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# Advances in A $\beta$ imaging probes: a comprehensive study of radiolabelled 1,3-diaryl-2-propen-1-ones for Alzheimer's disease: a review

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Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a formidable neurodegenerative disorder characterized by cognitive decline, memory impairment and inability to perform everyday tasks. In the pursuit of innovative diagnostic and therapeutic strategies, the synthesis and application of radiolabelled compounds have garnered significant attention. This review delves into the synthesis and biological significance of radiolabelled 1,3-diaryl-2-propen-1-ones, commonly known as chalcones, as A $\beta$  imaging probes for AD. These versatile chalcone derivatives have demonstrated noteworthy potential as radiotracers for visualizing A $\beta$  imaging probes, which are hallmark pathologies of AD. This review encompasses an exploration of chalcone synthesis *via* diverse methodologies and their biological implications, both as standalone entities and as precursors for intricate natural products. In addition, the pivotal role of advanced imaging techniques, such as single-photon emission computed tomography (SPECT) and positron emission tomography (PET), using various radioisotopes is highlighted. The use of radiopharmaceutical agents, including [<sup>18</sup>F]FDG, [<sup>18</sup>F]FMAPO, [<sup>11</sup>C]6-Me-BTA-1, [<sup>124/125</sup>I]IBETA, and [<sup>64</sup>Cu]YW-7 as potent tools for early diagnosis and therapeutic advancement is explored. This review underscores the critical

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nexus between radiolabelled chalcones and their pivotal role in advancing diagnostic and therapeutic paradigms in AD research. Furthermore, this study encapsulated the role of radiolabelled chalcone emphasizing their prospective implications for drug development and therapeutic interventions. A focal point of paramount significance is the elucidation of A $\beta$  imaging probes and its important role in the combat against AD, with a particular emphasis on their role in facilitating early diagnosis and fostering advancements in therapeutic strategies.

## 1. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a neurological disorder defined by increasing memory loss, cognitive deterioration, language impairment, disorientation, and the inability to perform regular activities.<sup>1-3</sup> Extracellular amyloid (A $\beta$ ) plaque development,

deposition, mitochondrial failure, oxidative stress, neuro-inflammation and intracellular neurofibrillary tangles are all symptoms of AD. The pathogenic feature of AD is the production of oligomer aggregates containing amyloid peptides (A $\beta$ <sub>40</sub> and A $\beta$ <sub>42</sub>) by abnormal cleavage of amyloid precursor proteins assisted by  $\alpha$ - and  $\gamma$ -secretase in the brain. AD affects the world's aging workforce, and a growing incidence might lead to higher



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Fig. 1 FDA-approved drugs for AD.

death and disability rates. By 2050, the number of Alzheimer's patients in the U.S. will have grown from 5.8 million to 13.8 million people.<sup>4-7</sup> In 1901, Alois Alzheimer, a psychiatrist and neuroanatomist from Germany discovered AD after he treated a 50 year-old lady who was showing signs of intellectual impairment, increasing disorientation and insomnia.<sup>8</sup> The medical assessment of her brain in 1906 revealed signs of senility, including plaques and tangles typical of aging. "Alzheimer's Disease" was eventually introduced to describe the disorder.<sup>9</sup> Cholinergic,  $\beta$ -amyloid hypotheses and tauopathy have dominated drug development for AD. Recently, other illnesses such as mitochondrial dysfunction and neuroinflammation have been included in the research.<sup>10</sup> The cholinesterase inhibitors such as donepezil (DPZ), memantine,<sup>11</sup> galantamine,<sup>12,13</sup> rivastigmine,<sup>14,15</sup> (Fig. 1) and a partial NMDA antagonist have been licensed by the FDA after years of study and breakthroughs in the field of pharmacotherapy. Unfortunately, these pharmaceutical medications can only cure AD symptoms for a short period and cannot halt or stop the disorder from spreading. As a result, more effective treatment

drugs that can prevent or reverse disease development should be recommended.<sup>16</sup> Radiopharmaceuticals<sup>17-19</sup> used for the treatment of AD are shown in Fig. 2.

## 2. Chalcones

(*E*)-1,3-Diphenyl-2-propene-1-one,<sup>1</sup> commonly known as chalcone, constitutes a distinctive chemical scaffold recurrently encountered in various natural flavonoids and isoflavonoids.<sup>20,21</sup> In the nineteenth century, Kostanecki and Tambor<sup>22</sup> embarked upon the synthesis of diverse natural chromophores, thereby coining the term "chalcone". This scaffold has acquired widespread significance within the scientific community due to its open-chain architecture, the abundance of exchangeable hydrogen atoms, and the capacity to yield an entirely novel class of chemical entities through structural modifications.<sup>23,24</sup> The synthesis of chalcones is facilitated through various methodologies such as base-catalyzed Claisen-Schmidt condensation, Wittig reaction, Friedel-Crafts acylation and Suzuki coupling reaction,<sup>25</sup> *etc.* This fundamental skeleton<sup>1</sup> serves as a versatile framework that can be significantly diversified. Common structural variations include substituting rings A and B with alternative heteroaryl entities and introducing multiple functional groups onto the phenyl ring such as amine, methoxy, hydroxy and halogens (Cl, F, Br), resulting in the enhancement of the biological potential of chalcones.<sup>26</sup> Additionally, modifications involving the fusion of ring A with the  $\alpha$ -carbon, as well as other alternations enumerated earlier, contribute to the structural diversity. Chalcones play a pivotal role as intermediates in the synthesis of biologically active heterocyclic compounds including isoxazole,<sup>27</sup> thiadiazol,<sup>28</sup> benzodiazepine,<sup>29</sup> pyrazoles,<sup>30</sup> pyrimidines,<sup>31</sup> benzothiazepines,<sup>32</sup> pyrazoline<sup>33</sup> *etc.* The remarkable biological versatility of chalcones is underscored by their engagement in a spectrum of activities encompassing anti-histaminic,<sup>34</sup> anti-cancer,<sup>35</sup> anti-retroviral,<sup>36</sup> anti-tubulin,<sup>37</sup> anti-hypertensive,<sup>38</sup> anti-oxidant,<sup>39</sup> anti-neoplastic,<sup>38</sup> anti-ulcer,<sup>40</sup> anti-tuberculosis,<sup>39</sup> anti-diabetic,<sup>41</sup> anti-inflammatory,<sup>42</sup> anti-Parkinson's,<sup>43</sup> and anti-AD<sup>44</sup> (Fig. 3) *etc.* The profound potential of the chalcone<sup>1</sup> has engendered remarkable interest in pharmaceutical research, particularly in the context of central nervous system disorders such as AD.<sup>43</sup> Although the structure of these compounds has been explored for its potential biological properties, only a scant number of chalcone-based probes have been investigated as viable radiotracers. Within the context of AD, chalcones and their derivatives have exhibited notable pharmacological potential across multiple targets, notably in the inhibition of A $\beta$ -fibrils aggregation and the activity of pivotal enzymatic systems such as acetylcholinesterase (AChE), butyrylcholinesterase (BuChE) and pseudocholinesterase. These enzymatic systems bear relevance to the development and progression of AD as per the cholinergic hypothesis.<sup>4</sup> It is acknowledged that aromatic structures within compounds can impede fibril assembly by disrupting the  $\mu$ -stacking arrangement within their hydrophobic core.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, a comprehensive understanding of the nuanced role exerted by functional groups situated on the aryl moieties of



Fig. 2 Radiopharmaceuticals labelled with <sup>18</sup>F, <sup>11</sup>C, <sup>124/125</sup>I, <sup>99m</sup>Tc for AD.



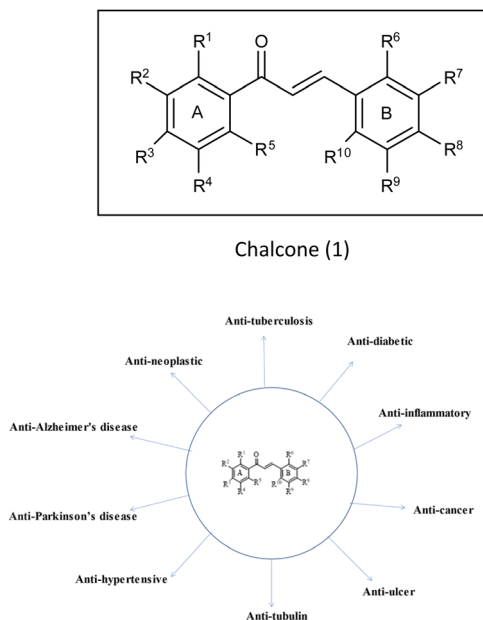


Fig. 3 Vast biological profile of chalcone.

chalcones in modulating binding affinity for A $\beta$ -plaques remains a relatively uncharted domain, constituting the focal theme of the present review. A wide variety of radiolabelled chalcones have been studied as a potential building block for anti-AD medication development. Researchers believe that Congo red (CR) and vitamin thioflavin (ThT) have the potential to be used intravenously as probes to detect brain-amyloid plaques. Compounds like [<sup>18</sup>F]-FDDNP,<sup>45,46</sup> [<sup>11</sup>C] 6-OH-BTA-1,<sup>47</sup> and [<sup>11</sup>C]SB-13,<sup>48</sup> have been tested in clinical studies, demonstrating that A $\beta$ -plaques may be seen in the natural human brain.<sup>49–51</sup>

The advent of chalcone-derived A $\beta$  imaging signifies a novel and unexplored domain within the realm of chemical investigation, extending the frontiers of existing knowledge. Chalcones and their analogues emerge as prospective candidates, holding promise for deployment as diagnostic tools or therapeutic entities in the amelioration of AD. This review elucidates the latest strides in the synthesis of radiolabelled chalcones, illuminating their significant contributions in the therapeutic landscape of AD. The organization of this review is structured around five distinct thematic categories, delineating diverse sets of radiotracers harnessed for this purpose.

### 3. <sup>125</sup>I labelled chalcones for AD

Mengchao Cui and colleagues<sup>52</sup> executed the synthesis of chalcone derivatives through a meticulously orchestrated Claisen-condensation reaction, involving substituted acetophenones<sup>1</sup> and indole carbaldehyde<sup>2</sup> in the presence of a basic catalyst *i.e.* 28% sodium methoxide (CH<sub>3</sub>ONa) in ethanol at ambient temperature. To generate the tributyltin precursor,<sup>11</sup> a bromo to tributyltin exchange reaction was undertaken, catalyzed by tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium [(PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>4</sub>Pd]. This synthetic endeavour yielded products across a spectrum from modest to

Table 1 Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ ) for binding to A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates versus [<sup>125</sup>I]IMPY<sup>52</sup>

| Compound | R                    | $K_i$ (nM)   |
|----------|----------------------|--------------|
| 3        | 4-Fluorophenyl       | 35.06 ± 6.21 |
| 4        | 4-Chlorophenyl       | 8.43 ± 2.13  |
| 5        | 4-Bromophenyl        | 8.96 ± 0.92  |
| 6        | 4-Iodophenyl         | 8.22 ± 1.46  |
| 7        | 4-Hydroxyphenyl      | >360         |
| 8        | 4-Methoxyphenyl      | 8.52 ± 2.15  |
| 9        | 4-Aminophenyl        | >1008        |
| 10       | 4-Methylaminophenyl  | 51.09 ± 7.71 |
| 11       | 4-Diethylaminophenyl | 5.17 ± 0.32  |
| DMIC-14  | —                    | 1.97 ± 0.26  |
| IMPY     | —                    | 10.5 ± 1.0   |

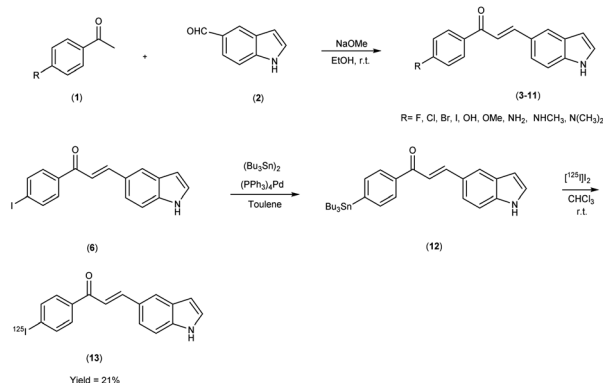
commendable yields. The preparation of the tributyltin precursor material was accomplished *via* an exchange reaction. The synthetic pathway was then extended to the synthesis of radiolabelled chalcones, employing a strategically designed [<sup>125</sup>I] iodine-labelled probe. These chalcones were subjected to meticulous biological scrutiny, wherein they underwent competitive binding assays targeting A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates by employing [<sup>125</sup>I] IMPY as a standard reference. The binding affinities of these compounds displayed a noteworthy range spanning from 4.46 nM to surpassing >1008 nM, contingent upon the specific substitution patterns exhibited on the phenyl ring (Table 1). Notably, the incorporation of halogen moieties, methylated amines and the hydroxy functional group onto the phenyl ring produced augmented binding affinities. Upon the co-introduction of indole derivatives alongside IMPY, the emergence of a shared binding site became evident, suggesting a plausible convergence of binding interactions. Much to our astonishment, DMIC-14 demonstrated a dose-dependent inhibition of the binding of [<sup>125</sup>I]IMPY. This inhibition exhibited a strong affinity for A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates, as indicated by a high binding constant ( $K_i = 1.97$  nM) (DMIC-14). These results implied that both chalcone and IMPY might target the identical binding site (thioflavin-T) on A $\beta$  aggregates that possess overlapping binding sites. Nonetheless, empirical investigations involving normal mice unveiled a notably limited *in vivo* cerebral uptake for [<sup>125</sup>I]-(*E*)-3-(1*H*-indol-5-yl)-1-(4-iodophenyl)prop-2-en-1-one<sup>13</sup> (0.41% injected dose per gram of brain tissue at 2 minutes post-administration) (Table 2). The subsequent *in vivo* experimentation in murine subjects indicated subdued neuro-infiltration of the introduced compounds within brain tissues. The intricate indole-chalcone molecular architecture stands poised for prospective refinements through judicious chemical modifications, with the eventual aim of fashioning a bespoke A $\beta$ -amyloid probe, thereby advancing our investigatory capabilities within the realm of amyloid-associated research (Scheme 1).

Masahiro Ono and co-researchers<sup>53</sup> orchestrated the synthesis of an innovative series of diphenylpropynone (DPP) derivatives through the strategic replacement of double bond inherent in chalcones with a more reactive triple bond. The DPP derivatives<sup>16–18</sup> were synthesized through a series of chemical



Table 2 Biodistribution in normal ddY mice after injection of radiolabelled compound 13

| Compound  | Organs      | Time after injection (min) |             |             |              |             |
|-----------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|-------------|
|           |             | 2 min                      | 15 min      | 30 min      | 60 min       | 120 min     |
| 13        | Blood       | 8.85 ± 0.48                | 5.70 ± 0.24 | 4.79 ± 0.53 | 4.15 ± 0.51  | 3.72 ± 0.77 |
|           | Brain       | 0.41 ± 0.02                | 0.29 ± 0.02 | 0.20 ± 0.03 | 0.21 ± 0.05  | 0.13 ± 0.02 |
|           | Heart       | 3.27 ± 0.31                | 2.27 ± 0.25 | 1.72 ± 0.10 | 1.61 ± 0.21  | 1.33 ± 0.26 |
|           | Liver       | 2.69 ± 0.22                | 2.21 ± 0.10 | 1.91 ± 0.22 | 11.48 ± 0.25 | 1.43 ± 0.42 |
|           | Spleen      | 3.02 ± 0.48                | 2.96 ± 0.84 | 2.40 ± 0.16 | 2.27 ± 0.34  | 1.89 ± 0.31 |
|           | Lung        | 7.33 ± 0.71                | 4.86 ± 0.17 | 4.20 ± 0.27 | 3.40 ± 0.59  | 3.19 ± 0.63 |
|           | Kidney      | 7.30 ± 1.08                | 4.03 ± 0.12 | 3.26 ± 0.07 | 3.11 ± 0.33  | 2.78 ± 0.19 |
|           | Stomach     | 2.01 ± 0.37                | 1.07 ± 0.28 | 0.85 ± 0.10 | 0.96 ± 0.34  | 1.19 ± 0.52 |
| Intestine | 1.36 ± 0.27 | 2.01 ± 0.43                | 2.32 ± 0.53 | 1.72 ± 0.43 | 2.13 ± 0.56  |             |



Scheme 1

reactions. The initial step involved the coupling of benzoyl chloride, *i.e.* *p*-iodobenzoyl chloride, or *p*-bromobenzoyl chloride, with phenylacetylene (4-ethynyl-*N,N*-dimethylaniline or *p*-ethynyl anisole). The reaction was catalyzed by palladium acetate (Pd(OAc)<sub>2</sub>) and base triethylamine (Et<sub>3</sub>N) was used. Subsequently, compound 21 was transformed into compound 22 through a demethylation process using boron tribromide (BBr<sub>3</sub>) in dichloromethane. The tributyltin derivative 23 was prepared from the bromo compound 17 *via* a bromo to tributyltin exchange reaction catalyzed by palladium (Pd(0)). This tributyltin derivative served as the initial substrate for radioiodination in the synthesis of [<sup>125</sup>I]24. The novel radioiodinated DPP derivative, denoted as [<sup>125</sup>I]24, was synthesized through an iodostannylation process employing hydrogen peroxide as the oxidant. This procedure successfully yielded the desired radioiodinated ligand. Notably, the absence of geometric isomerism, a complication often encountered in their double-bonded counterparts, confers a distinct advantage to this novel DPP family. The evaluation of these compounds encompassed their suitability for *in vivo* imaging applications within in the realm of AD and other neurovegetative disorders. Through a suite of binding assays conducted *in vitro*, these derivatives revealed a conspicuous and noteworthy affinity toward Aβ<sub>1-42</sub> aggregates, as substantiated by *k<sub>i</sub>* values spanning the range of 6 nM to 326 nM. Furthermore, the efficacy of these compounds was exemplified through the selective labelling of plaques, which was distinctly observable within brain tissue

sections procured from Tg2576 transgenic mice (Table 3). To discern their performance, a comparative analysis was conducted, leveraging the established [<sup>125</sup>I] IMPY as the standard reference. The radiolabelling of DPP derivative<sup>17</sup> was adeptly achieved utilizing [Na<sup>125</sup>I], followed by meticulous assessment *via* competitive binding assays. Upon embarking on biodistribution studies in normal murine models, it was observed that in the subsequent biodistribution investigations encompassing normal mice, the radiolabelled derivative [<sup>125</sup>I] exhibited an appreciable yet measured cerebral uptake (1.55% injected dose per gram of brain tissue at 2 minutes post-administration) and a concomitant progressive reduction in cerebral concentration over time (0.76% injected dose per gram of brain tissue at 60 minutes post-administration) (Table 4). Intriguingly, the non-radioiodinated DPP ligand displayed a discernibly lesser affinity for Aβ plaques when juxtaposed with its radioiodinated DPP ligand counterparts. This finding accentuates the advantageous role of radiolabelling in bolstering the binding affinity of DPP derivatives towards Aβ aggregates (Scheme 2).

