

## Synthesis and biological evaluation of (*E*)-cinnamic acid, (*E*)-2-styrylthiazole and (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazole derivatives

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### Abstract

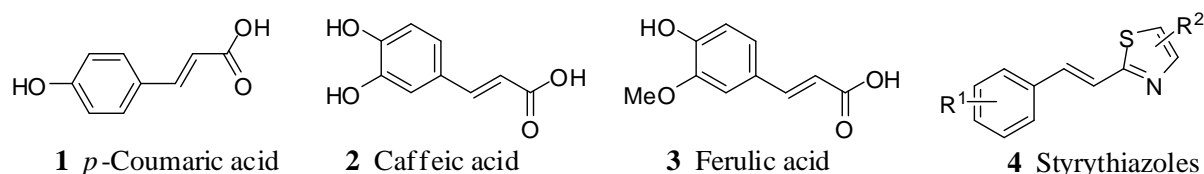
Cinnamyl- and thiazole-based compounds have been shown to exhibit diverse medicinal properties and a series of twelve (*E*)-2-styrylthiazole and (*E*)-2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazole derivatives, which are conjugates of both systems and which satisfy the “Lipinski rule of 5”, have been synthesised and subjected to *in vitro* biological screening. While insignificant inhibition (60-98% viability at 10  $\mu$ M) of HeLa (cervical cancer) cells was noted, all five of the (*E*)-2-[naphthalen-1-yl]vinyl]thiazole derivatives proved remarkably active against SH-SY5Y (neuroblastoma) cells with IC<sub>50</sub> values ranging from 2.09 to 8.64  $\mu$ M. Two of the seven (*E*)-2-styrylthiazoles were found to be moderately active (with IC<sub>50</sub> values of 10.8 and 11.7 mM), whereas the remaining five analogues exhibit significant proliferation of SH-SY5Y cells (with IC<sub>50</sub> values of 180-1000 mM). The results warrant further studies on the effects of styrylthiazoles on the differentiation and extension of SH-SY5Y cells in order to assess their activity in neurological degenerative diseases.

**Keywords:** Synthesis, cinnamic acids, styrylthiazoles, 2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles, biological activity

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## Introduction

The naturally occurring cinnamic acid derivatives, *p*-coumaric acid **1**, caffeic acid **2** and ferulic acid **3**, are small phenolic compounds found in fruits, vegetables and flowers (Figure 1)<sup>1</sup> or, as their esters, in essential oils, resins and balsams.<sup>2</sup> Cinnamic acid, an important intermediate in the biochemical shikimic and phenylpropanoic acid pathways,<sup>3</sup> belongs to the class of plant hormones (*viz.*, auxins) which regulate cell growth and differentiation.<sup>4</sup> Cinnamic acid analogues act as precursors of many commercially important synthetic cinnamic esters<sup>5</sup> and as reactants in the preparation of chalcones and stilbenes.<sup>6</sup> Cinnamic acid derivatives have also been reported to possess antidiabetic,<sup>7</sup> hepato-protective,<sup>8</sup> antioxidant,<sup>9</sup> antimicrobial,<sup>10</sup> anti-tuberculosis<sup>11</sup> and anti-cancer properties.<sup>12</sup> On the other hand, compounds containing the thiazole nucleus have also been reported to exhibit various biological activities, the specificity of action often being dictated by the attached functionalities.<sup>13</sup> Thiazole-containing heterocyclic peptides, such as nosiheptide, GE2270 A and nocathiacin,<sup>14-17</sup> isolated from marine organisms, exhibit potent biological profiles — observations which support the inclusion of the thiazole nucleus in the design of lead compounds in the development of new active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs).<sup>18</sup> Attention has thus been given to the development of novel compounds which contain both the styryl and thiazole moieties and, in this communication, we report the preparation and biological screening of a series of styrylthiazoles **4**, (*E*)-2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles and their cinnamic acid precursors.



**Figure 1.** Structures of cinnamic acid derivatives: *p*-coumaric acid **1**, caffeic acid **2** and ferulic acid **3** and the proposed styrylthiazoles **4**.

