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(54) **METHOD FOR SYNTHESIZING 5BETA, 6BETA-EPOXIDES OF STEROIDS BY A HIGHLY BETA-SELECTIVE EPOXIDATION OF DELTA5-UNSATURATED STEROIDS CATALYZED BY KETONES**

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(22) Filed: **Mar. 6, 2002**

Related U.S. Application Data

(63) Continuation-in-part of application No. 09/788,201, filed on Feb. 16, 2001, now abandoned.

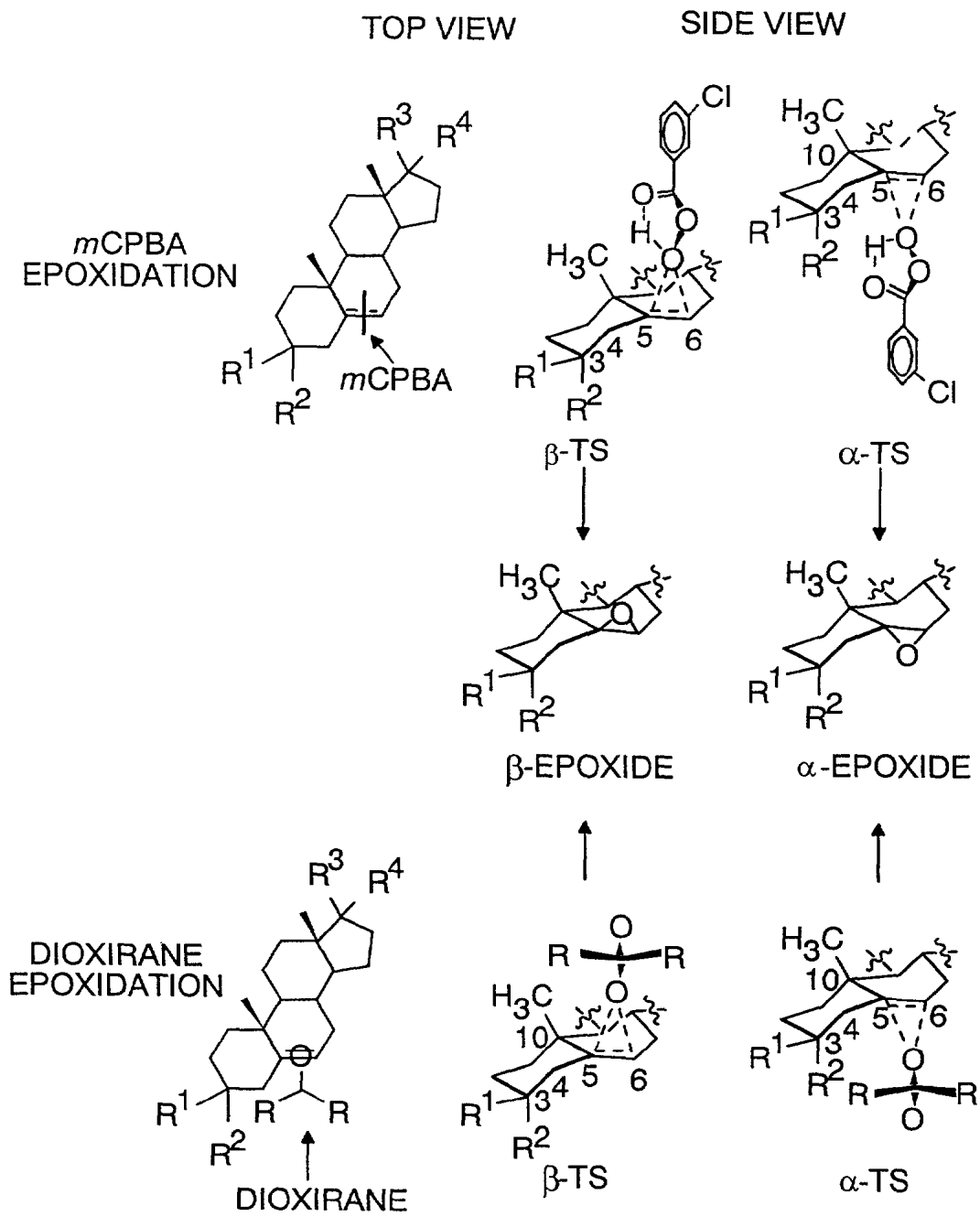
(60) Provisional application No. 60/183,396, filed on Feb. 18, 2000.

Publication Classification

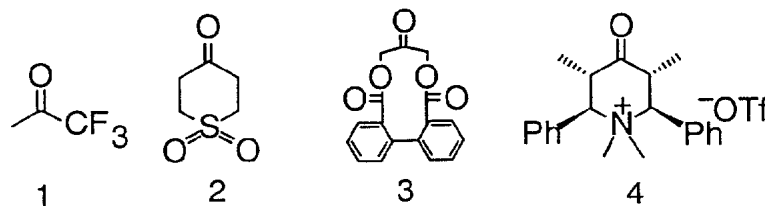
(51) **Int. Cl.⁷** **C07J 71/00; C07D 211/36**
(52) **U.S. Cl.** **540/80; 546/242**

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A general, efficient, and environmentally friendly method is provided for producing mostly β -epoxides of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids using certain ketones as the catalyst along with an oxidizing agent, or by using certain dioxiranes. In another aspect of the invention, a method is provided for producing mostly $5\beta,6\beta$ -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3α -position by an epoxidation reaction using a ketone along with an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides, or using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides. A whole range of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids, bearing different functional groups such as hydroxy, carbonyl, acetyl or ketal group as well as different side chains, were conveniently converted to the corresponding synthetically and biologically interesting $5\beta,6\beta$ -epoxides with excellent β -selectivities and high yields.



KETONES:



STEROIDS:

