studies on the synthesis of 1,4,5-trisubstituted pyrrolidine-2,3-diones

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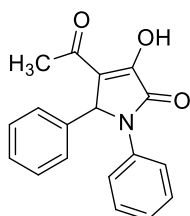
Experimental part, additional DFT data and NMR spectra

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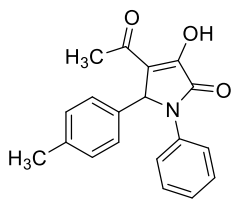
1. Experimental procedures and characterization data

General procedure for the synthesis of 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-3-pyrrolin-2-ones 4a–c: To a round-bottomed flask equipped with a mechanical stirrer was added benzaldehyde (1.5 equiv), aniline (1.0 equiv), and glacial acetic acid. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 1 hour under Ar atmosphere and the imine formation was monitored by TLC (hexane/EtOAc 5:1). Then, ethyl 2,4-dioxovalerate (1.0 equiv) was added, the resulting solution was stirred vigorously at room temperature under Ar atmosphere for 2–4 hours, and the formation of 3-hydroxy-3-pyrrolin-2-one derivatives was followed by TLC (CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.2). Then, distilled water was added to the flask and the mixture was stirred for 15 minutes. The precipitate was filtered and then crude product was recrystallized from the solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and toluene to obtain the pure compounds.



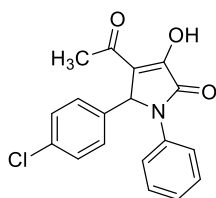
4-Acetyl-3-hydroxy-1,5-diphenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (4a): benzaldehyde (0.075 mL, 1.5 equiv, 0.75 mmol), aniline (0.046 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), ethyl 2,4-dioxovalerate (0.07 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), and glacial acetic acid (1.0 mL), under Ar atmosphere. Reaction time is 3 h. The crude was purified *via* recrystallization from a solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and toluene to obtain **4a** (117.6 mg, 80% yield) as a white solid. m.p. 222–223 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 7.58 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.29 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.74 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.23 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.42 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.20 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.32 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.15 – 7.08 (m, 2H; Ar-H), 2.34 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 164.58, 136.93, 136.20, 128.67, 128.10, 127.64, 125.39, 122.49, 120.53, 60.46, 39.11 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₈H₁₅NO₃: 294.1130; found: 294.1120



4-Acetyl-3-hydroxy-1-phenyl-5-(p-tolyl)-3-pyrrolin-2-one (4b): *p*-tolualdehyde (0.09 mL, 1.5 equiv, 0.75 mmol), aniline (0.046 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), ethyl 2,4-dioxovalerate (0.07 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), and glacial acetic acid (1.0 mL), under Ar atmosphere. Reaction time is 3 h. The crude product was purified *via* recrystallization from a solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and toluene to obtain **4b** (106.1 mg, 69% yield) as a white solid. m.p. 206-208 °C.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 7.56 (dd, $^4J(\text{H,H}) = 1.36$ Hz, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 8.68$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.28 (t, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.36$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.12 – 7.06 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 6.98 (d, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.84$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 2.31 (s, 3H; CH₃), 2.15 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (100 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 191.83 (*broad peak*), 164.54, 136.82, 136.23, 133.81, 128.72, 128.65, 127.50, 125.32, 122.45, 120.62, 60.20, 30.13 (*broad peak*), 20.60 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₉H₁₇NO₃: 308.1287; found: 308.1274

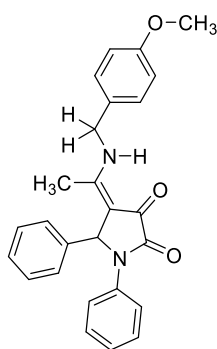


4-Acetyl-3-hydroxy-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-phenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (4c): From 4-chlorobenzaldehyde (105.4 mg, 1.5 equiv, 0.75 mmol), aniline (0.046 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), ethyl 2,4-dioxovalerate (0.07 mL, 1.0 equiv, 0.5 mmol), and acetic acid (1.0 mL), under Ar atmosphere. Reaction time is 5 h. The crude product was purified *via* recrystallization from a solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and toluene to obtain **4c** (139.2 mg, 85% yield) as a white solid. m.p. 193-194 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 7.55 (d, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.37$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.29 (d, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 8.24$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.27 (s, 2H; Ar-H), 7.23 (d, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 8.59$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 9.09 (t, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.42$ Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 2.32 (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, DMSO-d₆) δ 191.84, 164.49, 136.12, 136, 132.12, 129.57, 128.72, 128.10, 125.50, 122.49, 120.17, 59.70, 30.08 ppm.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 7.39 (dd, $^4J(\text{H,H}) = 1.46$ Hz, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 8.59$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.29 (t, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.83$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.23 (d, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 8.48$ Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.18 – 7.13 (m, 3H, Ar-H), 2.25 ppm (s, 3H, CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 194.44, 163.78, 135.58, 134.60, 133.68, 129.16, 129.14, 129.01, 128.98, 128.20, 126.53, 125.27, 122.71, 119.75, 61.64, 29.04 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) m/z [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₈H₁₄ClNO₃: 328.0740; found: 328.0735

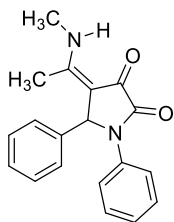
General procedure for the reaction between 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-3-pyrrolin-2-ones 4a–c and aliphatic amines: To a screw-capped reaction tube equipped with a magnetic stirring bar was added 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-3-pyrrolin-2-one (1.0 equiv) and aliphatic amine (4 equiv). Subsequently, ethanol was added and the resulting mixture was stirred at 80 °C for 5 h. The consumption of starting materials and the formation of product was monitored by TLC (CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.1). Then, hexane (5 mL) was added to the tube and the mixture was stirred at room temperature for 15 minutes. The precipitate was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH). In some cases, recrystallization was used for further purification after column chromatography.



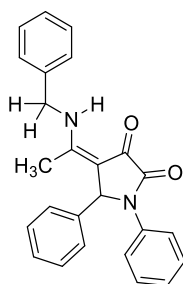
4-[1-(4-Methoxybenzyl)amino]ethylidene-1,5-diphenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10aa):

mixture of 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1,5-diphenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4a**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.17 mmol), 4-methoxybenzylamine (**9a**, 0.091 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.68 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 5 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.03) affording **10aa** (62.6 mg, 89% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 208-211 °C.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.74 (t_{br}, ³*J*(H,H) = 6.11 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.43 (dd, ⁴*J*(H,H) = 1.44 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.56 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.32 – 7.22 (m, 7H; Ar-H), 7.19 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.66 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.14 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.48 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 6.92 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.63 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.75 (s, 1H), 4.48 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.11 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.56 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.39 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.21 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.56 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 3.85 (s, 3H; OCH₃), 1.87 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.24, 164.34, 163.15, 159.42, 138.69, 136.81, 128.87, 128.83, 128.40, 128.35, 128.28, 128.12, 128.09, 126.21, 124.01, 114.54, 107.37, 61.55, 55.45, 46.77, 29.81, 15.61 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₆H₂₄N₂O₃: 413.1865; found: 413.1856

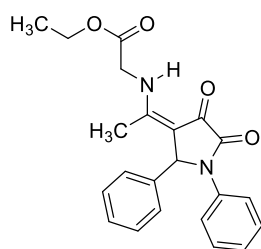


4-(1-Methylamino)ethylidene-1,5-diphenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10ab): a mixture of 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1,5-diphenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4a**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.17 mmol), methylamine (**9b**, 0.24 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.68 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 5 h. The precipitate was recrystallized from a solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and hexane to obtain pure product **10ab** (46.0 mg, 88%) as an off white solid. m.p. 284-286 °C. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.31 (d_{br}, ³J(H,H) = 7.02 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.48 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.37 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.59 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.34 – 7.22 (m, 7H; Ar-H), 7.14 (t, ³J(H,H) = 7.34 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 5.78 (s, 1H), 2.90 (d, ³J(H,H) = 5.32 Hz, 3H; CH₃), 1.86 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 176.66, 165.40, 164.60, 138.77, 136.86, 128.87, 128.80, 128.36, 128.14, 126.10, 124.02, 107.14, 61.39, 30.00, 15.35 ppm. HRMS (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₉H₁₈N₂O₂: 307.1447; found: 307.1436



4-(1-Benzylamino)ethylidene-1,5-diphenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10ac): a mixture of 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1,5-diphenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4a**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.17 mmol), benzylamine (**9c**, 0.074 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.68 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 5 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.07) affording **10ac** (58.7 mg, 90% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 235-237 °C.

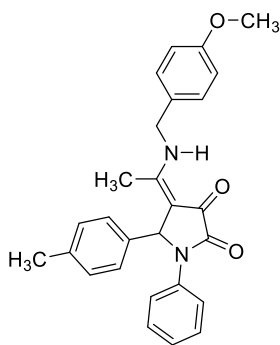
¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.66 (s_{br}, 1H; N–H), 7.28 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.79 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.23 – 7.10 (m, 11H; Ar-H), 7.01 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.36 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 5.64 (s, 1H), 4.44 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 5.91 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.89 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.37 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.16 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.87 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 1.73 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.54, 164.28, 164.19, 138.71, 136.83, 136.24, 129.20, 128.92, 128.88, 128.47, 128.12, 126.88, 126.32, 124.11, 107.47, 61.67, 47.28, 15.62 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₅H₂₂N₂O₂: 383.1760; found: 383.1756



4-[1-((Ethoxycarbonylmethyl)amino)]ethylidene-1,5-diphenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione

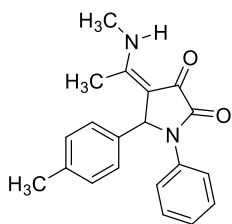
(10ad): a mixture of 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1,5-diphenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4a**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.17 mmol), glycine ethyl ester hydrochloride (**9d**, 94.9 mg, 4.0 equiv, 0.68 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 5 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.07) affording **10ad** (53.1 mg, 82% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 215-217 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.34 (s_{br}, 1H; N–H), 7.29 (dd, ⁴*J*(H,H) = 1.34 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.44 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 7.19 – 7.11 (m, 8H; Ar-H), 7.03 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.47 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 5.62 (s, 1H), 4.15 (q, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.08 Hz, 2H; O–CH₂), 3.97 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.05 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 18.11 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 3.89 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 18.1 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 1.70 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.21 ppm (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.13 Hz, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 178.42, 167.86, 163.92, 163.60, 138.58, 136.77, 128.95, 128.91, 128.53, 128.17, 126.43, 124.23, 107.59, 62.27, 61.66, 44.99, 15.60, 14.25 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₂H₂₂N₂O₄: 379.1658; found: 379.1661



5-(4-Methylphenyl)-4-[1-(4-methoxybenzyl)amino]ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10ba): 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1-phenyl-5-(*p*-tolyl)-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4b**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.163 mmol), 4-methoxybenzylamine (**9a**, 0.087 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.652 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 4 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.08) affording **10ba** (52.9 mg, 76% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 209-211 °C.

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.66 (t_{br}, ³*J*(H,H) = 6.31 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.37 (dd, ⁴*J*(H,H) = 1.12 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.62 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.23 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.44 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.12 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.61 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.09 – 7.05 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 6.99 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.60 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 6.86 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.67 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.66 (s, 1H), 4.42 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.09 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.54 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.34 (dd, ²*J*(H,H) = 6.21 Hz, ³*J*(H,H) = 15.54 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 3.78 (s, 3H; O-CH₃), 2.22 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.80 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (150 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.31, 164.35, 164.07, 159.43, 138.14, 136.90, 135.57, 129.53, 128.84, 128.29, 128.18, 127.97, 126.14, 124.00, 114.55, 107.45, 61.28, 55.46, 46.77, 21.21, 15.58 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₇H₂₆N₂O₃: 427.2022; found: 427.2019

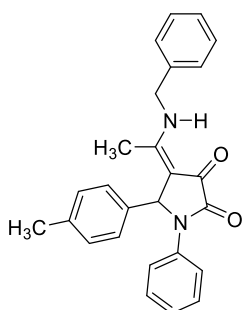


5-(4-Methylphenyl)-4-(1-methylamino)ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10bb):

4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1-phenyl-5-(*p*-tolyl)-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4b**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.163 mmol), methylamine (**9b**, 0.23 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.65 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 4 h. The crude product was recrystallized from a solvent mixture of CH₂Cl₂ and hexane to afford **10bb** (44.0 mg, 84% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 272-274 °C.

¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.19 (d_{br}, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.06 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.45 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.40 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.29 – 7.23 (m, 2H; Ar-H), 7.07 – 7.05 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 6.98 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.76 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.71 (s, 1H), 2.75 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 5.19 Hz, 3H; CH₃), 2.22 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.78 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 176.44, 165.64, 164.63, 137.99, 136.90, 135.57, 129.43, 128.78, 128.00, 125.89, 123.90, 107.19, 60.91, 29.85, 21.18, 15.35 ppm.

HRMS (ESI-quadrupole) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₀H₂₀N₂O₂: 321.1603; found: 321.1588

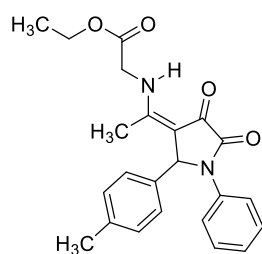


5-(4-Methylphenyl)-4-(1-benzylamino)ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10bc):

4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1-phenyl-5-(*p*-tolyl)-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4b**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.163 mmol), benzylamine (**9c**, 0.071 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.652 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 4 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica

gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.04) affording **10bc** (52.1 mg, 81% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 250-251 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.73 (t_{br}, ³J(H,H) = 6.26 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.38 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.37 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.66 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.33 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.72 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.30 – 7.20 (m, 5H; Ar-H), 7.10 – 7.06 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 7.00 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.86 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.68 (s, 1H), 4.50 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.13 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.88 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.43 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.36 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.89 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 2.23 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.80 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.59, 164.27, 164.15, 138.19, 136.90, 136.30, 135.57, 129.56, 129.18, 128.87, 128.09, 127.98, 126.86, 126.19, 124.04, 107.52, 61.32, 47.22, 21.23, 15.57 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₆H₂₄N₂O₂: 397.1916; found: 397.1916

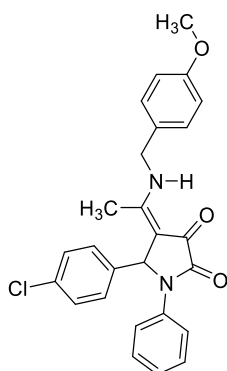


5-(4-Methylphenyl)-4-[1-((ethoxycarbonylmethyl)amino)]ethylidene-1-

phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10bd): 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-1-phenyl-5-(*p*-tolyl)-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4b**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.163 mmol), glycine ethyl ester hydrochloride (**9d**, 91.0 mg, 4.0 equiv, 0.652 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 4 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.1) affording **10bd** (56.0 mg, 87% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 248-250 °C.

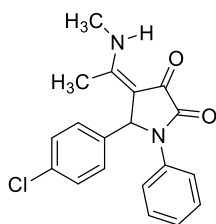
¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.38 (t_{br}, ³J(H,H) = 6.09 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.38 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.3 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.44 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.26 – 7.23 (m, 2H; Ar-H), 7.09 (t, ³J(H,H) = 7.45 Hz, 1H; Ar-H), 7.06 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.94 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 6.99 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.80 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.69 (s, 1H), 4.20 (q, (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.13 Hz, 2H; OCH₂), 4.00 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.22 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 18.13 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 3.88 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 5.94 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 18.18 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 2.22 (s, 3H;

CH₃), 1.76 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.27 ppm (t, ³J(H,H) = 7.13 Hz, 3H, CH₃). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 178.33, 167.90, 163.96, 163.71, 138.22, 136.82, 135.42, 129.56, 128.89, 128.04, 126.25, 124.11, 107.66, 62.21, 61.24, 44.90, 21.23, 15.61, 14.23 ppm. HRMS (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₃H₂₄N₂O₄: 393.1814; found: 393.1806



5-(4-Chlorophenyl)-4-[1-(4-methoxybenzyl)amino]ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10ca): 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-phenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4c**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.153 mmol), 4-methoxybenzylamine (**9a**, 0.081 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.612 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 7 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.1) affording **10ca** (55.0 mg, 81% yield) as a light yellow solid. m.p. 224-227 °C.

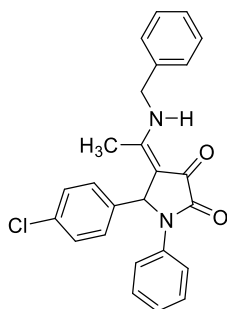
¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.66 (t_{br}, ³J(H,H) = 6.13 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.34 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.30 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.39 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.27 – 7.25 (m, 2H; Ar-H), 7.18 (d, ³J(H,H) = 8.5 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.13 – 7.09 (m, 5H; Ar-H), 6.87 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.23 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.69 (s, 1H), 4.43 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.09 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.49 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.34 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.19 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.49 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 3.79 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.80 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). ¹³C NMR (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.20, 164.18, 164.04, 159.53, 137.43, 136.57, 134.24, 129.40, 129.16, 129.05, 128.33, 127.99, 126.48, 124.05, 114.63, 106.96, 60.88, 55.49, 46.88, 15.70 ppm. HRMS (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₆H₂₃ClN₂O₃: 447.1475; found: 447.1470



5-(4-Chlorophenyl)-4-(1-methylamino)ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10cb):

4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-phenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4c**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.153 mmol), methylamine (**9b**, 0.22 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.61 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 8 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.15) affording **10cb** (40.3 mg, 77% yield) as a light yellow solid. m.p. 277-280 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.18 (d_{br}, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.10 Hz, 1H; N-H), 7.42 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.21 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.28 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.70 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.17 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.48 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.12 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 8.47 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.10 (t, ³*J*(H,H) = 7.53 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 5.73 (s, 3H; CH₃), 2.75 (d, ³*J*(H,H) = 5.27 Hz, 3H; CH₃), 1.78 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 176.44, 165.57, 165.55, 164.44, 137.47, 136.61, 134.11, 129.46, 129.07, 128.99, 126.23, 123.96, 106.68, 60.53, 29.90, 15.46 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₁₉H₁₇ClN₂O₂: 341.1057; found: 341.1055

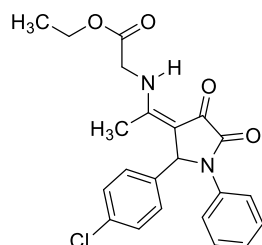


5-(4-Chlorophenyl)-4-(1-benzylamino)ethylidene-1-phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10cc):

4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-phenyl-3-pyrrolin-2-one (**4c**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.153 mmol), benzylamine (**9c**, 0.066 mL, 4.0 equiv, 0.612 mmol), and ethanol (0.34 mL) was

stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 8 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.1) affording **10cc** (49.7 mg, 79% yield) as an off white solid. m.p. 248-251 °C.

¹H NMR (600 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.70 (tbr, ³J(H,H) = 3.03 Hz, 1H; N–H), 7.36 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.18 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.62 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.34 (d, ³J(H,H) = 7.53 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.30 – 7.24 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 7.19 – 7.09 (m, 7H; Ar-H), 5.71 (s, 1H), 4.48 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.25 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.86 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 4.36 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.25 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 15.87 Hz, 1H; CH₂), 1.80 ppm (s, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (150 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.34, 164.28, 164.10, 137.37, 136.54, 136.10, 134.24, 129.40, 129.21, 129.16, 129.05, 128.17, 126.86, 126.48, 124.04, 107.02, 60.84, 47.25, 15.70 ppm. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) *m/z* [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₅H₂₁ClN₂O₂: 417.1370; found: 417.1365



5-(4-Chlorophenyl)-4-[1-((ethoxycarbonylmethyl)amino)]ethylidene-1-

phenylpyrrolidine-2,3-dione (10cd): 4-acetyl-3-hydroxy-5-(4-chlorophenyl)-1-phenyl-3-pyrrolidin-2-one (**4c**, 50.0 mg, 1.0 equiv, 0.153 mmol), glycine ethyl ester hydrochloride (**9d**, 86.0 mg, 4.0 equiv, 0.618 mmol) was stirred vigorously at 80 °C for 7 h. The crude product was purified by column chromatography (silica gel, eluent CH₂Cl₂/CH₃OH 5:0.06) affording **10cd** (50.4 mg, 80% yield) as a light yellow solid. m.p. 200-203 °C.

¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 11.33 (tbr, ³J(H,H) = 6.13 Hz, 1H; N–H), 7.38 (dd, ⁴J(H,H) = 1.45 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 8.47 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.26 (t, ³J(H,H) = 7.75 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.17 (d, ³J(H,H) = 8.45 Hz, 2H; Ar-H), 7.13 – 7.09 (m, 3H; Ar-H), 5.73 (s, 1H), 4.19 (q, ³J(H,H) = 7.12 Hz, 2H; O–CH₂), 3.95 (dd, ²J(H,H) = 6.37 Hz, ³J(H,H) = 18.21 Hz, 1H; N–CH₂), 3.74 (dd, ²J(H,H) =

5.62 Hz, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 18.22$ Hz, 1H; N-CH₂), 1.75 (s, 3H; CH₃), 1.26 ppm (t, $^3J(\text{H,H}) = 7.13$ Hz, 3H; CH₃). **¹³C NMR** (125 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 177.86, 167.77, 164.18, 163.83, 137.15, 136.42, 134.26, 129.49, 129.14, 129.05, 126.45, 124.05, 107.19, 66.22, 60.55, 15.82, 14.21. **HRMS** (ESI-TOF MS/MS) m/z [M + H]⁺ calcd for C₂₂H₂₁ClN₂O₄: 413.1268; found: 413.1268

2. Crystal structure determination of **10aa**

Single crystals of **10aa** suitable for X-ray diffraction were obtained by evaporating a solution of the compound in dichloromethane/*n*-hexane mixture at room temperature. X-ray intensity data were collected at 293(2)K on an Agilent SuperNova diffractometer, equipped with an Eos CCD detector, using Mo K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073$ Å). The images were interpreted and integrated with the CrysAlisPro and the implemented absorption correction was applied [1]. Using Olex2 [2], the structure was solved with the ShelXT [3] structure solution program using Intrinsic Phasing and refined with the ShelXL [4] refinement package using full-matrix least-squares minimization on F^2 . Non hydrogen atoms were anisotropically refined and the hydrogen atoms in the riding mode with isotropic temperature factors were fixed at 1.2 times U_{eq} of the parent atoms (1.5 for methyl groups). Hydrogen atom H15 was located from a difference electron density map and refined freely. Deposition number CCDC 2174310 contains the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data are provided free of charge by the joint Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre and Fachinformationszentrum Karlsruhe Access Structures service www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/structures.