## Results and Discussion

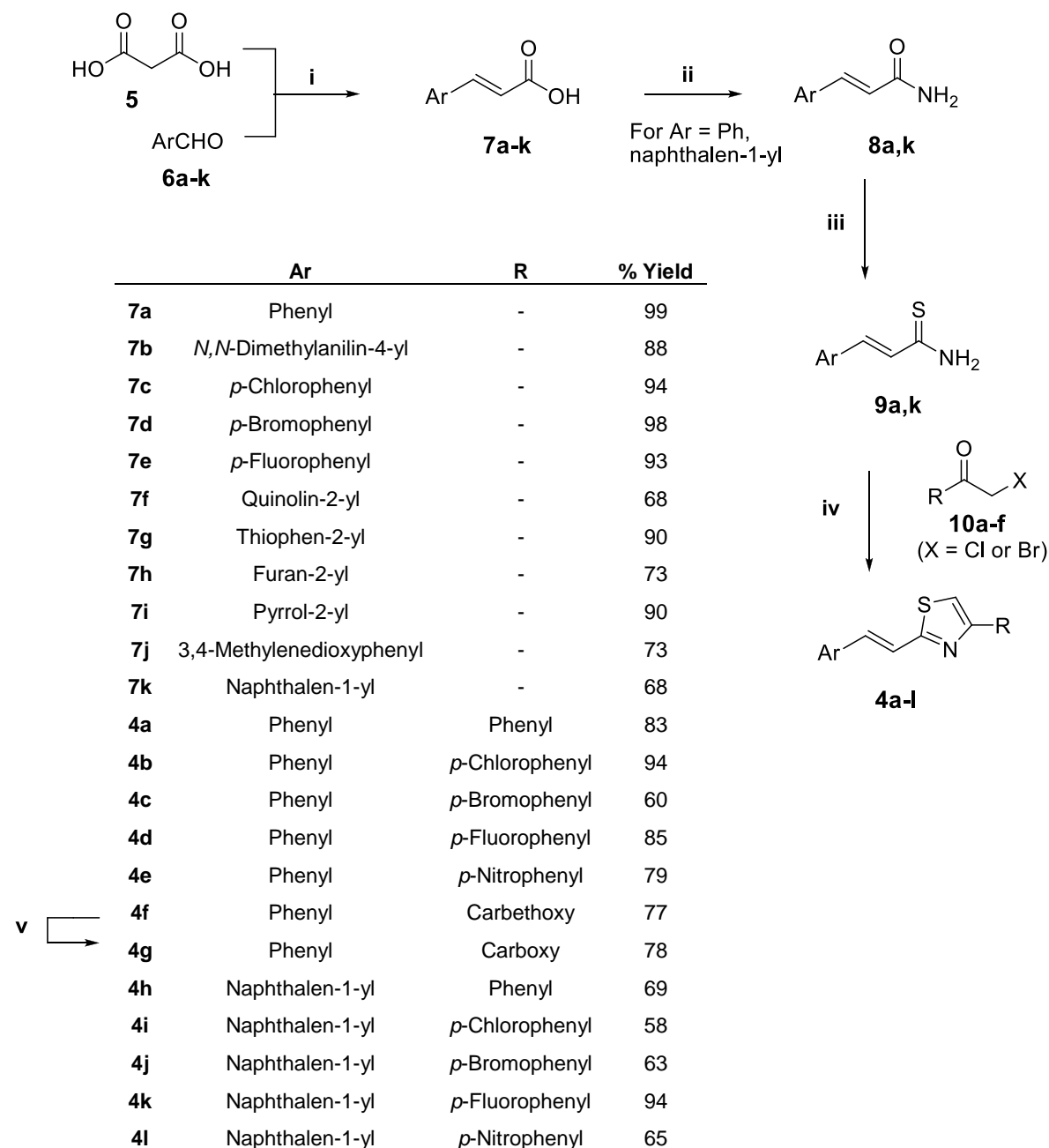
Access to the cinnamic acids **7a-k** and the targeted (*E*)-styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**, all of which satisfy the “Lipinski rule of 5”,<sup>19</sup> is outlined in Scheme 1. Various synthetic methods have been used for the preparation of cinnamic acid and its derivatives,<sup>6,20,21</sup> including compound **7k**, as reported by Master *et al.*<sup>16</sup> whose approach has been adopted in the current study. Thus, the commercially available aldehydes **6a-k** were reacted with malonic acid in pyridine, in the presence of a catalytic quantity of piperidine, at 90 °C for 1 hour (Scheme 1). [The lower temperature (90 °C) gave yields comparable with those obtained at 120-130 °C.<sup>16</sup>] This procedure permitted the diastereoselective synthesis of the desired (*E*)-cinnamic acid analogues **7a-f** in good yields (68-98%). Confirmation of the *E*-configuration is provided by

the large  $^1\text{H}$  NMR vicinal coupling constant (*ca.* 16 Hz) between the vinylic protons which typically resonate at *ca.* 7.0 and 9.0 ppm. All of the cinnamic acids **7a-k** were subjected to biological screening, while cinnamic acids **7a** and **7k** served as precursors for the synthesis of the styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**.