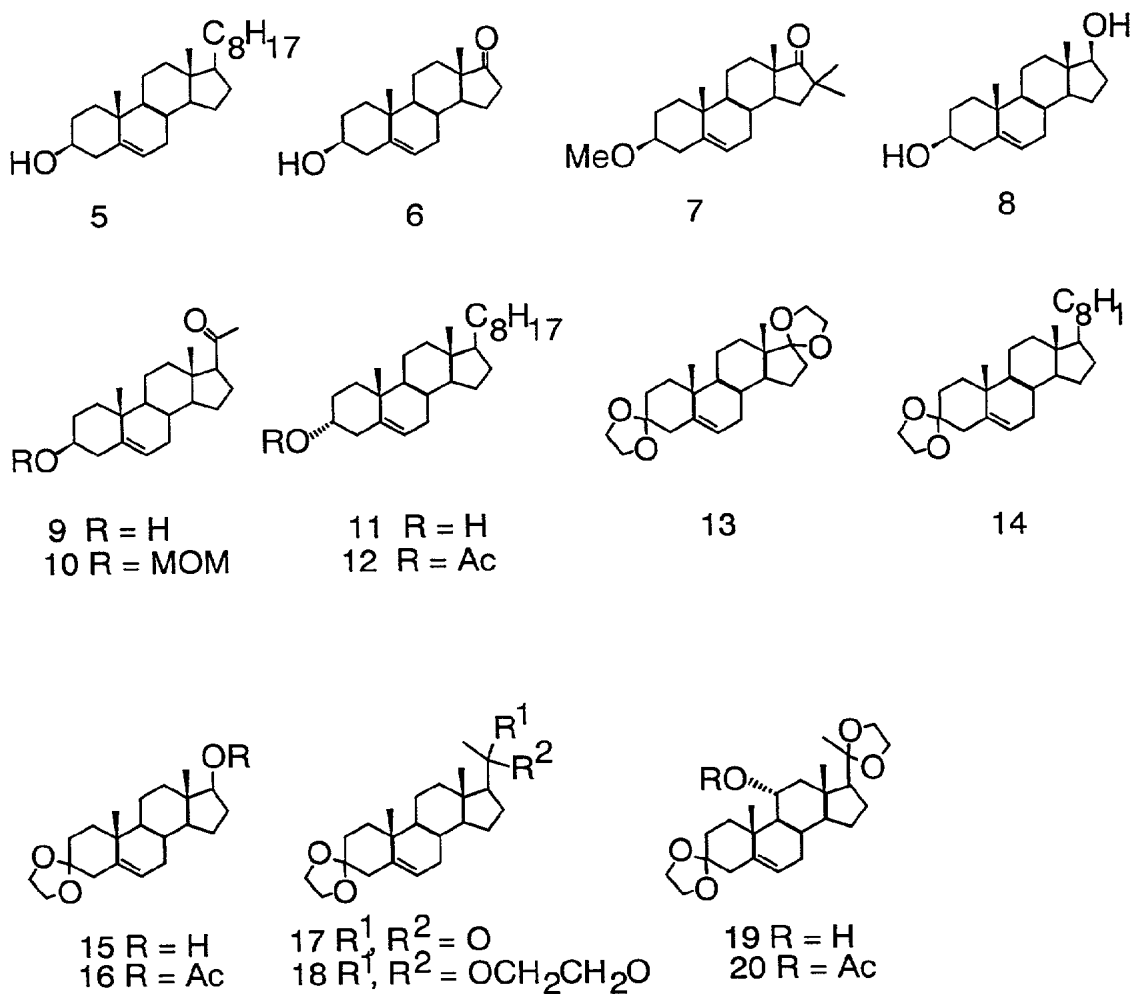


Fig. 2

Fig. 3

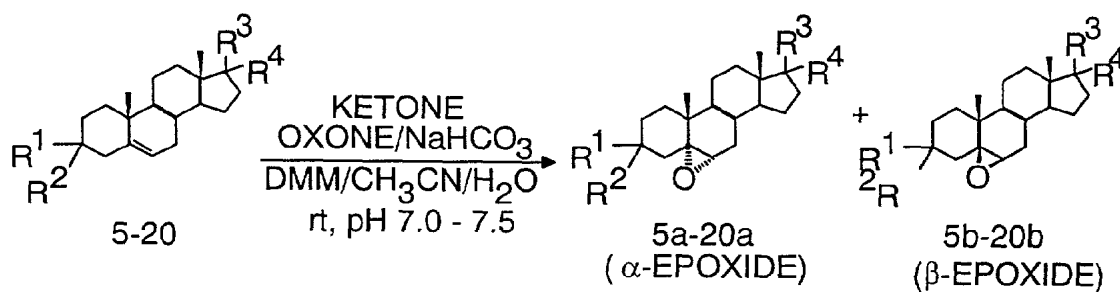


Fig. 4

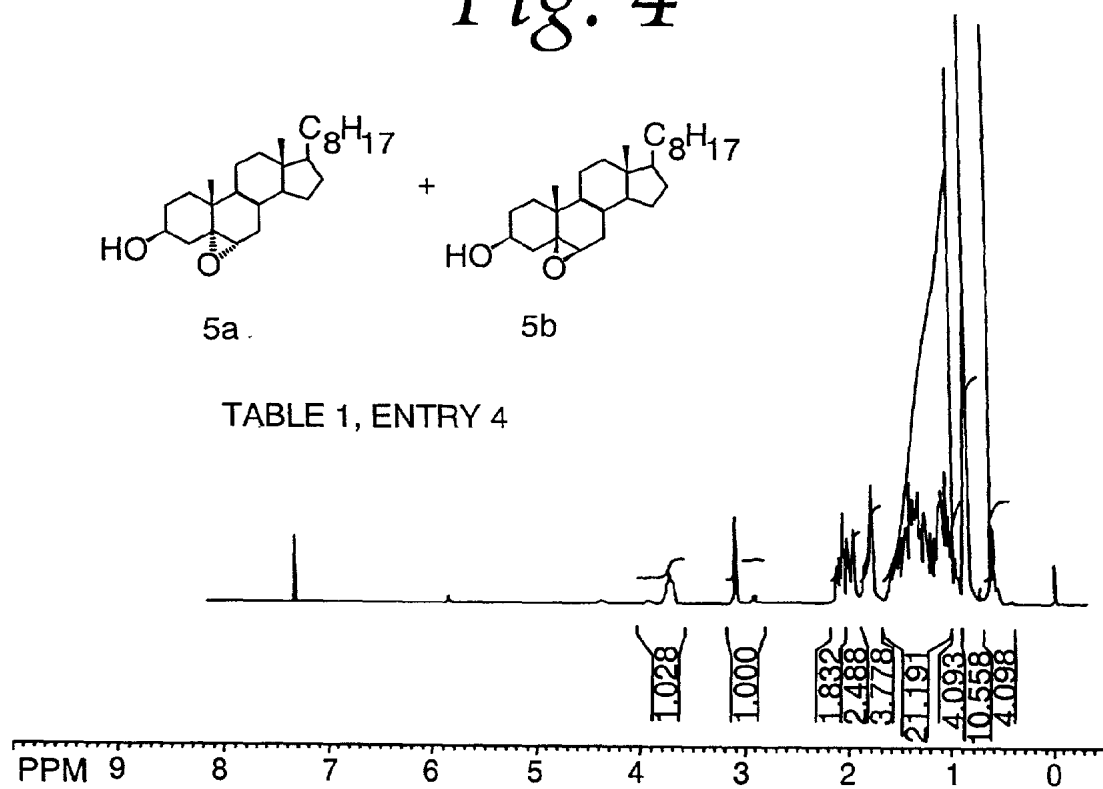


Fig. 5

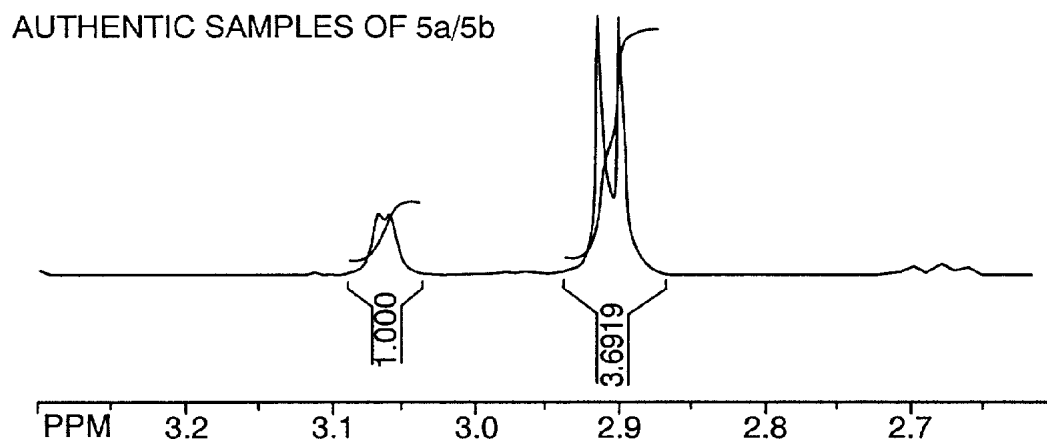


Fig. 6

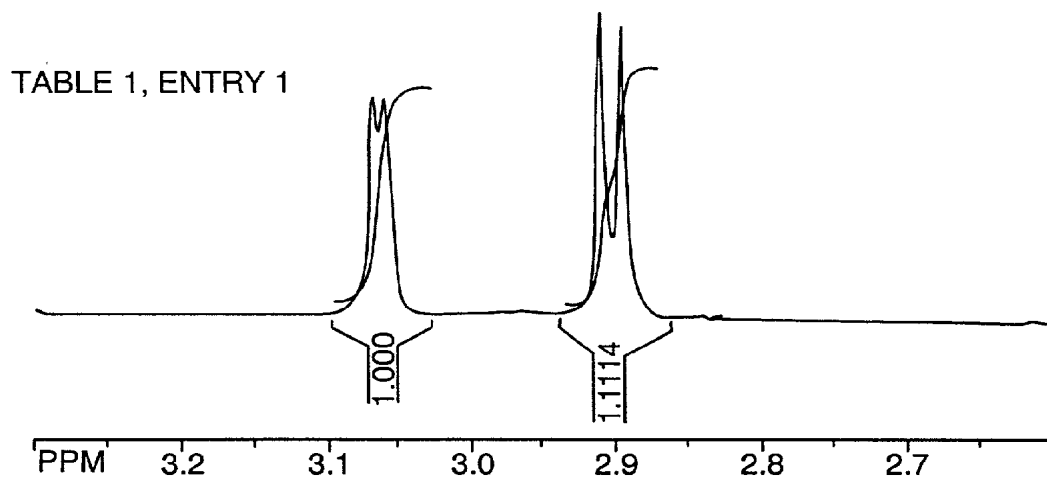


Fig. 7