In 2007, Masahiro Ono and co-workers<sup>54</sup> revealed the judicious synthesis of chalcones<sup>27</sup> through a transformative reaction involving substituted acetophenone<sup>25</sup> and carbaldehyde,<sup>26</sup> devised within the venerable Claisen condensation framework. The tributyltin derivatives,<sup>29</sup> were prepared from their respective bromo compounds through a bromo-to-tributyltin exchange reaction. This transformation was facilitated by palladium in its zero oxidation state, Pd(0). Subsequently, the tributyltin derivatives were readily subjected to a reaction with iodine in chloroform (CHCl<sub>3</sub>) under ambient conditions, yielding the corresponding iodo derivatives. Additionally, these tributyltin

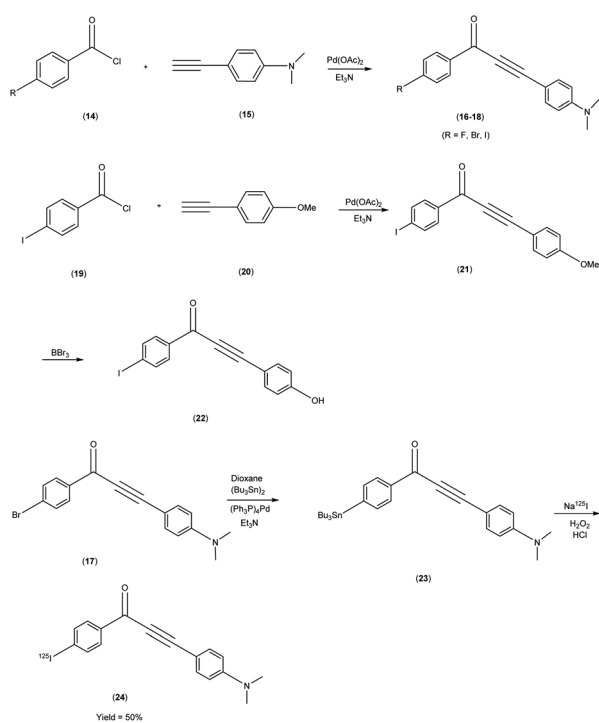
Table 3 Inhibition by DPP derivatives of ligand binding to Aβ<sub>1-42</sub> aggregates

| Compound | <i>K<sub>i</sub></i> (nM) |
|----------|---------------------------|
| 16       | 20.4 ± 1.3                |
| 18       | 6.0 ± 0.15                |
| 21       | 13.7 ± 5.0                |
| 22       | 325.8 ± 13.8              |
| IMPY     | 45.6 ± 11.5               |



Table 4 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of radiolabelled compound 24 in normal mice

| Compound | Organ     | Time after injection (min) |              |              |              |
|----------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|          |           | 2 min                      | 10 min       | 30 min       | 60 min       |
| 24       | Blood     | 6.19 ± 1.05                | 5.44 ± 0.36  | 3.94 ± 0.46  | 3.07 ± 0.20  |
|          | Liver     | 19.96 ± 2.47               | 15.29 ± 1.81 | 12.02 ± 1.21 | 10.06 ± 1.07 |
|          | Kidney    | 10.45 ± 1.82               | 9.81 ± 1.31  | 8.34 ± 0.77  | 7.75 ± 0.71  |
|          | Intestine | 2.73 ± 0.79                | 8.44 ± 1.67  | 12.04 ± 1.44 | 14.02 ± 1.77 |
|          | Spleen    | 4.41 ± 0.95                | 5.19 ± 0.93  | 5.47 ± 0.27  | 4.43 ± 1.64  |
|          | Stomach   | 0.75 ± 0.16                | 2.97 ± 2.55  | 2.35 ± 1.38  | 1.46 ± 0.38  |
|          | Pancreas  | 3.90 ± 0.44                | 3.39 ± 0.31  | 2.57 ± 0.30  | 2.09 ± 0.13  |
|          | Heart     | 10.00 ± 1.19               | 7.53 ± 1.14  | 6.03 ± 0.46  | 4.94 ± 0.54  |
|          | Brain     | 1.55 ± 0.26                | 1.23 ± 0.09  | 0.93 ± 0.06  | 0.76 ± 0.07  |



Scheme 2

derivatives served as suitable starting materials for radioiodination. The production of novel radioiodinated chalcones was achieved *via* an iododestannylation reaction, with hydrogen peroxide utilized as the oxidant. This process successfully

Table 5 Inhibition constants of chalcone derivatives on ligand binding to A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates

| Compound     | R                       | K <sub>i</sub> (nM) |
|--------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| 29           | Amino                   | 104.7 ± 12.0        |
| 30           | Methylamine             | 6.3 ± 1.6           |
| 31           | <i>N</i> -Dimethylamine | 2.9 ± 0.3           |
| 32           | Methoxy                 | 6.3 ± 1.7           |
| 33           | Hydroxy                 | 21.4 ± 1.4          |
| Thioflavin T | —                       | >10 000             |
| Congo red    | —                       | >10 000             |

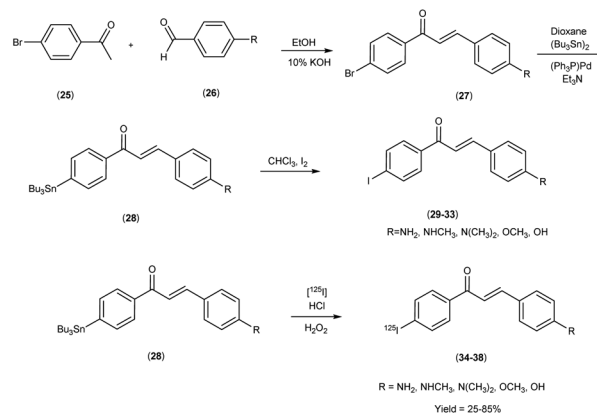
produced the anticipated radioiodinated ligands (34 to 38) in 25% to 85% yields. These chalcone entities, adorned with radiolabelled, were deftly harnessed as probes to scrutinize the intricate binding dynamics entailed in their interaction with A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates. The span of these architectural scaffolds in the realm of binding experiments is one that spans from the confines of 3 nm to the expanses of 105 nm, thereby encapsulating a diverse panorama of molecular interactions (Table 5). The biodistribution investigations conducted in murine subjects of standard physiological condition after intravenous administration of radioiodinated chalcones<sup>34–38</sup> manifested a noteworthy elevation in cerebral uptake (ranging from 2.0 & to 4.7% injected dose per gram) (% ID/g) at the 2 minutes time, concomitant with expeditious elimination from the cerebral region (ranging from 0.2% to 0.6% ID/g at the 30 minutes interval) (Table 6). In a comparative spectroscopic discourse, the resonances of radioiodinated chalcones were elegantly juxtaposed against their non-radioiodinated counterparts. Evidently, the former cohort displayed an elevated predilection for binding to the A $\beta$  plaques, thereby underscoring their heightened affinity towards these pathogenic markers (Scheme 3).

In 2011, Mengchao Cui *et al.*<sup>55</sup> engendered a paradigm shift through the generation of an innovative and heterogeneous assemblage of dibenzylideneacetones, which were subsequently subjected to an intricate scrutiny of their affiliative tendencies towards A $\beta$  aggregates across a spectrum of distinctive ligand binding loci. The central and crucial step in this synthetic pathway involved the base-catalyzed Claisen condensation reaction, which was initiated by employing suitably substituted aromatic aldehydes<sup>26</sup> in conjunction with aliphatic ketones.<sup>39</sup> The tributyltin precursor<sup>45</sup> was meticulously prepared from their respective bromo compounds<sup>42–44</sup> *via* a bromo-to-tributyltin exchange reaction. This reaction was efficiently catalyzed by tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)palladium [(Ph<sub>3</sub>P)<sub>4</sub>Pd]. The radioiodinated ligands *i.e.* [<sup>125</sup>I]48, 49 and 50, were subsequently synthesized from the corresponding tributyltin precursors by means of an iododestannylation reaction. This transformation was conducted with hydrogen peroxide serving as the oxidizing agent, yielding radiochemical yields of 27.6%, 15.3%, and 24.1%, respectively. Finally, the radiochemical identity of [<sup>125</sup>I]48, 49 and 50 was rigorously verified



**Table 6** Biodistribution of radioactivity after intravenous administration of radiolabelled compounds **34**, **35**, **36**, **37** and **38** in mice

| Compounds | Organs    | Time after injection (min) |              |
|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|
|           |           | 2 min                      | 10 min       |
| <b>34</b> | Blood     | 3.62 ± 0.69                | 1.46 ± 0.32  |
|           | Liver     | 7.52 ± 0.72                | 8.16 ± 2.15  |
|           | Kidney    | 6.96 ± 0.43                | 6.34 ± 3.51  |
|           | Intestine | 1.84 ± 0.32                | 11.27 ± 3.34 |
|           | Spleen    | 1.53 ± 0.37                | 0.60 ± 0.25  |
|           | Lung      | 4.74 ± 1.05                | 1.43 ± 0.23  |
|           | Stomach   | 0.87 ± 0.16                | 1.58 ± 0.44  |
|           | Heart     | 4.59 ± 0.54                | 0.84 ± 0.19  |
|           | Brain     | 4.49 ± 0.55                | 0.46 ± 0.07  |
|           | <b>35</b> | Blood                      | 1.64 ± 0.47  |
| Liver     |           | 7.20 ± 1.72                | 8.61 ± 1.13  |
| Kidney    |           | 6.62 ± 1.10                | 11.43 ± 4.02 |
| Intestine |           | 2.06 ± 0.35                | 10.46 ± 1.71 |
| Spleen    |           | 2.85 ± 0.81                | 0.80 ± 0.28  |
| Lung      |           | 8.30 ± 3.43                | 4.01 ± 0.30  |
| Stomach   |           | 1.02 ± 0.50                | 1.28 ± 0.41  |
| Heart     |           | 4.72 ± 1.00                | 1.08 ± 0.16  |
| Brain     |           | 4.72 ± 1.50                | 0.61 ± 0.11  |
| <b>36</b> |           | Blood                      | 1.85 ± 0.40  |
|           | Liver     | 10.02 ± 0.57               | 11.04 ± 2.42 |
|           | Kidney    | 5.32 ± 0.74                | 11.62 ± 2.06 |
|           | Intestine | 1.31 ± 0.16                | 10.38 ± 2.37 |
|           | Spleen    | 1.37 ± 0.21                | 0.60 ± 0.08  |
|           | Lung      | 3.40 ± 0.11                | 1.84 ± 0.15  |
|           | Stomach   | 0.96 ± 0.09                | 2.45 ± 0.19  |
|           | Heart     | 3.92 ± 0.36                | 1.18 ± 0.30  |
|           | Brain     | 2.04 ± 0.36                | 0.49 ± 0.08  |
|           | <b>37</b> | Blood                      | 1.34 ± 0.20  |
| Liver     |           | 5.97 ± 0.97                | 4.03 ± 0.72  |
| Kidney    |           | 4.61 ± 0.72                | 3.27 ± 0.28  |
| Intestine |           | 1.93 ± 0.28                | 10.19 ± 0.51 |
| Spleen    |           | 1.38 ± 0.21                | 0.29 ± 0.07  |
| Lung      |           | 3.81 ± 0.87                | 0.79 ± 0.13  |
| Stomach   |           | 0.9 ± 0.37                 | 2.11 ± 2.38  |
| Heart     |           | 3.74 ± 0.92                | 0.63 ± 0.18  |
| Brain     |           | 2.45 ± 0.49                | 0.22 ± 0.08  |
| <b>38</b> |           | Blood                      | 1.89 ± 0.13  |
|           | Liver     | 8.39 ± 1.49                | 6.64 ± 0.46  |
|           | Kidney    | 9.30 ± 0.84                | 3.51 ± 0.28  |
|           | Intestine | 1.87 ± 0.32                | 12.94 ± 2.43 |
|           | Spleen    | 3.56 ± 0.99                | 1.04 ± 0.25  |
|           | Lung      | 10.04 ± 2.09               | 1.04 ± 0.07  |
|           | Stomach   | 1.22 ± 0.19                | 2.16 ± 0.55  |
|           | Heart     | 5.92 ± 1.32                | 0.49 ± 0.06  |
|           | Brain     | 3.57 ± 0.39                | 0.40 ± 0.02  |

**Scheme 3****Table 7** Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) for binding to aggregates of  $A\beta_{1-42}$  versus [ $^{125}I$ ]IMPY

| Compound  | R             | $K_i$ (nM) |
|-----------|---------------|------------|
| <b>44</b> | Dimethylamino | 2.8 ± 0.5  |
| <b>46</b> | Methyl amino  | 2.8 ± 0.5  |
| <b>47</b> | Amino         | 7.0 ± 2.2  |

instigated through a comparative analysis, wherein the venerable [ $^{125}I$ ] served as the lodestar reference. In the view of the intricate structure–activity relationship (SAR), a cogent narrative emerged wherein the strategic substitution of the phenyl moiety with both electron-donating and electron-withdrawing appendages unveiled a vista of noteworthy compatibility in comparison with  $A\beta$  aggregates, thereby etching an indelible imprint upon the binding affinities exhibited by the dibenzylideneacetone substrate. The assessment of binding interactions between radiolabelled tracers (**48** to **50**) and  $A\beta$  plaques within brain tissue sections derived from AD patients or transgenic mice (APP/PS1) was conducted through *in vitro* autoradiography. As illustrated in Table 8, two of the radioiodinated probes, specifically compounds **48** and **50**, demonstrated pronounced affinity for plaques, producing robust signal intensities primarily localized within the cortical region, while maintaining minimal background signal in the white matter of the AD brain sections. The lipophilicity, quantified by the logarithm of the distribution coefficient ( $\log D$ ), for the radiolabelled tracers, was determined under experimental conditions, revealing relatively elevated partition coefficients ( $\log D = 2.97$  to  $3.66$ ). This observation reflects the inherently lipophilic characteristics of these probes. Furthermore, the thyroidal accumulation of the three radioiodinated probes was observed to attain levels ranging from 14% to 24% of the injected dose per gram of tissue (ID/g) at the 1 hour post-injection time point. This finding is indicative of *in vivo* deiodination. Intriguingly, these radioiodinated ligand entities showcased a resounding congruence with the  $A\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, a salient observation borne out by an astute confluence of experimental assays and analytical acumen. Further, refinement through structural

through HPLC by concurrent injection with their nonradioactive counterparts, thus ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the radiotracer compounds. The introduction of a substituent group at the *ortho* position resulted in a substantial reduction or complete elimination of binding affinity. Conversely, the *para* position exhibited remarkable tolerance towards sterically demanding substitutions. During this study, three radioiodinated ligands (compounds **48**, **49**, and **50**) were meticulously synthesized, all of which exhibited exceptionally high affinities for  $A\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, with binding affinities spanning a range of 0.9 to 7.0 nM (Table 7). A discerning discourse was



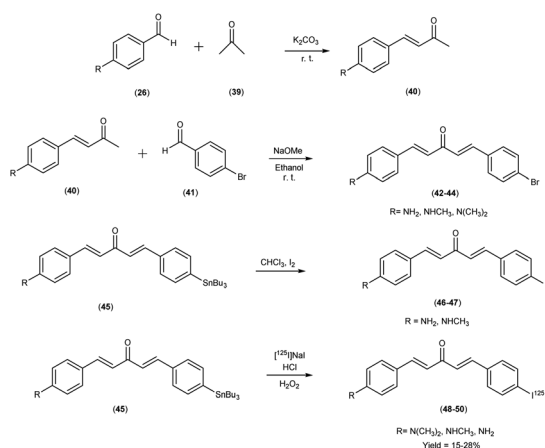
Table 8 Biodistribution of radioactivity after intravenous administration of radiolabelled compounds 48, 49, 50 in mice