The synthesis of the (*E*)-2-styrylthiazoles **4a-g** involved three steps, *viz.*, i) conversion of (*E*)-cinnamic acid **7a** to cinnamamide **8a**; ii) thionation to obtain the thioamide **9a**; and iii) condensation with  $\alpha$ -halo carbonyl derivatives to give the corresponding thiazoles **4a-f** (Scheme 1). Following the method developed by Pozdnev *et al.*,<sup>22,23</sup> (*E*)-cinnamic acid **7a** was reacted with di-*tert*-butyl dicarbonate [(Boc)<sub>2</sub>O], ammonium hydrogen carbonate and pyridine in tetrahydrofuran to afford cinnamamide **8a** in good yield (78.5%). Thionation was achieved by stirring cinnamamide **8a** with Lawesson's reagent in dry THF at ambient temperature for 8 h,<sup>24</sup> the progress of the reaction being monitored by thin layer chromatography (TLC). Work-up and column chromatography gave (*E*)-3-phenylprop-2-enethioamide **9a**<sup>22-27</sup> in 52% yield, with retention of the (*E*)-configuration about the double bond being confirmed by the large  $^1\text{H}$  NMR vinylic coupling constant ( $J = 15.6$  Hz) and conversion of the carbonyl group to thiocarbonyl by the significant downfield shift ( $\Delta\delta = 32$  ppm) of the thiocarbonyl (C=S) signal to  $\delta$  198.1 ppm. Application of the conventional Hantzsch method,<sup>13</sup> involving reaction of (*E*)-3-phenylprop-2-enethioamide **9a** with each of the  $\alpha$ -halo carbonyl compounds **10a-f** (X=Br or Cl) afforded the (*E*)-2-styrylthiazoles **4a-f**. Hydrolysis of the styrylthiazole-5-carboxylate ester **4f** afforded the corresponding acid **4g** as a white solid (65%, method 1).

Similar methods were used to obtain the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**, starting from (*E*)-3-(naphthalen-1-yl)-2-propenoic acid **7k** and proceeding *via* the two intermediates, (*E*)-3-(naphthalen-1-yl)-2-propenamide **8k** (98%) and (*E*)-3-(naphthalen-1-yl)prop-2-enethioamide **9k** (77%).

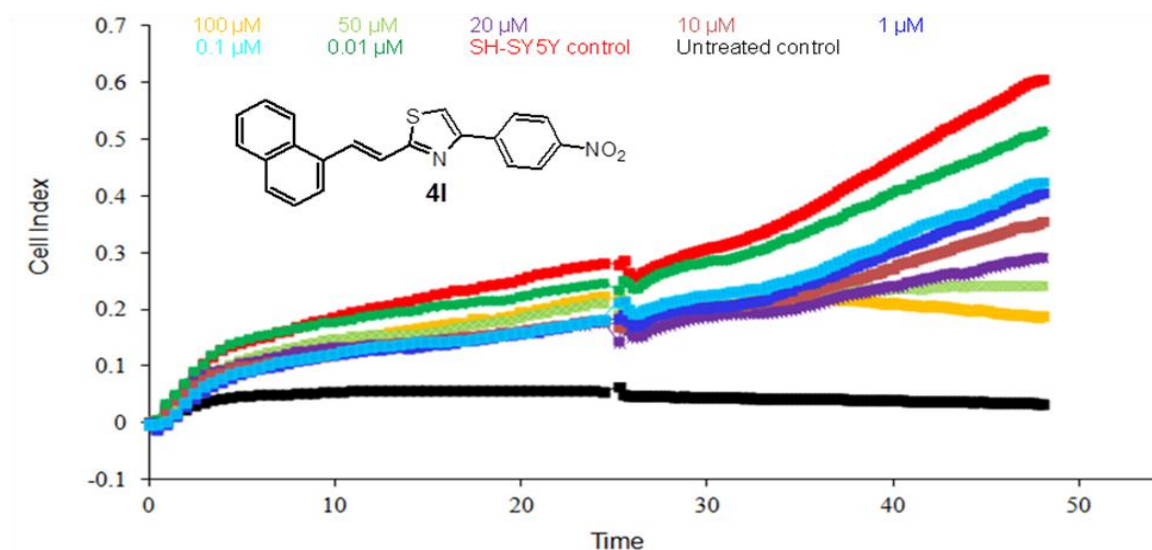
The synthetic derivatives **7a-k** and **4a-l** were screened for anti-malarial (*Plasmodium falciparum*), anti-tuberculosis (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) and anti-bacterial (*Pseudomonas aeruginosa*) activity as well as for cytotoxicity, in terms of their capacity to inhibit HeLa and SH-SY5Y cells. All of these compounds {with the exception of the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles (**4h-l**), and the *para*-chlorophenyl (**4b**) and *para*-bromophenyl (**4c**) (*E*)-styrylthiazoles which have predicted Log P values of 5.83-6.99 (*i.e.* slightly > 5)} satisfy the requirements of the "Lipinski rule of five" for *in vivo* transport and the capacity to traverse biological membranes.<sup>19</sup>