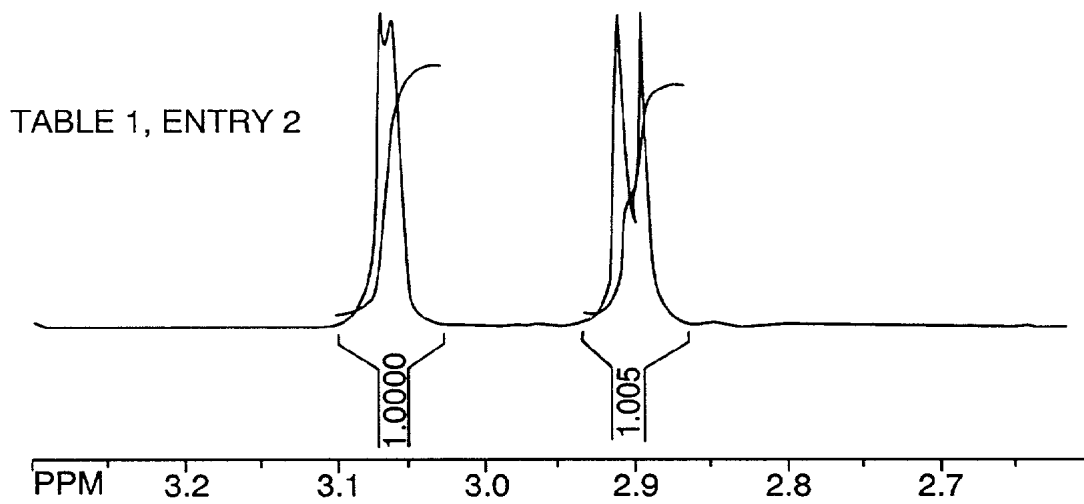


Fig. 8

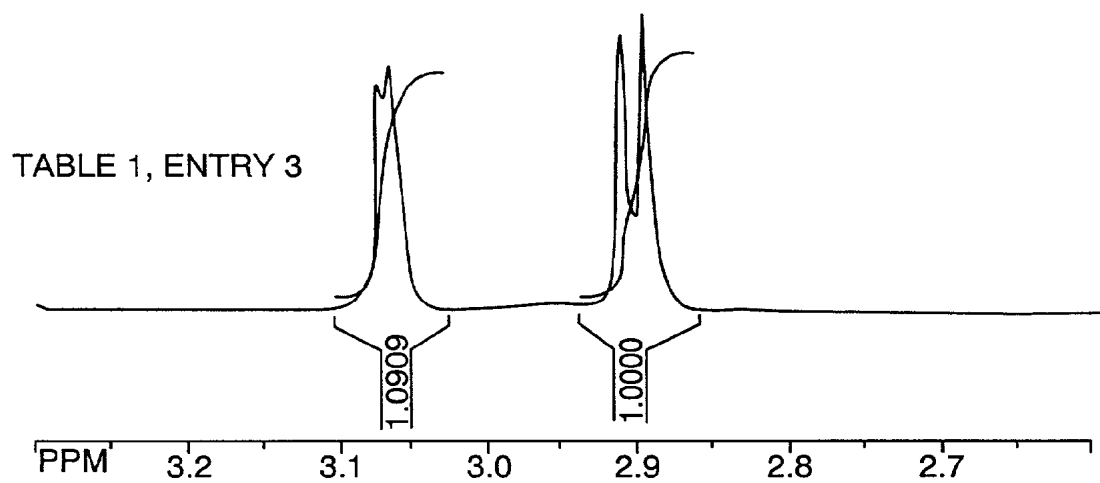


Fig. 9

TABLE 1, ENTRY 4

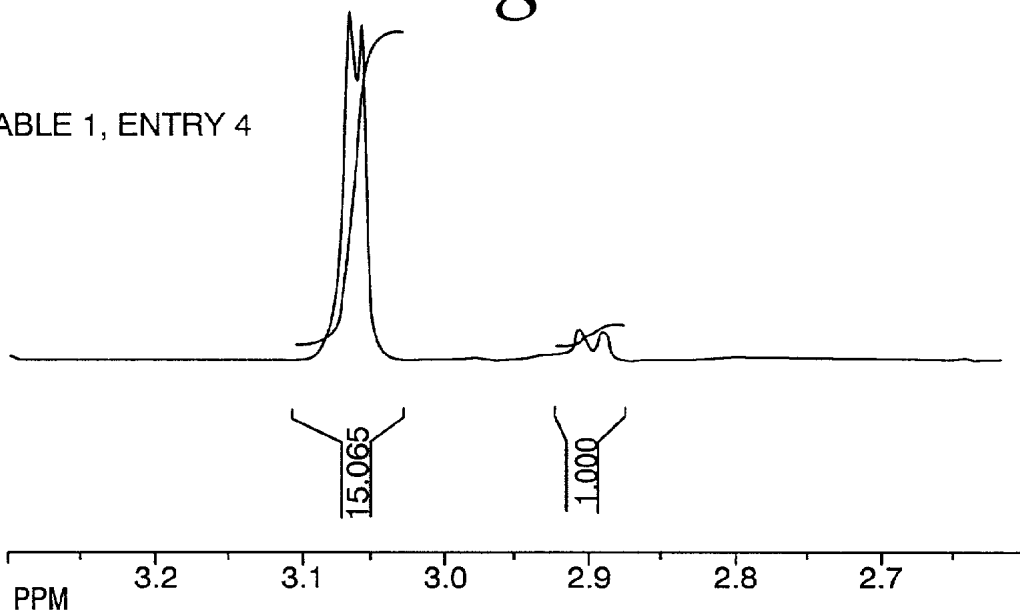


Fig. 10

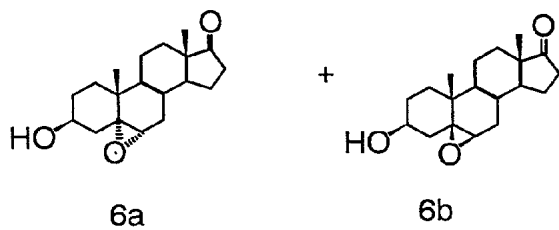


TABLE 1, ENTRY 5

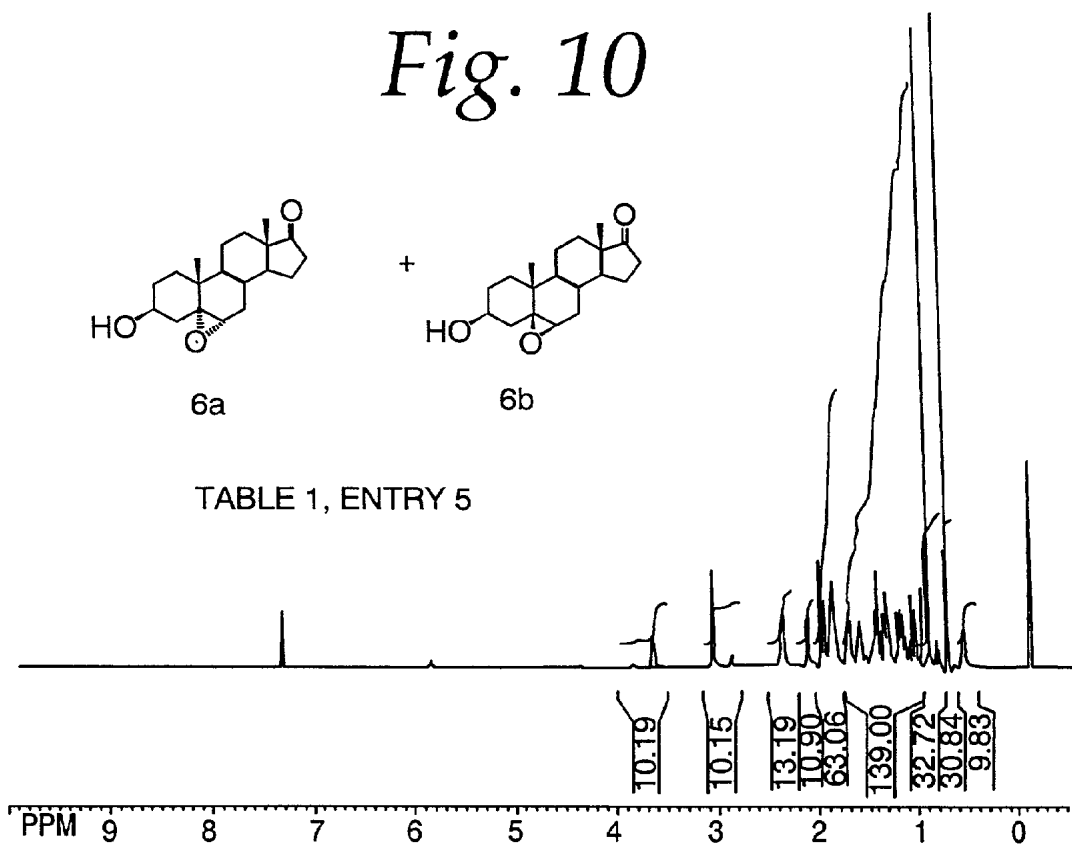


