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## Introduction

The genus *Delphinium* belongs to the family Ranunculaceae and consists of about 300 species distributed throughout the northern hemisphere.<sup>1,2</sup> Among the 300 species, more than 113 ones are endemic to China and about 18 ones are used as folk medicines.<sup>1,2</sup> As an important medicinal plant, *Delphinium* plants are used to treat traumatic injury, analgesia and rheumatism, etc.<sup>1</sup> Recent investigations showed that the diterpenoid alkaloids are the main components of *Delphinium* plants, and the alkaloids possess complex structure skeletons and exhibit a wide spectrum of pharmacological activities.<sup>3–7</sup> Thus, the diterpenoid alkaloids have become an increasing, attractive target for medicinal chemists.<sup>8</sup>

*Delphinium grandiflorum* is a perennial herb mainly distributed in the Northwest of China and some regions of Siberia and

People's Republic of Mongolia.<sup>9</sup> As a folk medicine, the *D. grandiflorum* is applied for the treatment of toothache, and used as native pesticide as well.<sup>9</sup> As part of our ongoing research on the bioactive natural products from *Delphinium* plants,<sup>10</sup> an extensive phytochemical investigation on *D. grandiflorum* was undertaken, leading to the isolation of two novel diterpenoid alkaloids, grandiflodines A and B (1 and 2). Compound 1 is a rare hetisine-type C<sub>20</sub>-diterpenoid alkaloid with the cleavage of the bond between the atoms of N and C-17. Compound 2 features an unusual lycocotonine-type C<sub>19</sub>-diterpenoid alkaloid skeleton with the cleavage of N-C<sub>19</sub> and C<sub>7</sub>-C<sub>17</sub> bonds, and construction of the N-C<sub>7</sub> bond. Herein, we report the isolation, structure elucidation and biological activities of 1 and 2 (Fig. 1).

## Results and discussion

Grandiflodine A (1) was isolated as colorless block crystal. The molecular formula of 1 was established as C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> by its HR-ESI-MS ( $m/z$  369.2175 [M + H]<sup>+</sup>, calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>29</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>: 369.2173). The UV spectrum of 1 displayed the absorption maxima at 208 nm, and its IR spectrum showed the characteristic absorptions for hydroxyl groups (3479, 3423 cm<sup>-1</sup>), cyanogroup (2228 cm<sup>-1</sup>) and carbonyl group (1673 cm<sup>-1</sup>). The <sup>1</sup>H NMR and HSQC spectroscopic data of 1 provided the resonances for two methyls [ $\delta$ <sub>H</sub> 1.18, 2.26 (each 3H, s);  $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 25.6, 33.4], an olefinic methylene [ $\delta$ <sub>H</sub> 4.51, 4.67 (each 1H, d, *J* = 1.8 Hz);  $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 103.4] and an oxygenated methine [ $\delta$ <sub>H</sub> 3.36 (1H, t, *J* = 5.8 Hz);  $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 72.9]. The <sup>13</sup>C and DEPT NMR data exhibited 22 signals of two methyls, seven methylenes, six methines and seven quaternary carbons, including a cyanogroup ( $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 117.6), a pair of double bond ( $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 103.4, 150.3) and a carbonyl group ( $\delta$ <sub>C</sub> 216.9). Detailed comparison of the <sup>1</sup>D NMR data of 1 (Table 1) with those of anhydroignavolin<sup>11</sup> showed that they were similar except for the presence of additional carbonyl and cyanogroup, and the

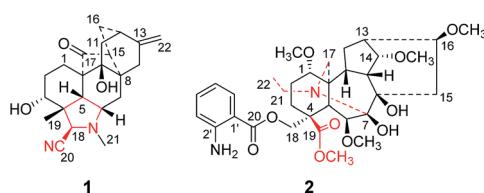


Fig. 1 Chemical structures of compounds 1 and 2.