**Scheme 1.** Synthesis of (*E*)-cinnamic acid derivatives, (*E*)-styrylthiazoles and (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles: Reagents and conditions: (i) Piperidine, pyridine, 90 °C, 1 h; (ii) (Boc)<sub>2</sub>O, THF, pyridine, NH<sub>4</sub>HCO<sub>3</sub>, rt, 6 h; (iii) Lawesson's reagent, THF, rt, 8 h; (iv) EtOH, 70 °C, 1 h; v) KOH, MeOH-H<sub>2</sub>O.

Preliminary *in vitro* cytotoxic screening of the synthesised compounds **7a-k** and **4a-l** was conducted using HeLa cells, while further cytotoxicity studies were conducted on the human neuroblastoma SH-SY5Y cells using an xCELLigence Real-Time Cell Analyzer (RTCA), the output of which is illustrated in Figure 2. The real-time monitoring permits label-free analysis of

cell viability providing insight into the mode of action of the test compounds.<sup>28,29</sup> From the HeLa cell inhibition data (Table 1) it was apparent that with the exception of the *p*-chlorophenyl- (**7c**) and 2-thiophenyl- (**7g**) cinnamic acid analogues, which exhibited 35-40% inhibition at 10  $\mu$ M, the remaining cinnamic acid analogues exhibited low levels of inhibition ( $\leq 20\%$  at 10  $\mu$ M). The styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** showed 2-40% inhibition of HeLa cells at 10  $\mu$ M, but remarkably variable activity against SH-SY5Y cells (Table 1, Figure 2). Thus, while the RTCA data revealed that of all the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** inhibited the SH-SY5Y cells remarkably with IC<sub>50</sub> values in the range of 2.09 to 8.64  $\mu$ M. Compounds **4a** and **4b** inhibited the SH-SY5Y cells moderately with IC<sub>50</sub> values of *ca.* 11 mM, the remaining compounds exhibited IC<sub>50</sub> values ranging from 180 to 1000 mM, with the carboxy analogue **4g** exhibiting the lowest toxicity on SH-SY5Y cells with a predicted IC<sub>50</sub> value  $> 1000$  mM. The proliferative effects may be due to the extended  $\pi$ -delocalisation in the styryl- and naphthalenylthiazole scaffolds — a structural feature of all-*trans*-retinoic acid which has been reported to: i) activate survival signalling in SH-SY5Y cells; ii) promote cell survival; and iii) reduce cell susceptibility to neurotoxins.<sup>30,31</sup> Further studies are required to compare the effects of compounds **4a-l** and all-*trans*-retinoic acid on the morphology and differentiation of SH-SY5Y cells,<sup>32</sup> and explore their potential activity against neurodegenerative diseases (*e.g.*, Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases).



**Figure 2:** RTCA dose-response curves for compound **4l** (1-100  $\mu$ M) on SH-SY5Y cells Cell.

Certain substituted cinnamic acids have been shown to exhibit anti-malarial potential,<sup>3,33</sup> and compounds **7a-k**, the styrylthiazole derivatives **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** were subjected to *in vitro* whole cell *Pf*LDH-based (*Plasmodium falciparum* parasite lactate dehydrogenase) bioassay,<sup>34</sup> the results of which are summarised in Table 1. Gravina *et al.*<sup>35</sup> found that, while  $\alpha$ -cyano- and  $\alpha$ -fluorocinnamate exhibited promising anti-malarial activity, these compounds were unfortunately toxic to human cells — a pattern

mirrored in the cytotoxicity levels observed for the cinnamic acid analogues **7a-k**. The *Pf*LDH inhibition levels exhibited by the cinnamic acid derivatives **7b-k** at a concentration of 20  $\mu$ M lie in the range 10-30% (chloroquine exhibits 98% inhibition at 2 nM), the 2-furanyl **7g** and 2-pyrrolyl **7h** derivatives being the least active and the *para*-fluorophenyl derivative **7f** the most active. The (*E*)-2-styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** also typically exhibited low inhibition levels against *Pf*LDH (< 20% inhibition at 20  $\mu$ M).