References

1. *CrysAlis PRO*; Rigaku Oxford Diffraction, Yarnton, UK, 2018
2. Dolomanov, O. V.; Bourhis, L. J.; Gildea, R. J.; Howard, J. A. K.; Puschmann, H. *J. Appl. Cryst.* **2009**, *42*, 339-341. doi: 10.1107/S0021889808042726
3. Sheldrick, G. M. *Acta Cryst. A* **2015**, *71*, 3-8. doi: 10.1107/S2053273314026370
4. Sheldrick, G. M. *Acta Cryst. C*, **2015**, *71*, 3-8. doi: 10.1107/S2053229614024218

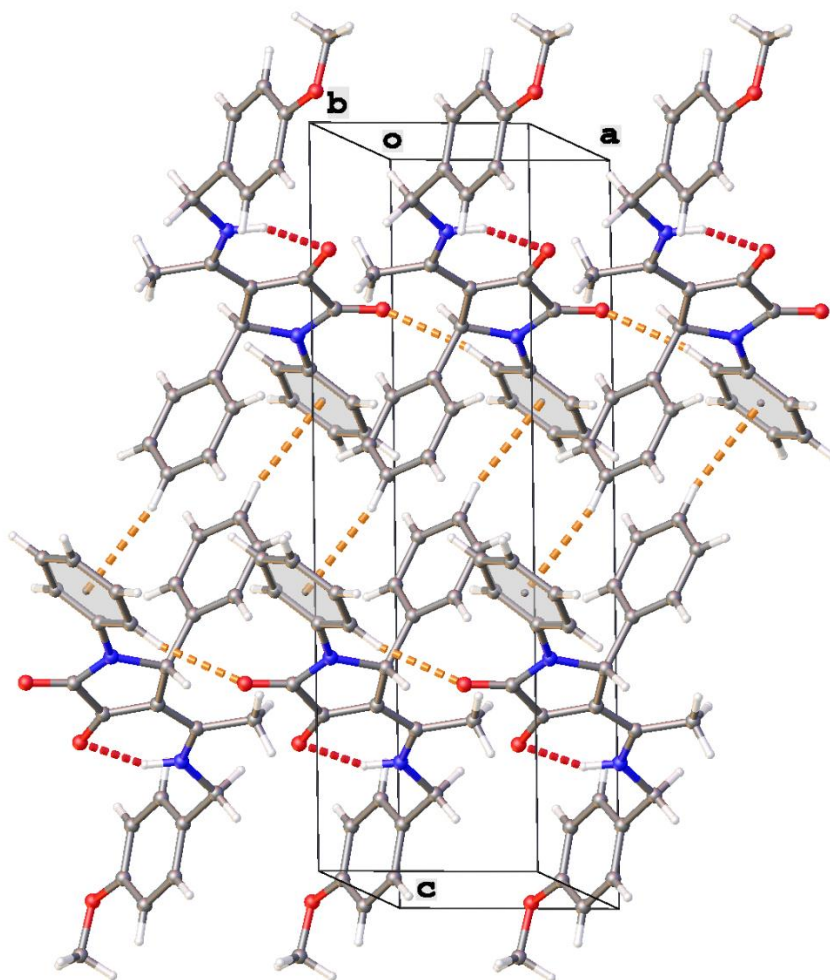
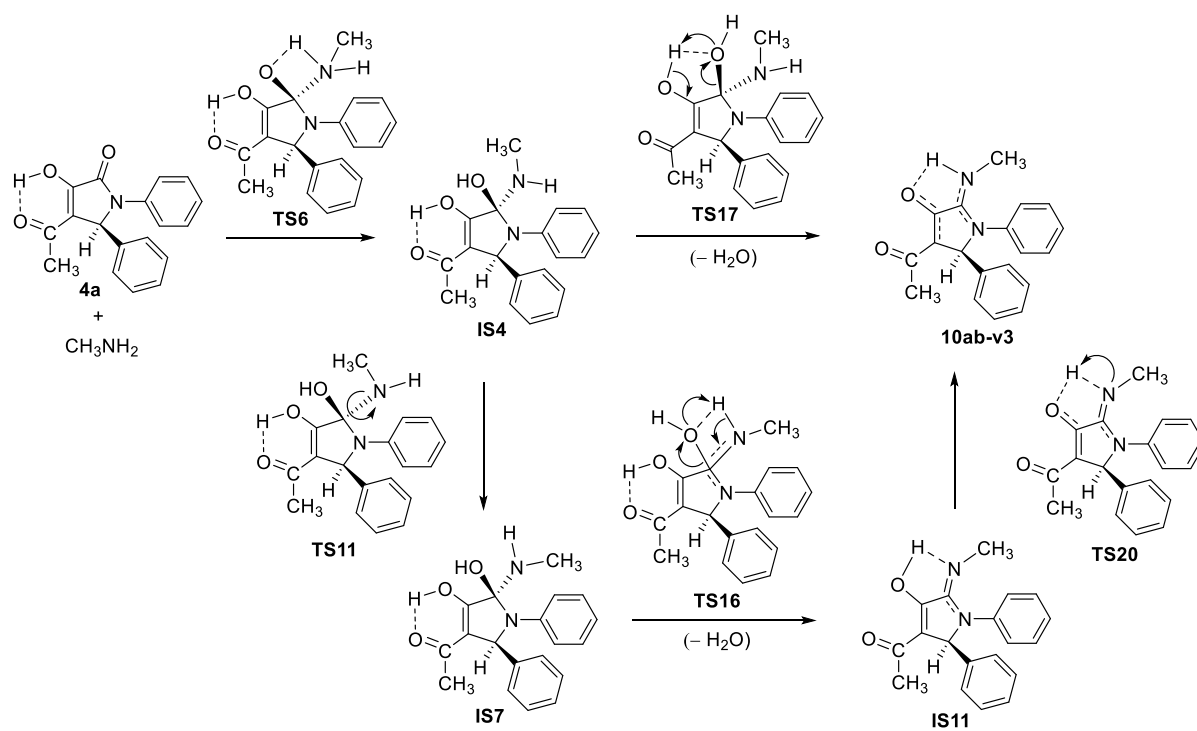


Figure S1. Partial view of the crystal packing of **10aa** showing the chain formation along the *a* direction by C–H $\cdots$ O hydrogen bonds. Neighboring chains connect by C–H $\cdots$ π interactions.

Table S1. Crystal data and structure refinement for **10aa**

Empirical formula	C ₂₆ H ₂₄ N ₂ O ₃
Formula weight	412.47
Temperature/K	293(2)
Crystal system	triclinic
Space group	P-1
<i>a</i> /Å	6.5031(3)
<i>b</i> /Å	9.1229(3)
<i>c</i> /Å	19.5749(9)
α /°	81.426(3)

$\beta/^\circ$	81.347(4)
$\gamma/^\circ$	71.352(4)
Volume/ $\text{\AA}^3$	1081.48(8)
Z	2
$\rho_{\text{calc}}/\text{g}/\text{cm}^3$	1.267
μ/mm^{-1}	0.083
F(000)	436.0
Crystal size/ mm^3	$0.5 \times 0.25 \times 0.25$
Radiation	MoK α ($\lambda = 0.71073$)
2 θ range for data collection/ $^\circ$	4.978 to 52.742
Index ranges	$-8 \leq h \leq 8$, $-11 \leq k \leq 11$, $-24 \leq l \leq 24$
Reflections collected	21854
Independent reflections	4424 [$R_{\text{int}} = 0.0486$, $R_{\text{sigma}} = 0.0347$]
Data/restraints/parameters	4424/0/286
Goodness-of-fit on F^2	1.094
Final R indexes [$I \geq 2\sigma(I)$]	$R_1 = 0.0697$, $wR_2 = 0.1731$
Final R indexes [all data]	$R_1 = 0.0898$, $wR_2 = 0.1871$
Largest diff. peak/hole / $e \text{ \AA}^{-3}$	0.23/-0.23



Scheme S1: Reaction pathways from **4a** to **10ab-v3** via **IS4**

Table S2. The relative energies at B3LYP/6-31+G(d,p) (kcal·mol⁻¹)

	ΔE		ΔE		ΔE		ΔE
4a-1	0.17	4a'-1	0.00	10ab-v2-1	4.09	IS5-1	0.00
4a-2	0.00	4a'-2	6.88	10ab-v2-2	6.21	IS5-2	5.42
4a-3	0.17	4a'-3	6.88	10ab-v2-3	6.64	IS5-3	1.53
4a-4	6.27	4a'-4	0.00	10ab-v2-4	0.00	IS5-4	4.51
4a-5	7.92	10ab-1	10.12	10ab-v2-5	1.19	IS5-5	0.69
4a-6	1.30	10ab-2	0.00	10ab-v2-6	3.73	IS5-6	1.33
4a-7	5.09	10ab-3	1.25	10ab-v2-7	6.72	IS5-7	1.47
4a-8	7.92	10ab-4	10.12	10ab-v2-8	6.64	IS5-8	1.66

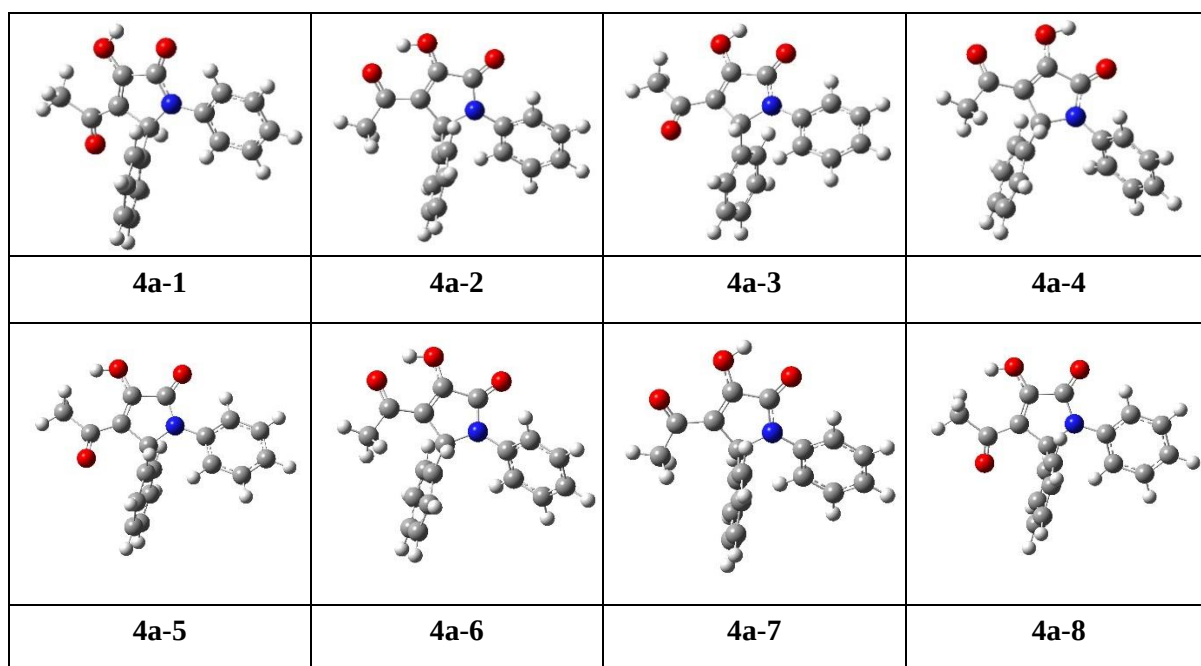


Figure S2. The isomers of **4a**

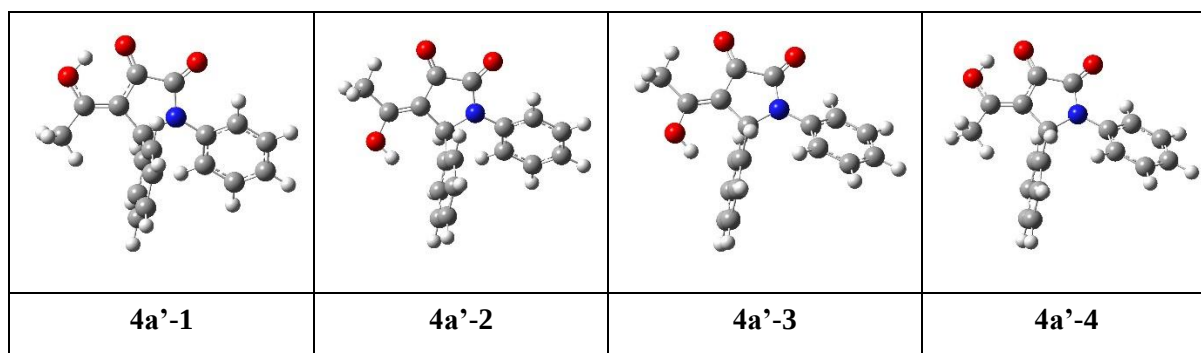


Figure S3. The isomers of **4a'**

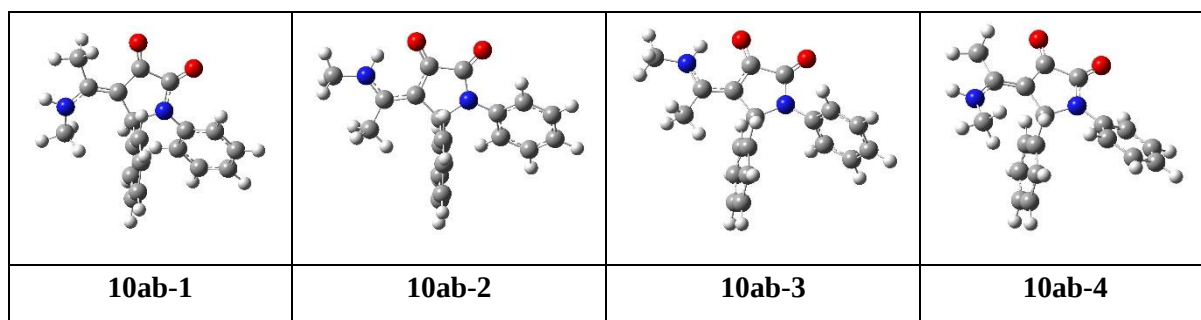


Figure S4. The isomers of **10ab**

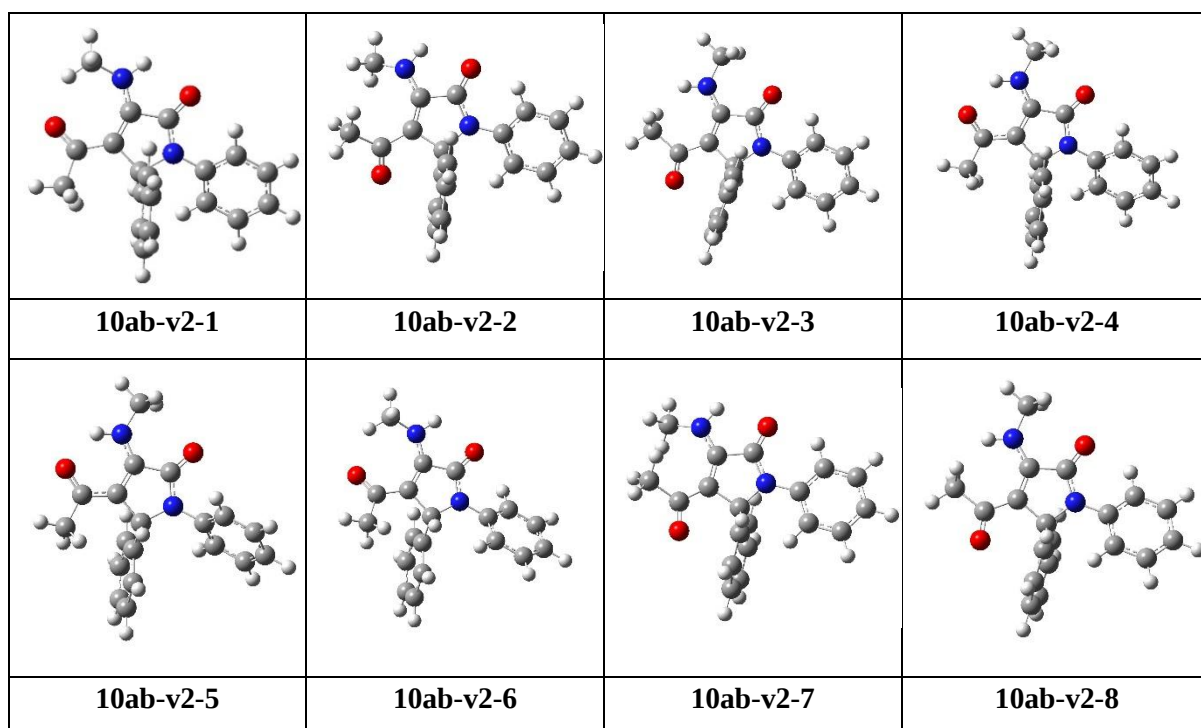


Figure S5. The isomers of **10ab-v2**

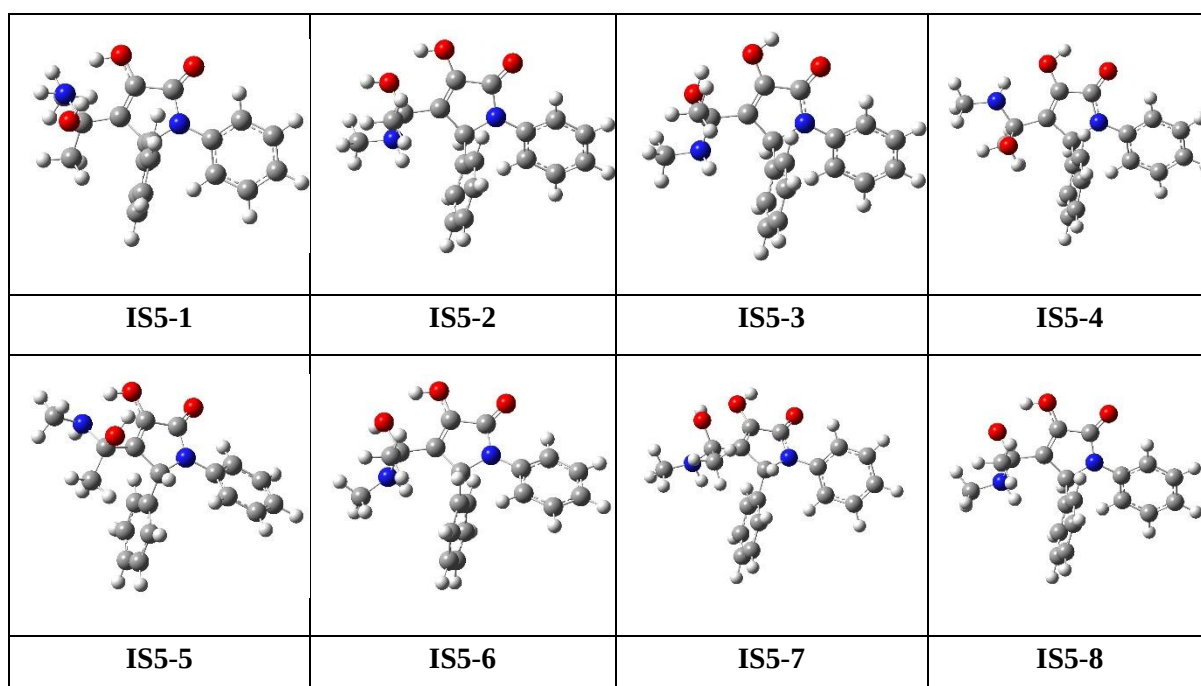
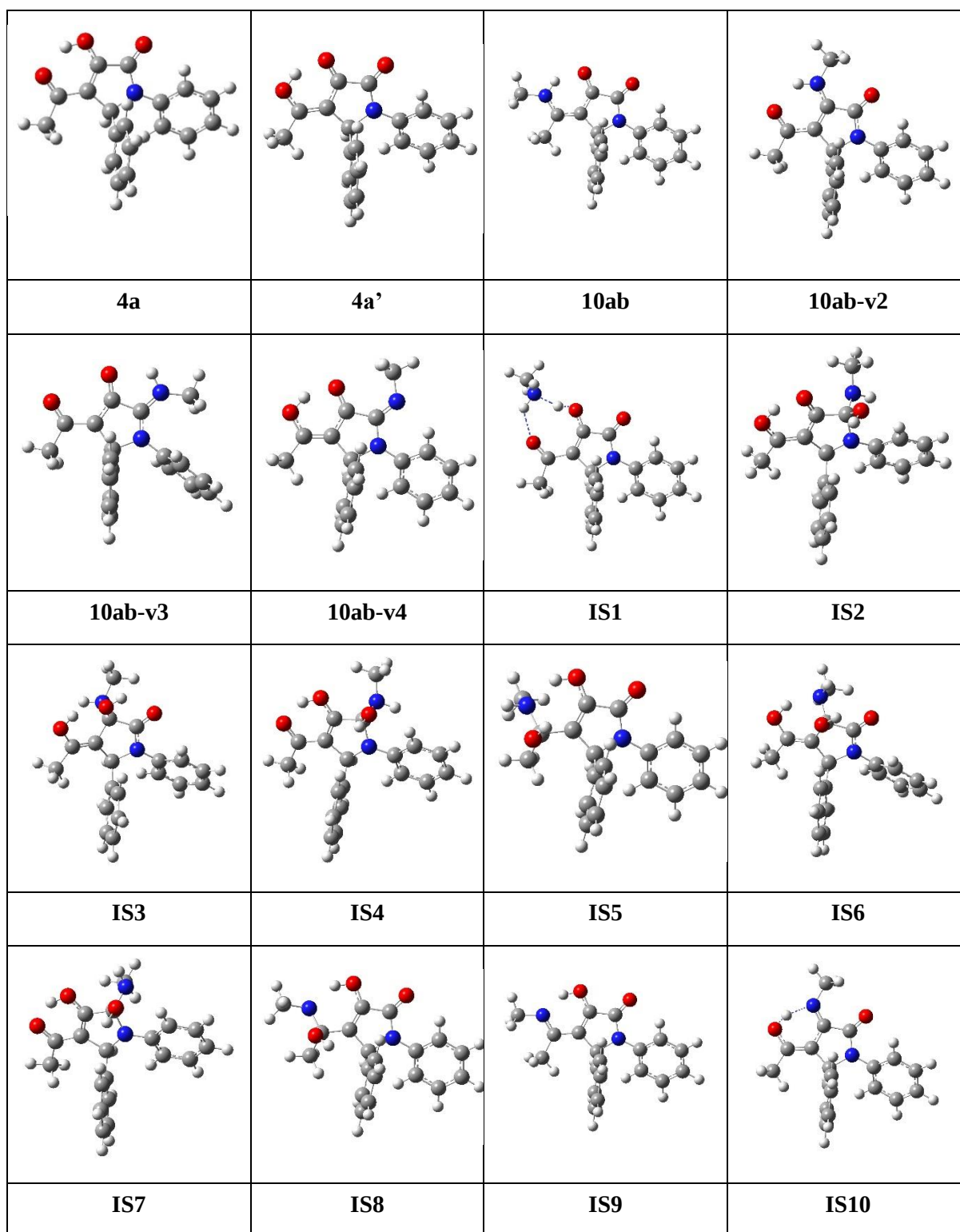
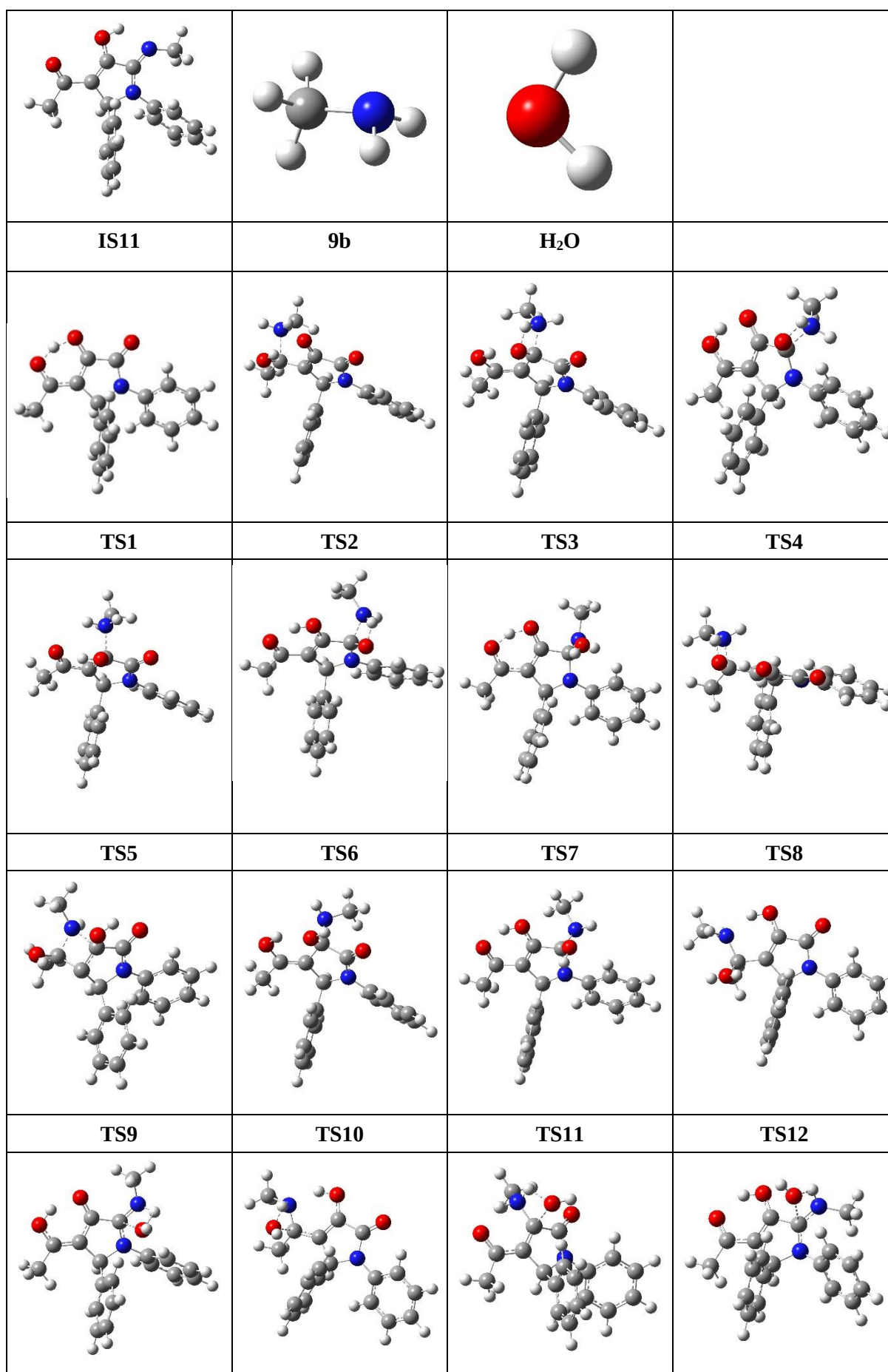