| Compounds | Organs    | Time after injection (min) |              |               |              |               |             |
|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|---------------|-------------|
|           |           | 2 min                      | 15 min       | 30 min        | 60 min       | 120 min       |             |
| 48        | Blood     | 11.62 ± 1.22               | 6.58 ± 2.15  | 3.98 ± 0.28   | 2.16 ± 0.55  | 2.29 ± 0.65   |             |
|           | Brain     | 1.59 ± 0.04                | 1.11 ± 0.28  | 0.63 ± 0.03   | 0.28 ± 0.03  | 0.26 ± 0.07   |             |
|           | Heart     | 6.42 ± 0.80                | 2.69 ± 0.85  | 1.62 ± 0.20   | 1.03 ± 0.24  | 1.19 ± 0.17   |             |
|           | Liver     | 44.64 ± 6.19               | 32.80 ± 5.01 | 24.64 ± 2.85  | 11.54 ± 0.60 | 16.47 ± 1.38  |             |
|           | Spleen    | 11.59 ± 1.10               | 9.94 ± 2.07  | 12.26 ± 3.95  | 6.28 ± 2.87  | 7.34 ± 0.67   |             |
|           | Lung      | 24.45 ± 1.67               | 12.97 ± 3.05 | 6.91 ± 1.32   | 3.64 ± 0.47  | 3.35 ± 0.12   |             |
|           | Kidney    | 15.86 ± 1.37               | 22.23 ± 5.52 | 15.63 ± 1.71  | 7.00 ± 2.62  | 8.55 ± 1.98   |             |
|           | Stomach   | 1.16 ± 0.15                | 1.75 ± 0.15  | 1.85 ± 0.27   | 0.61 ± 0.24  | 0.77 ± 0.29   |             |
|           | Intestine | 1.38 ± 0.38                | 7.38 ± 2.75  | 11.62 ± 3.42  | 7.68 ± 2.53  | 17.65 ± 2.91  |             |
|           | Thyroid   | 11.56 ± 2.61               | 14.93 ± 1.09 | 26.77 ± 1.41  | 23.53 ± 6.25 | 32.22 ± 1.13  |             |
|           | 49        | Blood                      | 7.48 ± 0.81  | 6.02 ± 1.80   | 4.84 ± 1.40  | 3.35 ± 0.90   | 4.46 ± 0.92 |
|           |           | Brain                      | 4.68 ± 0.25  | 2.62 ± 0.22   | 1.38 ± 0.23  | 0.71 ± 0.06   | 0.54 ± 0.09 |
| Heart     |           | 8.11 ± 1.74                | 4.14 ± 1.36  | 3.29 ± 1.42   | 1.74 ± 0.73  | 1.91 ± 0.60   |             |
| Liver     |           | 39.22 ± 4.48               | 40.83 ± 4.21 | 23.88 ± 4.21  | 22.63 ± 3.73 | 27.83 ± 2.15  |             |
| Spleen    |           | 4.57 ± 0.55                | 3.36 ± 0.14  | 2.22 ± 0.94   | 1.52 ± 0.38  | 1.23 ± 0.23   |             |
| Lung      |           | 9.67 ± 1.12                | 7.42 ± 2.95  | 6.18 ± 2.58   | 3.50 ± 0.70  | 3.90 ± 0.73   |             |
| Kidney    |           | 14.73 ± 2.23               | 16.49 ± 3.52 | 15.54 ± 5.56  | 10.46 ± 2.92 | 13.43 ± 4.53  |             |
| Stomach   |           | 3.26 ± 1.37                | 3.82 ± 0.67  | 3.17 ± 0.97   | 3.34 ± 0.93  | 4.49 ± 0.82   |             |
| Intestine |           | 3.53 ± 1.19                | 10.33 ± 4.30 | 13.19 ± 5.85  | 23.62 ± 3.87 | 41.29 ± 9.04  |             |
| Thyroid   |           | 18.20 ± 2.65               | 28.09 ± 4.45 | 27.78 ± 10.74 | 23.96 ± 3.78 | 72.93 ± 10.03 |             |
| 50        |           | Blood                      | 3.89 ± 0.34  | 4.93 ± 1.91   | 4.12 ± 0.33  | 1.72 ± 0.58   | 2.52 ± 0.19 |
|           |           | Brain                      | 4.56 ± 0.42  | 2.37 ± 0.32   | 1.36 ± 0.19  | 0.54 ± 0.12   | 0.40 ± 0.07 |
|           | Heart     | 7.06 ± 1.37                | 3.45 ± 0.59  | 2.01 ± 0.30   | 0.83 ± 0.17  | 1.11 ± 0.09   |             |
|           | Liver     | 16.98 ± 2.29               | 29.08 ± 4.93 | 24.17 ± 4.15  | 16.43 ± 2.32 | 17.57 ± 1.63  |             |
|           | Spleen    | 2.80 ± 0.15                | 2.02 ± 0.41  | 1.79 ± 0.17   | 0.80 ± 0.14  | 1.13 ± 0.39   |             |
|           | Lung      | 9.25 ± 1.09                | 6.06 ± 1.18  | 4.81 ± 0.43   | 2.43 ± 0.76  | 2.82 ± 0.16   |             |
|           | Kidney    | 11.20 ± 0.10               | 22.81 ± 3.42 | 16.31 ± 1.81  | 9.00 ± 1.67  | 9.52 ± 0.79   |             |
|           | Stomach   | 1.37 ± 0.37                | 3.10 ± 2.24  | 3.12 ± 0.92   | 2.12 ± 0.62  | 3.07 ± 0.58   |             |
|           | Intestine | 2.27 ± 0.17                | 6.90 ± 2.44  | 10.85 ± 3.68  | 25.97 ± 4.93 | 25.70 ± 1.48  |             |
|           | Thyroid   | 8.64 ± 2.19                | 8.39 ± 0.51  | 11.49 ± 3.53  | 14.14 ± 4.83 | 21.98 ± 3.75  |             |

exploration culminated in the crystallization of a pivotal insight into the *N,N*-dimethylamino substitution motif endowed the radiolabelled chalcones with a profound predisposition towards Aβ<sub>1-42</sub> aggregates, thereby establishing a cardinal tenet in the realm of molecular recognition. Embarking upon a trajectory of biodistribution inquiries, the radiolabelled

compounds exhibited a spirited foray into the cerebral milieu, marked by a robust initial penetration and expeditious clearance. In a poignant juxtaposition, the affinitive ardor of radioiodinated counterparts eclipsed that of their fluorinated brethren, thereby accentuating the heightened affinity engendered by the former compounds (Scheme 4).

In 2007, Masahiro Ono *et al.*<sup>56</sup> embarked upon the innovative synthesis of chalcone encompassed a base-catalyzed condensation process, wherein appropriately substituted ketones (**1** & **56**) were coupled with substituted benzaldehydes or heterocyclic aldehydes. Within this procedure, the substituted ketones were treated with the corresponding substituted benzaldehydes<sup>41</sup> or heterocyclic aldehydes<sup>56</sup> in the presence of a 10% aqueous potassium hydroxide (KOH) solution in ethanol at ambient temperature. This reaction led to the formation of the intended chalcone (**51** & **58** to **77**). The tin compounds (**51** & **78**) were derived from their respective bromo compounds (**52** & **79**). This conversion was facilitated by a bromo-to-tributyltin exchange reaction, catalyzed by palladium in its zero oxidation state, Pd(0). Subsequently, the tributyltin derivative (**79**) was readily subjected to a reaction with iodine in chloroform under ambient conditions, yielding the corresponding iodo derivatives, **53** to **55**. Furthermore, the tributyltin derivative **79** was employed as the starting material for radioiodination in the



Scheme 4





synthesis of [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]79. This novel radioiodinated ligand was successfully produced through an iododestannylation reaction, utilizing hydrogen peroxide as the oxidizing agent, ultimately yielding the desired radioiodinated ligand (80). The resulting ensemble of molecular entities, ranging in yield from modest to outstanding, bore witness to the intricate orchestration of this synthetic enterprise. Eager to unveil the intricate nuances of ligand A $\beta$  amyloid interactions, a comprehensive exploration unfolded wherein these newly minted chalcone derivatives assumed the mantle of A $\beta$ -amyloid imaging probes. This experimental saga revealed a pronounced affinity towards the A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, standing as a poignant testament to the judicious molecular design and synthetic endeavor. During *in vitro* binding investigations involving A $\beta$  aggregates, a diverse spectrum of  $K_i$  values was ascertained, underscoring their structural dependence. Notably, compound 58, which exhibited the most elevated binding affinity towards A $\beta$  aggregates, conspicuously demonstrated specific staining of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques and cerebrovascular amyloids within the ambit of the *in vitro* binding assays (Table 9). Collectively, these findings strongly advocate for the imperative pursuit of comprehensive investigations into the utility of the novel radioiodinated compound 80 as a prospective and valuable imaging probe for A $\beta$ -amyloid deposits. The unfolding binding studies, an endeavor of discerning scholarship, unveiled a compelling narrative wherein the radioiodinated chalcones exhibited a heightened proclivity for binding compared to their radioiodinated flavone counterparts. This observation resonates

profoundly with the stratagem of molecular modification, resonating with an overarching theme of molecular recognition and affinity. In the context of elucidating the structure–activity relationship (SAR) governing binding affinities towards synthetic A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, compound [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ](*E*)-1-(5-iodo-2-thienyl)-3-(4-dimethylaminophenyl)-2-propen-1-one (80) has been found to exhibit the most pronounced binding affinity in the *in vitro* experiments. Notably, the *in vivo* investigations involving an AD model murine system revealed the capacity of compound 80 to enable the visualization of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques within the cerebral tissue. Furthermore, biodistribution studies conducted in healthy mice demonstrated that radiolabelled compound (80) exhibited favorable cerebral uptake, with a measured value of 2.56% ID/g at 2 minutes post-injection, followed by rapid elimination from the cerebral compartment, as evidenced by a diminished level of 0.21% ID/g observed 60 minutes post-injection (Table 10). Against the backdrop of compound 80, the vanguard of radiolabelled moieties, intricate biodistribution scrutiny was pursued, guided by a central tenet

Table 10 Biodistribution of radioactivity after intravenous administration of radiolabelled compound 80 in mice

| Compounds | Time after injection (min) |             |             |             |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|           | 2 min                      | 10 min      | 30 min      | 60 min      |
| 80        | 2.46 ± 0.30                | 0.75 ± 0.31 | 0.31 ± 0.04 | 0.21 ± 0.02 |

Table 9 Inhibition constants of chalcone and chalcone-like derivatives on ligand binding to A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates

| Compounds | R <sub>1</sub>        | 4-Iodophenyl              | K <sub>i</sub> (nM) |
|-----------|-----------------------|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 53        | 4-Aminophenyl         | 4-Iodophenyl              | 248 ± 56            |
| 54        | 4-Methylaminophenyl   | 4-Iodophenyl              | 23.9 ± 3.6          |
| 55        | 4-Dimethylaminophenyl | 4-Dimethylaminophenyl     | 13.3 ± 1.9          |
| 58        | 5-Iodo-2-thienyl      | Phenyl                    | 151 ± 16            |
| 59        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 2-Furanyl                 | 908 ± 212           |
| 60        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 3-Furanyl                 | 125 ± 9.2           |
| 61        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 2-Thienyl                 | 102 ± 16            |
| 62        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 3-Thienyl                 | 93 ± 11             |
| 63        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 2-Imidazolyl              | 797 ± 316           |
| 64        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 2-Thiazolyl               | >10 000             |
| 65        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 5-Dimethylamino-2-furanyl | 1132 ± 344          |
| 66        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 5-Dimethylamino-2-thienyl | 113 ± 10            |
| 67        | 4-Iodophenyl          | 5-Dimethylamino-2-thienyl | 137 ± 3.4           |
| 68        | 5-Iodo-2-thienyl      | 5-Dimethylamino-2-furanyl | 1608 ± 85           |
| 69        | 5-Iodo-2-thienyl      | 4-Dimethylaminophenyl     | 126 ± 13            |
| 70        | 5-Bromo-2-furanyl     | 5-Dimethylamino-2-thienyl | 2648 ± 222          |
| 71        | 5-Bromo-2-furanyl     | 5-Dimethylamino-2-furanyl | >10 000             |
| 72        | 5-Bromo-2-furanyl     | 4-Aminophenyl             | 121 ± 40            |
| 73        | 5-Iodo-2-thienyl      | 5-Bromo-2-thienyl         | 476 ± 48            |
| 74        | 4-Aminophenyl         | 4-Methylaminophenyl       | 14.1 ± 0.6          |
| 75        | 5-Iodo-2-thienyl      | 5-Bromo-2-thienyl         | 198 ± 49            |
| 76        | 4-Methylaminophenyl   | 5-Bromo-2-thienyl         | 106 ± 7.1           |
| 77        | 4-Dimethylaminophenyl | 5-Bromo-2-thienyl         | 248 ± 56            |
| CR        | —                     | —                         | >10 000             |
| ThT       | —                     | —                         | >10 000             |
| AIC       | 4-Iodophenyl          | 4-Aminophenyl             | 105 ± 1.2           |
| IMC       | 4-Iodophenyl          | 4-Methylaminophenyl       | 6.3 ± 1.6           |
| DMIC      | 4-Iodophenyl          | 4-Dimethylaminophenyl     | 2.9 ± 0.3           |





Scheme 5

in the AD diagnostic the ability of imaging probes to surmount the cerebral barricades and efficaciously retreat from the milieu of affliction. This dualistic capability echoes a cardinal tenet in the quest for superior imaging modalities, thereby etching a profound imprint upon the landscape of neuroimaging diagnostics. Unveiling the cellular dimensions of these chalcone derivatives, the tenor of binding characteristics reverberated with a resonance of significant cellular uptake pertaining to A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, thereby illuminating the dynamic interplay between molecular design and cellular recognition, thus accentuating the potential utility of these chalcone scaffolds in the pursuit of elucidating the tapestry of Alzheimer's pathology (Scheme 5).

In 2007, Masahiro Ono and colleagues<sup>57</sup> orchestrated the synthesis of aurone derivatives, ushering these molecular entities into the crucible of evaluation of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques inherent in AD pathology. The synthesis of the aurone backbone was accomplished through an aldol reaction *i.e.* benzofuranones (86) were combined with benzaldehydes<sup>26</sup> in the presence of aluminum oxide (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>). Furthermore, the tributyltin derivative (89) was prepared from their corresponding bromo compound (87 & 88), through a bromo-to-tributyltin exchange reaction catalyzed by palladium in its zero oxidation state, Pd(0). Additionally, the tributyltin derivative (89) was a suitable starting material for radioiodination in the synthesis of radioiodinated compounds 93, 94 and 95. The new radioiodinated aurones were successfully generated through an iododestannylation reaction, facilitated by the utilization of hydrogen peroxide as the oxidizing agent. This process yielded the expected radioiodinated ligands, demonstrating the versatility of these derivatives in radiopharmaceutical applications in 36% to 54% yield. In the realm of binding studies, a captivating narrative unfurled wherein the aurone derivatives emerged as avid adherents to A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates. This proclivity for binding

Table 11 Inhibition constants of aurone derivatives on ligand binding to A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates

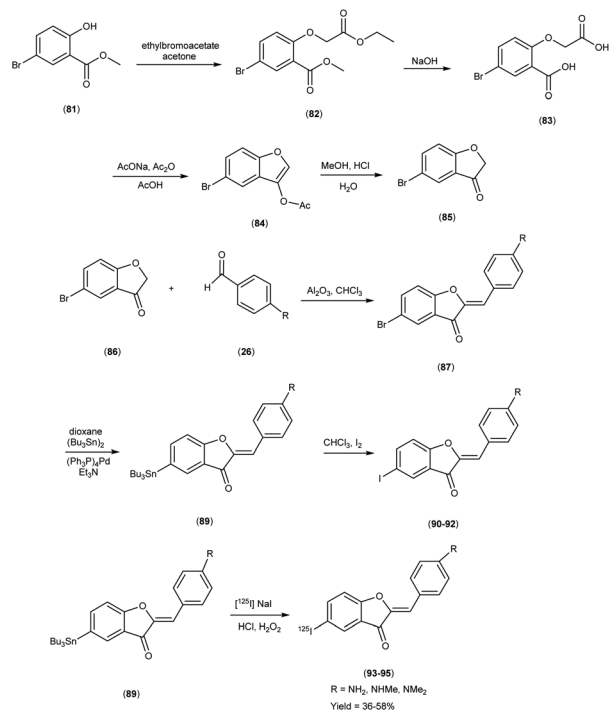
| Compound | $K_i$ (nM)  |
|----------|-------------|
| 90       | 2.69 ± 0.16 |
| 91       | 1.24 ± 0.11 |
| 92       | 6.82 ± 0.48 |

resonates as an ode to the strategic synthesis and molecular architecture, elucidating an affinity toward the morbid hallmark's characteristic of AD. Embarking upon an exploration of *in vitro* manifestations, the aurone derivatives materialized as poignant probes, casting a luminous radiance upon A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques within the confines of AD model mice brains. When conducting *in vitro* binding investigations employing A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates in the presence of aurone derivatives, notable findings emerged, revealing the manifestation of substantial binding affinities towards A $\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates. These affinities were quantitatively delineated by  $K_i$  values spanning a range of 1.2 to 6.8 nM (Table 11). Upon juxtaposing the  $K_i$  values associated with the previously reported radioiodinated flavones, it becomes evident that the  $K_i$  values associated with the radioiodinated aurones (93–95) were comparatively lower. This disparity signifies that the radioiodinated aurones exhibit heightened binding affinities towards A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques in comparison to their radioiodinated flavone counterparts. In the context of *in vitro* plaque labelling endeavors using brain sections obtained from double transgenic mice, it was observed that aurone derivatives exhibited a profound proclivity for vividly staining A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques. The subsequent bio-distribution studies conducted in normal mice following intravenous administration of radioiodinated aurones unveiled substantial cerebral uptake, ranging from 1.9% to 4.6% ID/g at 2 minutes post-injection, concomitant with rapid elimination from the cerebral compartment, registering values between 0.11% and 0.26% ID/g at the 60 minutes mark (Table 12). These pharmacokinetic attributes align notably with the prerequisites for effective amyloid imaging agents. The findings gleaned from this investigation collectively propose the potential utility of novel radiolabelled aurones as valuable agents for the detection of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques in the AD-afflicted brain. Consequently, these commendable pharmacokinetic attributes exhibited by radioiodinated aurones assume pivotal importance in the context of amyloid plaque detection in AD. These bio-distribution data further underscore that the novel radioiodinated aurones may possess superior *in vivo*

Table 12 Biodistribution of radioactivity after intravenous administration of radiolabelled compounds 93, 94 and 95 in mice

| Compounds | Time after injection (min) |             |             |             |
|-----------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|           | 2                          | 10          | 30          | 60          |
| 93        | 4.57 ± 0.27                | 1.51 ± 0.17 | 0.49 ± 0.06 | 0.26 ± 0.03 |
| 94        | 3.17 ± 0.45                | 1.22 ± 0.09 | 0.32 ± 0.02 | 0.24 ± 0.03 |
| 95        | 1.89 ± 0.38                | 0.69 ± 0.21 | 0.26 ± 0.04 | 0.11 ± 0.03 |





Scheme 6

pharmacokinetic profiles compared to their radioiodinated flavone counterparts, rendering them potentially more suitable for amyloid imaging in the context of AD (Scheme 6).