Cinnamic acid analogues only appear to feature in anti-tuberculosis agents when present as components of more complex scaffolds<sup>3</sup> and, consequently, the *in vitro* assays for activity against *M. tuberculosis* H<sub>37</sub>Rv were limited to the (*E*)-2-styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**. While exhibiting some activity, the MIC90 and MIC99 values for these compounds were found to exceed 20  $\mu$ M. Thiazole derivatives have been reported to exhibit antimicrobial activity<sup>36</sup> and compounds **4a-l** were also subjected to the antibacterial disc diffusion susceptibility assay against *P. aeruginosa* at concentrations of 10–2000  $\mu$ M. The *para*-bromophenylstyrylthiazole derivative **4c** and (*E*)-4-(4-fluorophenyl)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazole **4k** exhibited low-level zones of inhibition of *ca.* 7 and 9 mm at 1000 and 2000  $\mu$ M, respectively (*cf.* ampicillin, 24.7 mm at 0.0715  $\mu$ M and streptomycin, 20 mm at 0.0172  $\mu$ M).

**Table 1.** Bioassay data showing: the effects of the cinnamic acid analogues **7a-k**, the styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** on the viability of HeLa cells; IC<sub>50</sub> values for the inhibition of SH-SY5Y cells by compounds **4a-l**; the effects of compounds **7a-k** and **4a-l** on the viability of *Pf*LDH at 20  $\mu$ M; and the effects of compounds **4a-g** and **4h-l** against *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* H<sub>37</sub>Rv

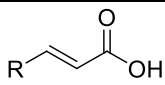
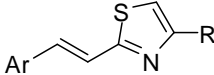
Compd.	R	% HeLa viability at 10 $\mu$ M <sup>a</sup>	SH-SY5Y IC <sub>50</sub> ( $\mu$ M) <sup>b</sup>	% <i>Pf</i> LDH viability at 20 $\mu$ M <sup>c</sup>	MIC90 ( $\mu$ M) <sup>d</sup>	MIC99 ( $\mu$ M) <sup>d</sup>
						
<b>7a</b>	Phenyl	-	-	-	-	-
<b>7b</b>	<i>N,N</i> -dimethylanilin-4-yl	85	-	80	-	-
<b>7c</b>	<i>p</i> -Chlorophenyl	65	-	75	-	-
<b>7d</b>	<i>p</i> -Bromophenyl	90	-	75	-	-
<b>7e</b>	<i>p</i> -Fluorophenyl	85	-	70	-	-
<b>7f</b>	Quinolin-2-yl	90	-	75	-	-
<b>7g</b>	Thiophen-2-yl	60	-	90	-	-
<b>7h</b>	Furan-2-yl	80	-	90	-	-
<b>7i</b>	Pyrrol-2-yl	75	-	80	-	-
<b>7j</b>	3,4-Methylenedioxyphenyl	80	-	80	-	-
<b>7k</b>	Naphthalen-1-yl	85	-	80	-	-

Table 1 (continued)

Compd.	R	% HeLa viability at 10 $\mu$ M <sup>a</sup>	SH-SY5Y IC <sub>50</sub> ( $\mu$ M) <sup>b</sup>	% <i>Pf</i> LDH viability at 20 $\mu$ M <sup>c</sup>	MIC90 ( $\mu$ M) <sup>d</sup>	MIC99 ( $\mu$ M) <sup>d</sup>
		<b>4a-g:</b> Ar = Phenyl <b>4h-l:</b> Ar = Naphthalen-1-yl				
<b>4a</b>	Phenyl	60	1.08x10 <sup>4</sup>	95	> 20	> 20
<b>4b</b>	<i>p</i> -Chlorophenyl	62	1.17 x10 <sup>4</sup>	102	> 20	> 20
<b>4c</b>	<i>p</i> -Bromophenyl	60	1.80 x10 <sup>5</sup>	95	> 20	> 20
<b>4d</b>	<i>p</i> -Fluorophenyl	70	5.73 x10 <sup>5</sup>	92	> 20	> 20
<b>4e</b>	<i>p</i> -Nitrophenyl	90	4.03 x10 <sup>5</sup>	82	> 20	> 20
<b>4f</b>	Carbethoxy	82	3.51 x10 <sup>5</sup>	98	> 20	> 20
<b>4g</b>	Carboxy	98	> 1x10 <sup>6</sup>	90	> 20	> 20
<b>4h</b>	Phenyl	60	2.09	82	> 20	> 20
<b>4i</b>	<i>p</i> -Chlorophenyl	65	5.19	90	> 20	> 20
<b>4j</b>	<i>p</i> -Bromophenyl	70	8.64	95	> 20	> 20
<b>4k</b>	<i>p</i> -Fluorophenyl	75	4.87	105	> 20	> 20
<b>4l</b>	<i>p</i> -Nitrophenyl	80	2.23	112	> 20	> 20

Control compounds: <sup>a</sup>Untreated HeLa cells: 100% viability; <sup>b</sup>Untreated SH-SY5Y cells: 100% viability; <sup>c</sup>Chloroquine: 4% viability at 2 nM; <sup>d</sup>Rifampicin: 0.0015 $\mu$ M (MIC90) & 0.00167  $\mu$ M (MIC99).