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: UV, IR, HRESIMS and NMR spectra of compounds 1 and 2. CCDC 1517870. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: [10.1039/c7ra02869e](https://doi.org/10.1039/c7ra02869e)



Table 1 NMR spectroscopic data for grandiflodines A (1) and B (2) ( $\delta$  in ppm)

Position	Grandiflodine A (1) <sup>a</sup>		Grandiflodine A (2) <sup>b</sup>	
	$\delta_c$	$\delta_h$ ( $J$ in Hz)	$\delta_c$	$\delta_h$ ( $J$ in Hz)
1	23.2	1.62 1.06 m	88.9	2.88 dd (10.8, 4.1)
2	26.6	2.60 m 1.62	21.7	1.98 m 1.75 m
3	72.9	3.36 t (5.8)	30.1	2.34 m 1.44 m
4	47.7	—	49.8	—
5	53.5	2.30	49.9	2.02 d (6.7)
6	58.6	3.07 m	90.5	3.71 m
7	31.2	2.30 1.75 dd (14.8, 4.5)	87.8	—
8	39.6	—	82.0	—
9	76.5	—	39.9	2.30 m
10	51.7	—	51.3	1.89 m
11	38.7	1.86 1.38 dd (14.1, 2.6)	42.7	—
12	35.9	2.16	29.6	1.83 m 1.35 m
13	150.3	—	45.3	2.43 m
14	32.7	1.62 1.56 dd (12.8, 4.3)	85.3	3.66 t (3.9)
15	49.2	2.30	33.2	2.37 m 1.57 dd (13.8, 8.1)
16	31.2	1.70 d (14.5) 2.16	84.2	3.12 m
17	216.9	—	42.3	2.99 d (11.0) 2.65 d (11.0)
18	55.3	3.81 s	70.5	4.66 d (10.9) 4.15 d (10.9)
19	25.6	1.18 s	174.9	—
20	117.6	—	167.7	—
21	33.4	2.26 s	43.7	3.15 m 2.75 m
22	103.4	4.51 4.67 d (1.8)	13.7	1.02 t (6.9)
3-OH		5.00 d (5.5)		
9-OH		4.86 s		
1-OCH <sub>3</sub>			56.8	3.24, s
6-OCH <sub>3</sub>			61.3	3.62, s
14-OCH <sub>3</sub>			57.9	3.38, s
16-OCH <sub>3</sub>			56.4	3.28, s
19-OCH <sub>3</sub>			52.1	3.72, s
1'			110.7	
2'			150.8	
3'			117.0	6.64, m
4'			134.4	7.24, m
5'			116.5	6.58, m
6'			131.0	7.71, dd (8.0, 1.4)

<sup>a</sup> Measured at 500/125 MHz in DMSO-*d*<sub>6</sub>. <sup>b</sup> Measured at 300/75 MHz in CDCl<sub>3</sub>. Overlapped signals are reported without designating multiplicity.

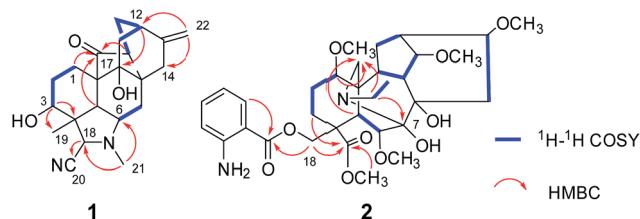


Fig. 2 Key  $^1\text{H}$ - $^1\text{H}$  COSY and HMBC correlations of 1 and 2.

absence of two oxygenated methines in 1. In the HMBC spectrum, the correlations (Fig. 2) between H-1/H-5/H-15 and the carbonyl group ( $\delta_c$  216.9) revealed that the carbonyl group was located at C-17. Moreover, the HMBC correlations between H-21 [ $\delta_h$  2.26, (3H, s)] and C-6/C-18 suggested that the methyl ( $\delta_c$  33.4, C-21) was connected to the nitrogen atom. The above information implied that the N-C<sub>17</sub> bond was broken to form a unique hetidines-type C<sub>20</sub>-diterpenoid alkaloid skeleton as depicted. In addition, the cyanogroup ( $\delta_c$  117.6) was located at C-18 based upon the HMBC correlation between H-18 and C-20 ( $\delta_c$  117.6). And the HMBC correlations between H-3 ( $\delta_h$  3.36, 1H, t,  $J$  = 5.8 Hz) and C-4/C-18/C-19, between H-11/H-12/H-15/H-16 and C-9 ( $\delta_c$  76.5) indicated that the carbons at C-3 and C-9 were substituted by hydroxyls, respectively. In light of the evidences mentioned above, the planar structure of 1 was finally established.

The relative configuration of 1 could be elucidated by the NOESY experiment. The correlations (Fig. 3) between 3-OH and H-18, between H-19 and H-3/H-5/H-6, as well as between 9-OH and H-5 established the relative configuration of 1. Finally, the structure and configuration were further elucidated by an X-ray diffraction analysis (Fig. 4). The final refinement of the Cu K $\alpha$  data resulted in a small flack parameter of -0.05 (6) allowing the assignment of the absolute configuration of 1 as 3*R*, 4*R*, 5*R*, 6*S*, 8*S*, 9*S*, 10*S*, 12*S*, 15*S*, 18*R*.