In 2014, Takeshi Fuchigami and colleagues<sup>58</sup> synthesized radioiodinated chalcones and characterized them as innovative SPECT imaging agents for A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques. The anticipated chalcone derivatives were synthesized through a series of carefully executed chemical reactions. Initially, 4-iodoacetophenone (96) was subjected to a reaction with 4-methoxybenzaldehyde (97), conducted in the presence of a basic catalyst (10% KOH) in ethanol at room temperature yielded 4-iodo-4-methoxychalcone (98) in a quantitative yield. The direct alkylation of compound 98 was then carried out by reacting it with ethylene chlorohydrin, ethylene glycol mono-2-chloroethyl ether, or 2-[2-(2-chloroethoxy)ethoxy]ethanol in the presence of potassium carbonate, conducted in dimethylformamide (DMF). This process provided compounds 99, 100 and 101, with yields of 52%, 49% and 17%, respectively. Subsequently, the tributyltin derivative, denoted as compound 104, was synthesized from the corresponding iodo derivative, *via* an iodo-to-tributyltin exchange reaction catalyzed by palladium in its zero oxidation state, Pd(0), resulting in a yield of 48%. The *p*-toluenesulfonate ester of (*E*)-3-(tri-*n*-butylstannyl)prop-2-enol was then coupled with phenol 103 to yield the tributyltin derivative 104, with a yield of 45%. The compound 104 underwent reaction with iodine in chloroform, forming the desired compound 105. The radioiodinated chalcones, 106 and 107 were prepared through an iododestannylation reaction, employing hydrogen peroxide as the oxidizing agent. These compounds were obtained with radiochemical yields ranging from 66% to 75%, and they

exhibited radiochemical purities exceeding 95% after purification *via* high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC). Specifically, the monoethyleneoxy and allyloxy derivatives demonstrated notable affinity towards A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates. Through fluorescence imaging, it was demonstrated that the monoethyleneoxy and allyloxy derivatives prominently labelled thioflavin-S positive antibody-bound plaques within brain slices obtained from Tg2576 transgenic mice. The monoethyleneoxy derivative (99) and allyloxy derivative (105) exhibited notable affinities for A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates, as evidenced by their respective  $K_i$  values of 24 and 4.5 nM (Table 13). The evaluation of the inhibition constants ( $K_i$ ) for compounds 99 to 101 unveiled a discernible influence of the ethyleneoxy group length within the chalcone scaffold on their binding affinities toward A $\beta$  aggregates. The hierarchy in binding affinity for A $\beta$  aggregates was established as follows: monoethyleneoxy derivative 99 ( $K_i$  = 24.0 nM) > triethyleneoxy derivative 101 ( $K_i$  = 87.8 nM) > diethyleneoxy derivative 100 ( $K_i$  = 127.1 nM). The statistical analyses further confirmed the significance of these disparities, with  $K_i$  value of compound 99 being markedly lower than both compound 100 ( $P$  < 0.001; ANOVA, Bonferroni *t*-test) and compound 101 ( $P$  < 0.001). Additionally,  $K_i$  value displayed a statistically significant decrease relative to compound 100 ( $P$  < 0.05). *In vitro* autoradiography assessments unveiled that [<sup>125</sup>I] 106 exhibited negligible accumulation in A $\beta$  plaques within brain sections obtained from Tg2576 mice. Conversely, the distribution pattern of radioiodinated compound 107 closely corresponded with the presence of A $\beta$  plaques, observed both in Tg2576 mouse brain sections and those from AD patient. Notably, biodistribution investigations in normal mice illustrated the favorable *in vivo* pharmacokinetic attributes of radioiodinated compound 106, with observed values of 4.82% ID/g at 2 minutes and 0.45% ID/g at 60 minutes post-injection. In contrast, [<sup>125</sup>I]107 demonstrated only modest cerebral uptake (1.62% ID/g at 2 minutes) and exhibited a protracted retention period (0.56% ID/g at 60 minutes) (Table 14). While compound 107 exhibited promising binding properties towards A $\beta$  plaques, it is evident that further structural refinements are warranted to enhance blood–brain barrier permeability and brain clearance. Consequently, the incorporation of the iodoallyloxy group into the chalcone backbone has proven effective in enhancing its affinity for A $\beta$  plaques. This study underscores the potential for further chemical modifications to yield valuable A $\beta$  imaging probes based on the chalcone scaffold (Scheme 7).

Table 13 Inhibition constant ( $K_i$ ) of chalcone derivatives for A $\beta$  aggregates

| Compounds | $K_i$ (nM)   |
|-----------|--------------|
| 99        | 24.0 ± 10.4  |
| 100       | 127.1 ± 27.3 |
| 101       | 87.8 ± 20.3  |
| 105       | 4.5 ± 1.5    |
| DMIC      | 10.8 ± 0.9   |



Table 14 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of [<sup>125</sup>I] labelled chalcone derivatives **106** and **107** in normal mice

| Compounds  | Organs    | Time after injection |              |              |              |
|------------|-----------|----------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
|            |           | 2 min                | 10 min       | 30 min       | 60 min       |
| <b>106</b> | Blood     | 3.95 ± 0.30          | 3.01 ± 0.58  | 2.60 ± 0.42  | 2.27 ± 0.60  |
|            | Liver     | 14.76 ± 2.88         | 20.11 ± 4.81 | 18.83 ± 1.20 | 15.57 ± 3.17 |
|            | Kidney    | 10.34 ± 1.72         | 9.05 ± 1.72  | 10.23 ± 1.96 | 9.89 ± 3.07  |
|            | Intestine | 3.98 ± 0.66          | 10.55 ± 3.41 | 26.39 ± 6.69 | 25.16 ± 6.54 |
|            | Spleen    | 2.69 ± 0.54          | 2.35 ± 0.74  | 1.21 ± 0.10  | 0.81 ± 0.14  |
|            | Lung      | 7.14 ± 1.34          | 4.63 ± 1.37  | 3.21 ± 1.24  | 1.94 ± 0.42  |
|            | Stomach   | 2.22 ± 0.41          | 3.38 ± 2.38  | 4.27 ± 3.43  | 4.01 ± 0.38  |
|            | Pancreas  | 6.12 ± 1.26          | 3.37 ± 1.00  | 1.07 ± 0.44  | 0.90 ± 0.54  |
|            | Heart     | 6.20 ± 1.19          | 3.13 ± 0.88  | 1.54 ± 0.13  | 1.05 ± 0.32  |
|            | Brain     | 4.82 ± 1.19          | 2.86 ± 0.87  | 1.00 ± 0.05  | 0.45 ± 0.09  |
| <b>107</b> | Blood     | 2.65 ± 0.21          | 2.29 ± 0.19  | 1.97 ± 0.55  | 2.43 ± 1.18  |
|            | Liver     | 23.21 ± 2.52         |              | 16.91 ± 0.62 | 10.26 ± 0.55 |
|            | Kidney    | 8.98 ± 1.60          | 6.06 ± 0.57  | 4.52 ± 0.59  | 4.17 ± 1.12  |
|            | Intestine | 1.74 ± 0.59          | 2.38 ± 0.88  | 4.45 ± 1.70  | 6.34 ± 2.57  |
|            | Spleen    | 4.43 ± 1.11          | 5.34 ± 2.03  | 4.68 ± 1.31  | 3.92 ± 1.52  |
|            | Lung      | 8.08 ± 1.39          | 4.48 ± 0.38  | 3.16 ± 0.42  | 3.28 ± 1.01  |
|            | Stomach   | 2.49 ± 1.07          | 5.19 ± 2.16  | 8.98 ± 5.05  | 16.44 ± 6.82 |
|            | Pancreas  | 4.02 ± 1.48          | 3.27 ± 0.51  | 2.35 ± 0.63  | 2.14 ± 1.12  |
|            | Heart     | 8.70 ± 1.66          | 3.39 ± 0.38  | 2.20 ± 0.13  | 2.10 ± 0.85  |
|            | Brain     | 1.62 ± 0.30          | 1.63 ± 0.22  | 0.87 ± 0.18  | 0.56 ± 0.16  |



Scheme 7

#### 4. <sup>99m</sup>Tc labelled chalcones for AD

In 2010, Masahiro Ono and colleagues<sup>59</sup> reported the exploration into the realm of molecular imaging in AD. Specifically, the authors synthesized and labelled chalcones with technetium-99m (<sup>99m</sup>Tc), subsequently investigating their potential utility as molecular probes for imaging A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques in AD pathology. One of the most widely employed methods for synthesizing chalcones involves the condensation of 4-

hydroxyacetophenone (**108**) with 4-dimethylaminobenzaldehyde (**109**). This reaction occurred in the presence of a basic catalyst *e.g.* 10% potassium hydroxide (KOH), conducted in ethanol at room temperature. This reaction resulted in the formation of 4-dimethylamino-4-hydroxy-chalcone (**110**) with a notable yield of 70%. The subsequent step involved the reaction of dibromo with compound **110**, giving rise to two distinct chalcone derivatives (**111**) both featuring alkyl groups of different lengths ( $n = 3$  or  $5$ ). After this step, the compound **111** ( $n = 5$ ) or  $6$  ( $n = 3$ ) was coupled with either Tr-MAMA or Tr-Boc-BAT, leading to the formation of compound **112** (referred to as Tr-MAMA-chalcones or Tr-Boc-BAT). The next set of compounds, specifically **118** and **119** which served as precursors for the labelling with <sup>99m</sup>Tc, were derived by deprotecting the thiol groups in compounds **122** and **123** respectively. Subsequently, the Re complexes (**113** and **114**) were synthesized through reactions involving corresponding compounds **112** and **115** respectively, with tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)rhenium(vii) oxide chloride, (PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>ReOCl<sub>3</sub>. The <sup>99m</sup>Tc complexes (**120**, **121**, **124**, and **125**) were prepared through a ligand exchange reaction. This process involved the utilization of the precursor <sup>99m</sup>Tc-glucoheptonate (GH), leading to the formation of the anticipated <sup>99m</sup>Tc-labelled complexes. Notably, these synthesized chalcones exhibited enhanced selectivity for targeting A $\beta$ <sub>1-42</sub> aggregates, a hallmark of AD pathology. The innovative chalcones analogs, incorporating <sup>99m</sup>Tc/Re compounds, effectively illuminated amyloid plaques within the brainstem section of experimental animals afflicted with AD. Biodistribution investigation imparts pivotal insights into cerebral uptake, a vital parameter for evaluating the suitability of an imaging probe. An exemplary  $\beta$ -amyloid imaging agent should possess the capability to efficiently breach the blood-brain barrier, thereby facilitating the delivery of an adequate dosage into the



Table 15 HPLC retention times of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labelled chalcones and their Re analogues and log  $P$  values of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labelled chalcones

| $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ compound | Retention time (min) | Re compound | Retention time (min) | Log $p$ of $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ compounds |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------|----------------------|--|
| 120                        | 14.2                 | 113         | 13.5                 | 2.55 ± 0.19                            |
| 121                        | 20.3                 | 114         | 18.4                 | 2.73 ± 0.16                            |
| 124                        | 9.3                  | 116         | 8.6                  | 1.51 ± 0.09                            |
| 125                        | 12.4                 | 117         | 11.2                 | 2.51 ± 0.05                            |

cerebral milieu. Simultaneously, it should demonstrate swift clearance from non-pathological brain regions, a factor that significantly contributes to enhancing the signal-to-noise ratio within the AD-afflicted brain. Prior investigations have indicated that the optimal degree of lipophilicity required for effective brain penetration lies within the log  $P$  range of 113 to 117, extensive biodistribution studies were also conducted

employing normal murine models (Table 15). Remarkably, the chalcones labelled with  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$  demonstrated a remarkable capacity to traverse the formidable blood–brain barrier, thereby facilitating substantial accumulation within the brain tissue. In the context of this assay, it was ascertained that the proportion of radioactivity associated with nonspecific binding to  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates ranged from 1.9% to 3.2% across the four  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -

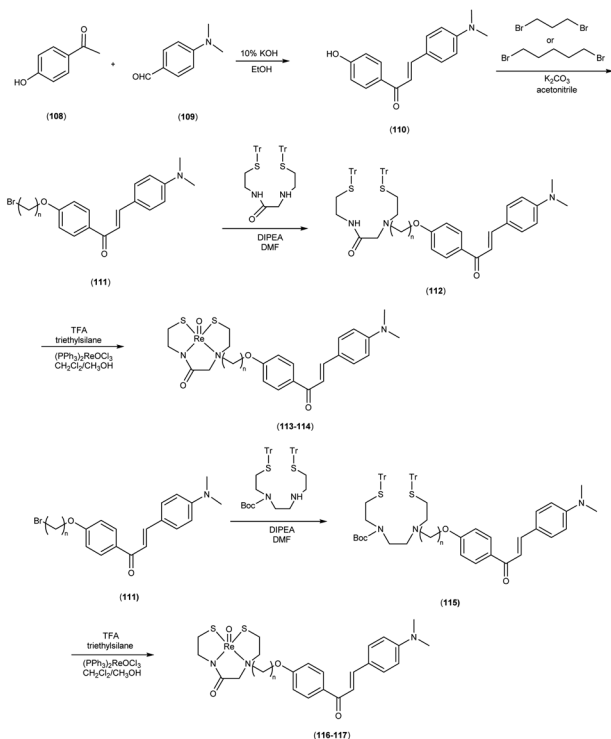
Table 16 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labelled chalcone derivatives in normal mice

| Compounds | Organs    | Time after injection (min) |              |              |               |
|-----------|-----------|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|---------------|
|           |           | 2 min                      | 10 min       | 30 min       | 60 min        |
| 120       | Blood     | 1.85 ± 0.31                | 0.91 ± 0.15  | 0.62 ± 0.16  | 0.28 ± 0.02   |
|           | Liver     | 18.92 ± 2.03               | 24.48 ± 1.34 | 26.63 ± 5.57 | 17.05 ± 1.52  |
|           | Kidney    | 9.45 ± 1.24                | 7.62 ± 3.79  | 9.85 ± 1.35  | 5.25 ± 0.87   |
|           | Intestine | 4.71 ± 0.63                | 12.45 ± 2.90 | 34.90 ± 3.01 | 36.49 ± 6.04  |
|           | Spleen    | 4.16 ± 0.52                | 3.17 ± 0.52  | 2.37 ± 0.48  | 1.28 ± 0.09   |
|           | Lung      | 16.1 ± 3.34                | 6.59 ± 1.23  | 3.61 ± 1.00  | 1.44 ± 0.17   |
|           | Stomach   | 0.76 ± 0.10                | 1.31 ± 0.15  | 2.06 ± 0.65  | 1.67 ± 0.29   |
|           | Pancreas  | 3.78 ± 0.49                | 5.28 ± 0.33  | 4.71 ± 0.96  | 2.27 ± 0.14   |
|           | Heart     | 11.05 ± 1.99               | 5.10 ± 1.00  | 2.16 ± 0.63  | 0.87 ± 0.22   |
|           | Brain     | 0.22 ± 0.05                | 0.32 ± 0.14  | 0.19 ± 0.030 | 0.11 ± 0.01   |
| 121       | Blood     | 2.49 ± 0.24                | 0.92 ± 0.05  | 0.50 ± 0.11  | 0.35 ± 0.13   |
|           | Liver     | 23.89 ± 2.51               | 24.03 ± 4.51 | 23.18 ± 3.67 | 21.95 ± 4.58  |
|           | Kidney    | 11.26 ± 0.62               | 9.66 ± 0.58  | 7.64 ± 0.88  | 6.39 ± 1.51   |
|           | Intestine | 6.27 ± 0.31                | 15.99 ± 0.87 | 37.18 ± 2.54 | 54.09 ± 10.94 |
|           | Spleen    | 3.15 ± 0.22                | 1.64 ± 0.33  | 0.69 ± 0.16  | 0.35 ± 0.15   |
|           | Lung      | 15.71 ± 4.59               | 4.54 ± 0.57  | 1.89 ± 0.24  | 1.28 ± 0.49   |
|           | Stomach   | 0.95 ± 0.14                | 1.37 ± 0.19  | 1.77 ± 0.62  | 2.41 ± 0.99   |
|           | Pancreas  | 4.93 ± 0.87                | 3.94 ± 0.84  | 1.71 ± 0.30  | 0.80 ± 0.32   |
|           | Heart     | 13.17 ± 1.42               | 3.03 ± 0.36  | 1.30 ± 0.35  | 0.78 ± 0.10   |
|           | Brain     | 0.78 ± 0.16                | 0.55 ± 0.06  | 0.28 ± 0.09  | 0.16 ± 0.09   |
| 124       | Blood     | 7.84 ± 2.85                | 5.37 ± 2.42  | 1.55 ± 0.62  | 0.41 ± 0.19   |
|           | Liver     | 18.35 ± 1.93               | 24.89 ± 2.27 | 21.29 ± 3.34 | 12.96 ± 3.14  |
|           | Kidney    | 10.50 ± 1.36               | 11.03 ± 2.66 | 9.62 ± 1.54  | 4.65 ± 0.75   |
|           | Intestine | 3.70 ± 0.55                | 9.60 ± 1.35  | 31.67 ± 4.85 | 41.40 ± 8.54  |
|           | Spleen    | 5.87 ± 2.07                | 4.44 ± 0.69  | 2.71 ± 0.92  | 1.42 ± 0.85   |
|           | Lung      | 16.33 ± 4.74               | 7.87 ± 1.60  | 3.16 ± 0.68  | 4.12 ± 4.25   |
|           | Stomach   | 0.85 ± 0.21                | 1.42 ± 0.28  | 2.29 ± 0.61  | 2.32 ± 0.81   |
|           | Pancreas  | 3.14 ± 1.32                | 5.30 ± 2.14  | 4.64 ± 0.76  | 1.63 ± 0.37   |
|           | Heart     | 13.26 ± 2.46               | 4.96 ± 1.83  | 2.54 ± 0.56  | 1.23 ± 0.28   |
|           | Brain     | 0.62 ± 0.27                | 0.49 ± 0.13  | 0.38 ± 0.11  | 0.16 ± 0.08   |
| 125       | Blood     | 2.81 ± 0.76                | 0.95 ± 0.45  | 0.56 ± 0.30  | 0.29 ± 0.13   |
|           | Liver     | 21.26 ± 2.50               | 27.33 ± 2.45 | 22.08 ± 3.93 | 14.34 ± 0.60  |
|           | Kidney    | 11.21 ± 1.46               | 8.54 ± 0.64  | 4.18 ± 0.52  | 1.92 ± 0.41   |
|           | Intestine | 6.22 ± 0.40                | 21.95 ± 2.50 | 42.24 ± 3.78 | 53.39 ± 4.78  |
|           | Spleen    | 2.91 ± 0.61                | 2.37 ± 0.55  | 0.74 ± 0.16  | 0.30 ± 0.04   |
|           | Lung      | 10.33 ± 1.80               | 2.47 ± 0.62  | 2.47 ± 0.62  | 0.73 ± 0.27   |
|           | Stomach   | 1.14 ± 0.26                | 1.80 ± 0.22  | 1.93 ± 0.19  | 1.68 ± 0.67   |
|           | Pancreas  | 6.91 ± 2.23                | 4.45 ± 0.54  | 1.44 ± 0.33  | 0.47 ± 0.06   |
|           | Heart     | 11.71 ± 2.13               | 3.01 ± 0.70  | 0.98 ± 0.26  | 0.44 ± 0.10   |
|           | Brain     | 1.48 ± 0.44                | 1.09 ± 0.20  | 0.35 ± 0.14  | 0.17 ± 0.06   |

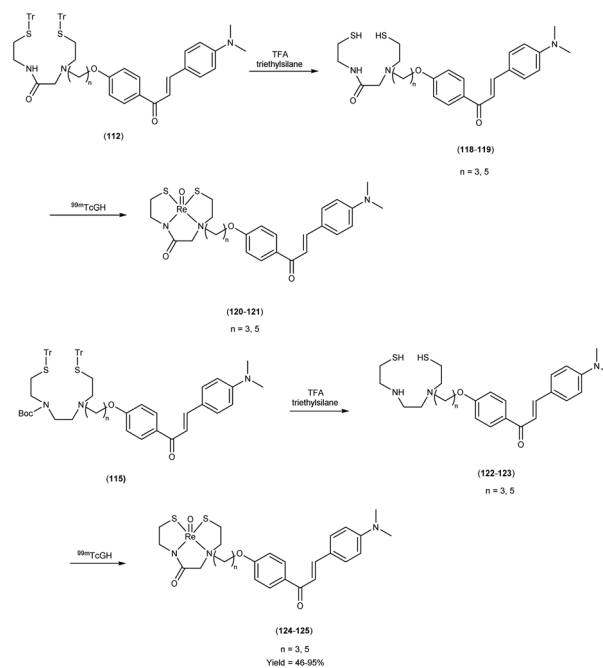


labelled chalcones. This observation implies that most of the radioactivity is attributed to the occupation of specific binding sites for A $\beta$  aggregates. Furthermore, it was observed that the percentage of radioactivity associated with chalcone binding to these aggregates exhibited a dose-dependent increase contingent upon the A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> dosage. Moreover, biodistribution investigations conducted in healthy mice unveiled the commendable *in vivo* performance of <sup>99m</sup>Tc-BAT-chalcone, designated as compound **124**. This compound exhibited a substantial brain uptake, quantified at 1.48% ID/g, as early as 2 minutes post-administration. Remarkably, compound **124** demonstrated rapid elimination from the cerebral compartment, registering a diminution to 0.17% ID/g after 60 minutes. This rapid clearance attribute aligns favorably with the prerequisites for an ideal imaging agent. Consequently, [<sup>99m</sup>Tc]**124** emerges as a promising candidate for the imaging of  $\beta$ -amyloid plaques within the context of AD-afflicted brains (Table 16). This compound exhibited exceptional attributes, notably its heightened absorption profile and rapid clearance from the brain upon administration into the normal meticulous characterization of amyloid plaques in AD pathology (Schemes 8 and 9).