Figure S6. The isomers of **IS5**





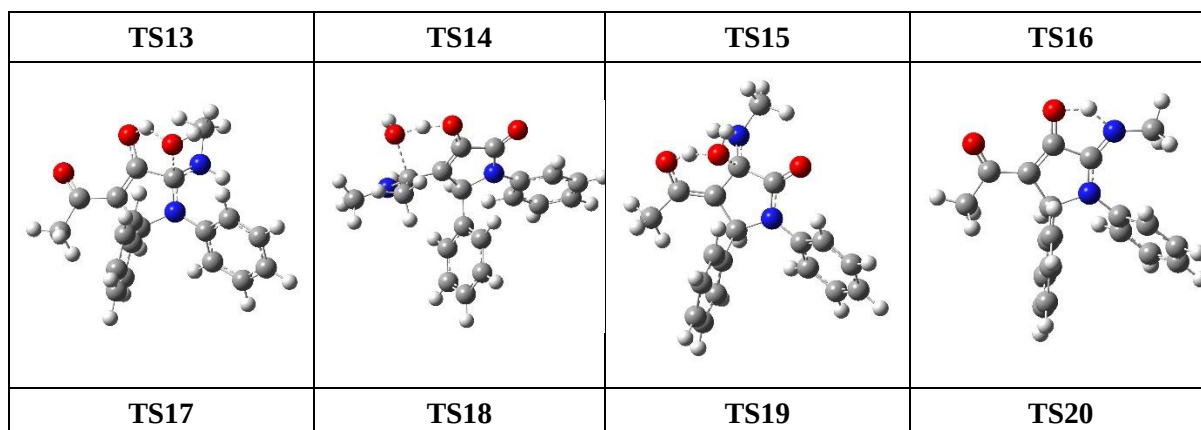
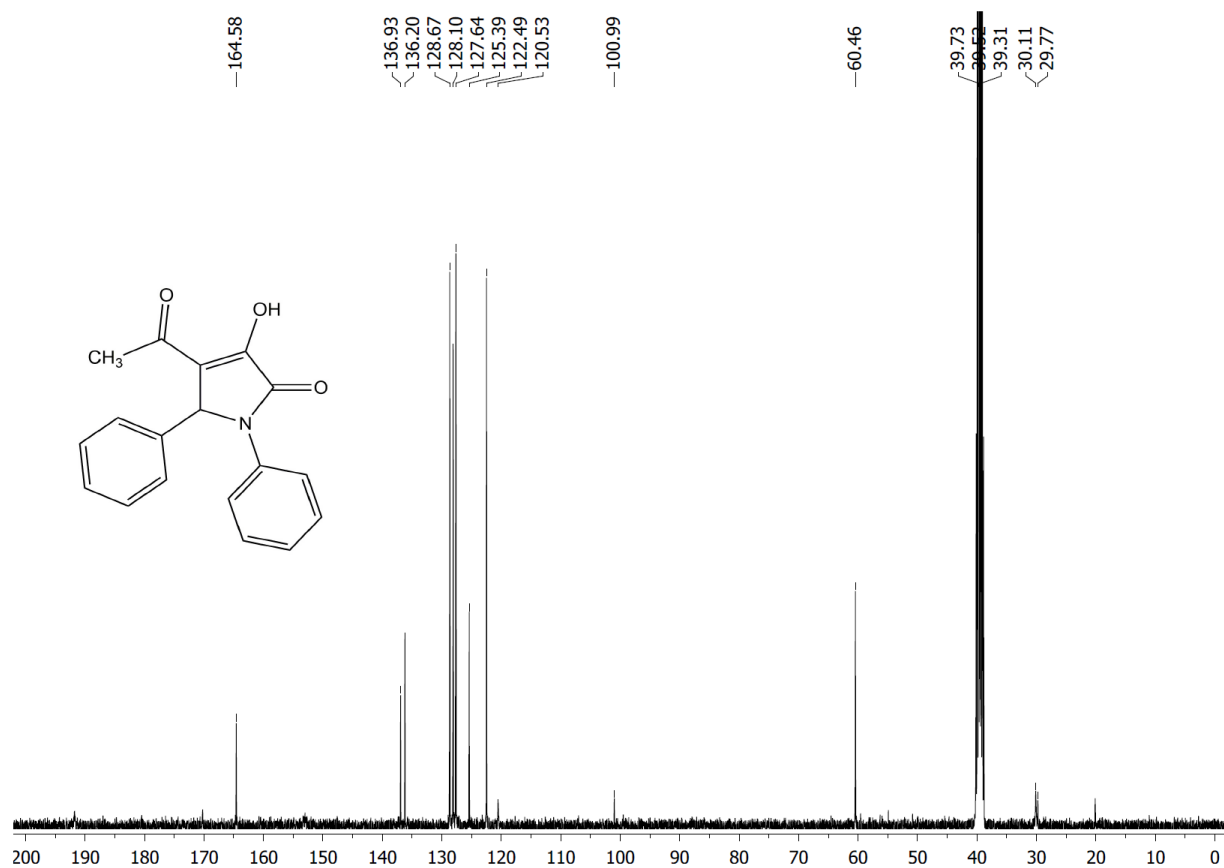
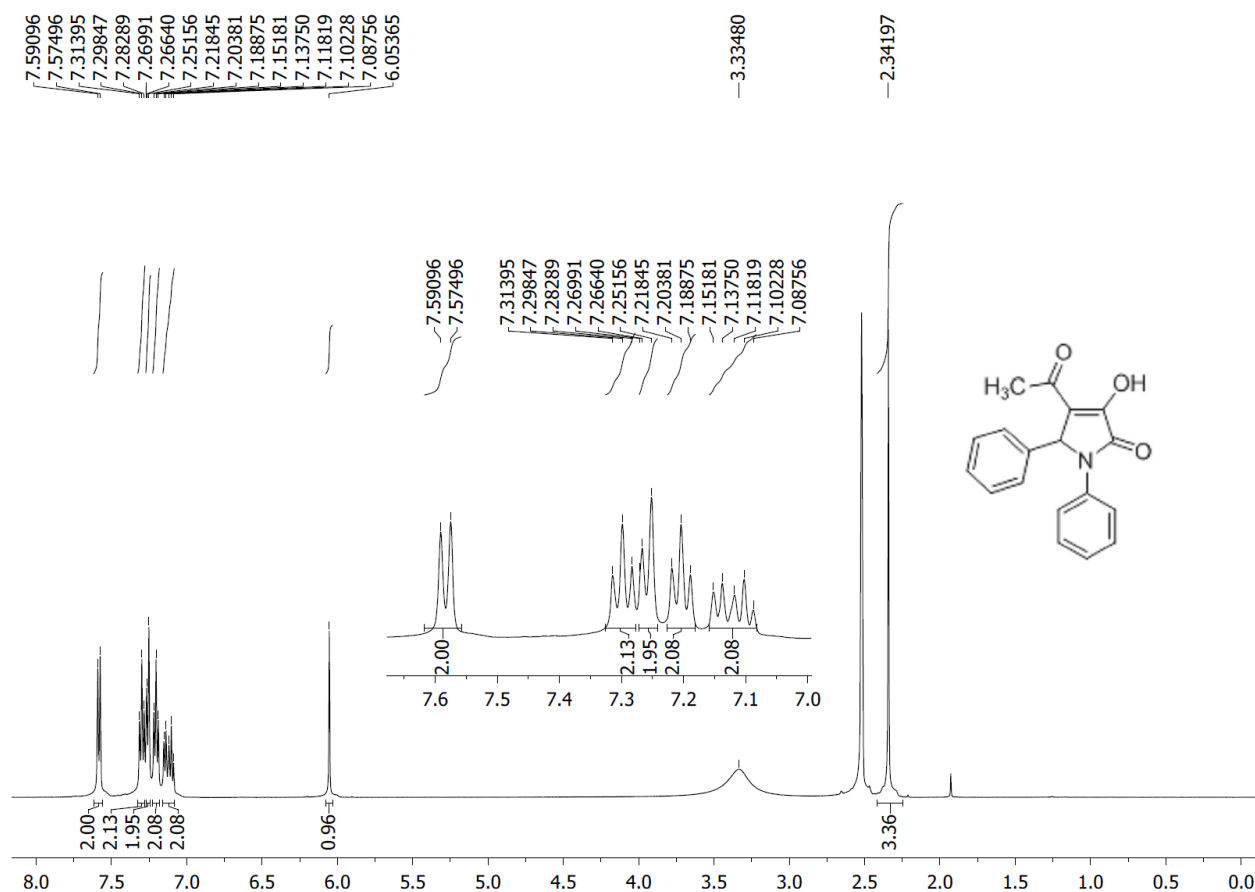
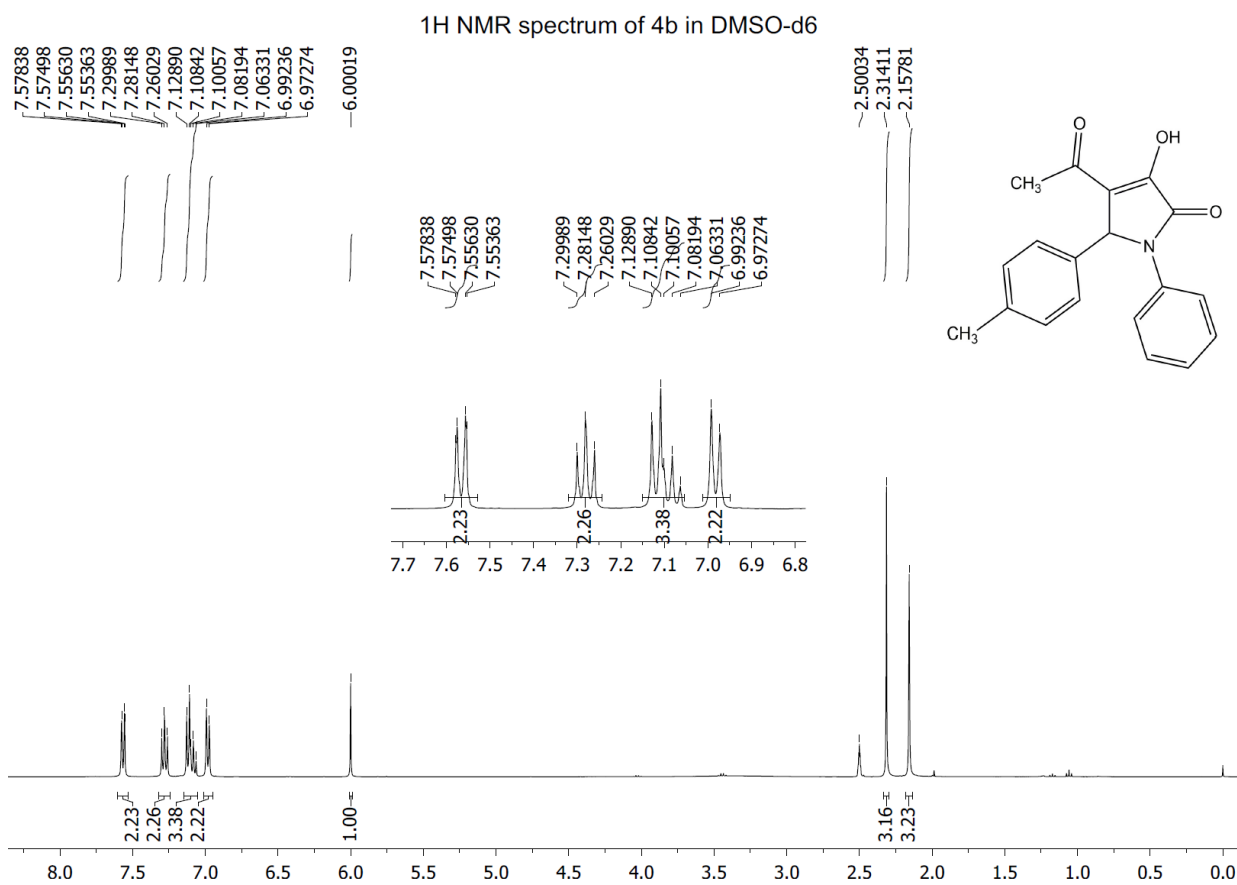
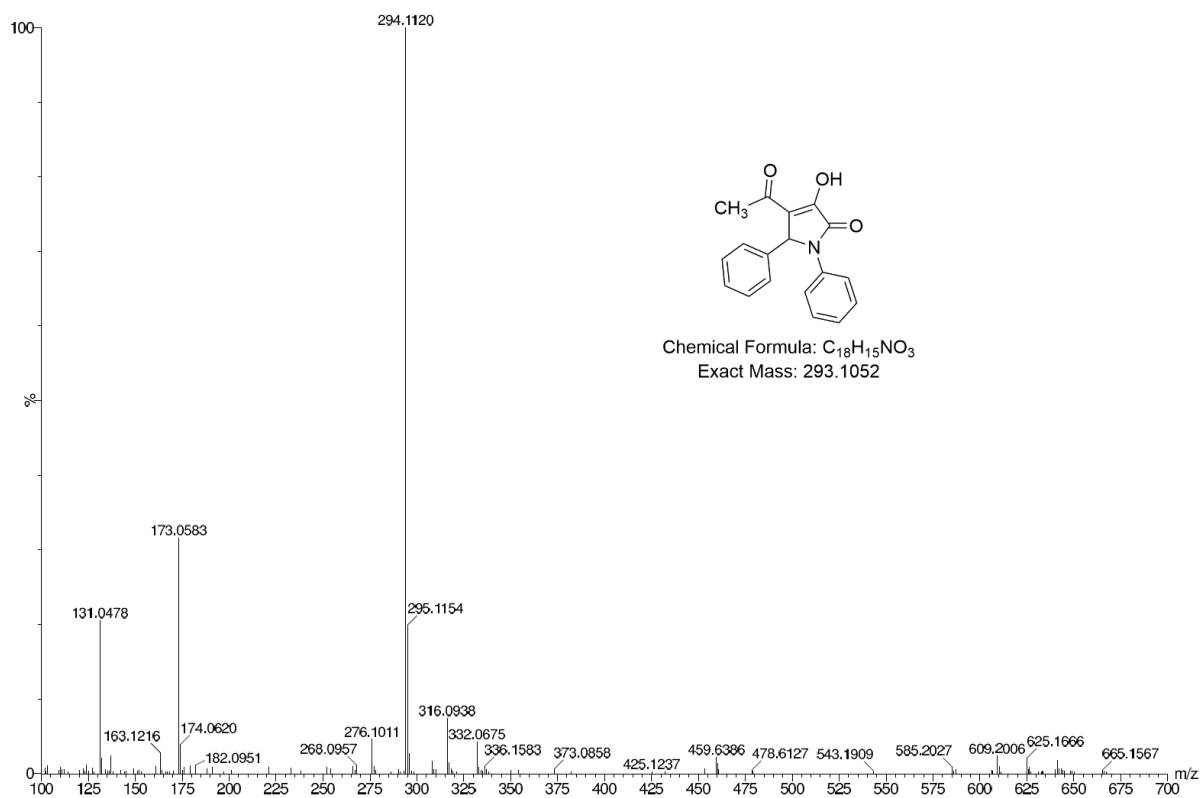


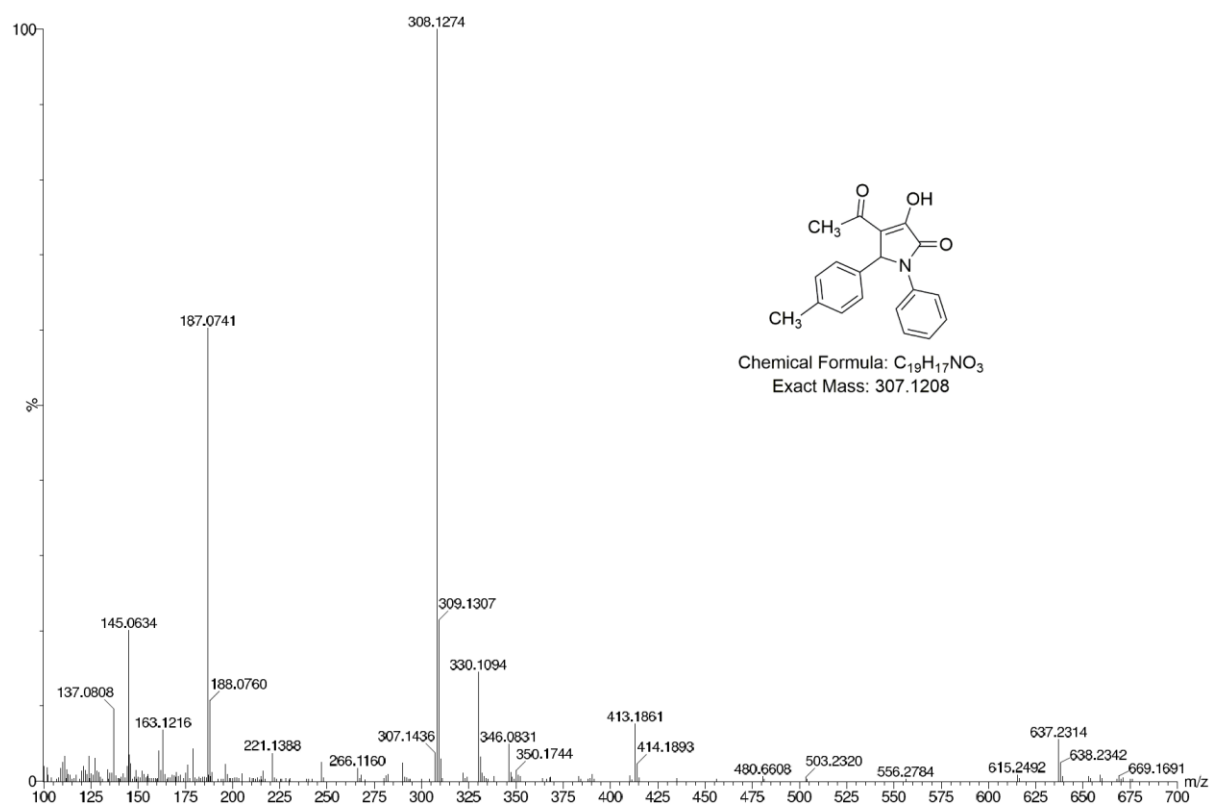
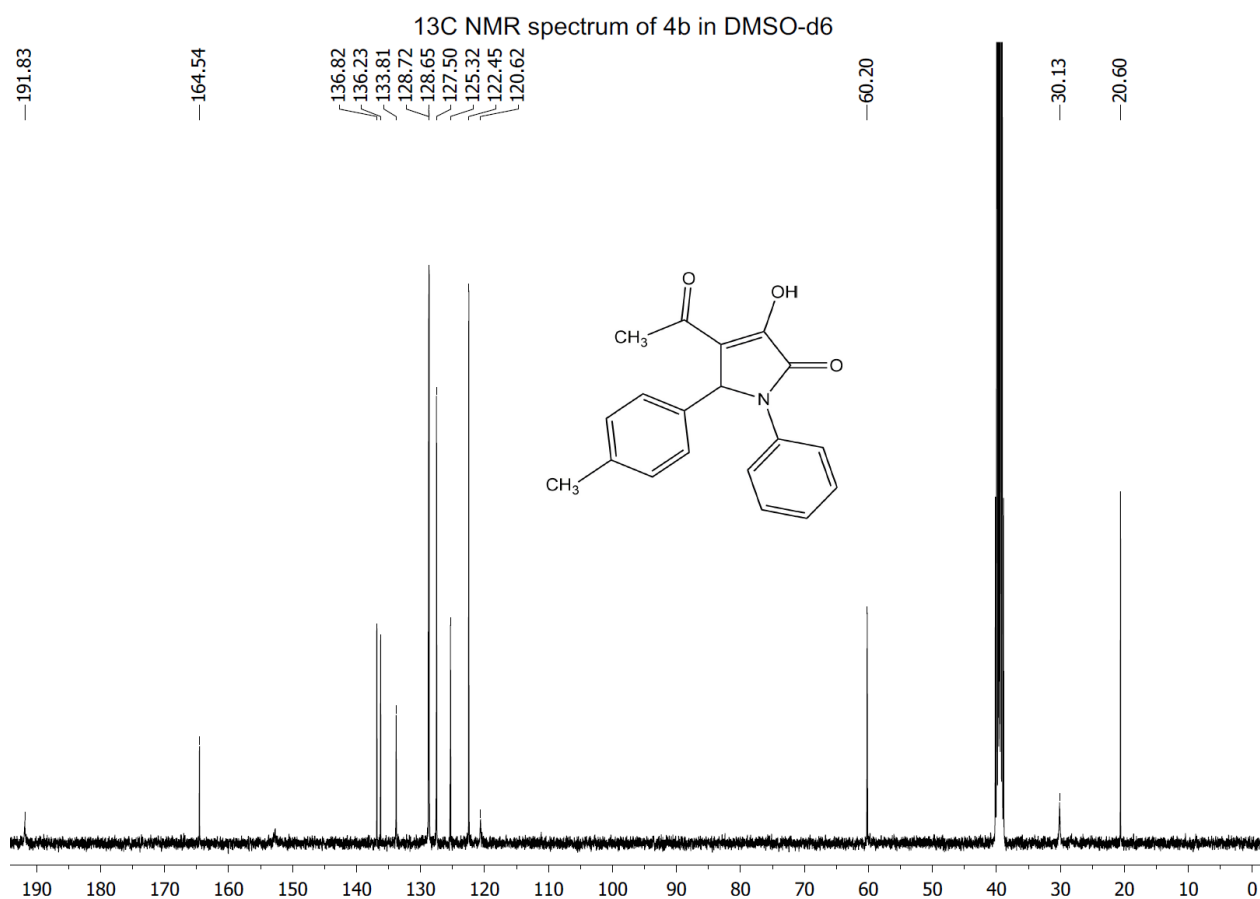
Figure S7. The structures of reactants, intermediates, transitional states, products shown in PES