The molecular formula of 2 was deduced as C<sub>33</sub>H<sub>48</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>10</sub> by HR-ESI-MS at *m/z* 633.3387 [M + H]<sup>+</sup> (calcd for C<sub>33</sub>H<sub>49</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>10</sub>: 633.3382). The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of 2 displayed the signals of one *ortho*-substituted benzene ring at  $\delta_h$  7.71 (1H, dd,  $J$  = 8.0, 1.4 Hz), 7.24 (1H, m), 6.64 (1H, m), 6.58 (1H, m), and five methoxyls at  $\delta_h$  3.72, 3.62, 3.38, 3.28, 3.24 (each 3H, s). The  $^{13}\text{C}$  and DEPT NMR data displayed thirty-three carbon signals including six methyls, seven methylenes, thirteen methines and seven quaternary carbons. Detailed analysis of the  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data (Table 1) of 2 showed a number of similarities to those of anthranoyllycoctonine.<sup>12</sup> The most notable differences were the existence of an additional carbonyl ( $\delta_c$  174.9) and an

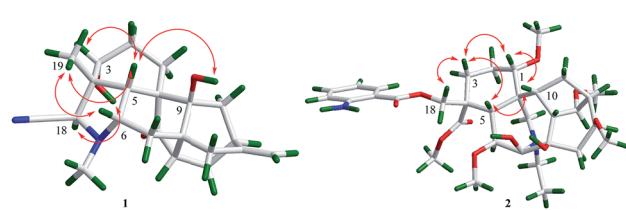


Fig. 3 NOESY correlations of 1 and 2.



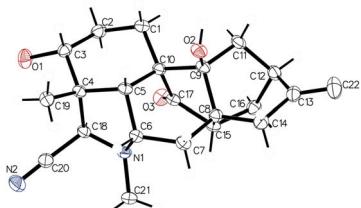


Fig. 4 Perspective drawing of the X-ray structure of 1.

additional methoxyl ( $\delta_c$  52.1) in **2**. The HMBC correlations between H-3/H-18 and C-19 ( $\delta_c$  174.9), and between 19-OCH<sub>3</sub> ( $\delta_c$  52.1) and C-19 indicated that the N-C<sub>19</sub> bond was broken, and the carbon at C-19 was oxidized to be carbonyl. Furthermore, the HMBC correlations between H-1/H-5/H-21 and the methylene at C-17 ( $\delta_c$  42.3) revealed that the C<sub>7</sub>-C<sub>17</sub> linkage was broken. In addition, the correlation from H-21 to C-7 suggested that a new bond was constructed between the nitrogen atom and C-7. Hence, the planar structure of **2** was established. The relative configuration of **2** was the same as that of anthranoyllycoctonine by interpretation of the NOESY data (Fig. 3).<sup>12</sup>

Compounds **1** and **2** were tested for their antiviral effect against the respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and anti-inflammatory activity on Nitric Oxide (NO) production. Both the two compounds showed no cell cytotoxicity towards the tested cells with the CC<sub>50</sub> values more than 100  $\mu$ M. Compound **2** displayed weak inhibitory effect on the growth of RSV and the production of NO in tested cells with the IC<sub>50</sub> values of 75.3 and 72.7  $\mu$ M, respectively, and **1** was virtually inactive with IC<sub>50</sub> values more than 100  $\mu$ M.

## Conclusions

In summary, compounds **1** and **2**, two novel diterpenoid alkaloids were isolated from *D. grandiflorum*. Compound **1** represents a rare hetisine-type C<sub>20</sub>-diterpenoid alkaloid, and **2** features an unusual lycocotonine-type C<sub>19</sub>-diterpenoid alkaloid skeleton, revealing that the alkaloids in *Delphinium* plants possess complex structure skeletons and adding the diversity of alkaloid compositions isolated from *Delphinium* plants. Moreover, the assays of anti-RSV and anti-inflammatory activities showed that these two compounds had little cytotoxicity towards the tested cells, providing more potentiality for further pharmacologic study.