In 2010, Masahiro Ono and collaborators<sup>60</sup> synthesized the flavones by using the most useful method known as the Baker-Venkatarman transformation. The 4-hydroxyacetophenone was initially transformed into a benzoyl ester which, upon treatment with a base, underwent conversion into a 1,3-diketone. This diketone was subsequently subjected to an acid-mediated reaction, leading to the synthesis of the desired flavone compound (**126**). The reaction of dibromopropane with compound **126** resulted in the production of the flavone



Scheme 8



Scheme 9

derivative **127**, which included a trimethine group. Subsequently, compound **127** was coupled with Tr-Boc-BAT to generate compound **128**, serving as the precursor for the <sup>99m</sup>Tc/Re reaction. The synthesis of the aurone backbone was achieved through an aldol reaction, involving benzofuranones and benzaldehydes in the presence of aluminum oxide (Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>). Specifically, 5-methoxy-3-benzofuranone was reacted with 4-dimethylbenzaldehyde in the presence of Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> in chloroform at room temperature, resulting in the formation of compound **131** with an impressive yield of 92%. The precursor for the subsequent <sup>99m</sup>Tc/Re reaction, denoted as compound **133**, was obtained in a manner analogous to the synthesis of the flavone derivative. Following the deprotection of the thiol groups in compounds **128** and **133** using trifluoroacetic acid (TFA) and triethylsilane, the Re complexes (**129** and **134**) were synthesized through reactions with tetrakis(triphenylphosphine)rhenium(vii) oxide chloride, (PPh<sub>3</sub>)<sub>2</sub>ReOCl<sub>3</sub>. The corresponding <sup>99m</sup>Tc complexes, represented as **130** ([<sup>99m</sup>Tc]BAT-FL) and **135** ([<sup>99m</sup>Tc]BAT-AR), were prepared through a ligand exchange reaction employing the precursor compound <sup>99m</sup>Tc-glucuheptonate (GH) in 40% to 45% yield. In this study, to develop more useful <sup>99m</sup>Tc imaging agents for the clinical diagnosis of AD, two flavones and aurone derivatives were synthesized with BAT as a chelation ligand. We then evaluated the biological potential of these compounds as probes by testing their affinity for A $\beta$  aggregates and b-amyloid plaques in sections of brain tissue from Tg2576 mice and their uptake by and clearance from the brain in biodistribution experiments using normal mice. The characterization of the complex was conducted through a comparative High-Performance Liquid Chromatography (HPLC) analysis, employing the corresponding rhenium (Re) complexes as reference compounds. The



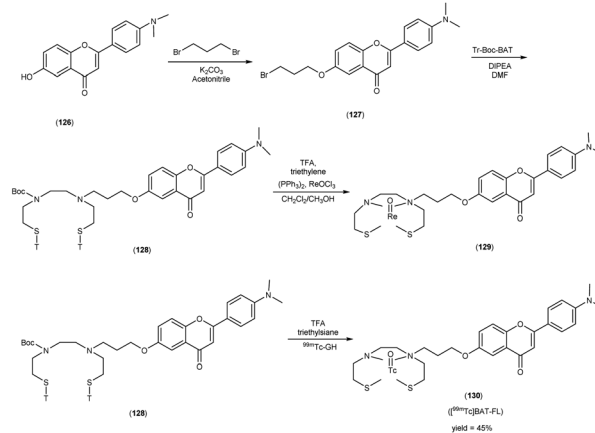
Table 17 HPLC retention times of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labeled chalcones and their Re analogues and log  $P$  values of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labeled chalcones

| Re compound | Retention time (min) | $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ compound | Retention time (min) | Log $p$ of $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ compounds |
|-------------|----------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| <b>129</b>  | 9.5                  | 130                        | 11.1                 | $2.77 \pm 0.04$                        |
| <b>134</b>  | 14.6                 | 135                        | 16.6                 | $2.23 \pm 0.04$                        |

retention times for [ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-FL and [ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-AR, as determined by HPLC with radioactivity detection, were recorded at 11.1 and 16.6 minutes, respectively. In parallel, the retention times of the corresponding Re complexes were measured using HPLC equipped with UV detection, resulting in values of 9.5 and 14.6 minutes, respectively (Table 17). This is the first time  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ /Re complexes based on flavone and aurone scaffolds have been proposed as probes for the detection of  $\beta$ -amyloid plaques in the brain. The pertinent  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$  complexes, namely ([ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-FL) and ([ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-AR), synthesized the precursor  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -glucoheptonate (GH) by employing a ligand exchange methodology. One particularly promising probe, denoted as  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -BATchalcone ( $n = 3$ ), emerged as a notable contender for the discernment of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques within the cerebral milieu. In the biodistribution study of the [ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-FL (**130**) and [ $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ]BAT-AR (**135**), their measured cerebral uptake, quantified at 0.64% and 0.79% ID/g at the 2 minutes time point following administration, fell below the anticipated levels (Table 18). This confluence of characteristics, comprising an affinity for A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques, efficient cerebral uptake, and prompt clearance, positions compounds **130** and **135** as promising candidates for the detection of A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques within the cerebral milieu. However, it is worth noting that further enhancements are necessitated to augment their cerebral uptake. The outcomes gleaned from this study offer

valuable insights to guide the development of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labeled probes tailored for the imaging of  $\beta$ -amyloid plaques in the brain (Schemes 10 and 11).

In 2013, Zijing Li and colleagues<sup>61</sup> conceived and synthesized innovative chalcone-mimic complexes by introducing a [ $\text{Cp}^{99m}\text{Tc}(\text{CO})_3$ ] core to replace a benzene ring. The synthesis began with the initial acetylation of the cyclopentadienyl group, achieved by the reaction with acetyl chloride in an ice bath. This

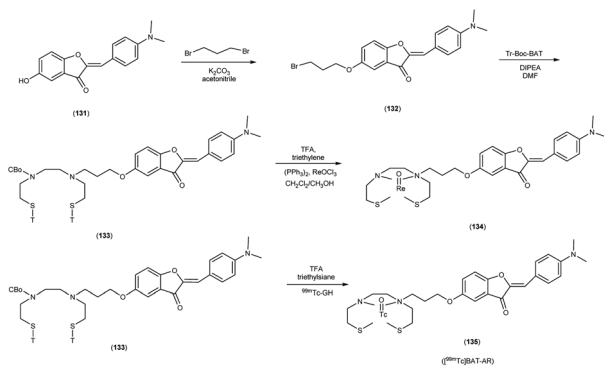


Scheme 10

Table 18 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labelled chalcone derivatives in normal mice

| Compounds  | Organs    | Time after injection (min) |                  |                  |                  |
|------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|            |           | 2 min                      | 10 min           | 30 min           | 60 min           |
| <b>130</b> | Blood     | $1.90 \pm 0.08$            | $0.80 \pm 0.16$  | $0.41 \pm 0.06$  | $0.28 \pm 0.06$  |
|            | Liver     | $19.35 \pm 1.30$           | $24.75 \pm 3.45$ | $27.73 \pm 3.30$ | $24.12 \pm 3.08$ |
|            | Kidney    | $9.70 \pm 0.83$            | $5.56 \pm 0.84$  | $2.38 \pm 0.30$  | $1.40 \pm 0.20$  |
|            | Intestine | $4.54 \pm 0.42$            | $11.36 \pm 1.88$ | $26.61 \pm 3.93$ | $42.67 \pm 2.98$ |
|            | Spleen    | $3.24 \pm 0.61$            | $2.21 \pm 0.31$  | $1.04 \pm 0.42$  | $0.45 \pm 0.07$  |
|            | Lung      | $11.42 \pm 2.10$           | $3.84 \pm 0.57$  | $1.70 \pm 0.24$  | $1.07 \pm 0.16$  |
|            | Stomach   | $0.90 \pm 0.15$            | $1.36 \pm 0.55$  | $1.52 \pm 0.67$  | $2.45 \pm 1.04$  |
|            | Pancreas  | $4.41 \pm 0.29$            | $4.31 \pm 0.35$  | $1.89 \pm 0.15$  | $0.84 \pm 0.17$  |
|            | Heart     | $12.00 \pm 1.16$           | $3.12 \pm 0.51$  | $0.99 \pm 0.18$  | $0.44 \pm 0.09$  |
|            | Brain     | $0.64 \pm 0.07$            | $0.57 \pm 0.14$  | $0.36 \pm 0.01$  | $0.23 \pm 0.04$  |
| <b>135</b> | Blood     | $1.56 \pm 0.16$            | $0.71 \pm 0.07$  | $0.35 \pm 0.04$  | $0.21 \pm 0.04$  |
|            | Liver     | $17.76 \pm 1.51$           | $17.77 \pm 1.70$ | $15.17 \pm 0.95$ | $12.96 \pm 1.48$ |
|            | Kidney    | $11.50 \pm 0.73$           | $8.77 \pm 1.15$  | $4.83 \pm 0.77$  | $3.28 \pm 1.52$  |
|            | Intestine | $6.78 \pm 0.78$            | $26.20 \pm 2.45$ | $46.06 \pm 3.17$ | $55.33 \pm 7.42$ |
|            | Spleen    | $2.87 \pm 0.30$            | $1.92 \pm 0.47$  | $0.70 \pm 0.07$  | $0.35 \pm 0.15$  |
|            | Lung      | $6.10 \pm 1.15$            | $3.25 \pm 0.78$  | $1.63 \pm 0.42$  | $0.85 \pm 0.18$  |
|            | Stomach   | $1.03 \pm 0.13$            | $1.63 \pm 0.25$  | $1.88 \pm 0.11$  | $1.69 \pm 0.49$  |
|            | Pancreas  | $5.85 \pm 1.09$            | $4.20 \pm 0.68$  | $1.53 \pm 0.54$  | $0.60 \pm 0.30$  |
|            | Heart     | $12.30 \pm 1.21$           | $3.26 \pm 0.43$  | $1.15 \pm 0.30$  | $0.40 \pm 0.09$  |
|            | Brain     | $0.79 \pm 0.12$            | $0.70 \pm 0.05$  | $0.27 \pm 0.06$  | $0.11 \pm 0.04$  |





Scheme 11

Table 19 Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) for binding to aggregates of  $A\beta_{1-42}$  versus [ $^{125}I$ ]IMPY

| Compound   | $K_i$ (nM)   | Compound   | $K_i$ (nM)      |
|------------|--------------|------------|-----------------|
| <b>143</b> | $899 \pm 78$ | <b>147</b> | $3.36 \pm 0.30$ |
| <b>144</b> | $211 \pm 19$ | <b>148</b> | $5.08 \pm 1.74$ |
| <b>145</b> | $108 \pm 16$ | IMPY       | $11.5 \pm 2.5$  |

process produced (acetylcyclopentadienyl)tricarbonylrhenium (**141**) with an impressive yield of 95%. Subsequently, this complex (**141**) was subjected to base-catalyzed Claisen

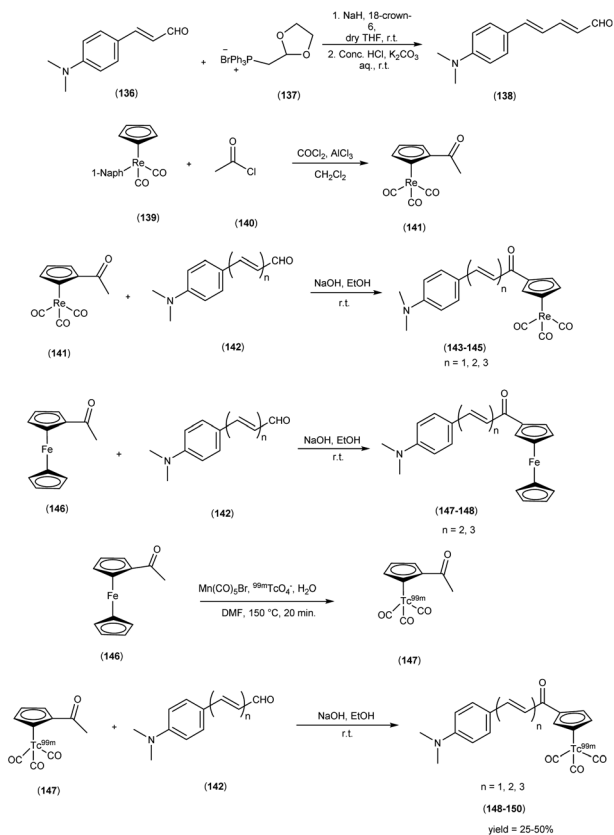
condensation with aromatic aldehydes (**142**), resulting in the formation of the final rhenium complexes (**143**, **144**, and **145**). These complexes exhibited varying  $\pi$  conjugation lengths and were synthesized with yields exceeding 90%. It is worth noting that two ferrocene complexes (**147** and **148**) were also synthesized using the same method, serving as precursors for radio-labelling. To obtain the  $^{99m}Tc$ -labelled cyclopentadienyl tricarbonyl complexes **148**, **149**, and **150**, a two-step sequential reaction was employed. In the first step, the compound  $[CH_3-COCp^{99m}Tc(CO)_3]$  ( $[^{99m}Tc]_2$ ) (**147**) was synthesized through a DLT method conducted at 150 °C for 20 minutes, yielding an average radiochemical yield of 50%. Subsequently,  $[^{99m}Tc]_2$  was subjected to a base-catalyzed Claisen condensation with the corresponding aldehydes. These complexes have been empirically demonstrated to exhibit a discernible affinity for  $A\beta$ -amyloid through both fluorescent staining conducted on brain sections obtained from AD patients and binding assays employing  $A\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates. The assessment of binding affinities, elucidated by  $K_i$  values, was contingent upon the extension of the conjugated  $\pi$  system, yielding values within the range of 899 to 108 nM. To provide a quantitative evaluation of the binding affinities of these chalcone-mimic complexes towards  $A\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, an *in vitro* inhibition assay was conducted in solution, employing [ $^{125}I$ ]IMPY as a competing radioligand, adhering to conventional methodologies. The results, as outlined in Table 19, revealed that the three rhenium complexes (**143**, **144** and **145**) effectively inhibited the binding of [ $^{125}I$ ]IMPY

Table 20 Biodistribution of [ $^{99m}Tc$ ] in male ICR mice

| Compounds      | Organs         | Time after injection (min) |                  |                  |                  |                  |
|----------------|----------------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|                |                | 2 min                      | 10 min           | 30 min           | 60 min           | 120 min          |
| <b>148</b>     | Blood          | $2.02 \pm 0.17$            | $0.82 \pm 0.05$  | $0.51 \pm 0.07$  | $0.51 \pm 0.06$  | $0.44 \pm 0.08$  |
|                | Brain          | $4.10 \pm 0.38$            | $2.27 \pm 0.51$  | $0.69 \pm 0.09$  | $0.50 \pm 0.08$  | $0.37 \pm 0.08$  |
|                | Heart          | $11.47 \pm 1.65$           | $1.87 \pm 0.36$  | $0.98 \pm 0.22$  | $0.84 \pm 0.16$  | $0.55 \pm 0.15$  |
|                | Liver          | $18.14 \pm 1.77$           | $24.75 \pm 3.38$ | $22.43 \pm 4.39$ | $25.96 \pm 2.06$ | $25.24 \pm 5.17$ |
|                | Spleen         | $3.53 \pm 0.52$            | $1.93 \pm 0.30$  | $0.81 \pm 0.14$  | $0.64 \pm 0.14$  | $0.51 \pm 0.15$  |
|                | Lung           | $7.39 \pm 1.06$            | $7.32 \pm 0.71$  | $5.52 \pm 0.49$  | $5.38 \pm 0.38$  | $4.79 \pm 0.43$  |
|                | Kidney         | $13.36 \pm 0.99$           | $5.38 \pm 0.66$  | $3.87 \pm 0.79$  | $3.17 \pm 0.16$  | $2.56 \pm 0.40$  |
|                | Stomach        | $1.69 \pm 0.16$            | $3.06 \pm 0.90$  | $2.18 \pm 0.39$  | $1.38 \pm 0.55$  | $0.75 \pm 0.16$  |
|                | Small pancreas | $6.81 \pm 1.57$            | $17.98 \pm 1.58$ | $37.71 \pm 7.94$ | $34.75 \pm 2.26$ | $26.22 \pm 4.20$ |
|                | <b>149</b>     | Blood                      | $3.80 \pm 0.71$  | $1.25 \pm 0.17$  | $0.98 \pm 0.49$  | $0.64 \pm 0.15$  |
| Brain          |                | $2.30 \pm 0.27$            | $1.85 \pm 0.25$  | $0.93 \pm 0.09$  | $0.55 \pm 0.08$  | $0.49 \pm 0.11$  |
| Heart          |                | $2.30 \pm 0.27$            | $1.85 \pm 0.25$  | $0.93 \pm 0.09$  | $0.55 \pm 0.08$  | $0.49 \pm 0.11$  |
| Liver          |                | $12.94 \pm 2.16$           | $3.58 \pm 0.51$  | $1.92 \pm 0.26$  | $1.36 \pm 0.13$  | $0.92 \pm 0.12$  |
| Spleen         |                | $32.64 \pm 4.34$           | $28.81 \pm 4.57$ | $34.32 \pm 5.35$ | $35.93 \pm 4.25$ | $29.59 \pm 5.35$ |
| Lung           |                | $4.50 \pm 0.91$            | $4.34 \pm 0.92$  | $2.84 \pm 0.90$  | $1.25 \pm 0.23$  | $1.00 \pm 0.16$  |
| Kidney         |                | $9.08 \pm 2.20$            | $6.18 \pm 1.59$  | $4.03 \pm 0.83$  | $3.29 \pm 1.45$  | $2.74 \pm 0.38$  |
| Stomach        |                | $1.11 \pm 0.24$            | $1.28 \pm 0.33$  | $1.86 \pm 0.60$  | $1.90 \pm 0.22$  | $1.38 \pm 1.63$  |
| Small pancreas |                | $5.27 \pm 0.46$            | $15.12 \pm 5.32$ | $24.42 \pm 4.62$ | $34.63 \pm 4.72$ | $29.94 \pm 5.47$ |
| <b>150</b>     |                | Blood                      | $13.53 \pm 1.37$ | $1.01 \pm 0.11$  | $0.70 \pm 0.08$  | $0.82 \pm 0.06$  |
|                | Brain          | $1.11 \pm 0.34$            | $0.40 \pm 0.05$  | $0.38 \pm 0.05$  | $0.51 \pm 0.08$  | $0.64 \pm 0.11$  |
|                | Heart          | $11.48 \pm 1.82$           | $3.50 \pm 0.23$  | $2.61 \pm 0.28$  | $1.70 \pm 0.14$  | $1.73 \pm 0.24$  |
|                | Liver          | $52.40 \pm 3.64$           | $67.08 \pm 3.54$ | $57.20 \pm 3.09$ | $40.49 \pm 6.00$ | $42.91 \pm 3.43$ |
|                | Spleen         | $13.14 \pm 2.57$           | $21.59 \pm 2.91$ | $20.95 \pm 2.72$ | $18.63 \pm 4.75$ | $11.65 \pm 4.25$ |
|                | Lung           | $31.98 \pm 4.58$           | $13.89 \pm 1.39$ | $8.66 \pm 0.99$  | $9.69 \pm 0.52$  | $9.18 \pm 1.87$  |
|                | Kidney         | $7.11 \pm 0.80$            | $2.83 \pm 0.33$  | $2.87 \pm 0.73$  | $2.98 \pm 0.36$  | $4.12 \pm 0.56$  |
|                | Stomach        | $0.63 \pm 0.10$            | $0.50 \pm 0.06$  | $0.74 \pm 0.08$  | $0.93 \pm 0.12$  | $1.15 \pm 0.13$  |
|                | Small pancreas | $2.30 \pm 0.45$            | $3.84 \pm 0.48$  | $9.85 \pm 0.72$  | $16.64 \pm 2.29$ | $14.93 \pm 2.70$ |