Fig. 11

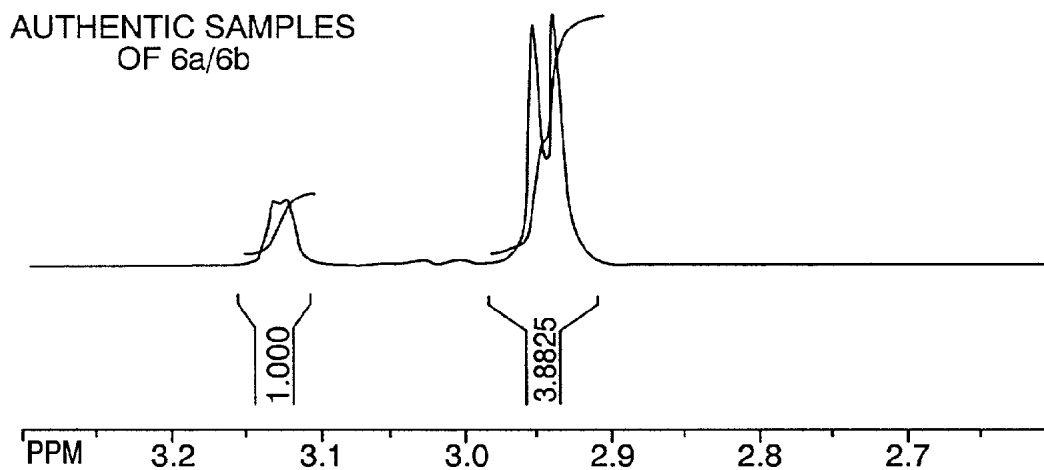


Fig. 12

TABLE 1, ENTRY 5

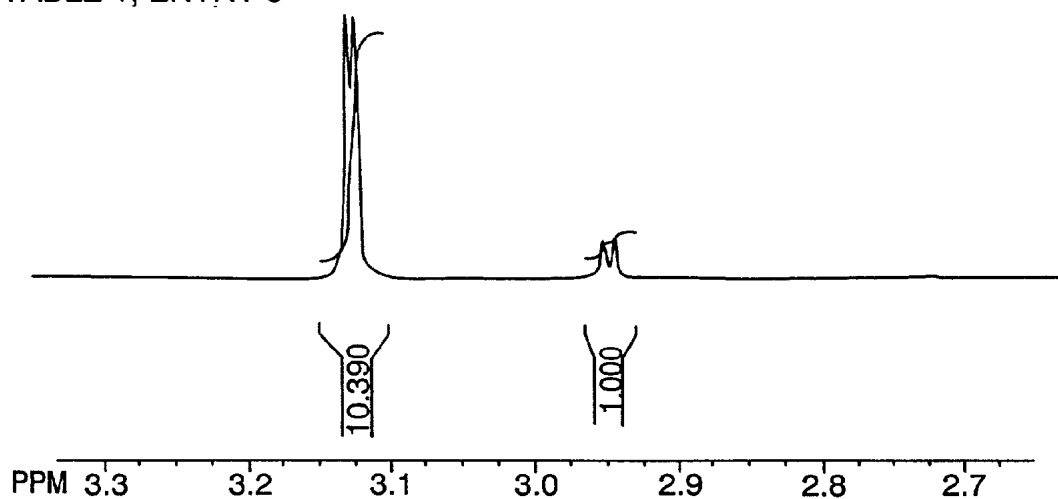


Fig. 13

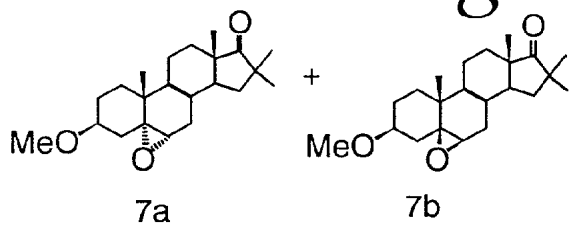


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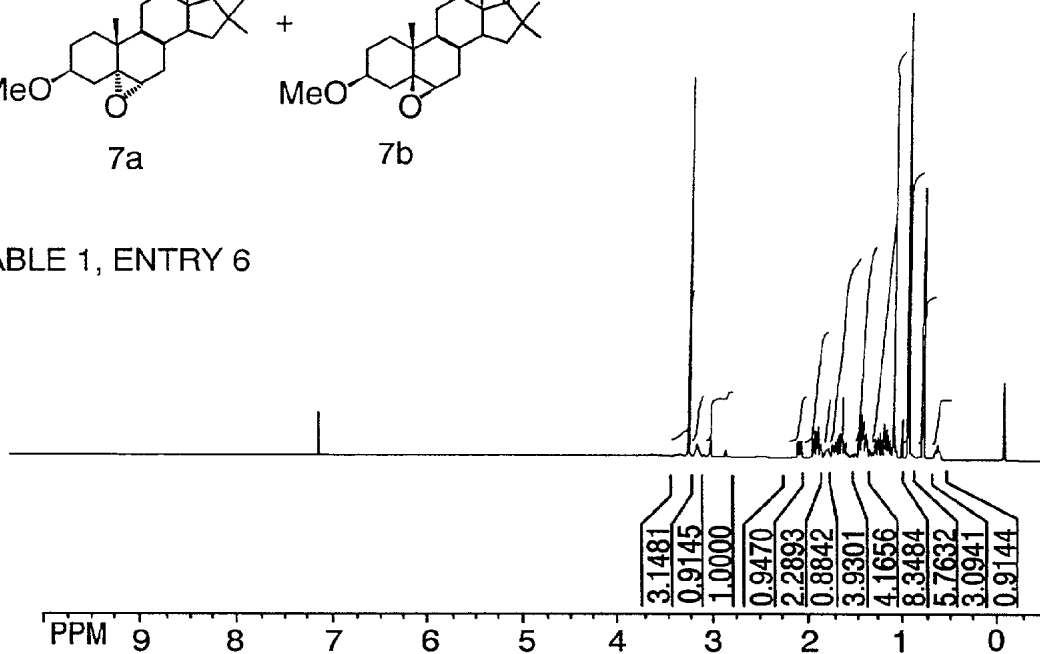