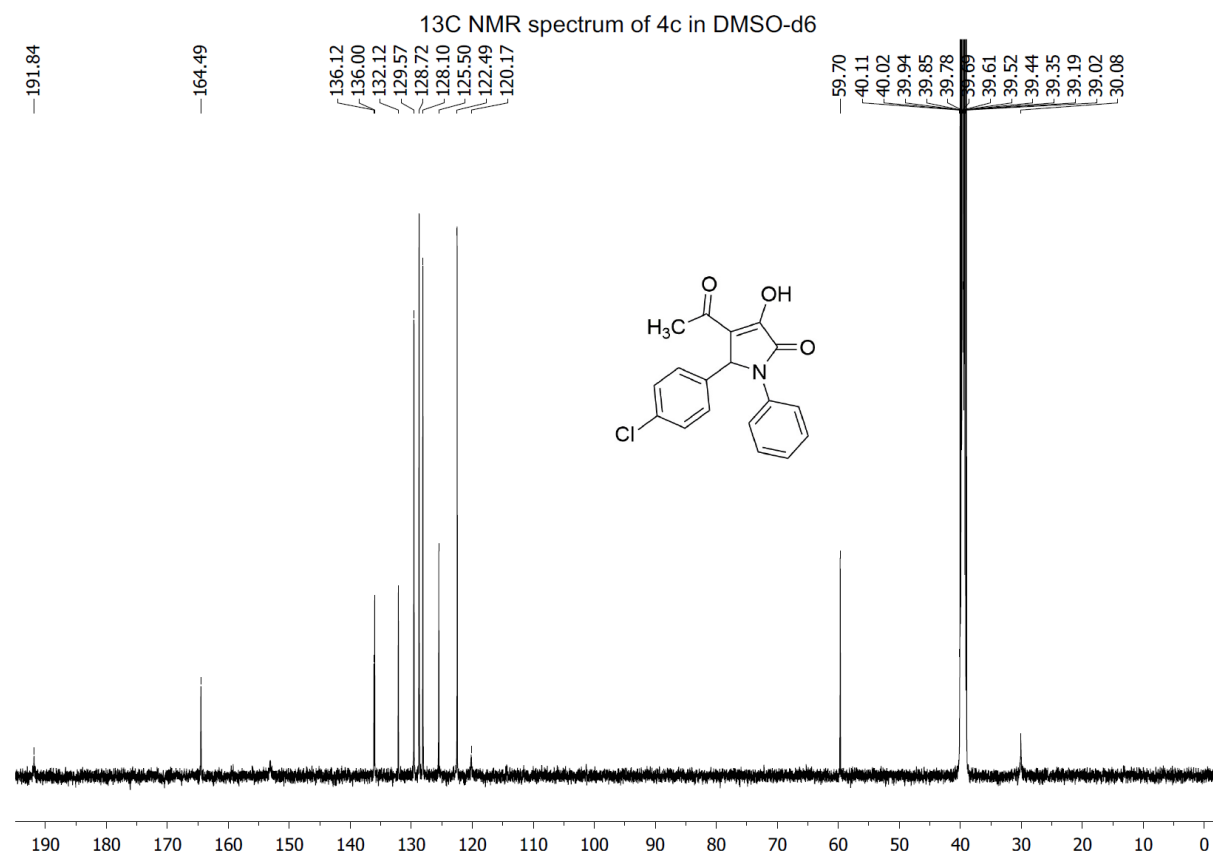
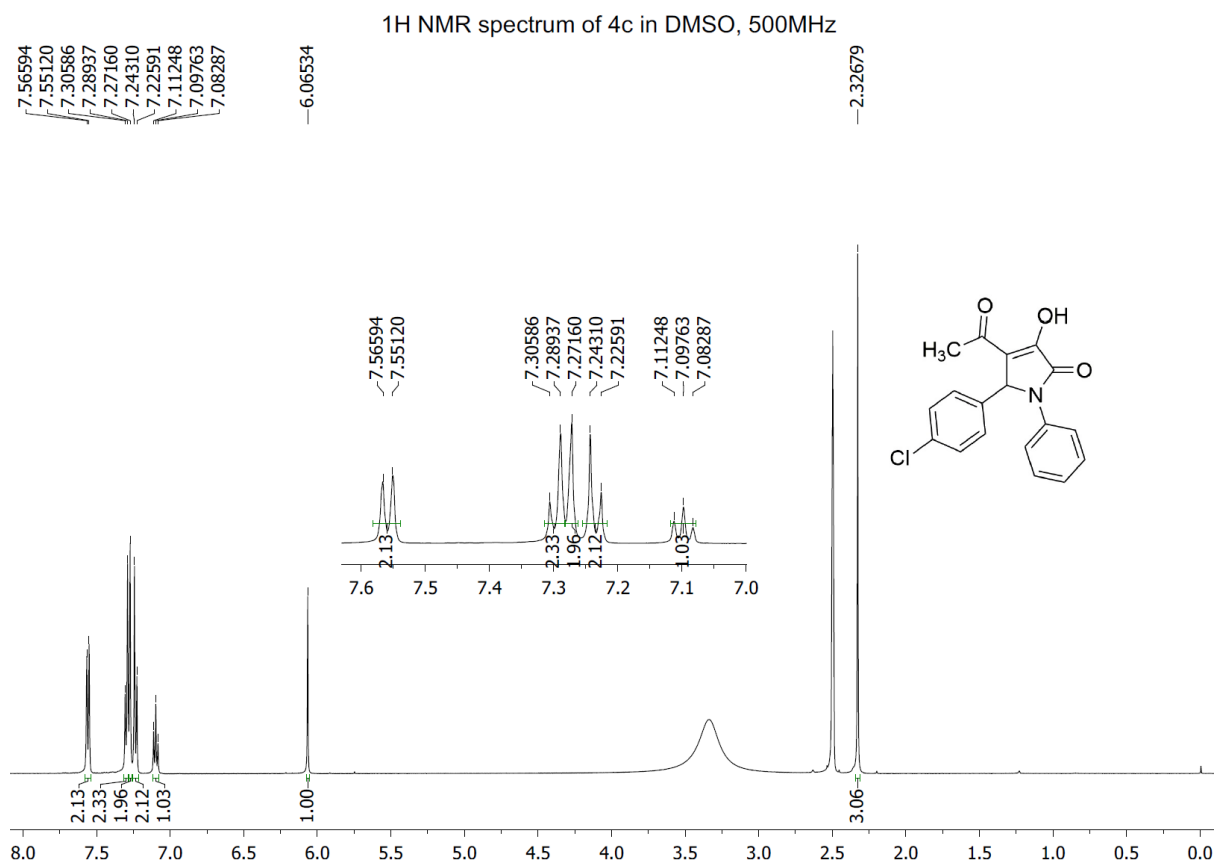
Table S3. The thermodynamic parameters of selected pathways (1), (2), (3) and (4) in chloroform (CHCl_3) and DMSO ($\text{kcal}\cdot\text{mol}^{-1}$) (B3LYP/6-311++g(2d,2p)//B3LYP/6-31+G(d,p))

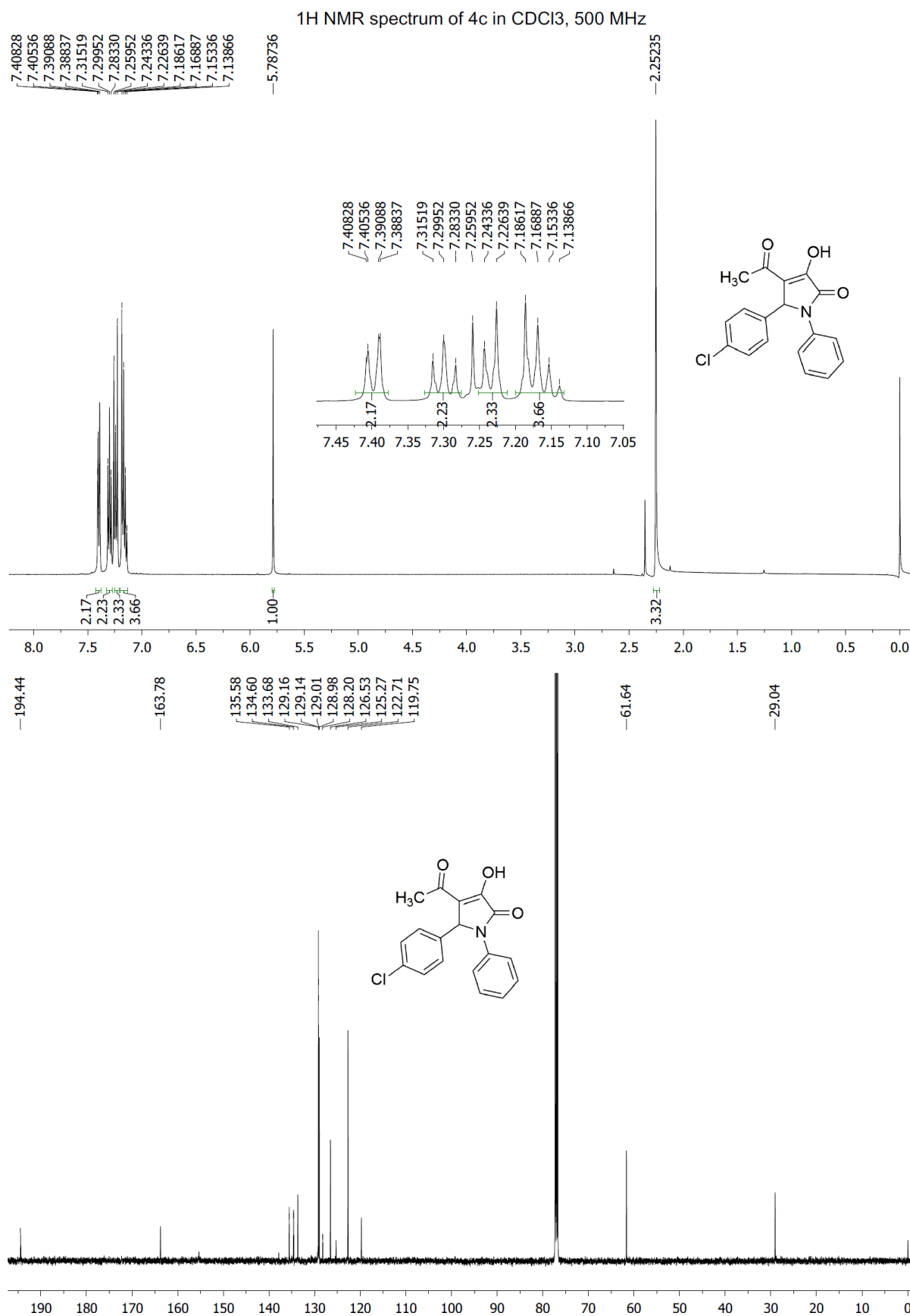
	Stage	CHCl_3					DMSO					Note
		ΔE	ΔG	$\Delta E^\#$	$\Delta G^\#$	i-Freq	ΔE	ΔG	$\Delta E^\#$	$\Delta G^\#$	i-Freq	
1	$4a' \rightarrow 4a$	-0.6	-0.4	1.0	1.5	-1167.79	-0.3	-0.1	1.0	1.2	-1170.31	TS1
2	$4a' \rightarrow \text{IS5}$	23.4	15.8	16.9	30.2	-140.24	25.8	18.8	14.0	26.7	-243.13	TS2
3	$4a' \rightarrow \text{IS3}$	14.1	25.9	38.3	51.2	-1639.37	15.4	27.2	38.4	51.0	-1674.23	TS3
4	$4a \rightarrow \text{IS1}$	-6.1	4.0				-7.5	2.3				
5	$4a \rightarrow \text{IS3}$	13.5	25.5	20.3	32.4	-148.19	15.1	27.1	19.3	31.2	-207.29	TS5
6	$\text{IS1} \rightarrow \text{IS5}$	16.7	19.4	42.3	44.9	-1611.97	18.0	21.0	42.4	45.3	-1653.21	TS8
7	$\text{IS3} \rightarrow \text{IS6}$	-2.4	-1.8	6.3	7.2	-136.62	-2.9	-2.5	5.9	6.5	-135.72	TS10
8	$\text{IS5} \rightarrow \text{IS8}$	1.2	1.2	1.4	2.2	-68.90	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.8	-64.09	TS12
9	$\text{IS5} \rightarrow \text{IS9}$	-10.7	-21.4	35.9	34.9	-465.86	-11.4	-22.2	34.4	33.7	-252.04	TS14
10	$\text{IS6} \rightarrow \text{IS10}$	-11.1	-22.3	26.0	25.5	-273.95	-11.7	-22.7	24.3	23.5	-250.62	TS15
11	$\text{IS8} \rightarrow 10\text{ab}$	-20.6	-31.2	7.5	7.1	-822.59	-22.2	-32.9	6.0	5.6	-730.72	TS18
12	$\text{IS3} \rightarrow 10\text{ab-v2}$	-23.4	-33.8	14.2	14.1	-998.02	-24.8	-35.4	13.3	13.3	-794.97	TS19
13	$\text{IS9} \rightarrow 10\text{ab}$	-8.5	-8.7				-9.6	-9.7				
14	$\text{IS10} \rightarrow 10\text{ab-v2}$	-10.3	-10.3				-10.2	-10.2				

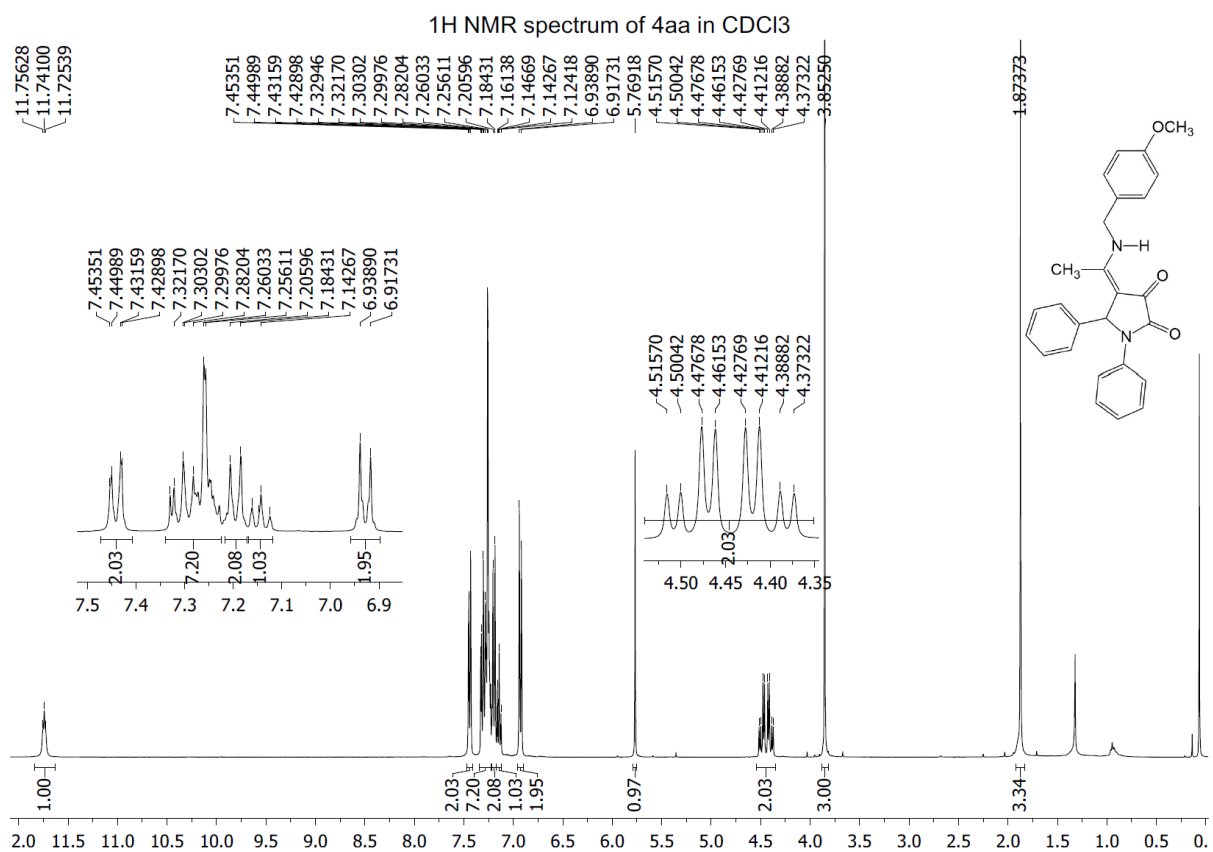
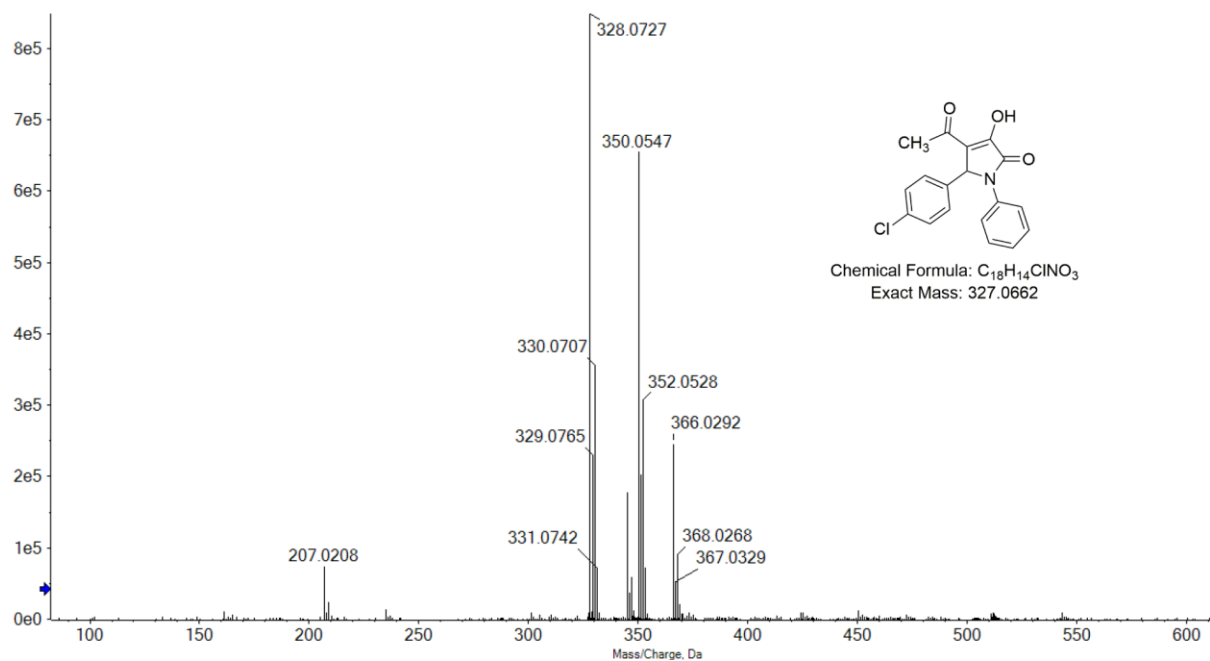