Scheme 12

Table 21 Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) of compounds for the binding of [ $^{125}$ F]DMIC to A $\beta$ 1–42 aggregates

| compound | R <sub>1</sub>                                    | R <sub>2</sub>                   | $K_i$ (nM)     |
|----------|---|----------------------------------|----------------|
| 152      | FCH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O                | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 45.7 ± 7.1     |
| 153      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 20.0 ± 2.5     |
| 154      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 38.9 ± 4.2     |
| 159      | FCH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O                | NH <sub>2</sub>                  | 678.9 ± 21.7   |
| 160      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> | NH <sub>2</sub>                  | 1048.0 ± 114.3 |
| 161      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> | NH <sub>2</sub>                  | 790.0 ± 132.1  |
| 162      | FCH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O                | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 197.1 ± 58.8   |
| 163      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 216.4 ± 13.8   |
| 164      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 470.9 ± 00.4   |
| 166      | F   | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 49.8 ± 6.2     |
| 167      | F   | NH <sub>2</sub>                  | 663.0 ± 88.3   |
| 168      | F   | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 234.2 ± 44.0   |
| DMIC     | I   | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 13.1 ± 3.0     |
| IMPY     |   |                                  | 28.0 ± 4.1     |

Table 22 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of [ $^{18}$ F] radiolabelled compound 170 in normal mice

| Compound | Organs | Time after injection (min) |             |             |             |
|----------|--------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|          |        | 2 min                      | 10 min      | 30 min      | 60 min      |
| 170      | Blood  | 2.09 ± 0.40                | 1.94 ± 0.18 | 2.35 ± 0.33 | 1.87 ± 0.26 |
|          | Brain  | 3.48 ± 0.47                | 1.52 ± 0.03 | 1.08 ± 0.09 | 1.07 ± 0.17 |
|          | Bone   | 1.80 ± 0.31                | 1.76 ± 0.15 | 2.98 ± 0.49 | 3.58 ± 0.41 |

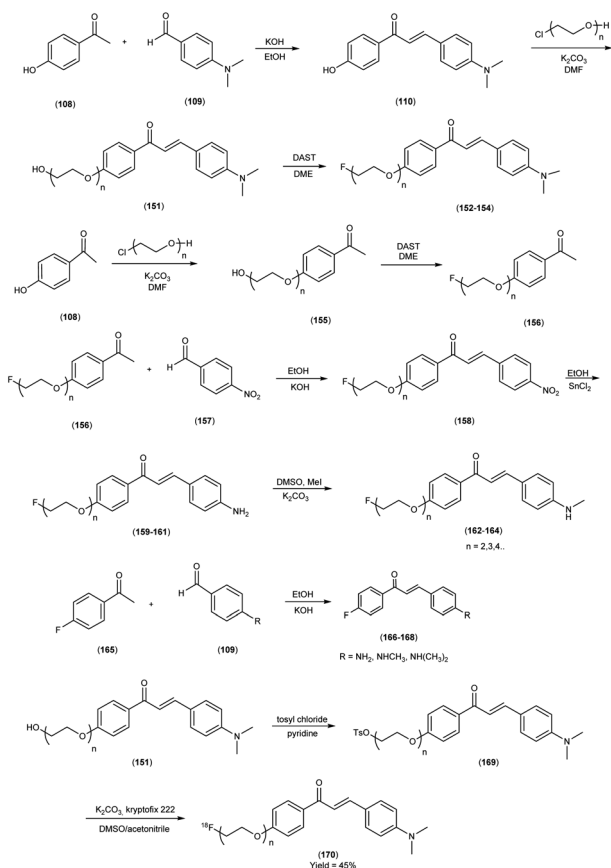
in a dose-dependent manner, with each exhibiting moderate binding affinities towards A $\beta$ <sub>1–42</sub> aggregates ( $K_i = 899 \pm 78$  nM for **143**,  $K_i = 211 \pm 19$  nM for **144**, and  $K_i = 108 \pm 16$  nM for **145**). While these values may not be considered optimal, they were nonetheless sufficiently robust for A $\beta$  aggregates, and notably comparable to the values determined for IMPY under the same assay system ( $K_i = 11.5 \pm 2.5$  nM). Moreover, these binding affinities align favorably with those reported for chalcone derivatives, where  $K_i$  values ranged from 2.9 to >10 000 nM as reported. In the context of biodistribution studies, it was observed that all compounds exhibited favorable initial brain uptake and rapid blood clearance. However, a noteworthy trend emerged, where an increase in the conjugation length correlated with a reduction in the initial brain uptake. Specifically, this pattern ranged from  $4.10 \pm 0.38\%$  ID/g for compound **148** to  $1.11 \pm 0.34\%$  ID/g for compound **150** (Table 20). It is important to note that these technetium-99m complexes, characterized by their small molecular weight (<500 Da), have been strategically designed through an integrated approach. This collective evidence underscores the potential feasibility of developing a promising  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labeled agent for the imaging of A $\beta$  plaques within the cerebral milieu. This intricate evaluation affirmed the robust affinity of technetium-99m ( $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ ), a radiotracer, demonstrating not only pronounced initial brain uptake but also expeditious clearance kinetics within bio-distribution investigations. These ingeniously devised, compact technetium-99m complexes, characterized by their synergistic alludes to the conceivable development of  $^{99m}\text{Tc}$ -labelled agents that hold the promise of enabling the visualization of A $\beta$  plaques within the cerebral milieu, thus contributing to the burgeoning field of neuroimaging in AD research (Scheme 12).

## 5. $^{18}\text{F}$ labelled chalcones for AD

In 2009, Masahiro Ono and collaborators<sup>62</sup> devised and synthesized fluorinated chalcone derivatives with the explicit intention of formulating  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labeled probes for deploying positron emission tomography (PET) as an imaging modality for the visualization of A $\beta$  plaques. The most advantageous approach for the synthesis of chalcones was the condensation reaction involving acetophenones (**108** & **165**) and 4-dimethylaldehyde (**109**). Within this framework, 4-hydroxy acetophenone or 4-fluoro acetophenone was subjected to a chemical reaction resulting in the formation of 4'-hydroxy-4-dimethylamino-chalcone (**110**) and 4'-fluoro-4-dimethylamino-chalcone (**158**), yielding products in quantities of 84.0% and 41.6%, respectively. The fluorination of compounds **151** & **155** to yield compounds **152**, **153**, **154** and **156**



was executed using diethylamino sulfur trifluoride (DAST) after the incorporation of three oligoethylene glycol molecules into the phenolic hydroxyl group. The  $^{18}\text{F}$  radiolabelling of tosyl precursor (169) was executed *via* a nucleophilic displacement reaction with the fluoride anion with a radiochemical yield of 45%. These chalcones were characterized by their incorporation of fluoro-pegylated (FPEG) moieties, synthesized employing the aldol condensation method. These newly synthesized compounds were harnessed for *in vitro* binding assessments, it was observed that the FPEG chalcone derivatives featuring a dimethylamino group exhibited elevated  $K_i$  values, ranging from 20 to 50 nM, in contrast to their counterparts bearing either a monomethylamino or a primary amine group (Table 21). Remarkably, they demonstrated a remarkable proclivity, surpassing monomethyl amine and primary amine groups, signifying a heightened affinity for A $\beta$  binding. Noteworthy among these compounds, [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]-3-(4-dimethylamino)phenyl)-1-(4-(2-((fluoroethoxy)-ethoxy)phenyl)-2-propen-1-one (170) exhibited a pronounced ability to recognize A $\beta$  plaques avidly. Furthermore, compound (170) showcased the attributes of swift cerebral clearance within the brain of normal murine subjects (Table 22). This study not only contributes to the expanding repertoire of potential AD diagnostic tools but also accentuates the potency of these fluoro-pegylated chalcone derivatives in illuminating A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques, setting the stage for further advancements in neuroimaging research (Scheme 13).



Scheme 13

In 2018, Sho Kaide and colleagues<sup>63</sup> encompassed the synthesis of radio-fluorinated chalcone derivatives, followed by a comprehensive assessment of their potential utility in PET for discerning A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques linked to AD. The synthesis of nonradioactive chalcones (172 to 175) was carried out by the reaction of 4-iodoacetophenone with either 4-dimethylamino-benzaldehyde or 4-methylaminobenzaldehyde in the presence of a basic catalyst (10% KOH) in ethanol at ambient temperature with a yield range of 60% to 63%. To synthesize the precursors necessary for  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labelling, boronate derivative 176 was synthesized from compound 174 through coupling reactions with bis(pinacolato)diboron, aided by a base (KOAc) and a palladium catalyst ( $\text{PdCl}_2(\text{dppf})\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ). The synthesized boronate derivative (176) was effectively employed as a precursor in the copper-mediated nucleophilic  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labelling process, leading to the successful preparation of radiolabelled compounds 177 and 178. This approach facilitated the direct conversion of iodine moieties, which were originally integrated into the chalcone structure, into fluorine, ultimately yielding the desired radiolabelled compounds 177 and 178. The core strategy employed the transformation of iodine to fluorine as a foundational principle, facilitating the construction of novel radio-fluorinated chalcones designed as PET probes. This ingenious design aimed to foster enhanced specificity in detecting A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques while mitigating undesirable non-specific binding. In the context of *in vitro* binding investigations employing recombinant A $\beta$  peptides in aggregate form, both [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]DMFC and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]FMC demonstrated notable binding affinities, characterized by  $K_i$  values of 4.47 and 6.50 nM, respectively. Furthermore, in the context of *in vitro* autoradiography (ARG) experiments conducted using brain sections from individuals with AD, [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]DMFC and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]FMC exhibited conspicuous accumulation exclusively within regions abundant in A $\beta$  plaques. This unequivocal pattern of accumulation underscores their discerning recognition of human A $\beta$  plaques in the *in vitro* setting. The development of these new radio-fluorinated chalcones was executed through a strategic process that entailed the direct conversion of iodine to fluorine, an innovation achieved by implementing  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labelling methodologies employing boronated precursors. This transformative approach culminated in the direct incorporation of fluorine-18 into the chalcone scaffold, yielding [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]4-dimethylamino-4-fluoro-chalcone (177) and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]4'-fluoro-4-methylamino-chalcone (178). These novel compounds, representative of the

Table 23 Brain uptake of radioactivity after the injection of [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]chalcones, [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]chalcones and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]Florbetapir in normal mice and the 2 min/30 min ratio of radioactivity accumulation

| Compound                       | % ID/g brain |             |                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------|-------------|----------------------|
|                                | 2 min        | 30 min      | Ratio (2 min/30 min) |
| [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]DMFC (177)  | 4.43 ± 0.45  | 0.52 ± 0.07 | 8.5                  |
| [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]DMIC       | 2.43 ± 0.10  | 0.33 ± 0.07 | 7.4                  |
| [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]FMC (178)   | 5.47 ± 0.52  | 0.66 ± 0.09 | 8.3                  |
| [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]IMC        | 3.52 ± 0.62  | 0.63 ± 0.19 | 5.6                  |
| [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]Florbetapir | 4.90 ± 0.99  | 1.65 ± 0.11 | 3.0                  |





innovation, showcased commendable attributes within *in vivo* scenarios. In the context of a biodistribution study conducted in healthy mice, both compounds **177** and **178** exhibited notably higher initial brain uptake levels, quantified at 4.43% and 5.47% ID/g, respectively, at the 2 minutes time point following injection. Furthermore, these compounds displayed a substantially more expeditious clearance from the brain, registering values of 0.52% and 0.66% ID/g at the 30 minutes post-injection interval, respectively (Table 23). This contrasted favorably with the performance of a Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved  $\text{A}\beta$ -amyloid imaging agent, [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]Florbetapir, signifying an enhanced likelihood of detecting  $\text{A}\beta$  plaques while mitigating non-specific binding in the cerebral milieu. This favourable outcome was attributable to the compound's judiciously designed lipophilicity and molecular dimensions, as realized through the iodine-to-fluorine conversion strategy. Such advancements hold the potential to propel the domain of neuroimaging further, thereby contributing to a more nuanced understanding of  $\text{A}\beta$ -amyloid plaque distribution within the intricate landscape of the AD-afflicted brain (Scheme 14).

In 2009, Masahiro Ono and colleagues<sup>64</sup> a compelling endeavor unfolded wherein a series of innovative fluoro-pegylated (FPEG) flavones and their derivatives were synthesized, with the overarching aim of assessing their applicability in unraveling the intricacies of AD development and functionality. In this intricate synthetic process, the initial step involves the reaction of substituted acetophenone (**179**) with acetyl chloride to synthesize a benzoyl ester (**180**) denoted as compound **181**. Subsequently, this species (**181**) is subjected to a base-mediated reaction, yielding a 1,3-diketone (**182**). Further, the treatment of diketone with acid triggers the transformation into the targeted flavone compound denoted as **183**. The compound **183** is then subjected to demethylation using  $\text{BBR}_3$  in  $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ , leading to the formation of compound **184**. To synthesize compounds bearing 1–3 ethoxy groups as the polyethylene glycol (PEG) linkage, 2-chlorethanol was coupled with the hydroxyl group of compound **184** to yield compound **185**. The fluorinated flavone derivatives, designated as compounds **186** to **194**, were successfully prepared by reacting compound **185** with diethylamino sulfur trifluoride (DAST) in dimethoxyethane (DME) or ethylene glycol dimethyl ether. In the final phase of the synthetic process, the synthesis of flavone

**Table 24** Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) of compounds for the binding of compound **203** to **205** for  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates

| Compound   | $K_i$ (nM)       | Compound   | $K_i$ (nM)       |
|------------|------------------|------------|------------------|
| <b>186</b> | $5.3 \pm 0.8$    | <b>192</b> | $234.0 \pm 60.6$ |
| <b>187</b> | $14.4 \pm 2.5$   | <b>193</b> | $54.5 \pm 10.3$  |
| <b>188</b> | $19.3 \pm 4.0$   | <b>194</b> | $45.1 \pm 5.8$   |
| <b>189</b> | $234.3 \pm 63.5$ | <b>198</b> | $260.5 \pm 43.3$ |
| <b>190</b> | $99.0 \pm 11.8$  | <b>199</b> | $110.0 \pm 47.4$ |
| <b>191</b> | $321.1 \pm 74.4$ | <b>200</b> | $73.9 \pm 5.3$   |

derivatives (**198**, **199** and **200**) bearing fluorine atoms directly bound to the phenyl group is successfully accomplished. To achieve the desired  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labeled FPEG flavones, denoted as compounds **203**, **204** and **205**, the tosylates **202** serve as the precursors. The free hydroxyl groups of the compound **185** was transformed into tosylate through a reaction with tosyl chloride (TsCl) in the presence of pyridine, resulting in the formation of tosylated compound **202**. The synthesized tosylate (**202**) was combined with [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]fluoride and potassium carbonate in the presence of Kryptofix 222, all dissolved in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO), and heated at 160 °C for a duration of 5 minutes. The meticulous design of these compounds strategically incorporated electron-donating functional moieties, encompassing methoxy, hydroxy, methylamino, dimethylamino and amino groups, all of which play pivotal roles in engendering affinity for  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregation, a hallmark of AD pathology. The binding affinities of the FPEG flavone derivatives towards  $\text{A}\beta$  aggregates displayed a range spanning from 5 to 321 nM (Table 24). Within brain sections obtained from AD model mice, those FPEG flavones featuring a dimethylamino group were observed to robustly stain  $\text{A}\beta$ -amyloid plaques. To quantitatively assess the affinities of these FPEG flavones for  $\text{A}\beta$  aggregates, *in vitro* binding experiments were conducted in solutions employing [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]DMFV as the ligand. The hierarchy of affinity among the flavone derivatives towards  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates was established as follows: the dimethylamino derivatives (**186**, **187**, **188** and **200**) exhibited the highest affinity, followed by the monomethylamino derivatives (**190**, **193**, **194** and **199**), and finally, the primary amino derivatives (**189**, **191**, **192** and **198**). Notably, this study involved the performance of *in vitro* plaque labelling on brain slices extracted from Tg2576 mice, revealing that the synthesized FPEG flavones exhibited a pronounced tendency to selectively bind to  $\text{A}\beta$ -amyloid plaques. Three distinct  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labeled FPEG flavones, denoted as [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**203**, [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**204**, and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**205**, were subjected to comprehensive bio-distribution assessments in normal mice (Table 25). Remarkably, all three ligands demonstrated a substantial uptake within the brain, ranging from 2.89% to 4.17% ID/g at the 2 minutes post-injection time point, a level deemed sufficient for effective imaging purposes. Furthermore, these compounds exhibited favorable clearance kinetics, as evidenced by the brain levels of 1.89%, 2.00%, and 1.31% ID/g at the 30 minutes post-injection interval for [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**203**, [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**204** and [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]**205**, respectively. These values corresponded to 45.3%, 56.5%, and 45.3% of the initial peak uptake for radiolabelled compounds **203**, **204** and **205** respectively. The noteworthy attributes of rapid initial uptake into the normal brain coupled with swift washout represent highly



Table 25 Biodistribution of  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labeled flavones in normal mice

| Compounds | Organ | Time after injection (min) |             |             |             |
|-----------|-------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|           |       | 2 min                      | 10 min      | 30 min      | 60 min      |
| 203       | Blood | 2.80 ± 0.41                | 2.71 ± 0.13 | 2.53 ± 0.17 | 3.25 ± 0.31 |
|           | Brain | 4.17 ± 0.77                | 3.62 ± 0.21 | 1.89 ± 0.13 | 2.19 ± 0.18 |
|           | Bone  | 2.02 ± 0.53                | 2.83 ± 0.23 | 4.51 ± 0.55 | 6.21 ± 0.84 |
| 204       | Blood | 2.09 ± 0.35                | 2.50 ± 0.21 | 2.50 ± 0.21 | 2.94 ± 0.27 |
|           | Brain | 3.54 ± 0.54                | 2.75 ± 0.21 | 2.00 ± 0.20 | 2.13 ± 0.10 |
|           | Bone  | 1.13 ± 0.22                | 1.65 ± 0.10 | 2.42 ± 0.38 | 3.74 ± 0.30 |
| 205       | Blood | 2.35 ± 0.54                | 1.50 ± 0.26 | 1.40 ± 0.04 | 1.88 ± 0.08 |
|           | Brain | 2.89 ± 0.74                | 2.23 ± 0.36 | 1.31 ± 0.14 | 1.37 ± 0.11 |
|           | Bone  | 1.53 ± 0.52                | 2.38 ± 0.39 | 4.06 ± 0.49 | 5.21 ± 0.98 |

desirable properties for  $\beta$ -amyloid imaging probes, as they contribute to the attainment of a high signal-to-background ratio. However, it is noteworthy that the free fluoride resulting from this process was not absorbed by brain tissue. Hence, the anticipated interference stemming from this free fluoride is expected to be relatively minimal in the context of brain imaging (Schemes 15 and 16).