Fig. 14

AUTHENTIC SAMPLES
OF 7a/7b

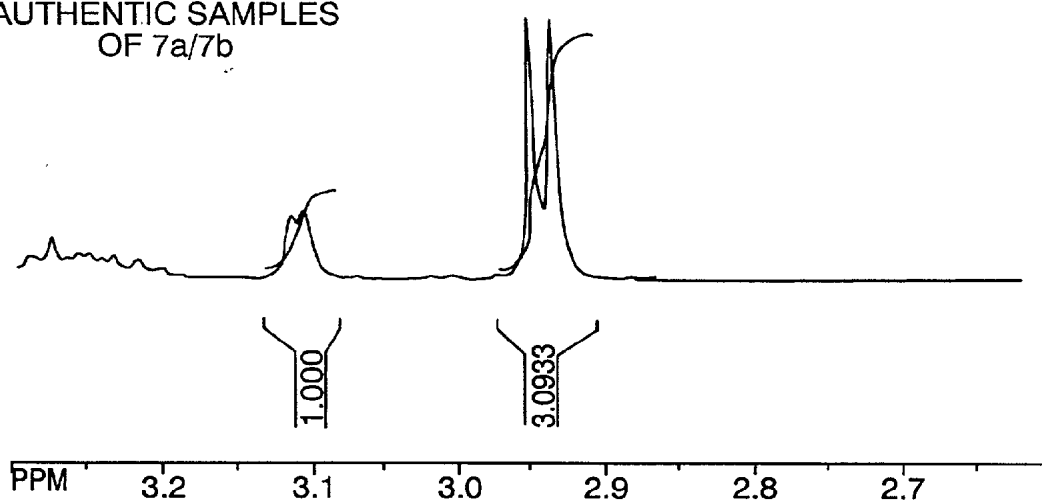


Fig. 15

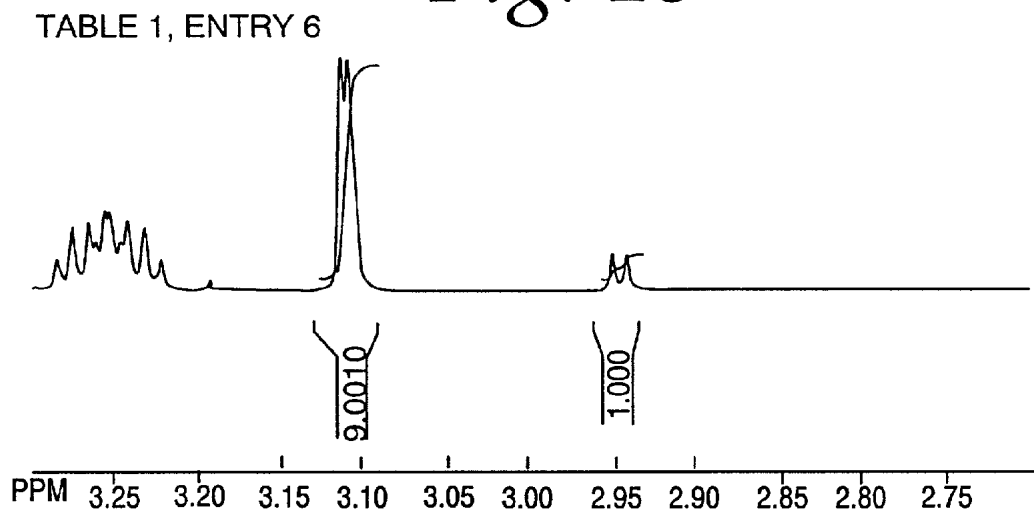


Fig. 16

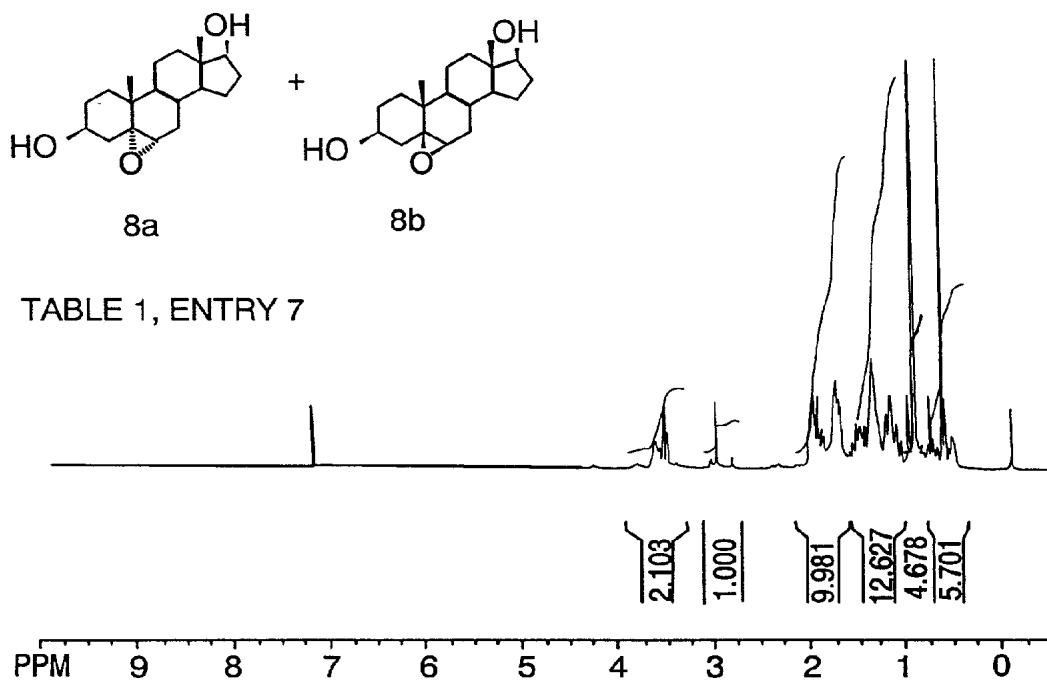