## Conclusions

Various cinnamic acid analogues **7a-k** have been prepared and used as precursors for the synthesis of 2-styrylthiazole derivatives **4a-g** and (*E*)-2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**. None of these compounds exhibited significant inhibition of HeLa cells nor significant antimalarial, anti-tuberculosis or antibacterial activity. However, the (*E*)-2-[2-[(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l** exhibited remarkable activities against SH-SY5Y cells (with IC<sub>50</sub> values ranging from 2.09 to 8.64  $\mu$ M), while the 2-styrylthiazole derivatives **4a-g** showed moderate activities against SH-SY5Y cells ranging from inhibition in two cases (with IC<sub>50</sub> values of 10.8 and 11.7 mM) to proliferation, with IC<sub>50</sub> values ranging from 180 to > 1000 mM. The results indicate that studies are warranted on the effects of styrylthiazoles on the differentiation and extension of SH-SY5Y cells in order to assess their therapeutic potential in the treatment of neurological degenerative diseases.

## Experimental Section

All reagents were obtained from Sigma-Aldrich (South Africa) and used without further purification. Tetrahydrofuran (THF) and methylene chloride were stored over 4 Å molecular sieves. Reaction progress and purity of the compounds were checked by thin layer chromatography (TLC) on pre-coated silica gel G60 F<sub>254</sub> plates (Merck®), and viewed under UV light (Syngiene LF-206.LS lamp, South Africa) at 254 and 365 nm. Melting points were recorded, uncorrected, using Reichert<sup>(R)</sup> slide warmer hot plate microscopy. Nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) spectra were recorded on Bruker Avance<sup>TM</sup> II 600 MHz, Bruker Avance<sup>TM</sup> III HD 400 MHz and Bruker Fourier<sup>TM</sup> 300 MHz spectrometers. The NMR chemical shifts are reported in ppm downfield from tetramethylsilane (TMS), and the coupling constants are given in Herz (Hz). The NMR analyses were carried out in deuterated solvents, such as DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>, CDCl<sub>3</sub>, acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub> and methanol-*d*<sub>4</sub>, and the spectra calibrated using solvent signals [ $\delta_{\text{H}}$ : 7.26 ppm for residual CHCl<sub>3</sub>, 2.50 ppm for residual DMSO, 2.05 ppm for residual acetone and 3.31 ppm for residual MeOH;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ : 77.2 ppm (CDCl<sub>3</sub>), 39.5 ppm (DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>), 29.8 ppm (acetone-*d*<sub>6</sub>) and 49.0 ppm (MeOH-*d*<sub>4</sub>)]. Infrared (IR) spectra were obtained using a Perkin Elmer Spectrum 400 Frontier / FT-IR spectrometer; compounds were analysed neat. High resolution mass spectra (HRMS) were recorded on a Waters API Q-TOF Ultima spectrometer (University of Stellenbosch, Stellenbosch, South Africa). Compounds **7a-k**,<sup>37</sup>, **8a**,<sup>16,37</sup> **8b**,<sup>38</sup> **9a**,<sup>16,24</sup> **9b**,<sup>39</sup> **4a**,<sup>39-41</sup> **4e-g**,<sup>42</sup> **4h**<sup>39</sup> and **4k**<sup>43,44</sup> are known. The preparation and characterisation of the known compound **4a** and the new compounds are summarised below. NMR data for new compounds and bioassay procedures are provided in the supplementary data.

### Formation of the (*E*)-styrylthiazoles **4a-g** and the (*E*)-2-[2-(naphthalen-1-yl)vinyl]thiazoles **4h-l**.

**General procedure, exemplified by the preparation of 4-phenyl-2-styrylthiazole (**4a**).** A mixture of (*E*)-3-phenylprop-2-enethioamide (**9**) (0.082 g, 0.5 mmol) and 2-bromoacetophenone (0.099 g, 0.5 mmol) in ethanol (1.5 mL) was stirred at 70 °C for 1 h. The solvent was removed *in vacuo* and the crude product was extracted with EtOAc. The resulting solution was washed successively with satd. aq. NaHCO<sub>3</sub> and water, and dried (anhydr. Na<sub>2</sub>SO<sub>4</sub>), and the solvent was removed *in vacuo*. The crude product was purified using column chromatography on silica gel G<sub>60</sub>, eluting with hexane-EtOAc (3:2) to give, as a yellowish, fluffy solid, 4-phenyl-2-styrylthiazole (**4a**) (0.109 g, 82.6%), mp 130-132 °C (Lit.<sup>39-41</sup> 131.0-131.5 °C) [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>14</sub>NS (MH<sup>+</sup>) 264.0847. Found *M*+1, 264.0841];  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.07 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 8.00 (2H, d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, ArH), 7.72 (2H, d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH), 7.55 (2H, s, HC=CH), 7.50–7.40 (4H, overlapping m, ArH) and 7.39–7.33 (2H, overlapping m, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 165.8, 154.8, 135.3, 133.9, 133.7, 128.7, 128.6, 128.5, 127.9, 127.0, 125.9, 121.1 and 113.9 (ArC and HC=CH).