Mengchao Cui and colleagues<sup>55</sup> orchestrated a transformative shift in paradigm by precisely crafting an innovative and heterogeneous array of dibenzylideneacetones. The synthesis of FPEG dibenzylideneacetones, the dimethylated

derivative or the monomethylated derivative **206** was subjected to coupling reactions with benzaldehyde modified with polyethylene glycol, resulting in the formation of compound **209**. For the dimethylated dibenzylideneacetone series, the hydroxyl groups present in compound **209** was initially protected *via* tosylation, yielding precursor compound **210**. These precursors were subsequently subjected to a reaction with anhydrous tetra-*n*-butylammonium fluoride (TBAF) at reflux conditions, leading to the formation of non-radioactive FPEG dibenzylideneacetones **210** to **212**. In the case of monomethylated dibenzylideneacetone series, compound **86** had its hydroxyl group protected by treatment with *tert*-butyldimethylsilyl chloride (TBDMSCl), resulting in the TBS-protected compound **218**. Further modification involved protecting the methylamino group of compound **219** with butyloxycarbonyl (BOC), yielding compound **220**. Following the removal of the TBS-protecting group from compound **219** through treatment with TBAF, the free hydroxyl group was converted into mesylates by reacting with methanesulfonyl chloride in the presence of triethylamine, culminating in the formation of compound **222**. To produce the desired  $^{18}\text{F}$ -labeled dibenzylideneacetone **213** and **222**, the tosylate precursor (**210**) was mixed with [ $^{18}\text{F}$ ]fluoride and potassium carbonate, with the addition of Kryptofix 222, in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO). The mixture was then subjected to heating at 120 °C for 5 minutes to produce compound **213** a radiochemical yield of 49%. In the case of radiolabelled compound **222**, the *N*-BOC-protected mesylate compound **221**



Scheme 15



Scheme 16

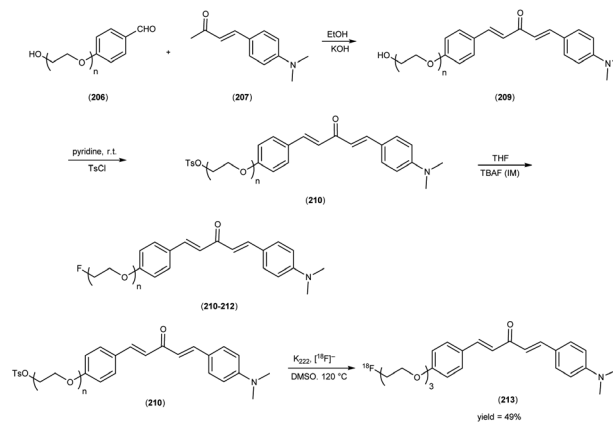


## Review

**Table 26** Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) for binding to aggregates of  $A\beta_{1-42}$  versus [ $^{125}I$ ]IMPY

| Compound   | R             | $K_i$ (nM)     |
|------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>210</b> | Dimethylamino | $5.6 \pm 2.5$  |
| <b>211</b> | Dimethylamino | $4.4 \pm 1.3$  |
| <b>212</b> | Dimethylamino | $6.9 \pm 1.4$  |
| <b>216</b> | Methyl amino  | $8.6 \pm 1.3$  |
| IMPY       | —             | $10.5 \pm 1.0$ |

served as the precursor. After heating at 120 °C for five minutes, the mixture was exposed to aqueous HCl to remove the *N*-BOC-protecting group. The crude product was subsequently purified through HPLC, achieving a radiochemical purity greater than 98% and a radiochemical yield of 13%. These compounds were subsequently subjected to a rigorous examination to discern their affinity profiles toward  $A\beta$  aggregates across a spectrum of discrete ligand-binding sites. The majority of the synthesized compounds exhibited remarkable affinity for  $A\beta$  aggregates, with binding constants ( $K_i$ ) in the nanomolar (nM) range. The structure–activity relationship (SAR) investigation outlined previously revealed that the incorporation of a substituted group at the *ortho* position resulted in a diminished or nullified binding interaction. In stark contrast, the *para* position exhibited remarkable tolerance toward steric bulk substitutions, thereby presenting an enticing prospect for the prospective development of novel radioligands that can be readily labelled for *in vivo* imaging of  $A\beta$  plaques. In the context of PET or SPECT agent development targeted towards  $A\beta$  plaques, this observation pertaining to the dibenzylideneacetone scaffold bears significant importance. Notably, the FPEG ligands **210**, **212** and **216**, distinguished by varying polyethylene glycol unit counts ( $n = 1$  to 3), consistently exhibited exceptional affinity ( $K_i$



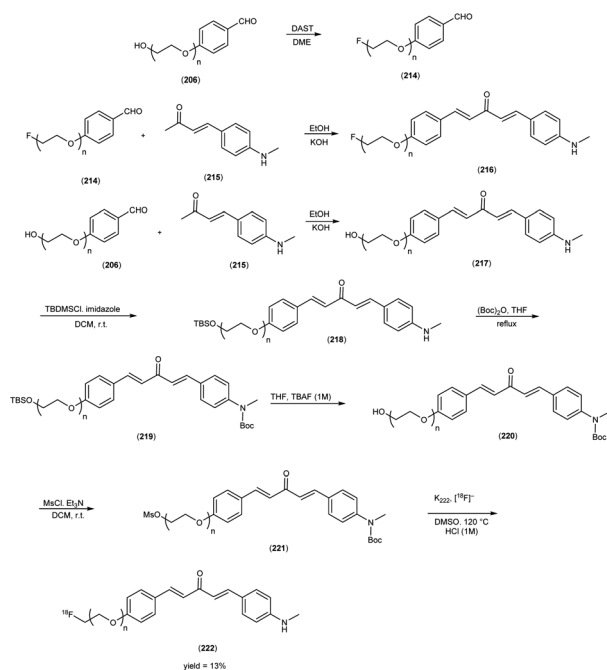
Scheme 17

< 10 nM) (Table 26). Remarkably, the length of the linker moiety did not impart any substantial alteration in the binding characteristics. Intriguingly, augmenting the size of the substituent at the aromatic amino group resulted in a discernible reduction in binding affinity. The lipophilicity ( $\log D$ ) profiles of the radiolabelled tracers [ $^{18}F$ ]213, and [ $^{18}F$ ]222 assessed under controlled experimental conditions exhibited relatively elevated partition coefficients ( $\log D = 2.97$  to 3.66), indicative of their inherent lipophilic characteristics. Subsequent biodistribution investigations were conducted in healthy murine subjects employing these radiolabelled tracers. As delineated in Table 27, compounds **213** and **222** manifested commendable initial blood–brain barrier (BBB) permeation with remarkable initial cerebral uptake (4.13%, and 5.15% ID/g at 2 minutes, respectively). Additionally, the radiolabelled probes exhibited favorable brain penetration characteristics along with rapid

**Table 27** Biodistribution of [ $^{18}F$ ]213 and [ $^{18}F$ ]222 in ddY normal mice (% ID/g, mean (SD),  $n = 4$ )

| Compounds  | Organ     | Time after injection (min) |                  |                  |                  |
|------------|-----------|----------------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
|            |           | 2 min                      | 10 min           | 30 min           | 60 min           |
| <b>213</b> | Brain     | $4.13 \pm 0.41$            | $1.51 \pm 0.17$  | $1.04 \pm 0.23$  | $0.90 \pm 0.14$  |
|            | Blood     | $5.38 \pm 0.32$            | $3.89 \pm 0.36$  | $2.46 \pm 0.54$  | $1.60 \pm 0.17$  |
|            | Bone      | $2.88 \pm 0.37$            | $2.42 \pm 0.14$  | $2.33 \pm 0.30$  | $2.33 \pm 0.30$  |
|            | Liver     | $22.3 \pm 3.12$            | $24.41 \pm 3.34$ | $14.0 \pm 1.94$  | $6.88 \pm 1.51$  |
|            | Kidney    | $12.95 \pm 0.79$           | $12.77 \pm 2.42$ | $7.13 \pm 2.64$  | $3.67 \pm 0.85$  |
|            | Spleen    | $4.26 \pm 1.05$            | $6.19 \pm 1.06$  | $4.46 \pm 0.80$  | $1.93 \pm 0.67$  |
|            | Stomach   | $6.28 \pm 5.75$            | $7.39 \pm 1.87$  | $6.00 \pm 1.14$  | $3.98 \pm 1.52$  |
|            | Intestine | $4.12 \pm 0.48$            | $10.53 \pm 2.11$ | $17.50 \pm 4.47$ | $21.57 \pm 7.37$ |
|            | Lung      | $12.30 \pm 1.99$           | $6.34 \pm 0.88$  | $3.38 \pm 0.43$  | $1.86 \pm 0.25$  |
|            | Heart     | $7.60 \pm 1.32$            | $3.33 \pm 0.35$  | $1.90 \pm 0.26$  | $1.47 \pm 0.13$  |
| <b>222</b> | Brain     | $5.15 \pm 0.17$            | $1.35 \pm 0.19$  | $1.35 \pm 0.19$  | $1.27 \pm 0.12$  |
|            | Blood     | $7.44 \pm 1.22$            | $7.99 \pm 0.34$  | $4.68 \pm 0.59$  | $3.59 \pm 0.93$  |
|            | Bone      | $2.97 \pm 0.35$            | $2.93 \pm 0.37$  | $2.94 \pm 0.91$  | $2.54 \pm 0.84$  |
|            | Liver     | $24.1 \pm 5.77$            | $30.09 \pm 4.43$ | $19.24 \pm 3.64$ | $14.07 \pm 1.87$ |
|            | Kidney    | $16.48 \pm 2.51$           | $14.15 \pm 0.98$ | $11.51 \pm 1.76$ | $9.43 \pm 1.50$  |
|            | Spleen    | $5.39 \pm 1.79$            | $6.62 \pm 0.42$  | $5.44 \pm 1.24$  | $5.35 \pm 2.06$  |
|            | Stomach   | $3.26 \pm 0.63$            | $2.61 \pm 0.18$  | $1.93 \pm 0.33$  | $1.28 \pm 0.49$  |
|            | Intestine | $6.58 \pm 0.89$            | $12.82 \pm 3.23$ | $24.34 \pm 3.83$ | $26.26 \pm 3.57$ |
|            | Lung      | $12.19 \pm 2.31$           | $11.77 \pm 1.94$ | $7.43 \pm 1.03$  | $5.44 \pm 1.45$  |
|            | Heart     | $10.55 \pm 1.10$           | $7.64 \pm 1.23$  | $5.67 \pm 0.72$  | $5.14 \pm 0.88$  |





Scheme 18

clearance. Notably, these probes unequivocally exhibited a distinctive signal for labelling amyloid plaques, as evidenced in transgenic mouse brain sections and postmortem brain sections from AD patients (Schemes 17 and 18).

## 6. $^{11}\text{C}$ labelled chalcones for AD

In the scholarly pursuit orchestrated by Mashiro Ono and colleagues,<sup>62</sup> a meticulous synthesis endeavor unfolded, involving the preparation of *N*-nor methyl precursors and subsequent utilization of [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]methyl triflate for the purpose of synthesizing radiolabelled chalcones tagged with the  $^{11}\text{C}$  isotope. In order to synthesize the desired compound (229), fluorination of compound 223 was executed using diethylamino sulfur trifluoride (DAST). Prior to this, the introduction of three oligoethylene glycol moieties into the phenolic hydroxyl group of the compound 108 was carried out by using 1,2 dichloroethane in DMF by using potassium carbonate as a base. The chalcone was synthesized by employing the Claisen-Schmidt condensation reaction of 4-nitrobenzaldehyde (225) and 4-substituted acetophenone (224), engaged within a basic medium. The amino derivatives were readily prepared by reducing compound 226 with  $\text{SnCl}_2$ . Furthermore, the transformation of compound 227 into their respective monomethylamino derivatives (228), was achieved through methylation with  $\text{CH}_3\text{I}$  under alkaline conditions. For the synthesis of  $^{11}\text{C}$ -labelled chalcones, the starting materials were the *N*-normethyl precursors (229) and [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]methyl triflate ([ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]MeOTf). The radiochemical yields of the final product were found to range from 40% to 55%, and these values were decay corrected to the end of the bombardment. The radiochemical purity of the resulting compounds consistently exceeded 99%,

Table 28 Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) of compounds for the binding of [ $^{125}\text{I}$ ]DMIC to  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates

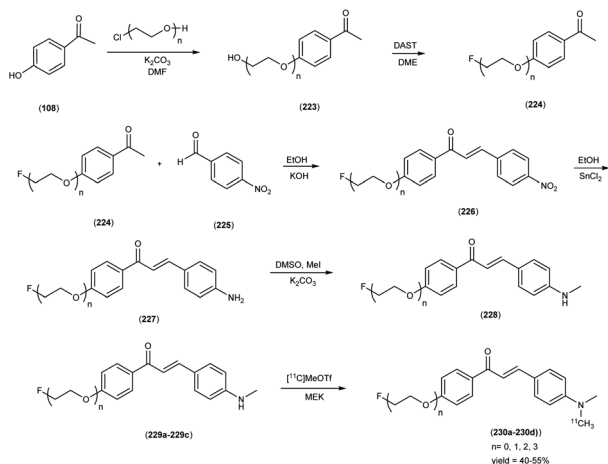
| Compound | R <sub>1</sub>                                    | R <sub>2</sub>                   | $K_i$ (nM)   |
|----------|---|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 229      | FCH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O                | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 197.1 ± 58.8 |
| 229      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>2</sub> | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 216.4 ± 13.8 |
| 229      | F(CH <sub>2</sub> CH <sub>2</sub> O) <sub>3</sub> | NHCH <sub>3</sub>                | 470.9 ± 00.4 |
| DMIC     | I   | N(CH <sub>3</sub> ) <sub>2</sub> | 13.1 ± 3.0   |
| IMPY     |   |                                  | 28.0 ± 4.1   |

and the specific activity ranged from 22 to 28 GBq  $\mu\text{mol}^{-1}$ . This pioneering methodology aimed to endow these chalcones with radiolabelled, facilitating their application as imaging agents. The *In vitro* binding assays with  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates revealed that FPEG chalcone derivatives featuring a dimethylamino group exhibited notably higher  $K_i$  values, ranging from 20 to 50 nM, in comparison to their counterparts containing either a mono-methylamino or primary amine group (Table 28). The subsequent phase of inquiry involved conducting biodistribution studies on normal murine subjects, employing four distinct  $^{11}\text{C}$ -labelled chalcone compounds. Remarkably, the outcome of these investigations unveiled an expeditious phenomenon whereby the  $^{11}\text{C}$ -labelled FPEG chalcones, mere moments after administration, promptly traversed the cerebral barrier. Upon administration of  $^{11}\text{C}$ -labeled FPEG chalcones (230a to 230d), the ensuing radioactivity effectively traversed the blood-brain barrier, manifesting a commendable uptake within the range of 3.7% to 6.0% ID/g in the brain at the 2 minutes post-injection time point. This level of uptake was deemed sufficient for enabling the imaging of  $\text{A}\beta$  plaques within the cerebral environment. Additionally, these compounds exhibited favorable clearance kinetics within the normal brain, as indicated by values of 2.3%, 1.0%, 0.35%, and 1.0% ID/g at the 60 minutes post-injection interval for [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230b, [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230c, [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230d, and [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230a, respectively (Table 29). This translocation culminated in their substantial accumulation within the brain tissue, reaching uptake levels that were deemed suitable for the imaging of  $\text{A}\beta$  plaques. The quantitative range of accumulation

Table 29 Biodistribution of radioactivity after injection of [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230a, [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230b, [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]230c, and [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]13 in normal mice

| Compounds | Time after injection | Organ       |             |
|-----------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|
|           |                      | Blood       | Brain       |
| 230a      | 2 min                | 3.65 ± 0.37 | 6.01 ± 0.61 |
|           | 10 min               | 2.73 ± 0.28 | 3.24 ± 0.39 |
|           | 30 min               | 2.12 ± 0.18 | 2.57 ± 0.26 |
|           | 60 min               | 2.22 ± 0.25 | 2.26 ± 0.41 |
| 230b      | 2 min                | 3.48 ± 0.56 | 4.73 ± 0.47 |
|           | 10 min               | 2.28 ± 0.84 | 2.23 ± 0.18 |
|           | 30 min               | 2.54 ± 0.96 | 1.14 ± 0.12 |
|           | 60 min               | 1.44 ± 0.36 | 1.00 ± 0.19 |
| 230c      | 2 min                | 2.44 ± 0.25 | 4.31 ± 0.33 |
|           | 10 min               | 1.52 ± 0.42 | 0.64 ± 0.07 |
|           | 30 min               | 1.01 ± 0.15 | 0.64 ± 0.07 |
|           | 60 min               | 0.68 ± 0.10 | 0.35 ± 0.03 |





Scheme 19

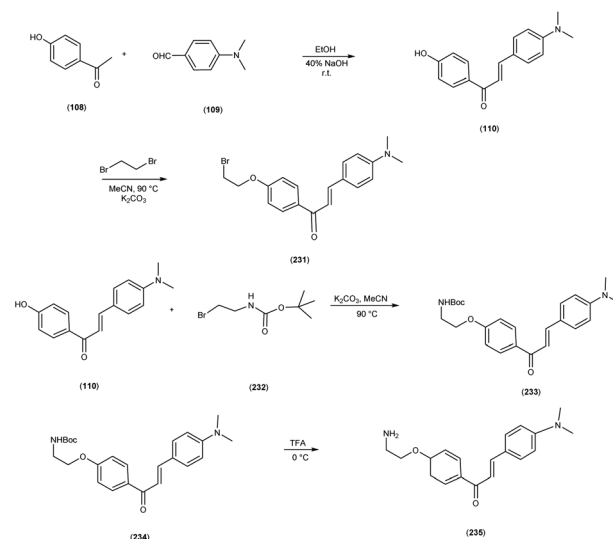
spanned from 3.7% to 6.0% injected dose per gram of brain tissue. This accomplishment not only showcases the feasibility of the developed radiolabelling technique but also underscores the potential of these  $^{11}\text{C}$ -labelled FPEG chalcones as promising tools for imaging  $\text{A}\beta$  plaques, thus contributing to the advancement of neuroimaging methodologies with a focus on AD research (Scheme 19).