## Experimental section

### General

Melting point was obtained on an X-5 microscopic melting point apparatus. Optical rotations were recorded on a digital JASCO P-2000 polarimeter. UV spectra were obtained using a JASCO V-550 UV/VIS spectrophotometer. IR spectra were measured on a JASCO FT/IR-480 plus FT-IR spectrometer. NMR spectra were obtained by Bruker AV-500/300 spectrometers, with TMS as an internal standard. The chemical shifts ( $\delta$ ) were expressed in ppm and coupling constants ( $J$ ) in Hz. HR-ESI-MS

data was recorded on an Agilent 6210 ESI/TOF mass spectrometer. Analytical HPLC was performed using a Dionex ultimate 3000 system with a Cosmosil C<sub>18</sub> analytical column (5  $\mu$ m, 4.6  $\times$  250 mm). Preparative HPLC was performed using an Agilent 1100 liquid chromatograph with a Cosmosil C<sub>18</sub> preparative column (5  $\mu$ m, 20  $\times$  250 mm). Column chromatographies were performed with silica gel (80–100, 200–300, 300–400 mesh; Qingdao Marine Chemical Group Co. Ltd, Qingdao, China), ODS (50  $\mu$ m, 120  $\text{\AA}$ ; YMC) and Sephadex LH-20 (Pharmacia Biotech, Uppsala, Sweden). Silica gel GF<sub>254</sub> plates (Yantai Chemical Industry Research Institute, Yantai, China) were used for thin-layer chromatography (TLC). Fractions were monitored by TLC, and spots were detected with modified Dragendorff's reagent.

### Plant material

The dried rhizomes of *D. grandiflorum* were purchased in Guangzhou, Guangdong Province of China, in July, 2015. The plant was authenticated by Prof. Guang-Xiong Zhou (College of Pharmacy, Jinan University). A voucher specimen (no. 150713) was deposited in the Institute of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Natural Products, Jinan University, Guangzhou, P. R. China.

### Extraction and isolation

The air-dried and powdered rhizome (10.0 kg) was extracted four times with 95% alcohol (4  $\times$  35 L) at room temperature. After evaporation of alcohol, the crude extract (492.2 g) was suspended in water (2 L) and acidified with HCl to pH = 4–5, then partitioned with CHCl<sub>3</sub> (3  $\times$  4 L) to give a water-soluble fraction. The water-soluble fraction was basified with NH<sub>3</sub>·H<sub>2</sub>O to pH = 9–10 and then partitioned with a H<sub>2</sub>O/CHCl<sub>3</sub> mixture to give a CHCl<sub>3</sub>-soluble fraction (63.0 g). The CHCl<sub>3</sub>-soluble fraction was chromatographed on silica gel column (300–400 mesh, 1000 g) eluted with a solvent system of CHCl<sub>3</sub>/CH<sub>3</sub>OH (100 : 0 to 0 : 100, v/v), yielding six fractions (Fr.A-F). Fr.B (9.2 g) was further separated on an ODS column (200 g) eluted with MeOH/H<sub>2</sub>O (30 : 70 to 100 : 0, v/v) to afford 9 sub-fractions (Fr.B1–B9). Fr.B5 (1.2 g) was purified by Sephadex LH-20 (MeOH/CHCl<sub>3</sub>, 1 : 1, v/v) and compound **1** (15.0 mg) was crystallized from the eluent. Then **2** (12.3 mg) was obtained by the preparative HPLC with MeOH/H<sub>2</sub>O (68 : 32, v/v) from Fr.B5.

**Grandiflodine A (1).** Colorless and block crystals (MeOH); mp 273–274 °C;  $[\alpha]_D^{19} +6.8$  (*c* 0.6, DMSO); UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 208.6 (3.57) nm; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3480, 3423, 2933, 2876, 2228, 1674, 1462, 1057, 1054, 894  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ; <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR data see Table 1; HRESIMS *m/z* 369.2175 (calcd for C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>29</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>, 369.2173).

**Grandiflodine B (2).** White powder;  $[\alpha]_D^{25} +10.7$  (*c* 0.96, MeOH); UV (MeOH)  $\lambda_{\text{max}}$  (log  $\epsilon$ ) 219.5 (3.78), 250.2 (3.30), 340.5 (3.18) nm; IR (KBr)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3455, 2931, 2874, 1677, 1453, 1360, 1189, 1055, 893  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ; <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR data see Table 1; HRESIMS *m/z* 633.3382 (calcd for C<sub>33</sub>H<sub>49</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>10</sub>, 633.3387).