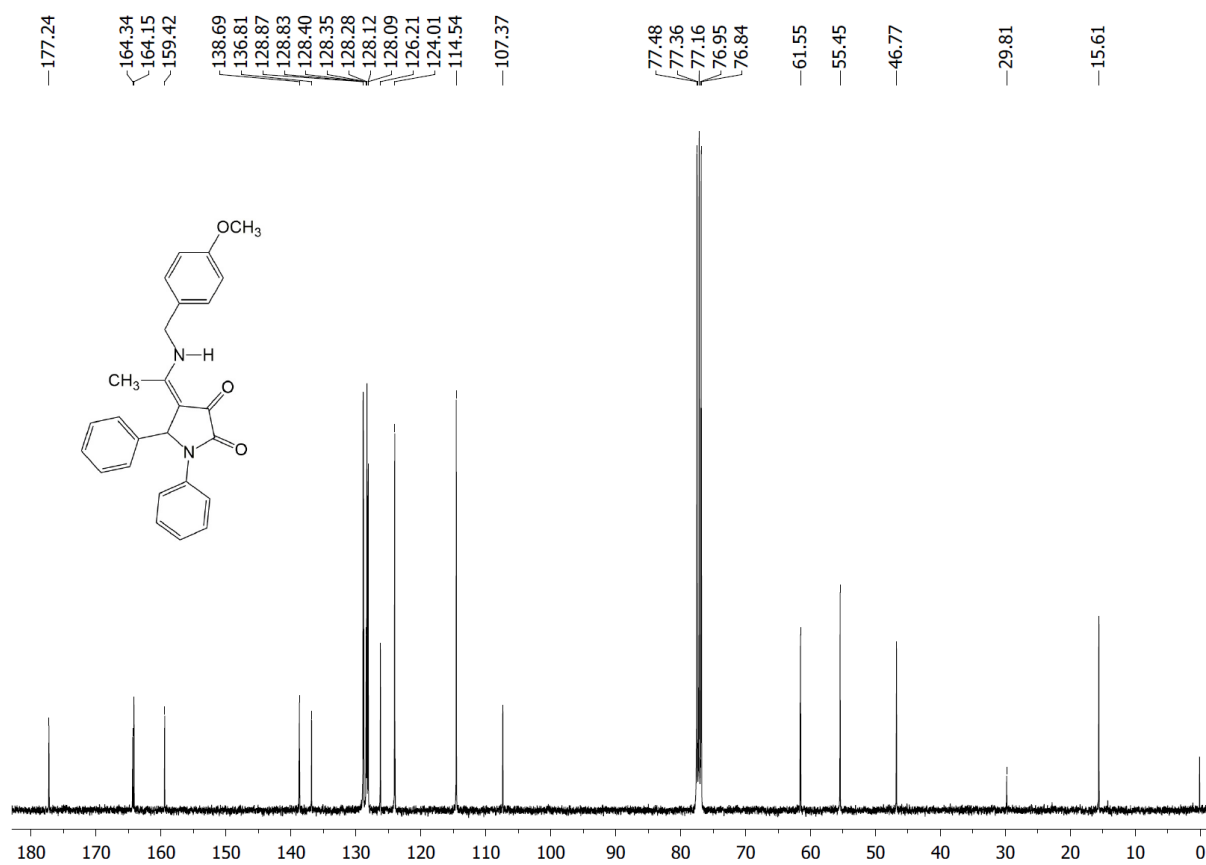




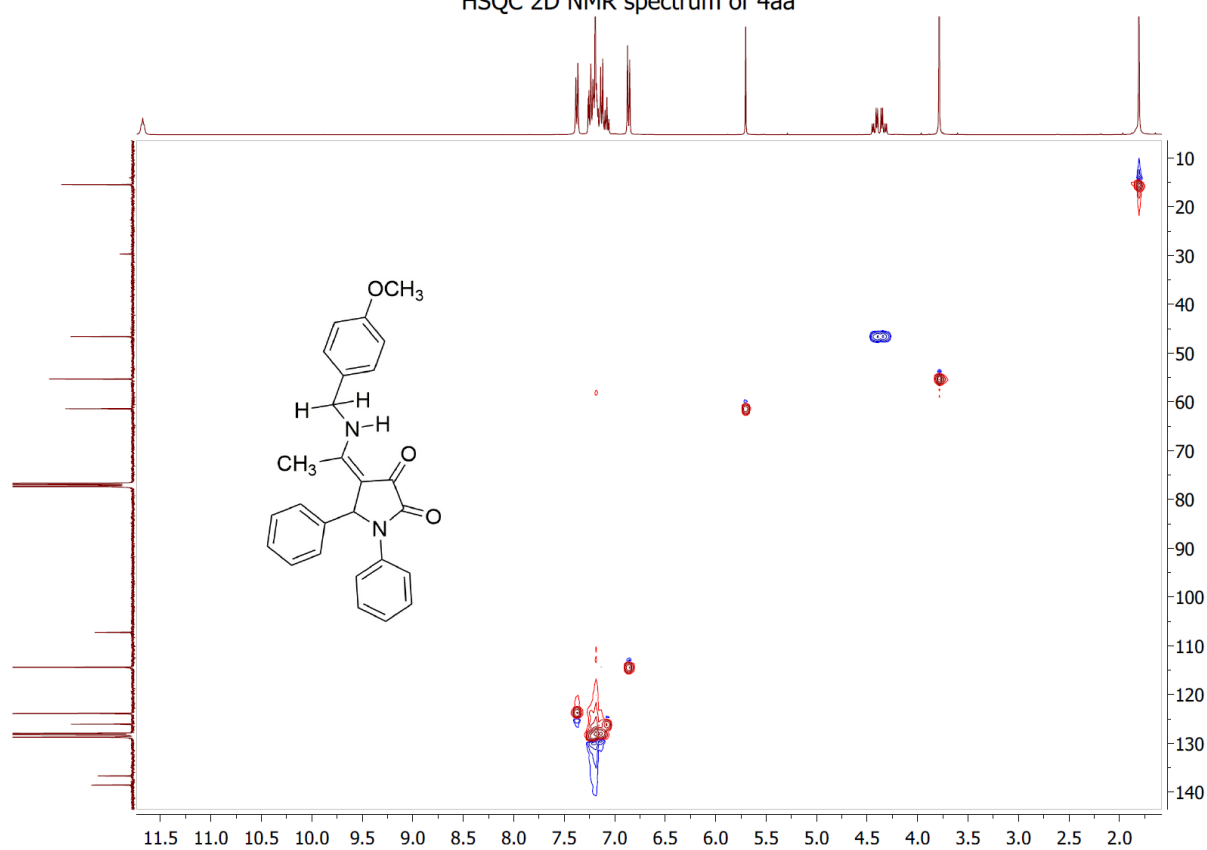


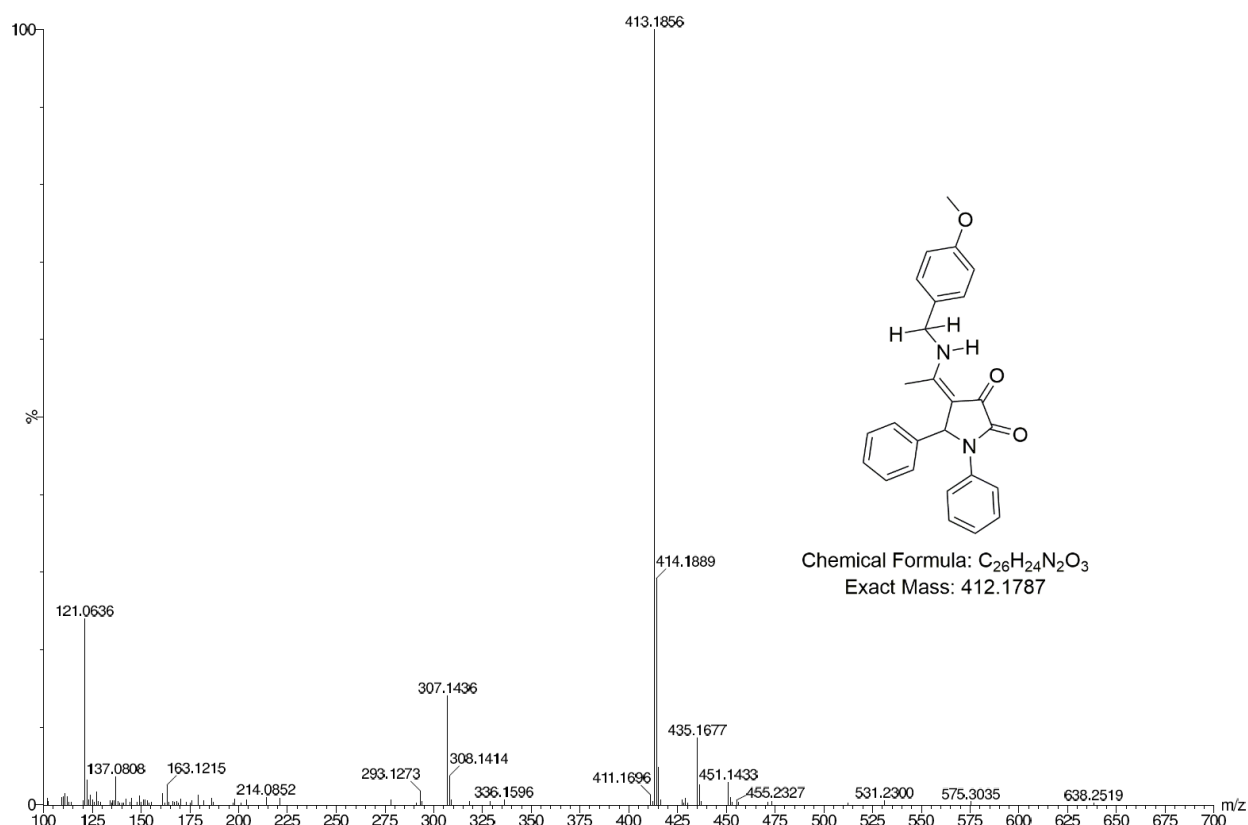
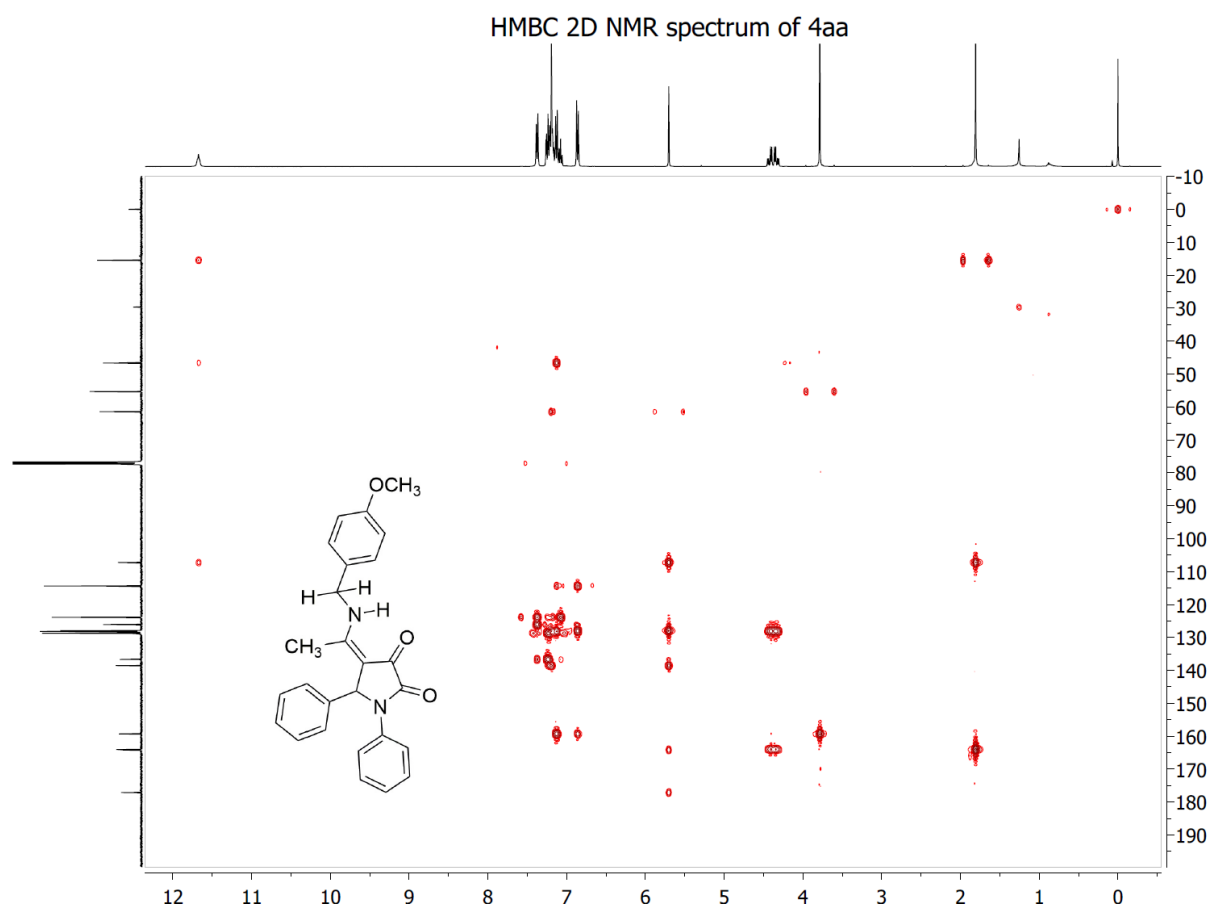


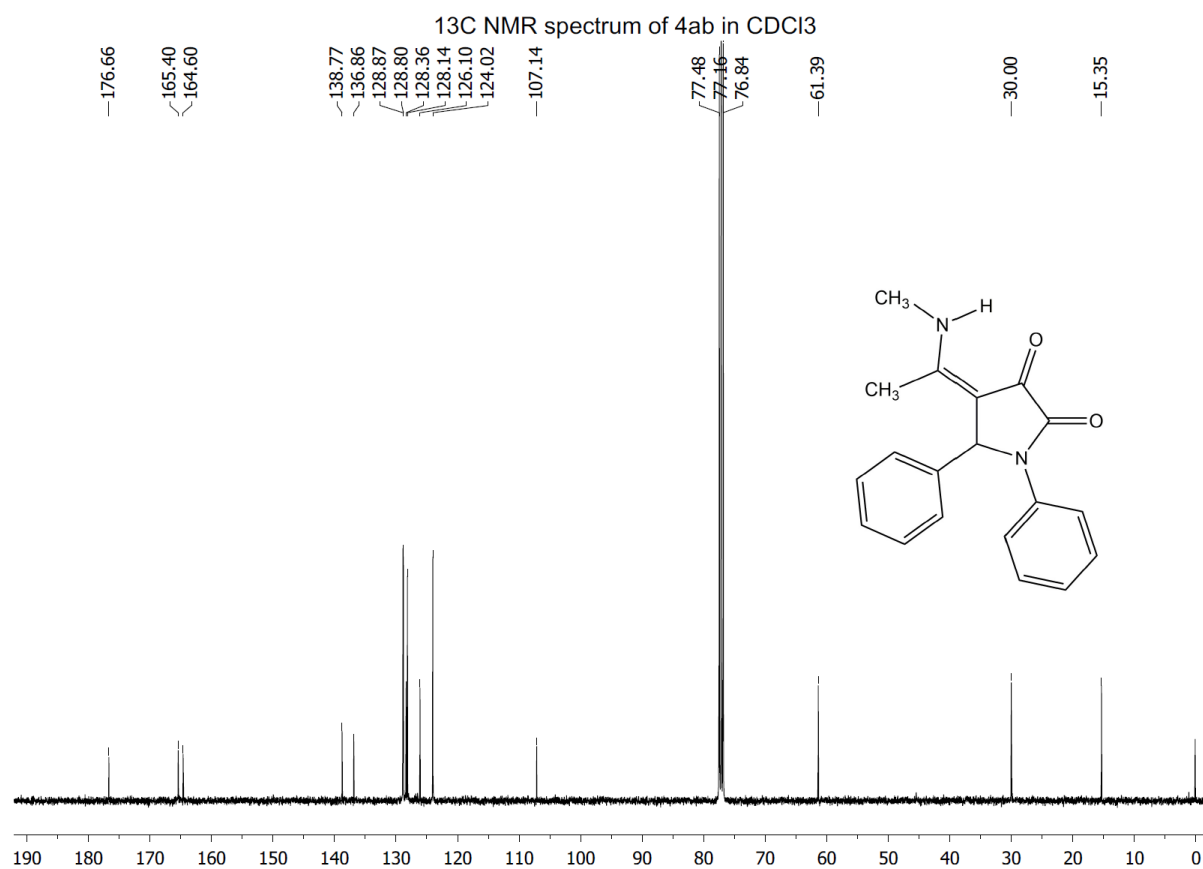
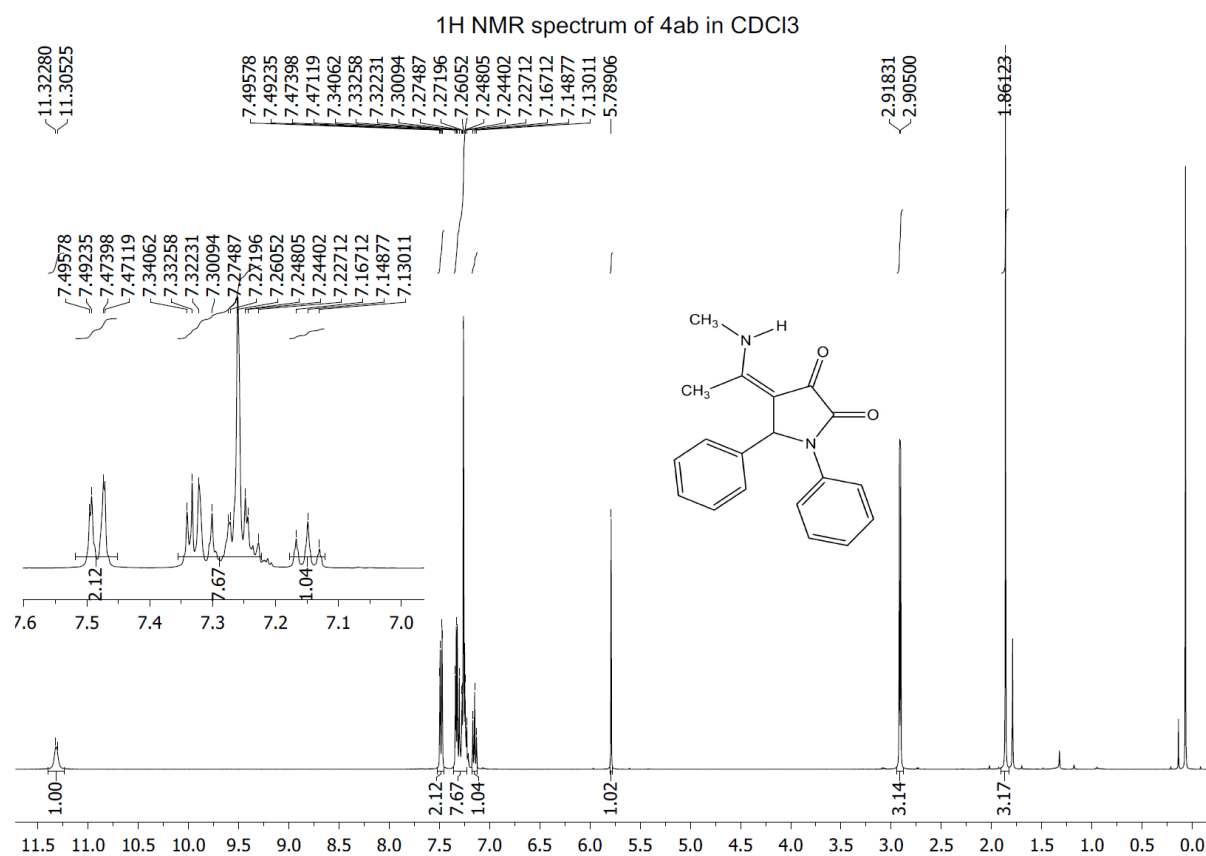


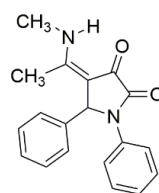
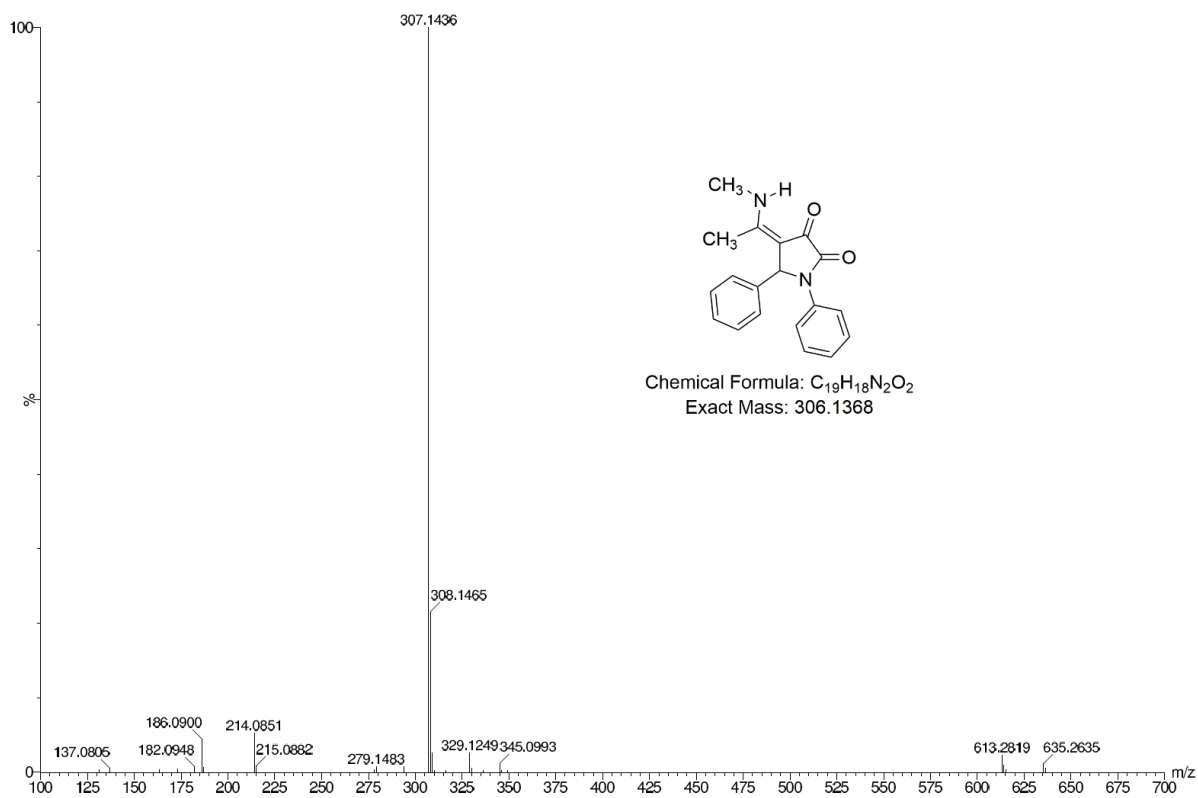


HSQC 2D NMR spectrum of 4aa



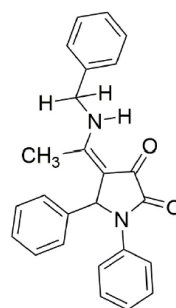
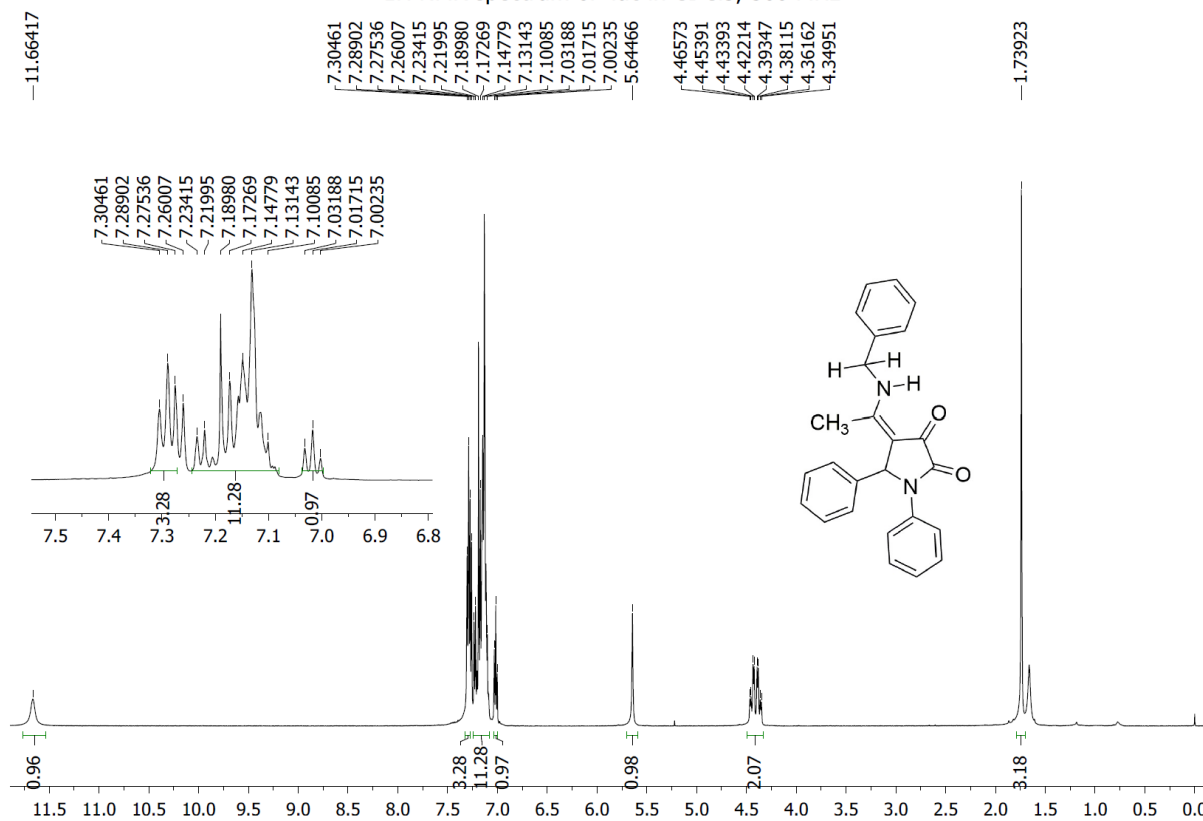