Fig. 17

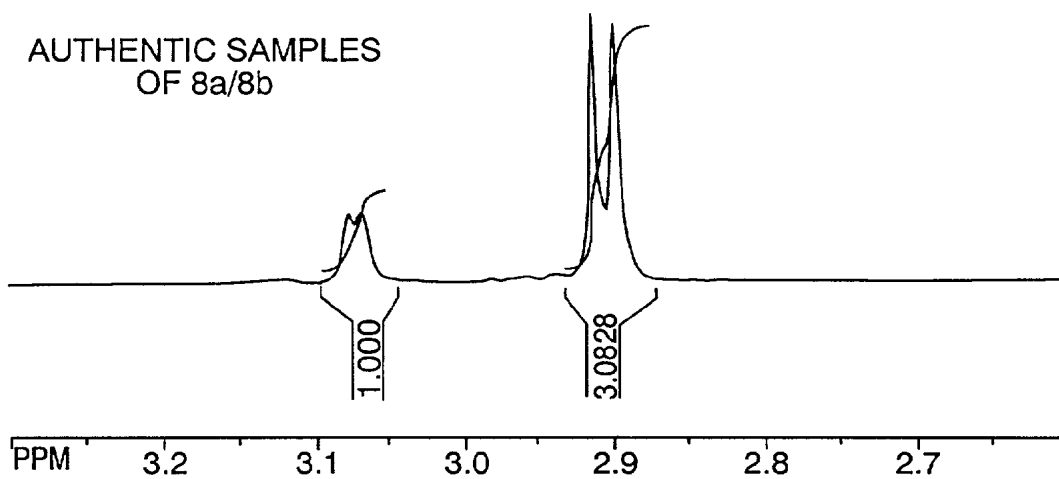


Fig. 18

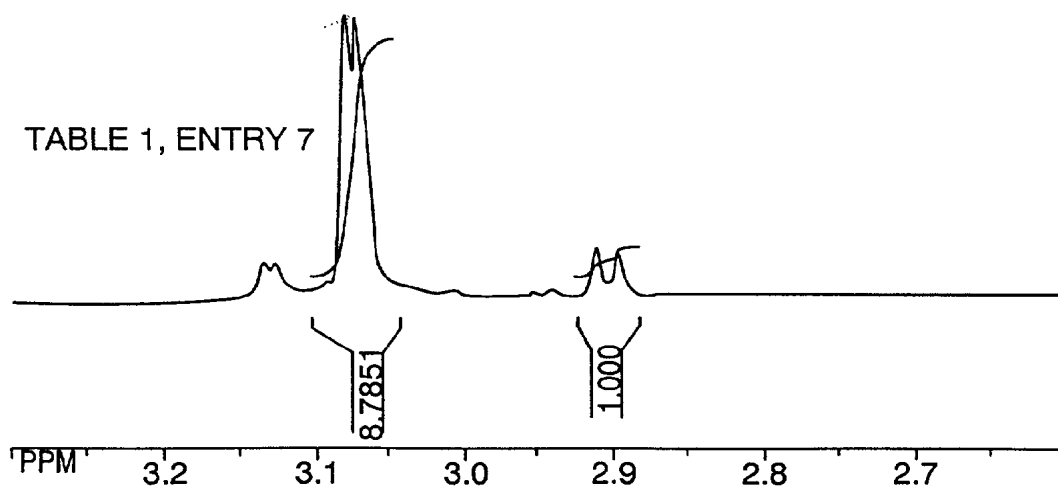


Fig. 19

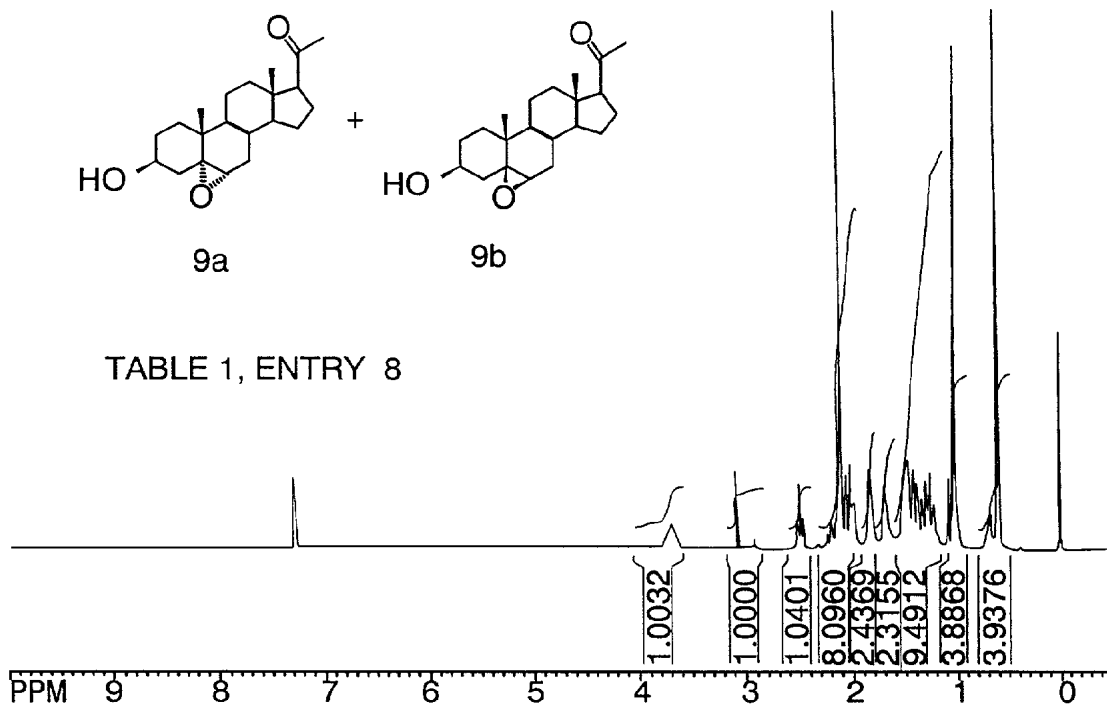


Fig. 20