**X-ray crystallographic analysis of 1.** Colorless blocks, C<sub>22</sub>H<sub>28</sub>N<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub>,  $M_r$  = 368.46; monoclinic, space group P2<sub>1</sub>;  $a$  = 9.7305 (2)  $\text{\AA}$ ,  $b$  = 8.76406 (16)  $\text{\AA}$ ,  $c$  = 11.0765 (2)  $\text{\AA}$ ,  $\alpha$  = 90°,  $\beta$  = 109.45 (2)°,  $\gamma$  = 90°;  $V$  = 890.68 (3)  $\text{\AA}^3$ ,  $Z$  = 2,  $d_x$  = 1.374  $\text{Mg m}^{-3}$ ,

$F(000) = 396.0$ ,  $\mu(\text{Cu K}\alpha) = 0.731 \text{ mm}^{-1}$ . Data collection was performed on a Gemini S Ultra using graphitemonochromated radiation ( $\lambda = 1.54184 \text{ \AA}$ ); 2829 unique reflections were collected to  $\theta_{\text{max}} = 125.536^\circ$ , where 14 056 reflections were observed [ $F_2 > 2\sigma(F_2)$ ]. The structure was solved by direct methods (SHELXS 97)<sup>13</sup> and refined by full-matrix least-squares on  $F_2$ . Final  $R = 0.0297$ ,  $R_w = 0.0840$ , and  $S = 1.111$ . Crystallographic data for these structures have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center as CCDC 1517870 for compound 1.

#### Assay of anti-RSV activities on Hep-2 cells

The human larynx epidermoid carcinoma (HEp-2, ATCC CCL-23) cells and RSV A2 (ATCC VR-1540) strains were purchased from Medicinal Virology Institute, Wuhan University, China. HEp-2 cells were cultured in DMEM (Gibco) supplemented with 100 U mL<sup>-1</sup> penicillin and streptomycin solution, and virus was propagated in HEp-2 cells and incubated in DMEM with 2 mM L-glutamine, 2% FBS, and 100 U mL<sup>-1</sup> penicillin and streptomycin solution. All of the cells were cultured in a 95% humidified atmosphere supplied with 5% CO<sub>2</sub> at 37 °C, and the ribavirin (Sigma, purity of 99%) was used as the positive control. The cytotoxicity of the compounds toward HEp-2 cells was detected by the MTT assay in 96-well plates (Corning) with the optical density (OD) values measured in an enzyme immunoassay reader (Thermo Labsystems Multiskan MK3) at 570 nm, and the 50% cytotoxic concentration (CC<sub>50</sub>) was estimated by regression analysis. The antiviral activities of the isolates against the RSV-A2 strain were assessed by the CPE reduction assay as reported in previous paper.<sup>14</sup> The concentration that reduces 50% of CPE with respect to the virus control was estimated from the plots of the data and was defined as the 50% inhibitory concentration (IC<sub>50</sub>) of the tested compounds.

#### Assay of anti-inflammatory activities on NO production toward RAW 264.7 cells

RAW 264.7 cells were provided by the Medicinal Virology Institute of Wuhan University and maintained in DMEM (Gibco) containing 10% FBS (Gibco), and supplemented with 100 U mL<sup>-1</sup> penicillin and streptomycin solution. Cells were cultured at 37 °C in a 95% humidified atmosphere supplied with 5% CO<sub>2</sub>. The cytotoxicity of the compounds on RAW 264.7 cells was detected by the MTT assay in 96-well plates with the OD values measured at 570 nm, and the CC<sub>50</sub> was estimated by regression analysis. The anti-inflammatory activities of the compounds were evaluated by the inhibitory effect on NO production. RAW 264.7 cells ( $4 \times 10^4$  cells per well) were incubated in a 96-well plate for 14 h and then pretreated with 100 ng mL<sup>-1</sup> LPS and different concentrations of compounds (6.25–

100  $\mu\text{M}$ ) for 24 h. Then, the Griess reagent (100  $\mu\text{L}$ ) was added and blended with the supernatant (100  $\mu\text{L}$ ), and the absorbance was measured at 540 nm with an enzyme immunoassay reader. NO levels were determined via a calibration curve constructed with NaNO<sub>2</sub> concentrations of 3.12–100  $\mu\text{M}$ . Inhibitory effects of compounds on NO production (IC<sub>50</sub>) were calculated by regression analysis of the dose–response curve generated from the data.

#### Acknowledgements

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