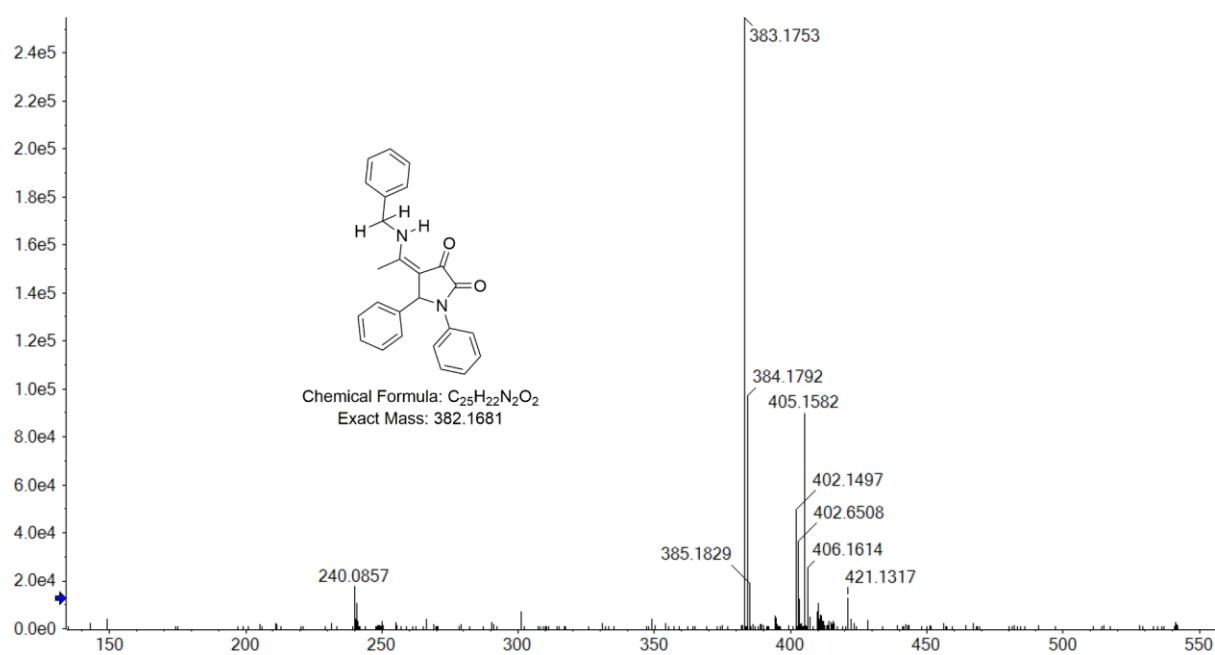
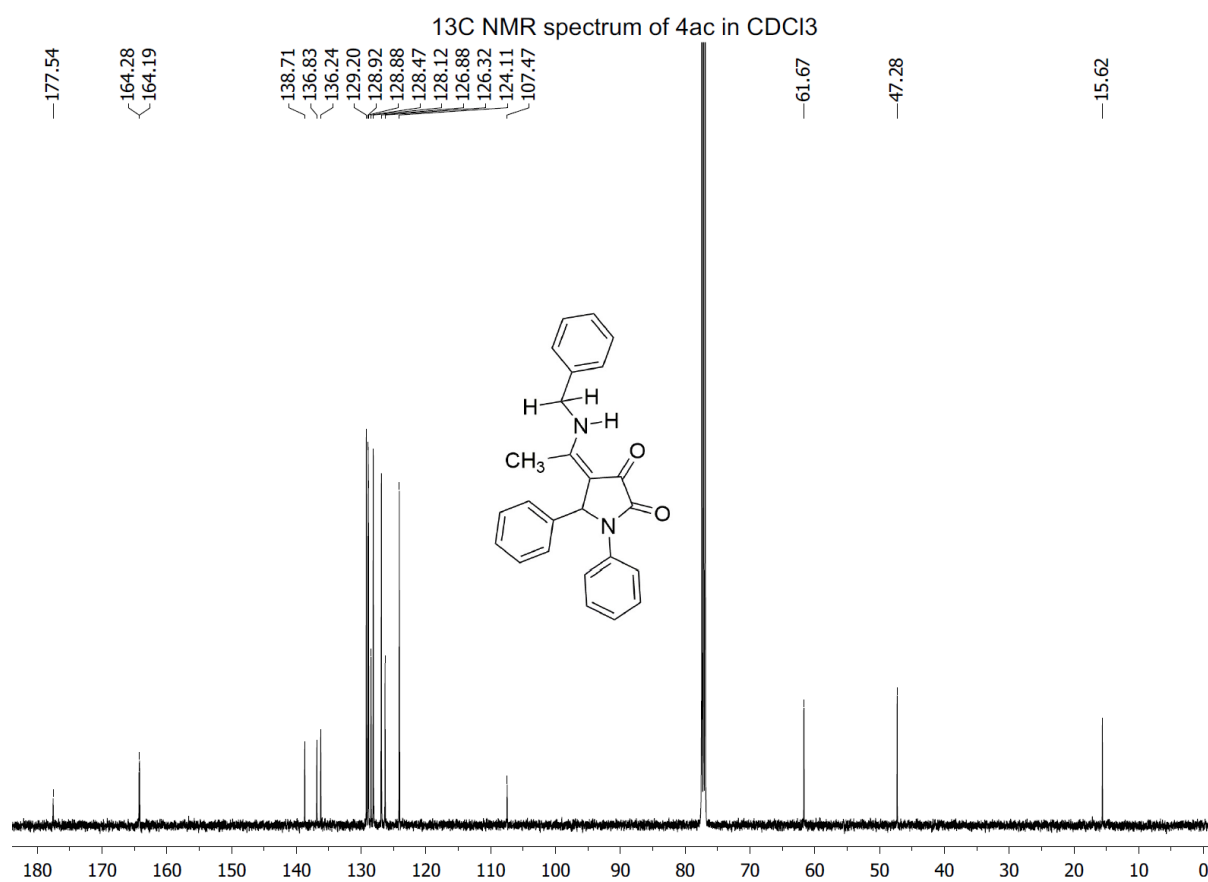


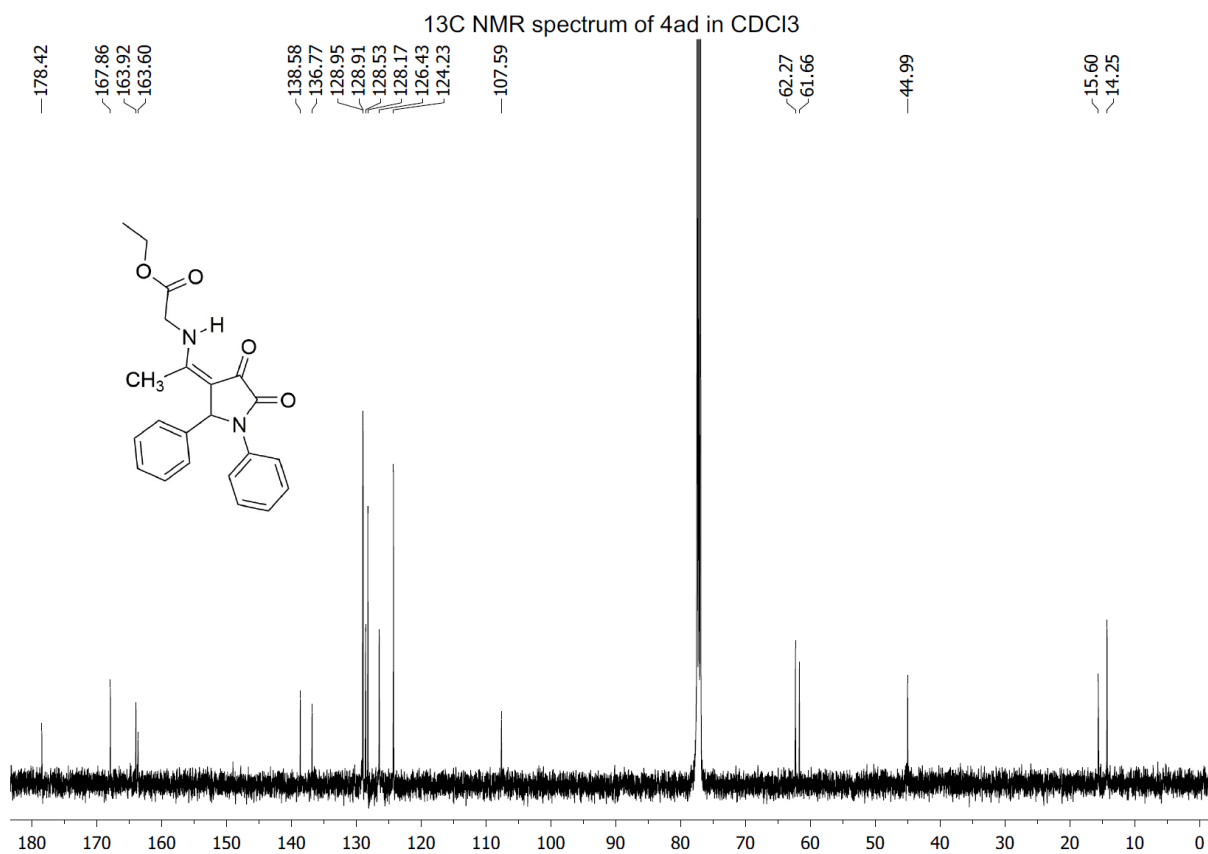
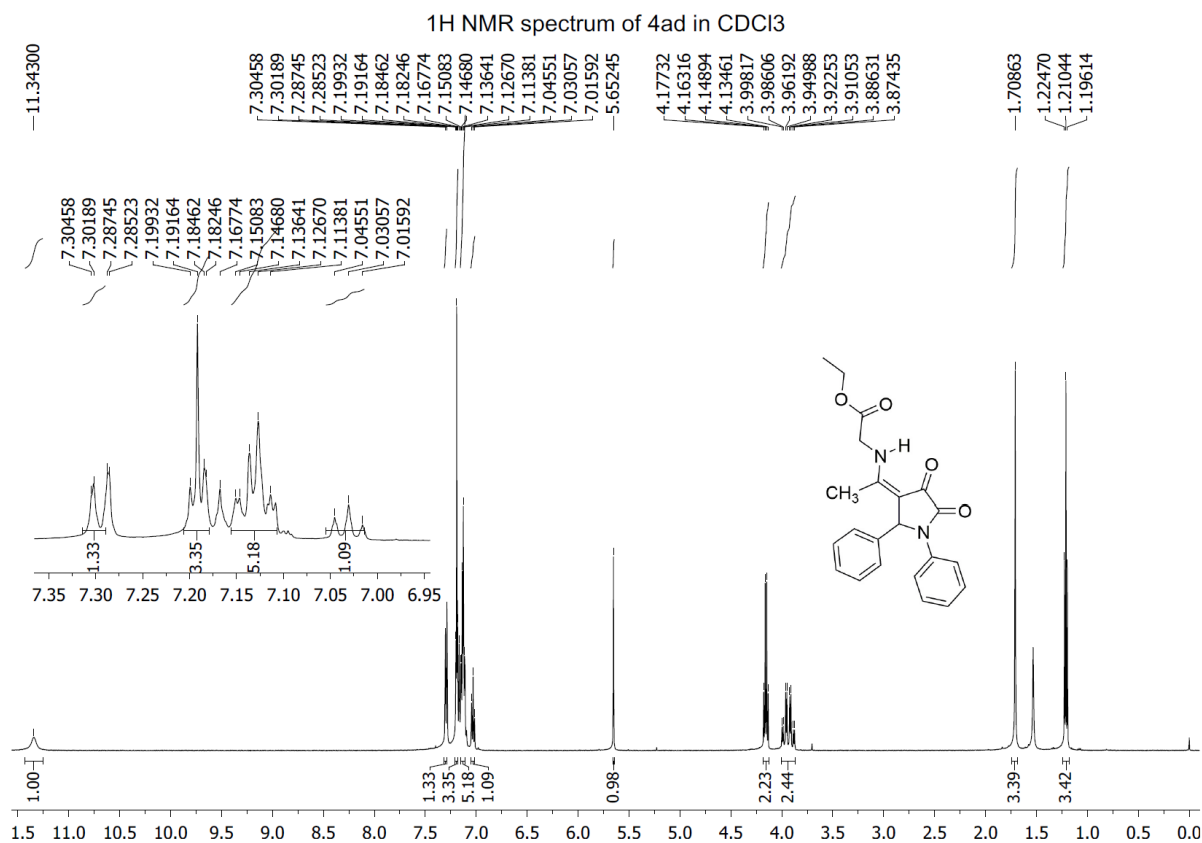


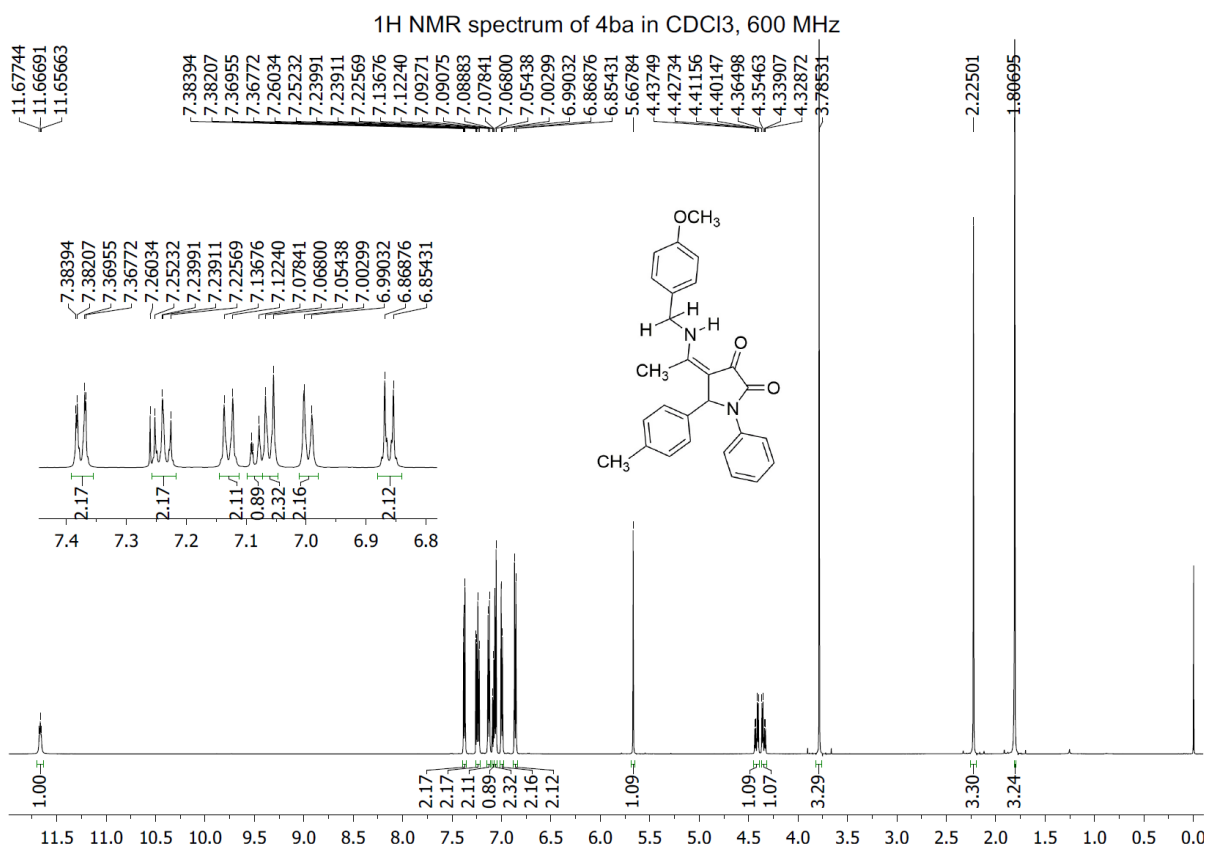
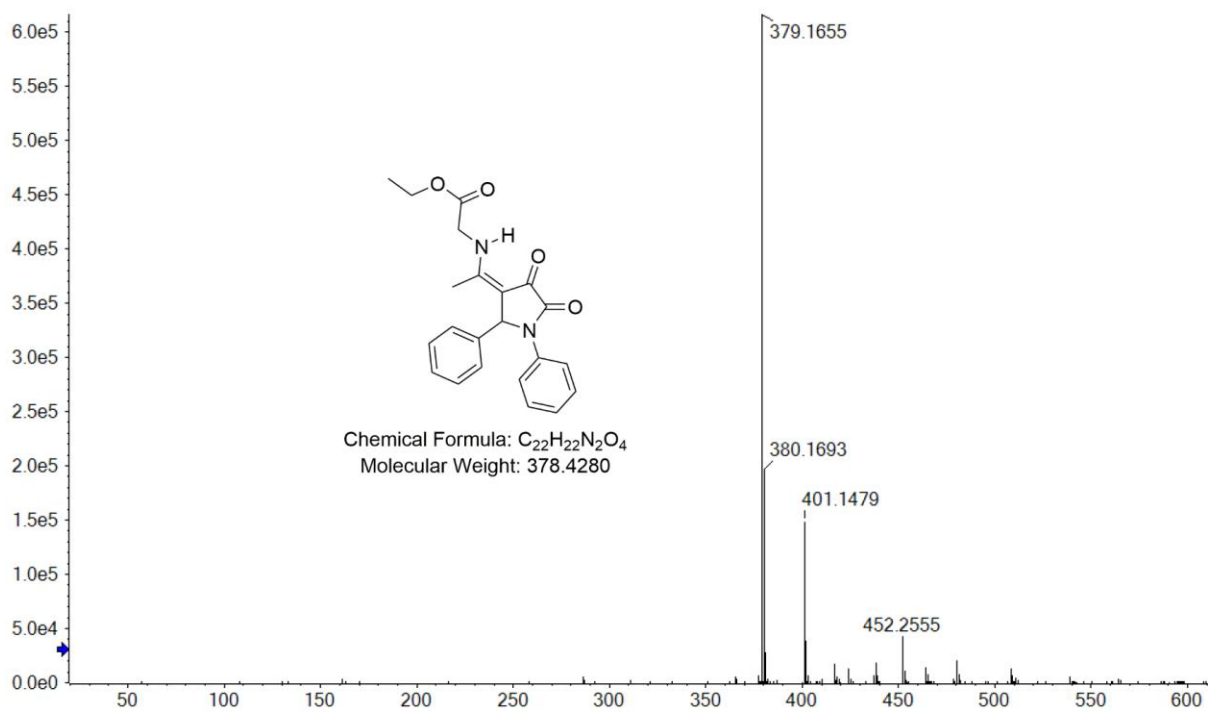
Chemical Formula: $C_{19}H_{18}N_2O_2$
Exact Mass: 306.1368

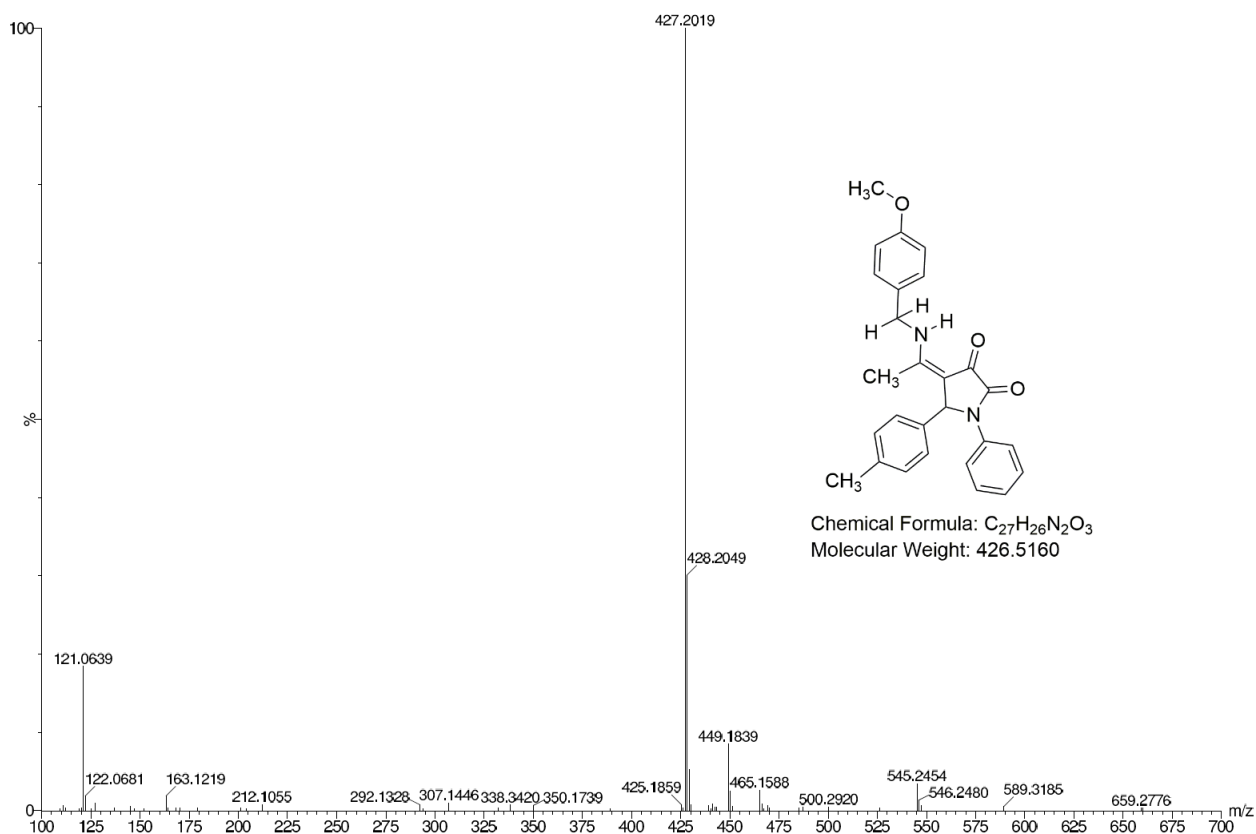
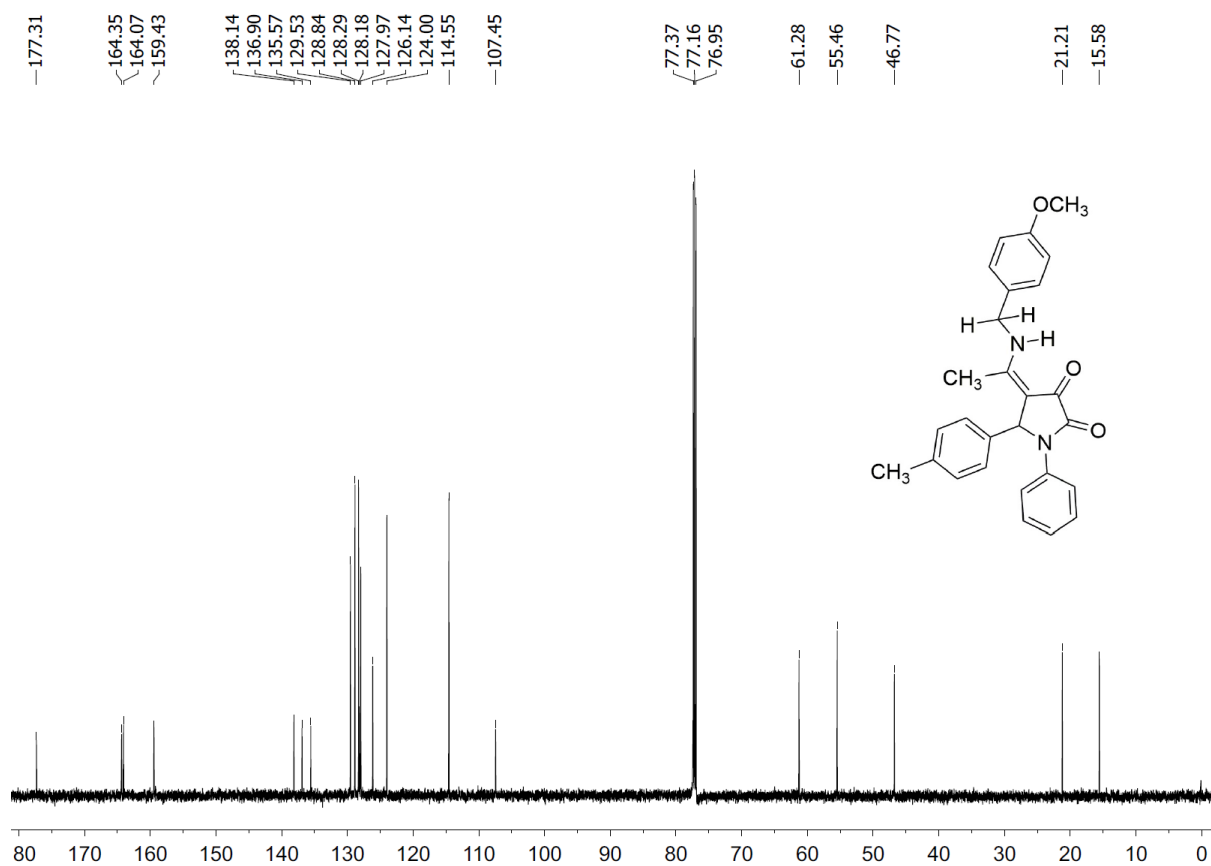
1H NMR spectrum of 4ac in $CDCl_3$, 500 MHz