**(*E*)-4-(4-Chlorophenyl)-2-styrylthiazole (**4b**)** as a yellow solid (0.140 g, 94%), mp 150-153 °C [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>13</sub>NS<sup>35</sup>Cl (MH<sup>+</sup>), 298.0457. Found *M*+1, 298.0448];  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400



MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.15 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 8.04 (2H, d, *J* = 7.6 Hz, ArH), 7.73 (2H, d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH), 7.56 (2H, s, HC=CH), 7.53 (2H, d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, ArH), 7.42 (2H, t, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH) and 7.37 (1H, t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 166.2, 153.7, 135.4, 134.3, 132.8, 132.6, 129.0, 128.8, 128.7, 127.8, 127.3, 121.2 and 114.8 (ArC and HC=CH).

**(E)-4-(4-Bromophenyl)-2-styrylthiazole (4c)** as a fluffy, yellow solid (0.103 g, 60.1%), mp 169-170 °C [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>13</sub>NS<sup>79</sup>Br (MH<sup>+</sup>), 341.9952. Found *M*+1, 341.9945];  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.15 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 7.96 (2H, d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, ArH), 7.73 (2H, d, *J* = 7.0 Hz, ArH), 7.66 (2H, d, *J* = 8.0 Hz, ArH), 7.55 (2H, s, HC=CH), 7.42 (2H, dd, *J* = 6.6 Hz and *J* = 7.1 Hz, ArH), 7.37 (1H, t, *J* = 7.2 Hz, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 166.8, 154.2, 135.9, 134.8, 133.7, 132.2, 129.5, 129.4, 128.6, 127.8, 121.8, 121.7 and 115.4 (ArC and HC=CH).

**(E)-4-(4-Fluorophenyl)-2-styrylthiazole (4d)** as a yellow solid (0.091 g, 64.9%), mp 126-128 °C [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>17</sub>H<sub>13</sub>NSF (MH<sup>+</sup>), 282.0753. Found *M*+1, 282.0742];  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.06 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 8.04 (2H, m, ArH), 7.73 (2H, d, *J* = 7.1 Hz, ArH), 7.55 (2H, s, HC=CH), 7.42 (2H, t, *J*\* = 6 Hz, ArH), 7.37 (1H, m, ArH) and 7.30 (2H, t, *J*\* = 10 Hz, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 166.5, 163.5 (<sup>1</sup>*J*<sub>F,C</sub> = 246 Hz), 155.3, 136.0, 134.6, 131.0 (<sup>4</sup>*J*<sub>F,C</sub> = 3.6 Hz), 129.5, 129.4, 128.7 (<sup>3</sup>*J*<sub>F,C</sub> = 9.8 Hz), 127.8, 121.8, 116.1 (<sup>2</sup>*J*<sub>F,C</sub> = 21.9 Hz) and 114.4 (ArC, HC=CH and thiazolyl-C).

\* Overlapping doublets (*J*<sub>H,H</sub> and *J*<sub>F,H</sub>).

**(E)-4-(4-Chlorophenyl)-2-[2-(1-naphthalenyl)vinyl]thiazole (4i)** as a yellow solid, mp 118-120 °C; [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>15</sub>NS<sup>35</sup>Cl (MH<sup>+</sup>), 348.0614. Found *M*+1, 348.0606];  $\nu/\text{cm}^{-1}$  1560 (C=C) and 3143 (C=CH, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; CDCl<sub>3</sub>) 8.30 (1H, d, *J* = 16.1 Hz, CH=CH<sub>a</sub>), 8.26 (1H, d, *J* = 8.4 Hz, ArH), 7.93-7.86 (4H, m, ArH), 7.83 (1H, d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH), 7.62-7.57 (1H, m, ArH), 7.56-7.50 (2H, m, ArH), 7.44-7.39 (4H, overlapping m, 2 x ArH, CH=CH<sub>b</sub>, and thiazolyl-H);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; CDCl<sub>3</sub>) 167.2, 155.3, 134.2, 133.9, 133.2, 133.0, 131.8, 131.5, 129.5, 129.1, 128.9, 127.9, 126.7, 126.3, 125.8, 124.4, 124.1, 123.7 and 112.7 (ArC, HC=CH and thiazolyl-C).