In 2018, Kanchan Chauhan and co-authors<sup>65</sup> orchestrated a comprehensive investigation, wherein they embarked upon the synthesis of  $^{11}\text{C}$ - $(\text{Chal})_2\text{DEA-Me}$  (**237**), an innovative homodimeric chalcone-based  $^{11}\text{C}$ -PET radiotracer. The facile synthetic approach employed in this investigation drew upon classical principles of organic chemistry, incorporating condensation and nucleophilic substitution reactions. Notably, the starting materials, *N,N*-dimethylbenzaldehyde (**109**) and 4-hydroxyacetophenone (**108**), engaged in a Claisen–Schmidt condensation reaction within a basic medium, yielding the *E*-isomer of chalcone (**110**). Subsequently, compound **110** was subjected to *o*-methylation at the hydroxyl position, resulting in the formation of the monomeric derivative, Chal-Me (**231**). The compound **110** underwent further reaction with 1,2 dibromoethane to produce intermediates (**232**), which collectively constituted a bivalent ligand bearing  $\text{C}_2$  symmetry. The compound **235** was generated through the conjugation of bromoethylamine-boc with compound **110**, followed by the removal of the boc-protecting group. The culmination of these synthetic steps led to the formation of the dimeric compound,  $(\text{Chal})_2\text{DEA}$  (**236**). In this study, a wet chemistry methodology

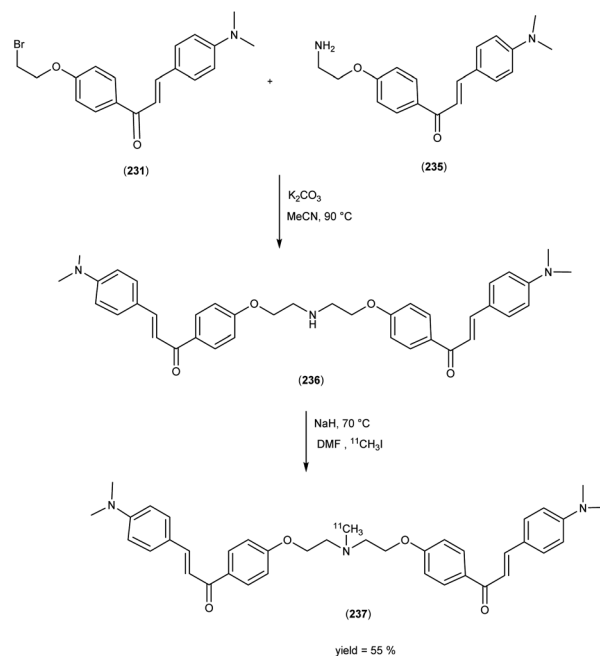
**Table 30** Percentage of intact tracer in plasma and brain homogenates of ddY mice

| Compounds                | Time after the injection (min) | Organs |       |
|--------------------------|--------------------------------|--------|-------|
|                          |                                | Plasma | Brain |
| $^{11}\text{C}$ -Chal-Me | 10 min                         | 40.3   | 98.6  |
|                          | 30 min                         | 25.8   | 94.8  |
| <b>235</b>               | 10 min                         | 37.6   | 98.7  |
|                          | 30 min                         | 23.9   | 93.3  |

was harnessed for radiolabelling, with the radiolabelling process executed in the presence of sodium hydride. The radiolabelling of precursor **236** was accomplished through *N*- $^{11}\text{C}$ -methylation yielding  $^{11}\text{C}$ - $(\text{Chal})_2\text{DEA-Me}$  (**237**). These radiolabelled tracers were efficiently isolated using reversed-phase high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), resulting in high radiochemical yields *i.e.* 55%, and purity exceeding 98%. The central objective of their endeavor encompassed an in-depth exploration of the radiotracers binding affinity toward  $\text{A}\beta$ -amyloid plaques, pivotal to the understanding of neurodegenerative disorders. The investigation entailed intricate PET imaging and biodistribution assessments, both of which



Scheme 20



Scheme 21



unveiled the radiotracers judicious brain pharmacokinetics. Remarkably, the bivalent ligand exhibited heightened cerebral outcome underscoring the promising potential of  $^{11}\text{C}$ -(chal) $_2$ -DEA-Me (237) as an adept *in vivo* imaging tracer of  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$ , accentuating the efficacy of a bivalent approach in augmenting biological responses, particularly for early amyloidosis detection. The utilization of a bivalent approach in the design of radioligands is underscored by a marked and statistically significant enhancement ( $p < 0.0001$ ) in the binding affinity of compound 237 towards synthetic  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates when compared to its monomeric counterpart,  $^{11}\text{C}$ -Chal-Me. This augmentation in binding affinity signifies the efficacy of the bivalent strategy. In the context of PET imaging and biodistribution investigations, both ligands exhibited favorable brain pharmacokinetics, with the bivalent ligand demonstrating higher cerebral uptake. Notably, the analysis of metabolites in brain homogenates derived from healthy ddY mice demonstrated the robust stability of these radiotracers in the cerebral milieu, with over 93% of the tracer remaining intact 30 minutes post-injection (Table 30). Furthermore, both chalcone derivatives exhibited intrinsic fluorescence, and their emission properties underwent substantial alterations upon binding to  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$ . These preliminary findings indicate a promising potential for compound 237 as an *in vivo*  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  imaging tracer. In concert with experimental insights, computational studies corroborated the superior binding affinity and thermodynamic stability of this devised ligand when contrasted with monomeric and conventional ligands. Such initial findings collectively bolster the rationale behind envisioning compound 237 as a prospective *in vivo* imaging tracer, while concurrently advocating the strategic utility of a bivalent approach in eliciting robust biological responses, thereby offering potential

benefits in addressing afflictions as traumatic brain injury (TBI) and AD (Schemes 20 and 21).

## 7. $^{68}\text{Ga}$ labelled chalcones for AD

In 2014, Kanchan Chauhan and collaborators<sup>66</sup> orchestrated a meticulous synthesis endeavor aimed at the production of radiolabelled chalcones, imbued with the potential to serve as PET imaging probes, specifically within the realm of AD. The synthetic protocol employed in this study consisted of a meticulous five-step procedure. To initiate this process, a Claisen-Schmidt condensation reaction was chosen as the method of choice for generating chalcone, specifically (*E*)-1-(4-hydroxyphenyl)-3-(4-isopropylphenyl)prop-2-en-1-one (110). This intermediate served as the foundational building block for subsequent transformations. The culminating and paramount phase of the synthesis entailed the reaction of diethylenetriamine pentaacetic acid (DTPA) with (*E*)-1-(4-hydroxyphenyl)-3-(4-isopropylphenyl)prop-2-en-1-one (110), yielding the complex molecular structure denominated as 5,8-bis(carboxymethyl)-13-(4-((*E*)-3-(4-(dimethylamino)phenyl)acryloyl)phenoxy)-2-(2-(4-((*E*)-3-(4-(dimethylamino)phenyl)acryloyl)phenoxy)ethylamino)-2-oxoethyl)-10-oxo-2,5,8,11-tetraazatridecane-1-carboxylic acid, abbreviated as DT(Ch) $_2$ . It is of noteworthy significance that this intricate chemical transformation was executed with a remarkable 94% yield, denoting a highly efficient synthetic endeavour. This innovative ligand (243) was envisaged as an adept tool for PET-based detection through radiolabelling with the radioisotope  $^{68}\text{Ga}$ . In an *in vitro* binding assay conducted on  $\text{A}\beta_{1-42}$  aggregates, it was observed that  $^{68}\text{Ga}$ -DT(Ch) $_2$  exhibited a remarkable binding affinity, characterized by an inhibition constant of  $4.18 \pm 0.62$  nM. The fluorescent attributes of this ligand were noteworthy, featuring absorption/emission peaks at 410/540 nM (Table 31). Notably, upon binding to  $\text{A}\beta$  aggregates, the ligand displayed a distinct blue shift and a notable 5.5-fold enhancement in emission intensity. In the context of blood kinetics, investigations conducted in normal rabbits indicated rapid clearance dynamics, with a half-life ( $t_{1/2}$ ) of  $24 \pm 0.08$  nM minute for the fast component ( $t_{1/2}(\text{F})$ ) and 2 hours and  $40 \pm 0.04$  nM minute for the slow component ( $t_{1/2}(\text{S})$ ). Moreover, *in vivo* biodistribution analysis unveiled the blood-brain barrier penetration capabilities of the complex, as evidenced by a brain

**Table 31** Inhibition constants ( $K_i$ , nM) for ligands binding to  $\text{A}\beta_{42}$  aggregates ( $n = 3$ )

| Compounds                              | $K_i$ (nM)      |
|--|-----------------|
| DT(Ch) $_2$ (243)                      | $21.5 \pm 0.94$ |
| $^{69/71}\text{Ga}$ -DT(Ch) $_2$ (244) | $4.18 \pm 0.62$ |
| DMIC                                   | $3.64 \pm 0.3$  |
| Thioflavin                             | $T > 6000$      |

**Table 32** Biodistribution of  $^{68}\text{Ga}$ -DT(Ch) $_2$  (244) after tracer injection in normal mice ( $n = 3$ )

| Compound | Organ     | Times after injection |                  |                  |                 |
|----------|-----------|-----------------------|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
|          |           | 2 min                 | 10 min           | 30 min           | 60 min          |
| 244      | Blood     | $6.22 \pm 1.4$        | $5.20 \pm 0.81$  | $1.69 \pm 0.18$  | $0.83 \pm 0.11$ |
|          | Brain     | $1.24 \pm 0.31$       | $1.06 \pm 0.09$  | $0.36 \pm 0.06$  | $0.20 \pm 0.01$ |
|          | Heart     | $1.34 \pm 0.16$       | $1.03 \pm 0.13$  | $0.43 \pm 0.12$  | $0.36 \pm 0.06$ |
|          | Lung      | $1.77 \pm 0.17$       | $3.24 \pm 0.27$  | $1.54 \pm 0.14$  | $0.90 \pm 0.09$ |
|          | Liver     | $11.12 \pm 1.02$      | $14.67 \pm 1.42$ | $11.85 \pm 1.21$ | $6.78 \pm 1.08$ |
|          | Spleen    | $1.04 \pm 0.37$       | $2.10 \pm 0.31$  | $0.67 \pm 0.18$  | $0.33 \pm 0.08$ |
|          | Kidney    | $4.86 \pm 0.93$       | $5.31 \pm 0.86$  | $2.50 \pm 0.57$  | $1.28 \pm 0.27$ |
|          | Stomach   | $0.54 \pm 0.13$       | $0.82 \pm 0.11$  | $0.69 \pm 0.13$  | $0.36 \pm 0.07$ |
|          | Intestine | $2.33 \pm 0.19$       | $3.19 \pm 0.15$  | $5.98 \pm 0.28$  | $6.23 \pm 0.25$ |







Scheme 22

uptake of  $1.24 \pm 0.31\%$  ID/g at 2 minutes post-injection, followed by expeditious washout, with negligible activity (0.36% ID/g) remaining at 30 minutes post-injection (Table 32). These initial investigations underscore the potential of the bivalent synthesis approach, as it had a minimal impact on the binding affinity of the compound. Consequently, the synthesized  $^{68}\text{Ga}$ -complex, denoted as  $^{68}\text{Ga-DT(Ch)}_2$ , represents a promising candidate for generator-produced PET imaging probes in the context of AD. The study further delved into the intricate dynamics within the circulatory system of normal rabbits, uncovering the rapid clearance kinetics of the synthesized complex. Importantly, the investigation also disclosed that the strategic bivalent synthesis strategy did not exert any adverse influence on the binding affinity of the resulting compound. This outcome resonates with the binding affinity of the resulting compound (Scheme 22).

## 8. Current overview and future prospective

The continued exploration of radiolabelled 1,3-diaryl-2-propen-1-ones as A $\beta$  imaging probes presents a dynamic trajectory for research endeavors. The future investigations may focus on refining synthetic methodologies to enhance the efficiency and yield of these radiotracers, ultimately facilitating their widespread availability and utilization. The exploration of novel chalcone derivatives with tailored molecular architectures may yield compounds with improved imaging properties, enhanced

brain penetration and heightened selectivity for A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques, thereby elevating the precision and accuracy of early AD detection. In the realm of radiochemistry, a diverse array of strategies has been meticulously investigated to enhance the efficacy of radiolabelling procedures. These strategies have predominantly harnessed cutting-edge pathways tailored to the specific attributes of commonly employed radionuclides within nuclear medicine applications. Notably, the radioisotope iodine-125 has been directly introduced onto activated aryl structures, employing well-established methodologies such as iododestannylation reaction. Conversely, the incorporation of fluorine-18 necessitated the utilization of tosylated precursors or more contemporaneously, innovative approaches like the application of aryl boronic precursors. The carbon-11 radiolabelling in its customary execution entailed the reaction between *N*-nor methyl precursors and [ $^{11}\text{C}$ ]methyl triflate. The utilization of technetium-99m spanned a diverse landscape of chalcone derivatives, involving the bifunctional chelator strategy encompassing MAMA, BAT and DTPA moieties. Alternatively, an integrated approach was pursued, involving the substitution of a section of the chalcone structure with a cyclopentadienyl group. An intriguing synthesis was the generation of homodimer analogs labelled with [ $^{68}\text{Ga}$ ], facilitated through the strategic deployment of the acyclic chelator DTPA. In-depth investigations ensued to comprehend the ramifications of structural modifications and the consequences associated with distinct radionuclide choices on the ultimate affinity of radiotracers for A $\beta$ -amyloid plaques. This multifaceted exploration drew upon an amalgamation of techniques. Conventionally, studies pertaining to affinity and binding assays were conducted on synthetic aggregates. However, there was a parallel endeavor involving *in vitro* staining utilizing fluorescent chalcone derivatives on brain sections from both murine and human subjects, characterized by plaque expression. Finally, the *in vivo* biodistribution studies conducted on normal murine models, provided a critical assessment of brain uptake dynamics and radiotracer washout characteristics. The future collaborative efforts among chemists, radiopharmacologists and neuroscientists may lead to the development of innovative radiolabelled chalcones with multimodal capabilities, enabling simultaneous imaging of various biomarkers associated with AD pathology. These advanced probes could offer comprehensive insights into the disease progression, aiding in elucidating intricate molecular mechanisms and paving the way for more therapeutic interventions.

In parallel, translating the findings of this review into clinical applications holds immense potential. The refinement and validation of radiolabelled chalcones as reliable tools for non-invasive AD diagnosis and patient stratification could expedite the identification of individuals at risk, enabling early intervention and personalized treatment strategies. Additionally, the integration of these imaging probes into larger clinical trials and longitudinal studies may yield critical insights into disease progression, therapeutic efficacy and response to interventions, thereby contributing to the development of novel therapeutic avenues and monitoring tactics. As the field of radiolabelled chalcones for A $\beta$  imaging probes continues to evolve, synergistic collaborations among researchers, clinicians and



pharmaceutical industries are likely to propel the translation of these innovative concepts from bench to bedside. The elucidation of the intricate interplay between radiolabelled chalcones and AD pathology, coupled with the clinical validation of their diagnostic and prognostic utility, holds the promise of ushering in a new era of precision medicine in the management of AD.

## 9. Conclusion

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is a complicated neurological disorder that affects millions of people around the world. In recent decades, after several biochemical and pharmacological studies to decipher the complexity of this degenerative disease, scientists have been able to identify and develop innovative therapeutic agents to control this unpredictable disease. A study on this topic showed that most of the radiopharmaceuticals that reached phase two did not show a narcotic difference and therefore did not reach phase three. However, more than fifty molecules have successfully progressed from phase two to phase three, but only one drug has passed phase three clinical trials since 2003. Interestingly, more than 140 therapeutic agents are currently under investigation at various stages of clinical trials, but it is still unclear how many of them will progress from clinical trials to primary care. In this review, we discussed biosynthesis, the structural significance of radiolabelled chalcones, their therapeutic uses as AD agents, and structure–activity correlation research. Using nuclear imaging techniques such as positron emission tomography (PET) and single photon emission computed tomography (SPECT), radiolabelled chalcones as A $\beta$  imaging agents could lead to *in vivo* detection of AD. The researchers have primarily focused on the skeletal modification of chalcones to produce new and innovative compounds with a wide range of applications. The reviewed literature endeavored to provide a meaningful overview of radiolabelled chalcones as novel A $\beta$ -imaging probes.

## Abbreviations

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| PET   | Positron emission tomography                             |
| SPECT | Single-photon emission computed tomography               |
| AD    | Alzheimer's disease                                      |
| DPP   | Diphenylpropynone  |
| HPLC  | High-performance liquid chromatography                   |
| IMPY  | 6-Iodo-2-(40-dimethylamino-)phenyl-imidazo [1,2]pyridine |

## Conflicts of interest

The authors disclose no conflicts of interest.

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