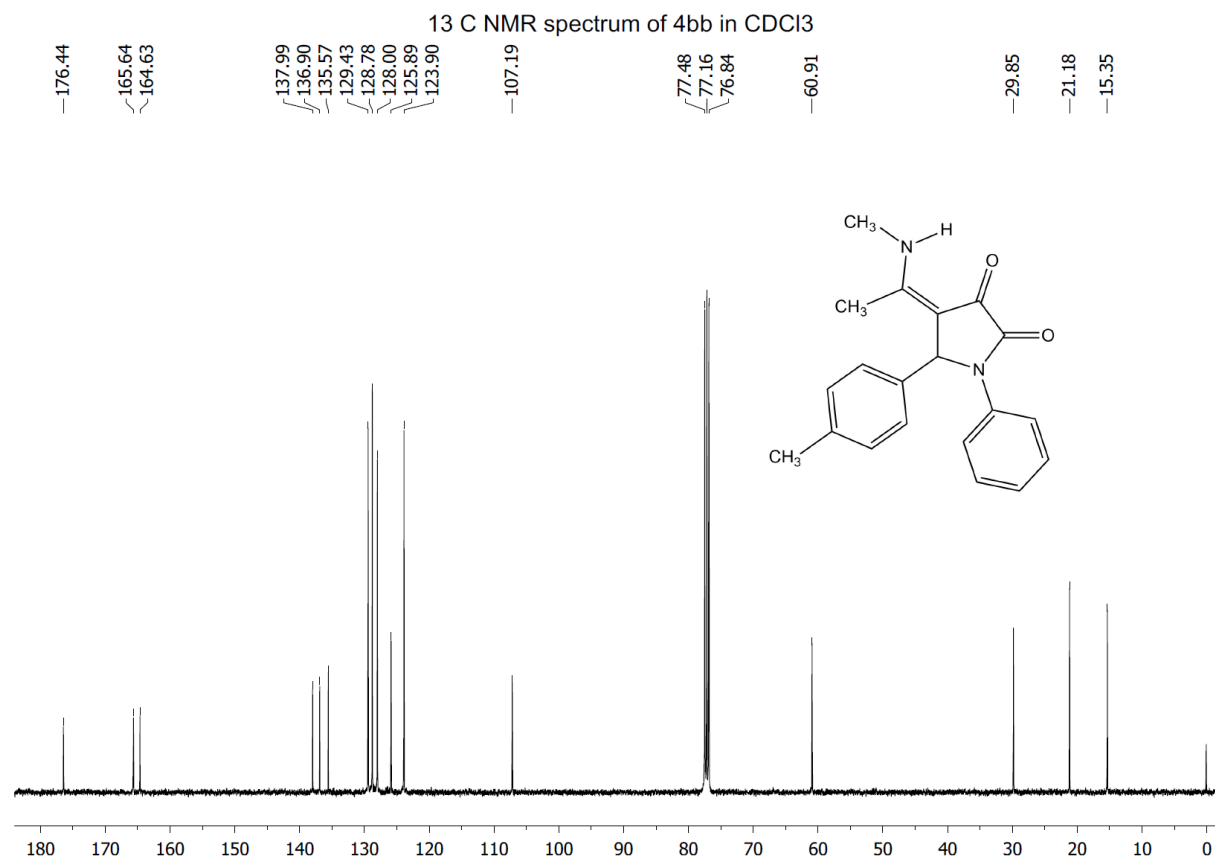
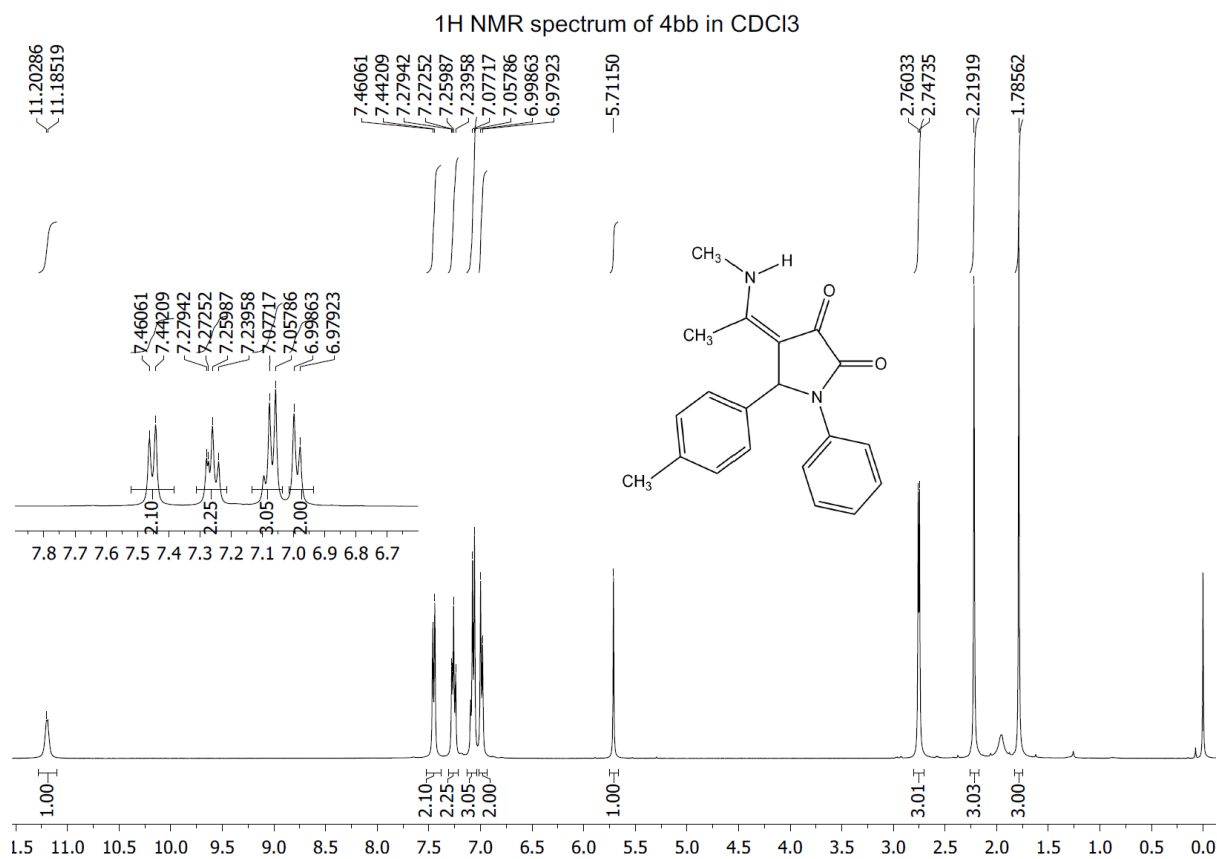


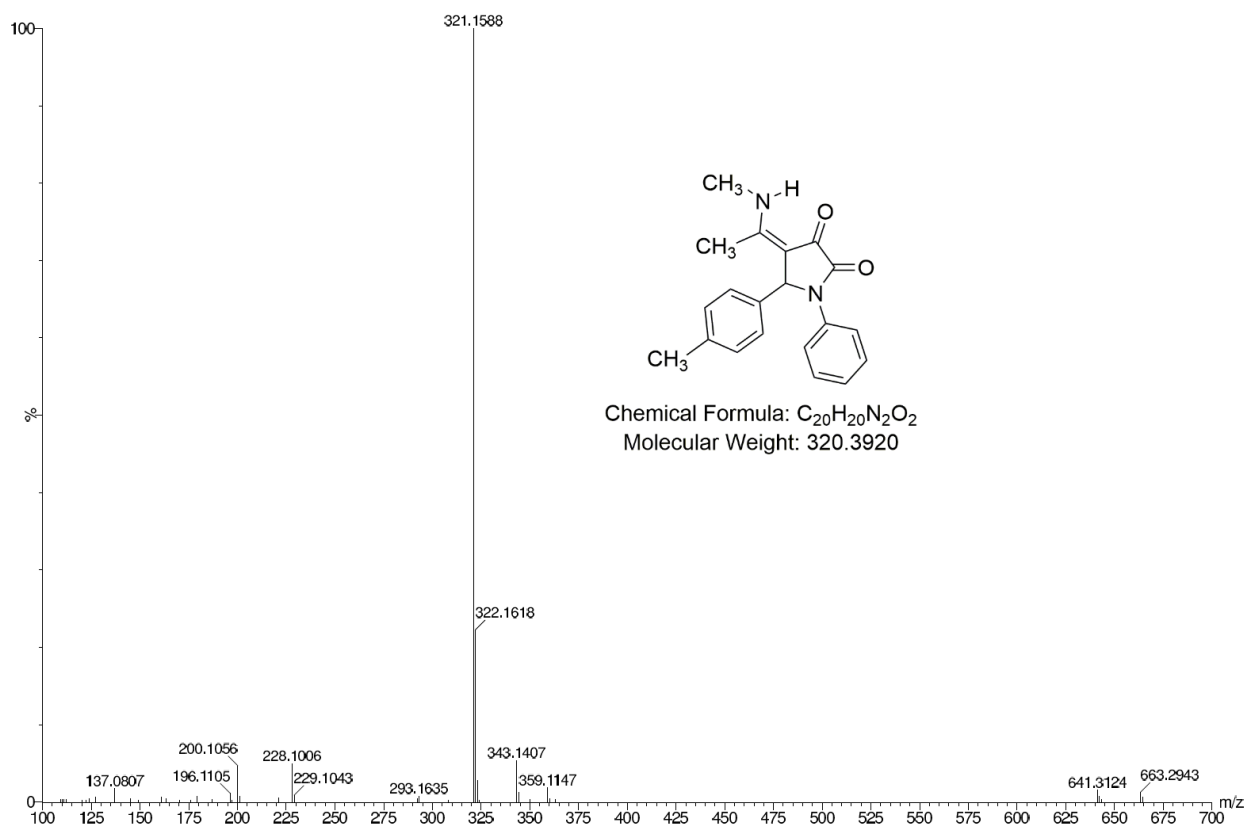




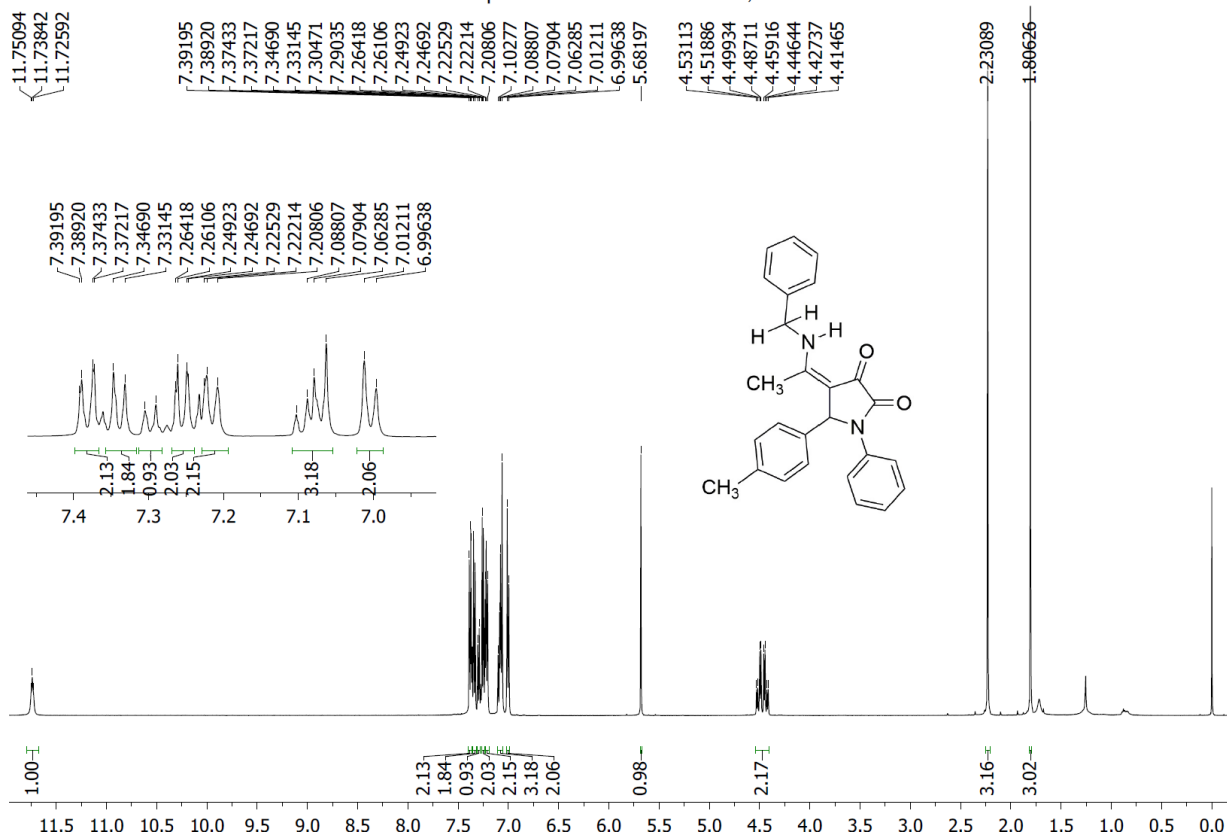


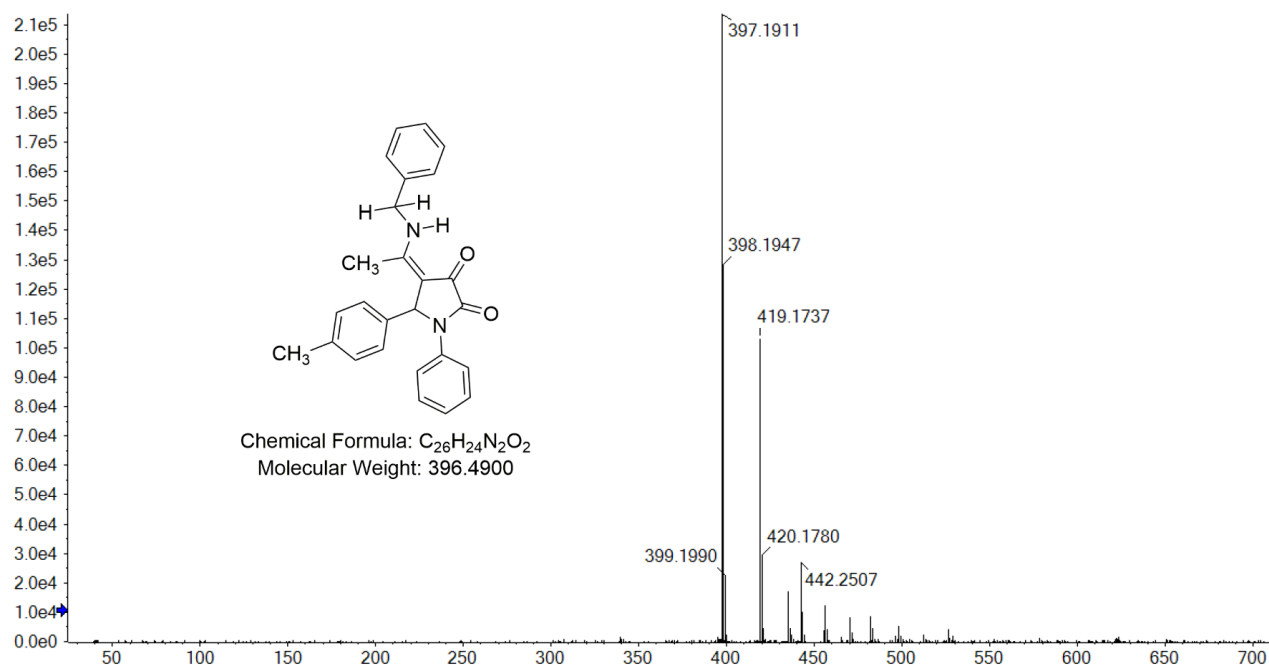
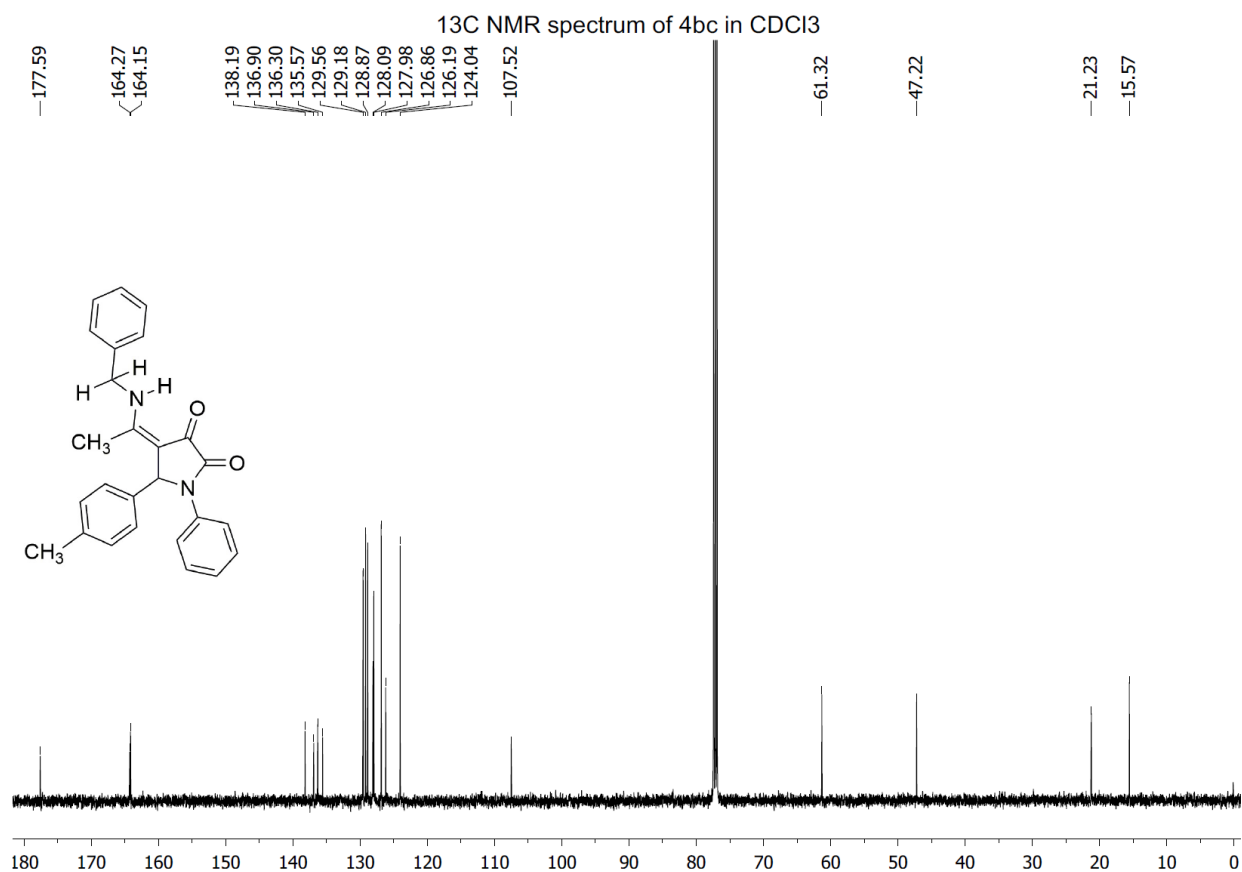


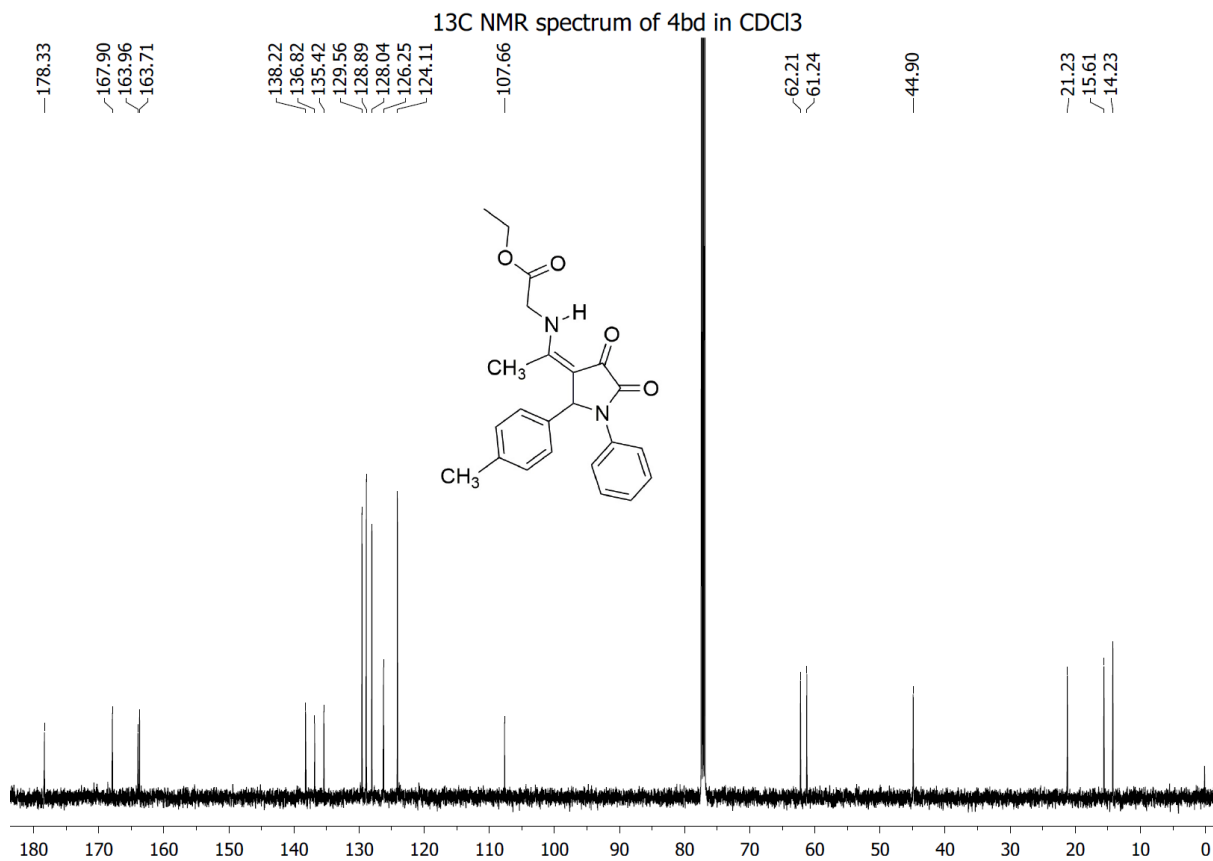
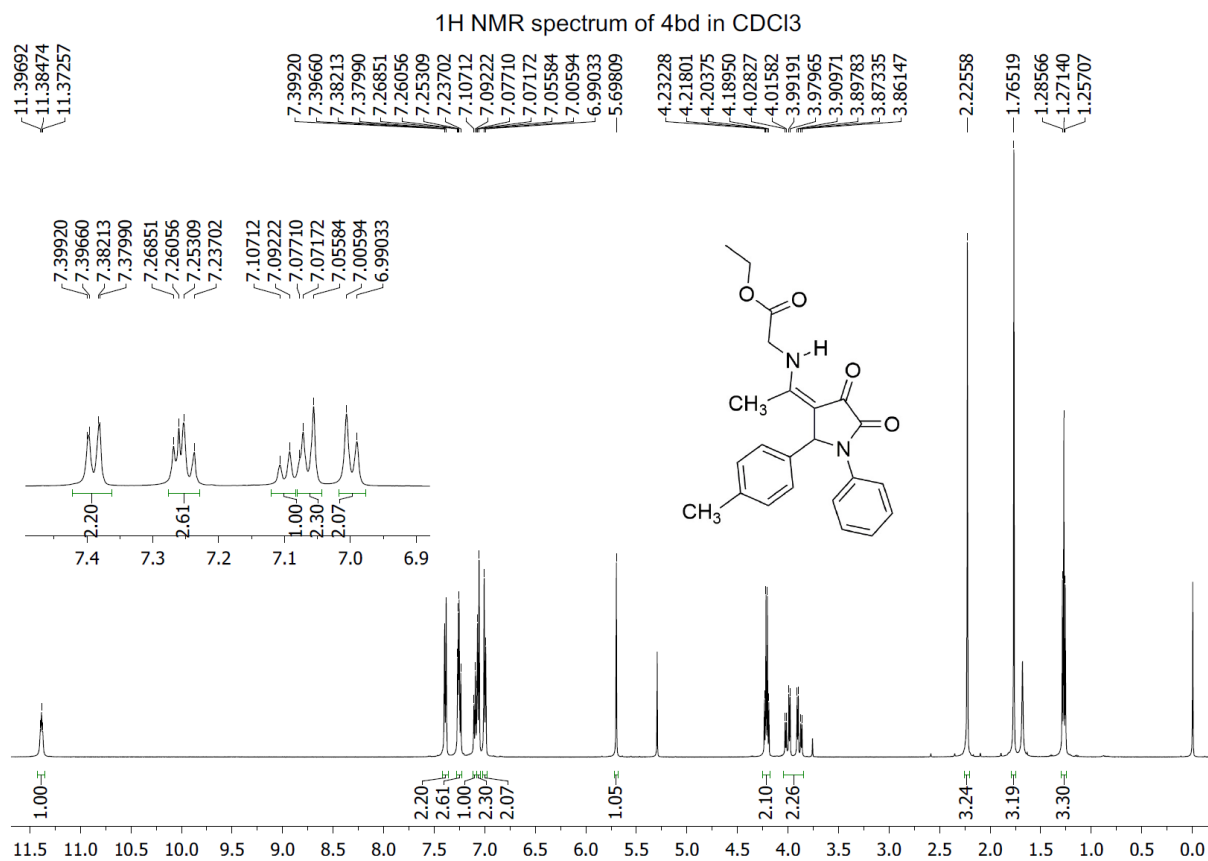