**(E)-4-(4-Bromophenyl)-2-[2-(1-naphthalenyl)vinyl]thiazole (4j)** as a yellow solid, mp 120-122 °C; [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>15</sub>NS<sup>79</sup>Br (MH<sup>+</sup>) 392.0109. Found *M*+1, 392.0090];  $\nu/\text{cm}^{-1}$  1513 (C=C) and 3028 (C=CH, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; CDCl<sub>3</sub>) 8.30 (1H, d, *J* = 15.9 Hz, CH=CH<sub>a</sub>), 8.26 (1H, d, *J* = 8.3 Hz, ArH), 7.90-7.84 (4H, overlapping m, ArH), 7.83 (1H, d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH) 7.62-7.49 (5H, overlapping m, ArH), 7.45 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H) and 7.41 (1H, d, *J* = 15.9 Hz, CH=CH<sub>b</sub>);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; CDCl<sub>3</sub>) 167.0, 155.2, 133.8, 133.3, 133.1, 131.9, 131.7, 131.3, 129.4, 128.8, 128.0, 126.6, 126.1, 125.7, 124.2, 124.0, 123.5, 122.3 and 112.7 (ArC, HC=CH and thiazolyl-C).

**(E)-2-[2-(1-Naphthalenyl)vinyl]-4-(4-nitrophenyl)thiazole (4l)** as a bright yellow solid, mp 148-149 °C; [HRMS: *m/z* calculated for C<sub>21</sub>H<sub>15</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>S (MH<sup>+</sup>) 359.0854. Found *M*+1, 359.0839];  $\nu/\text{cm}^{-1}$  1598 (C=C) and 3101 (C=CH, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{H}}$ /ppm (400 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.52 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 8.41 (1H, d, *J* = 15.8 Hz, CH=CH<sub>a</sub>), 8.39-8.32 (5H, overlapping m, ArH), 8.05 (1H, d, *J* = 7.3 Hz, ArH), 8.02-7.98 (2H, overlapping m, ArH), 7.68-7.64 (2H, overlapping m, ArH) and 7.63-7.58 (2H, overlapping m, ArH and CH=CH<sub>b</sub>);  $\delta_{\text{C}}$ /ppm (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 166.8, 152.8, 146.8,

139.9, 133.4, 132.3, 131.1, 130.7, 129.5, 128.7, 127.1, 126.9, 126.3, 125.9, 124.4, 124.3, 123.5, 123.4 and 118.8 (ArC, HC=CH and thiazolyl-C).

### Hydrolysis of ethyl (*E*)-2-styrylthiazole-4-carboxylate (**4f**).

This was achieved using two different methods.

**Method 1.**<sup>45</sup> A solution of KOH (0.093 g, 0.5 mmol) in MeOH-H<sub>2</sub>O [(2:1), 300  $\mu$ L] was added to ethyl (*E*)-2-styrylthiazole-4-carboxylate (**4f**) (0.088 g, 0.25 mmol) in MeOH (250  $\mu$ L). The resulting solution was stirred at room temperature for 2 h, and the reaction was monitored by TLC [hexane-EtOAc (1:1)]. Addition of HCl (20%; 0.5 mL) to the reaction mixture precipitated (*E*)-2-styrylthiazole-4-carboxylic acid (**4g**) (0.038 g, 65.4%) as a yellow solid, mp 178-180 °C (this compound has been cited in the literature<sup>44</sup> without a mp) [HRMS:  $m/z$  calculated for C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>10</sub>NO<sub>2</sub>S (MH<sup>+</sup>) 232.0422. Found  $M+1$ , 232.0431];  $\nu/\text{cm}^{-1}$  1730 (C=O) and 2598-3140 (COOH);  $\delta_{\text{H}}/\text{ppm}$  (400 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 8.39 (1H, s, thiazolyl-H), 7.71 (2H,  $J$  = 8.2 Hz, ArH), 7.53 (2H, apparent d,  $\Delta\nu$  = 17.6 Hz, CH=CH), 7.42 (2H, t,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz, ArH) and 7.36 (1H, m, ArH);  $\delta_{\text{C}}/\text{ppm}$  (100 MHz; DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>) 166.4 (C=O), 162.0, 147.8, 135.2, 128.9, 128.1, 128.1, 128.0, 127.4 and 121.0 (ArC and HC=CH).

**Method 2.**<sup>43</sup> The procedure for the synthesis of compound **4a** was employed, using (*E*)-3-phenylprop-2-enethioamide **9** (0.163 g, 1 mmol) and bromopyruvic acid (0.167 g, 1 mmol) to obtain the desired product **4g** as a yellow solid (0.175 g, 75.5%).

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