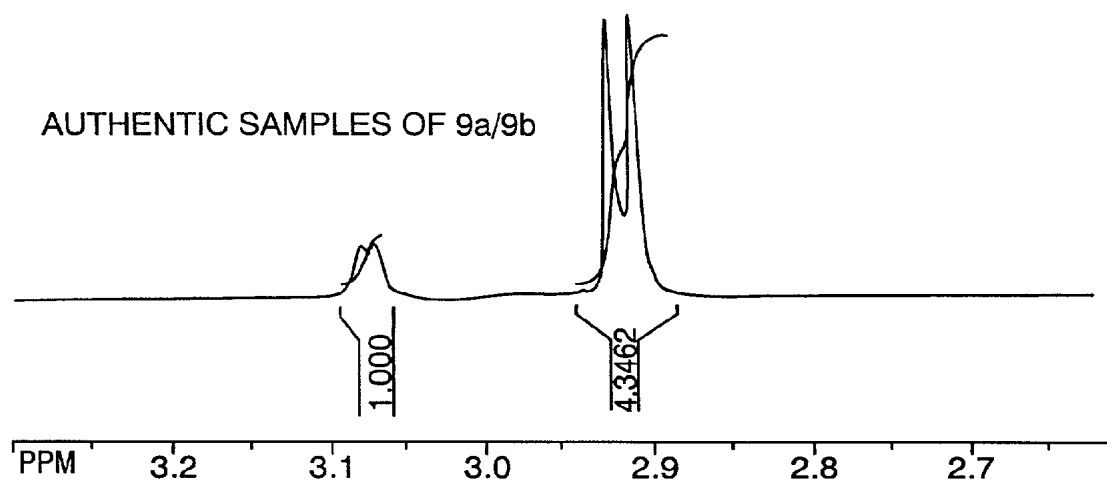


Fig. 21

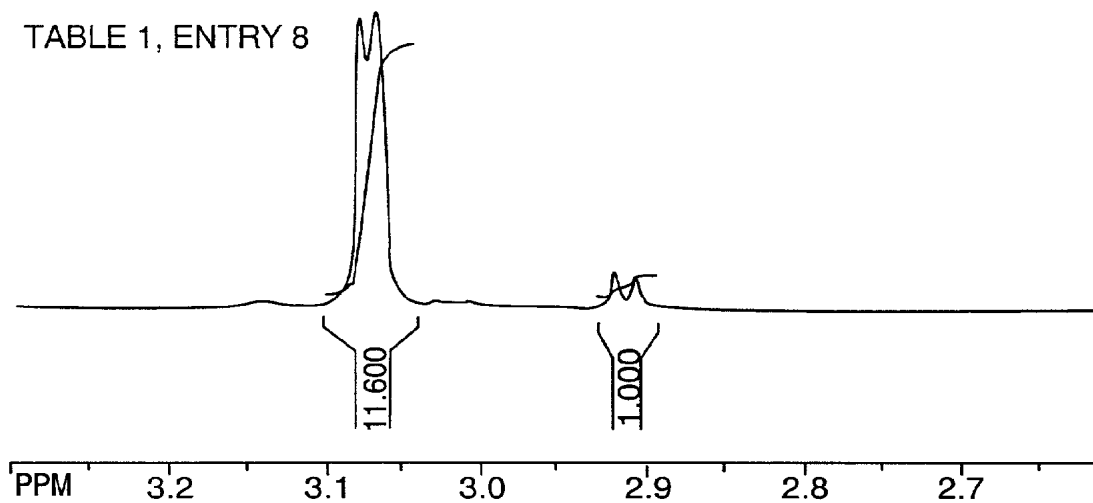


Fig. 22

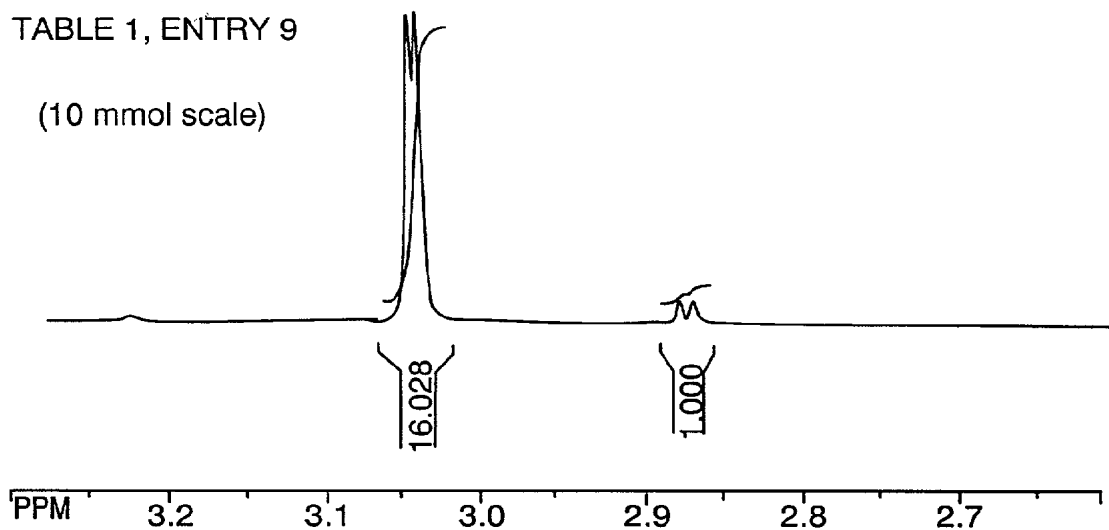


Fig. 23

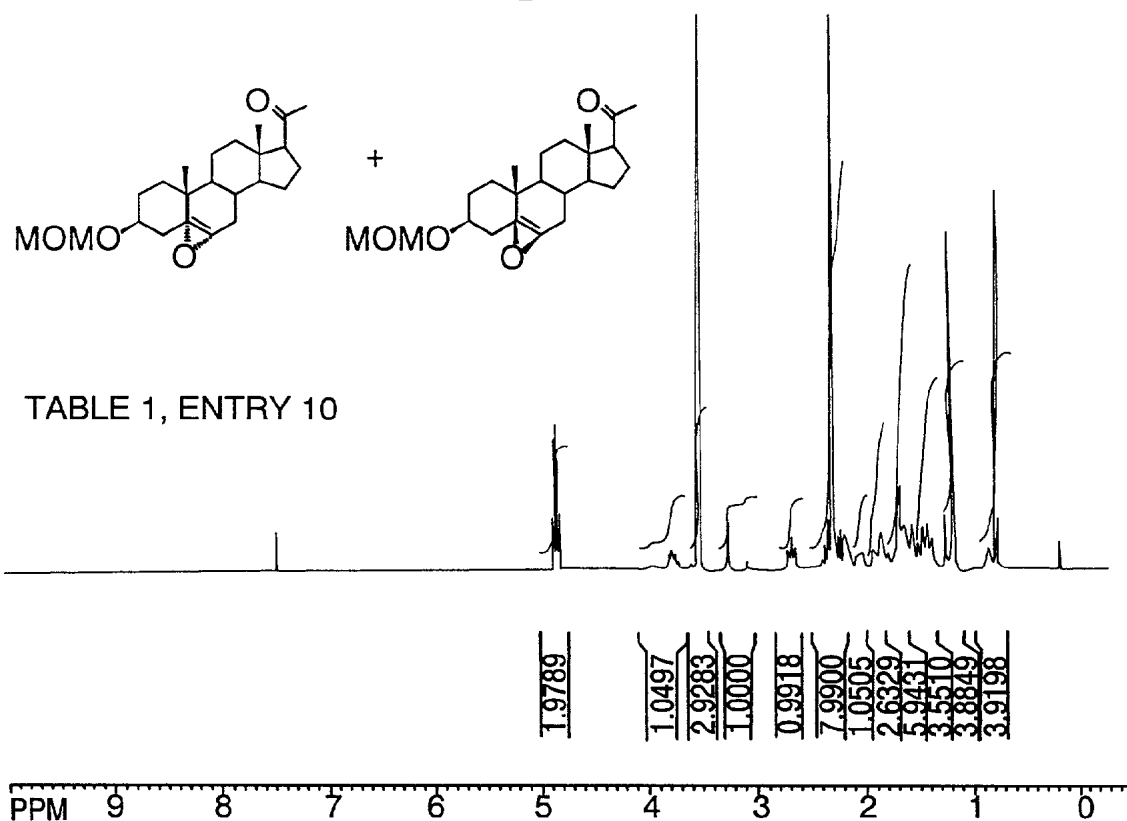