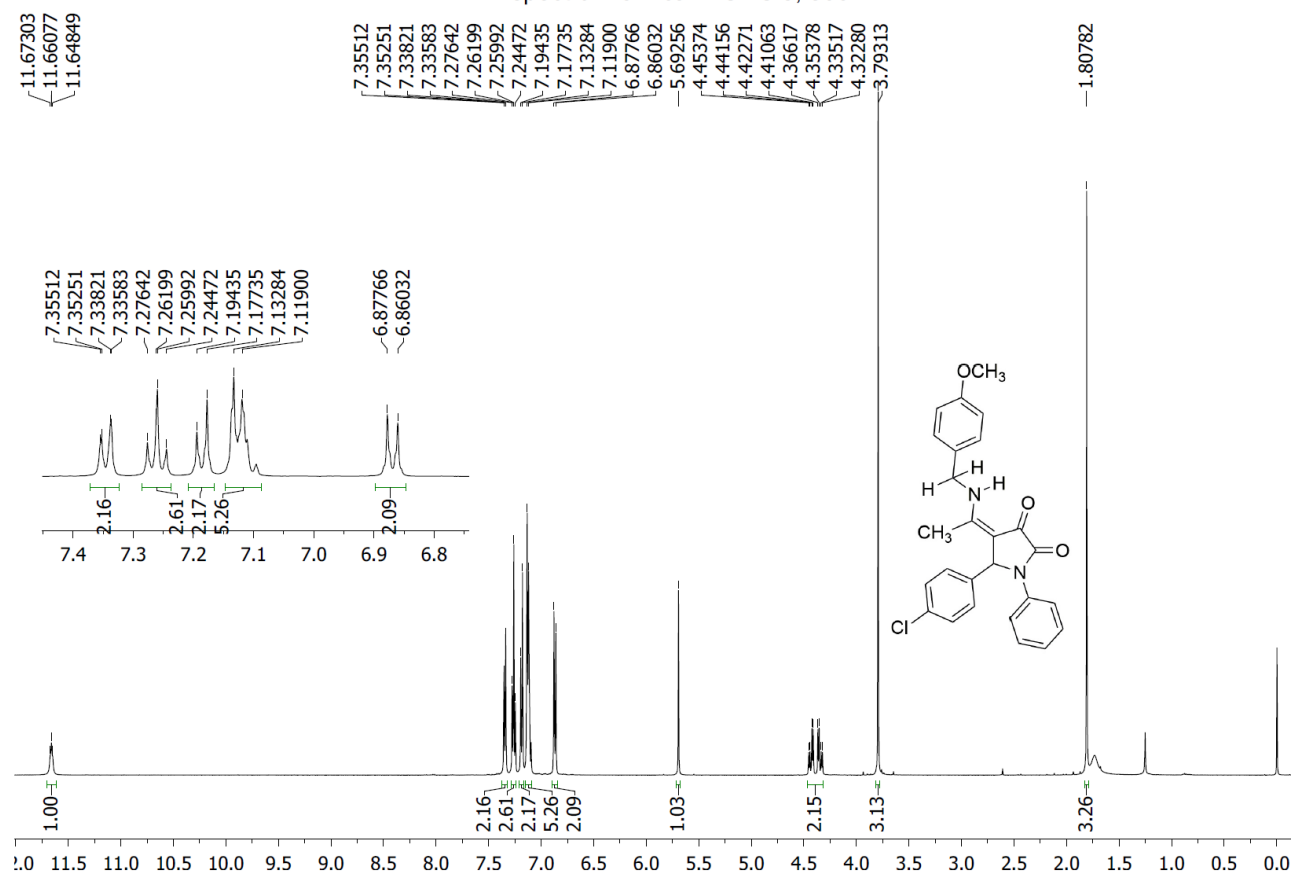
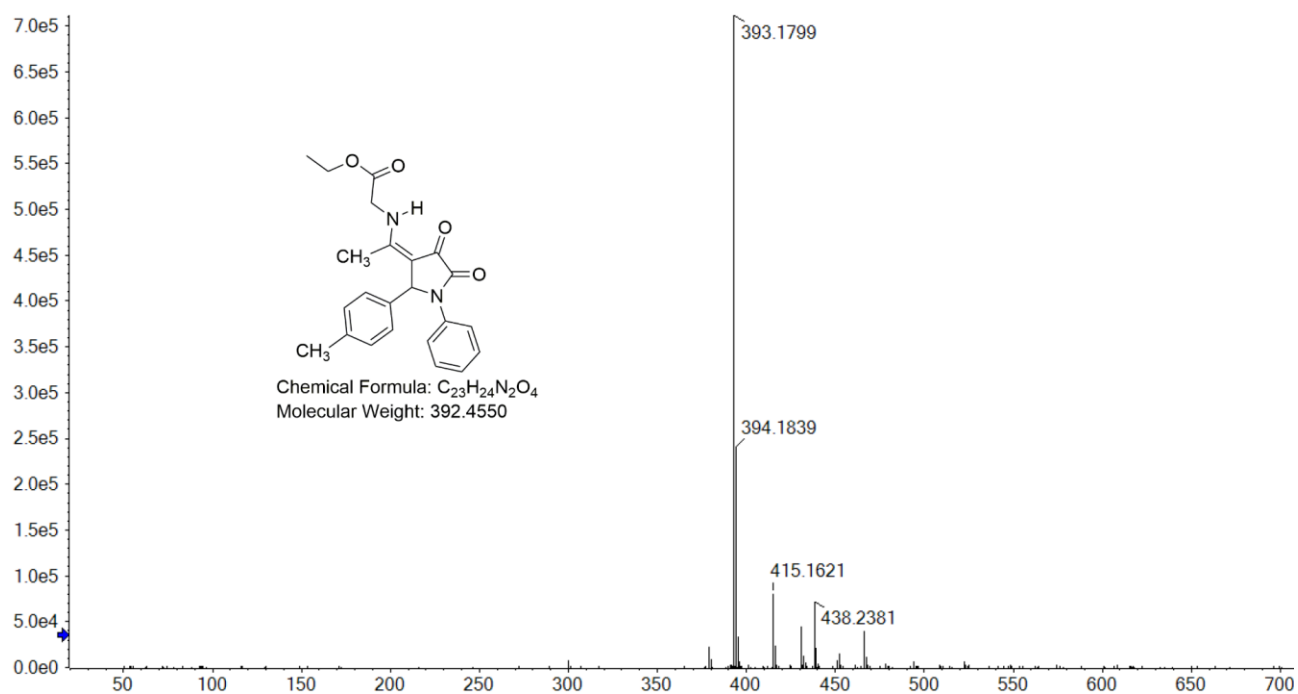


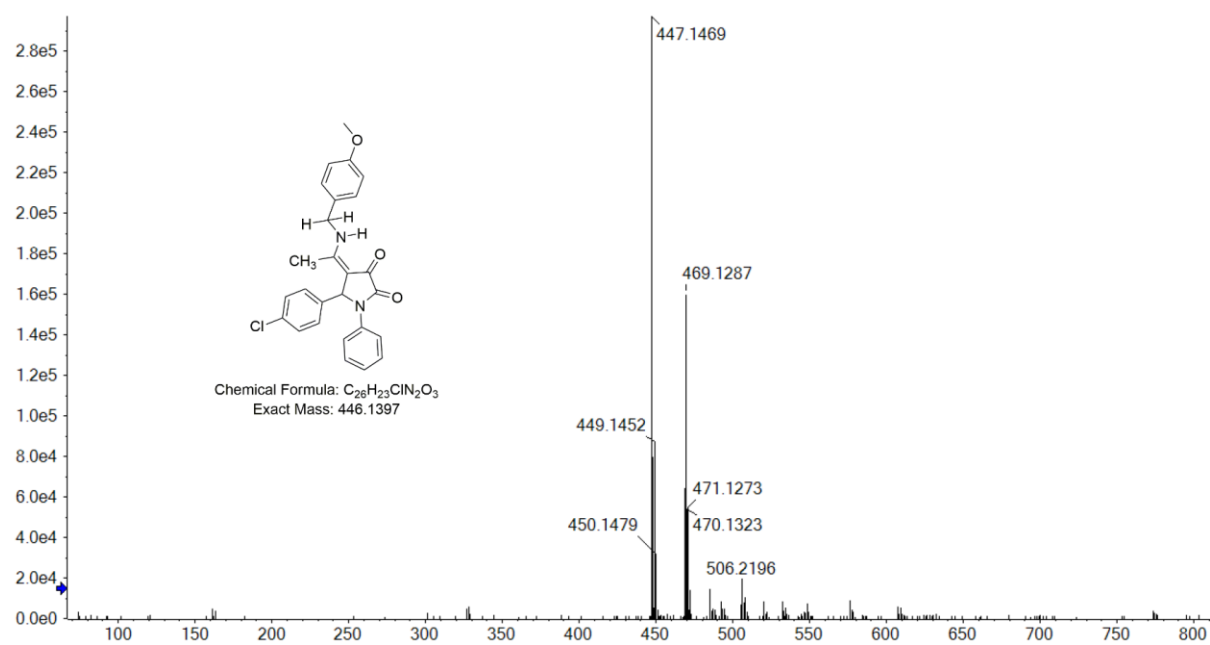
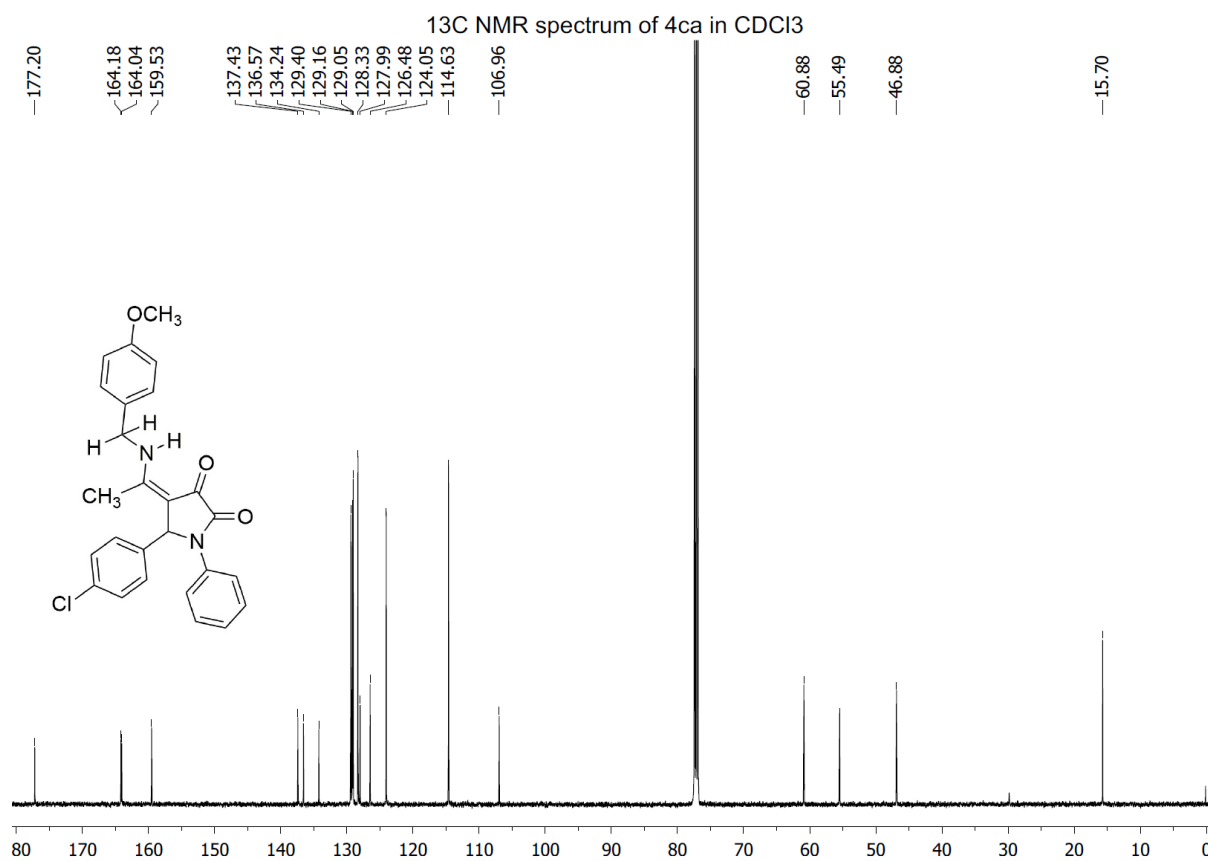
H NMR spectrum of 4bc in $CDCl_3$, 500 MHz

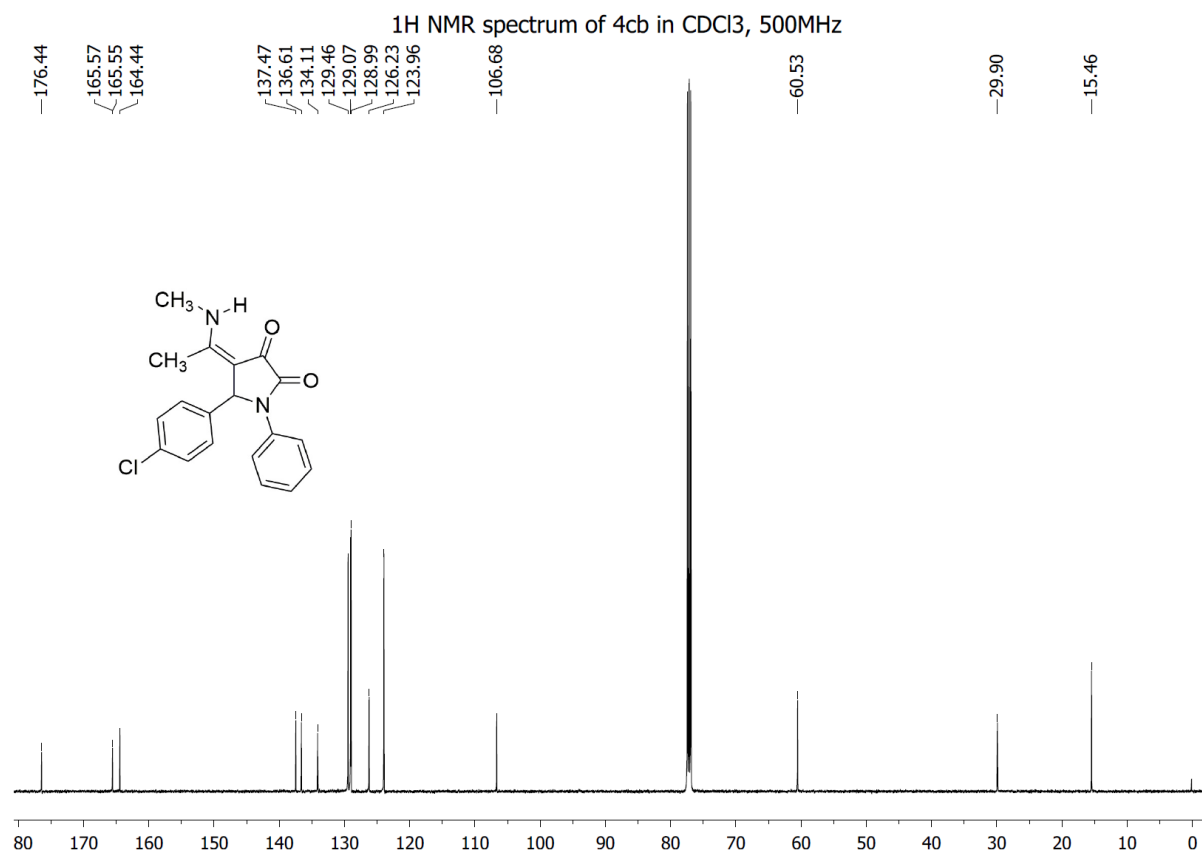
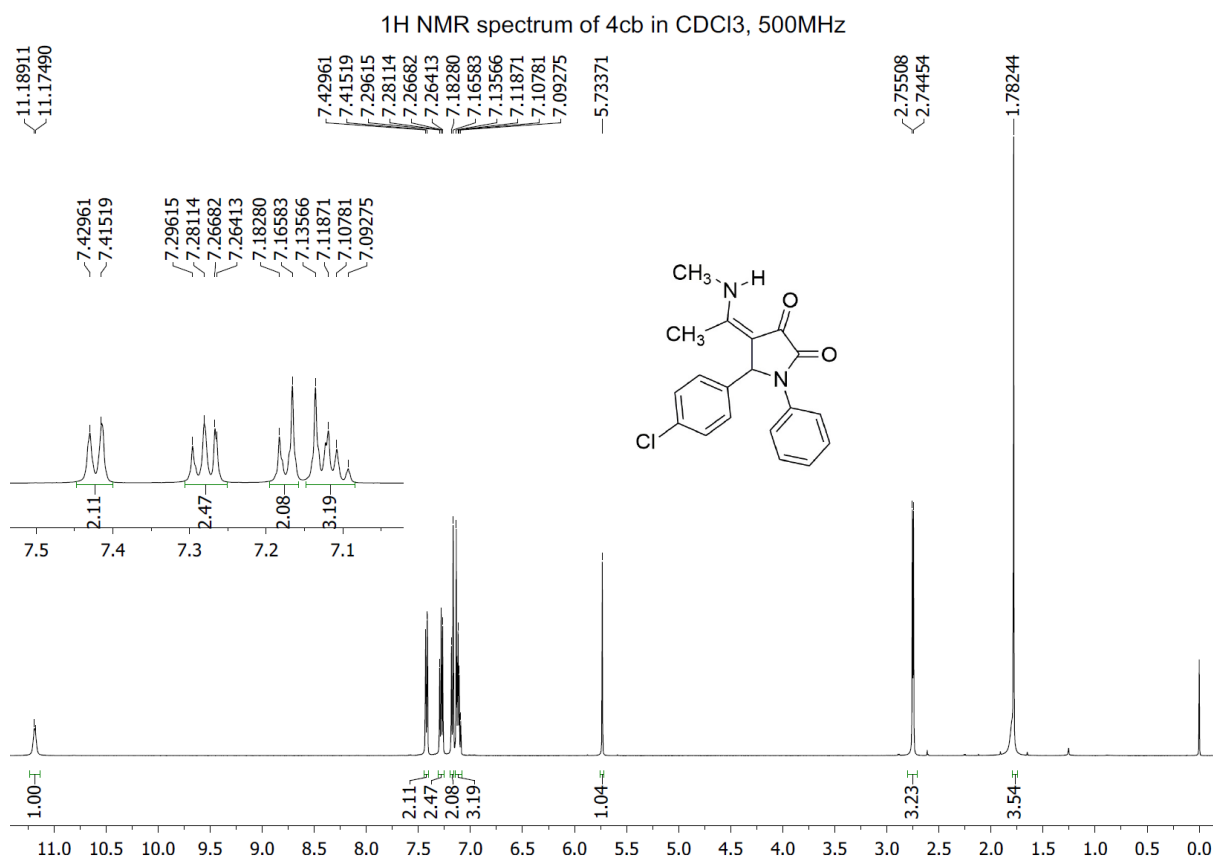


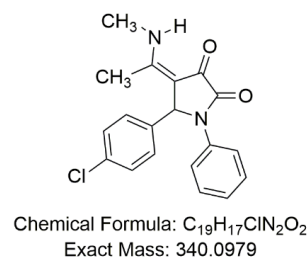
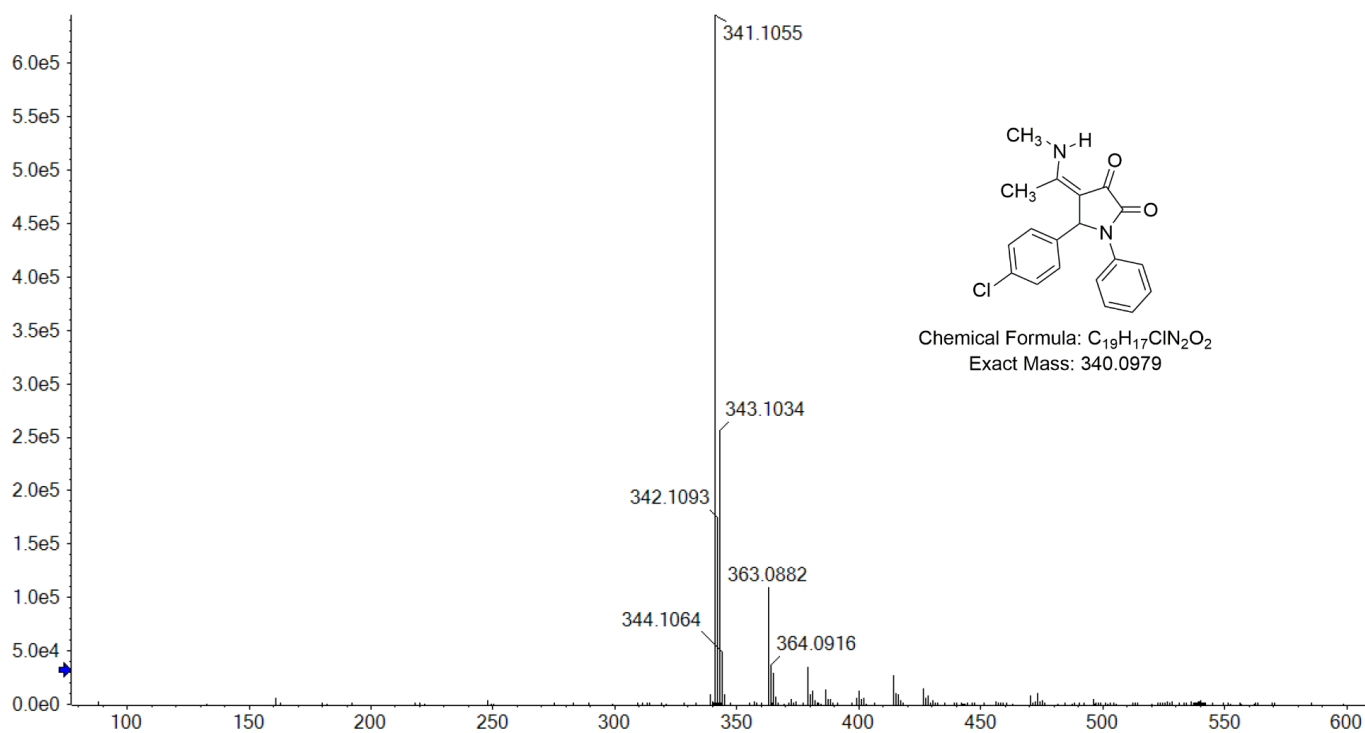












¹H NMR spectrum of 4cc in CDCl₃, 600MHz

