



# Reductive cyclisations of amidines involving amination radicals†

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**Amidines bearing simple alkenes undergo amination radical cyclisation upon treatment with  $\text{SmI}_2$ . The mild, reductive electron transfer process delivers medicinally-relevant, polycyclic quinazolinone derivatives in good to excellent yield and typically with complete diastereocontrol.**

Nitrogen-containing heterocycles are ubiquitous components in the molecular architectures of natural products, materials and drug candidates.<sup>1</sup> As a feature in biologically active alkaloids,<sup>2</sup> the quinazolinone ring system is a significant member of the family and its presence in nature has inspired the search for synthetic quinazolinones with medicinal potential (Scheme 1A).<sup>3</sup> Although various approaches to these polycyclic scaffolds have been described,<sup>4</sup> expedient, stereoselective synthetic strategies to quinazolinones that operate under mild conditions on simple, readily accessible substrates, are of high value.

Radical cyclisations have emerged as an important tool for the efficient generation of complex polycyclic products.<sup>5</sup> However, few radical cyclisation strategies have been developed for the synthesis of quinazolinone analogues.<sup>6</sup> Of these, Malacria, Courillon and Fensterbank have described an elegant radical cyclisation approach using tributyltin hydride and applied the method to a synthesis of Luotonin A.<sup>6a-f</sup> Weaver and Bowman have also reported a radical cyclisation approach to quinazolinones using tributyltin hydride.<sup>6g</sup> Recently, Chiba reported an elegant oxidative radical rearrangement that constructs quinazolinones.<sup>6h,i</sup> Finally, quinazolinone scaffolds have been accessed using radical processes involving  $\text{Ag}(\text{I})$ <sup>6j</sup> and  $\text{Cu}(\text{I})$ ,<sup>6k</sup> visible-light photoredox catalysis,<sup>6l</sup> and DTBP in a metal-free process.<sup>6m</sup> Despite these reports,<sup>6</sup> there remains a need for a straightforward method that constructs polycyclic quinazolinones under mild conditions.

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† Electronic supplementary information (ESI) available: General experimental procedures, characterization details, <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectra of compounds, X-ray crystallographic data for **2a**, **2g** and **2t**, nOe study and analysis of coupling constants for **2u**. CCDC 1846530–1846532. For ESI and crystallographic data in CIF or other electronic format see DOI: 10.1039/c8cc05178j

## A. Selected biologically-active quinazolinone natural products

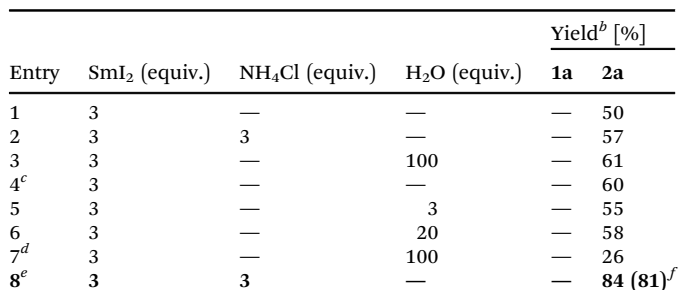


## B. Cyclisations of amination radicals formed from amidines by SET

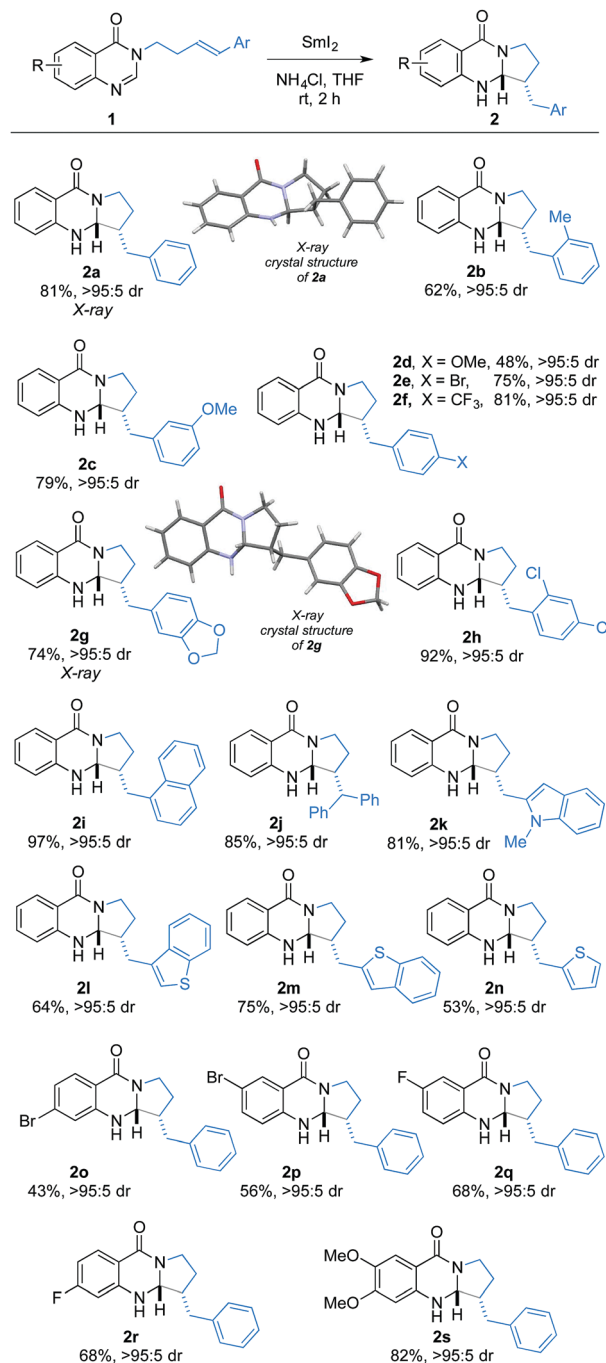


**Scheme 1** (A) Selected biologically-active quinazolinone natural products (B) this work: the cyclisation of amination radicals, formed from amidines by SET, provides efficient access to quinazolinones.

We recently reported the first radical reduction, cyclisations and cyclisation cascades involving radical anions generated from urea-type carbonyls by single electron transfer (SET).<sup>7</sup> During the study, we found that the amination radical anion intermediates could be generated and trapped by tethered alkenes to form heterocyclic products.<sup>7a</sup> Related amination radicals were formed and trapped, in an intermolecular sense, by Beaudry in his highly effective cross-coupling of amidines with electron-deficient alkenes.<sup>8</sup> Both processes are mediated by the reductive SET reagent, samarium iodide ( $\text{SmI}_2$ , Kagan's reagent).<sup>9</sup> This highly versatile, commercially available or readily prepared reagent often proves to be the only viable mediator of challenging radical cyclisations and cyclisation cascades designed to deliver high value products not easily accessible by alternative means.<sup>10</sup> Crucially, in Beaudry's study, only two *intramolecular* examples of amidine-alkene coupling were described and in all examples, both inter- and intramolecular, alkenes bore strongly electron-withdrawing groups.<sup>8a</sup> We recognised that the *intramolecular*  $\text{SmI}_2$ -mediated coupling of amidines with simple unactivated alkene radical acceptors could provide expedient access to important quinazolinones. Herein, we describe the first general study of amination radical cyclisations triggered by SET reduction of amidines using



Using the optimised conditions, we have explored the generality of the amidine-alkene radical cyclisation (Scheme 2). In all cases, the desired quinazolinone products of cyclisation were obtained with complete diastereocontrol (>95:5 dr) and in good to excellent yield. Various functional groups on the alkenyl aryl ring were found to be compatible with the reductive conditions, including methoxy (**2c**, **2d**), bromo (**2e**), chloro (**2h**), trifluoromethyl (**2f**), and acetal (**2g**). Furthermore, the presence of medicinally-relevant heteroaromatic rings including indole (**2k**), benzothieryl (**2l** and **2m**), and



The radical cyclisation could be carried out on gram-scale with no loss of efficiency: Using the optimised conditions, **1a**



**Scheme 3** (A) A gram-scale experiment; (B) construction of quaternary carbon stereocenters; (C) extension to 6-exo-trig cyclisation; (D) deuterium labelling experiment; (E) origin of diastereoselectivity.

(4.0 mmol, 1.1 g) was converted to **2a** (3.0 mmol, 0.83 g) in 75% yield (Scheme 3A). In addition, radical cyclisation of 2-methyl quinazolin-4-one **1t** gave **2t** containing a quaternary carbon center in 46% isolated yield as 2 : 1 mixture of diastereoisomers (Scheme 3B). The structure of the major diastereoisomer of **2t** was confirmed by X-ray crystallographic analysis.<sup>13</sup> Substrate **1u** underwent a challenging 6-exo-trig cyclisation to give **2u** in 44% isolated yield with moderate diastereocontrol. In this case, the *anti* diastereoisomeric product predominated, as determined by NOE and also supported by the comparison of measured and calculated coupling constants (Scheme 3C).<sup>14</sup> A deuterium labeling experiment was also performed using  $\text{SmI}_2\text{-ND}_4\text{Cl}$ . As expected, the labelled cyclisation product **2a-D** was obtained, thus confirming that the cyclisation is terminated by protonation of a benzylic organosamarium (100% D incorporation, 83 : 17 dr at the labelled benzylic position).<sup>15</sup> The KIE measured for this reductive cyclisation suggests that proton transfer is not involved in the rate-determining step (Scheme 3D). Finally, a likely transition structure for the 5-exo-trig radical cyclisation that explains the origin of the *syn*-diastereoselectivity is shown in Scheme 3E. In contrast, to

the cyclisations of ketyl radical anions that often proceed to give *anti*-products,<sup>16</sup> the cyclisation of neutral aminor radical **1**, formed by protonation of a radical anion after SET or by protonation of the amidine prior to SET, favours cyclisation *via syn*-transition structure **3**.

In summary, reductive amidine-alkene radical cyclisations, involving the intramolecular addition of aminor radicals to simple alkenes, deliver polycyclic quinazolinones. The radical process is mediated by single electron transfer from commercially available  $\text{SmI}_2$ , operates under mild conditions on readily-available substrates, proceeds with complete diastereocontrol, and delivers a range of medicinally-relevant, quinazolinone derivatives in good to excellent yield.

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## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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