Fig. 24

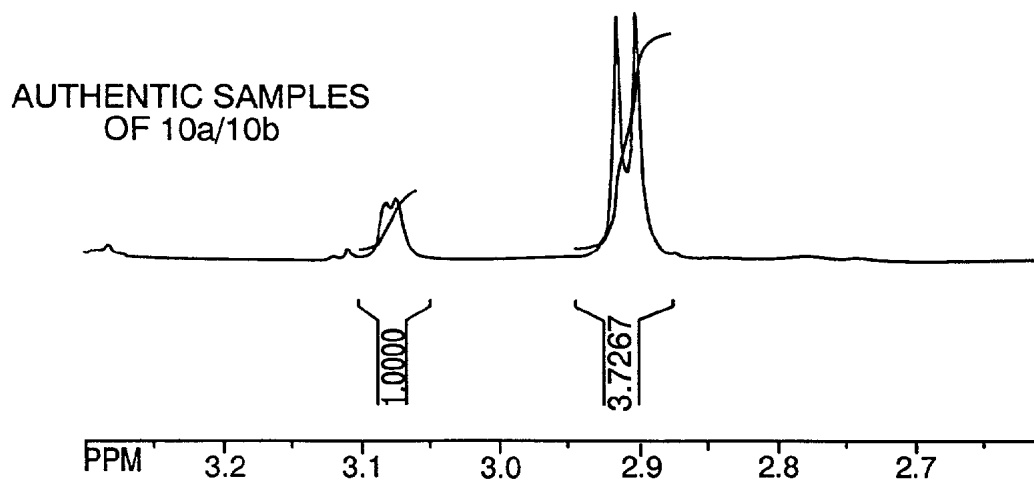


Fig. 25

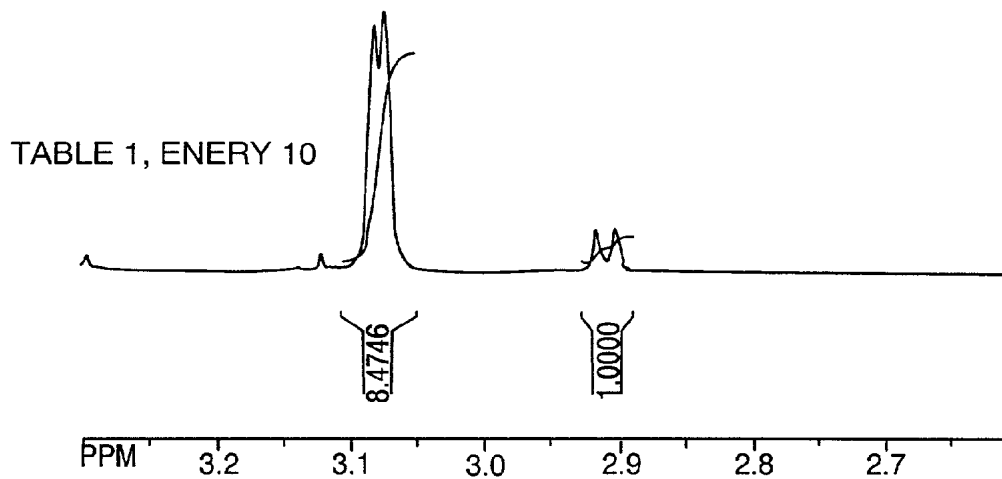


Fig. 26

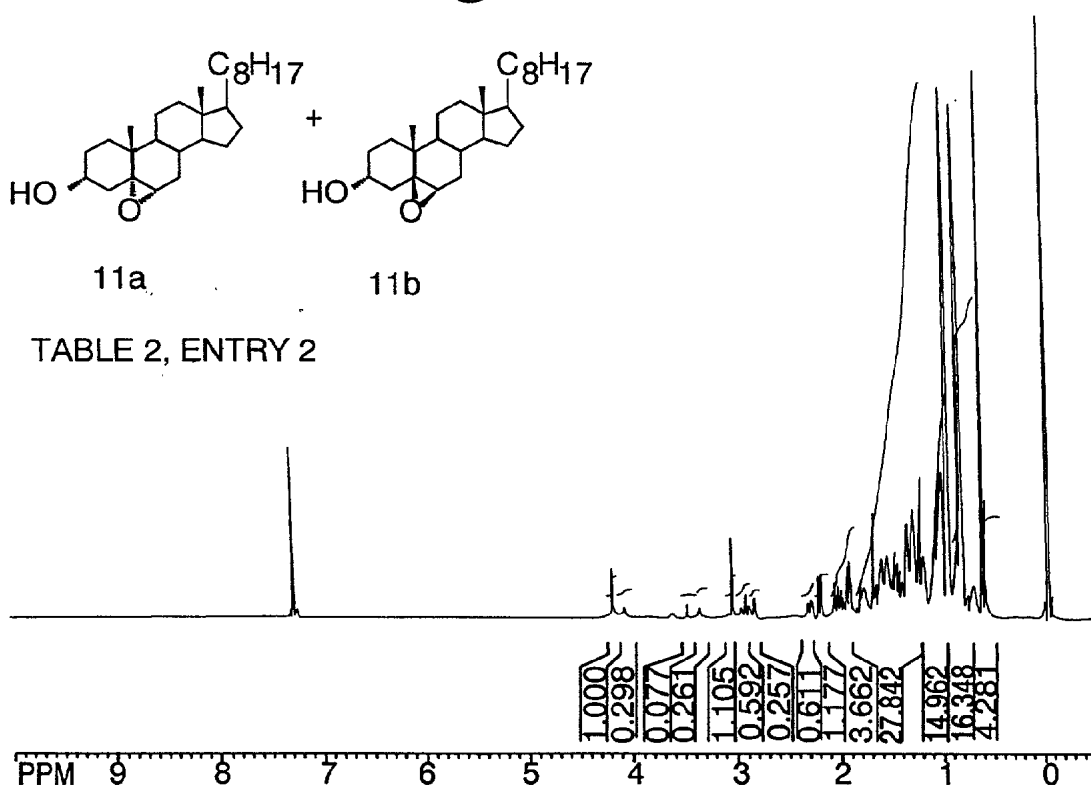


Fig. 27

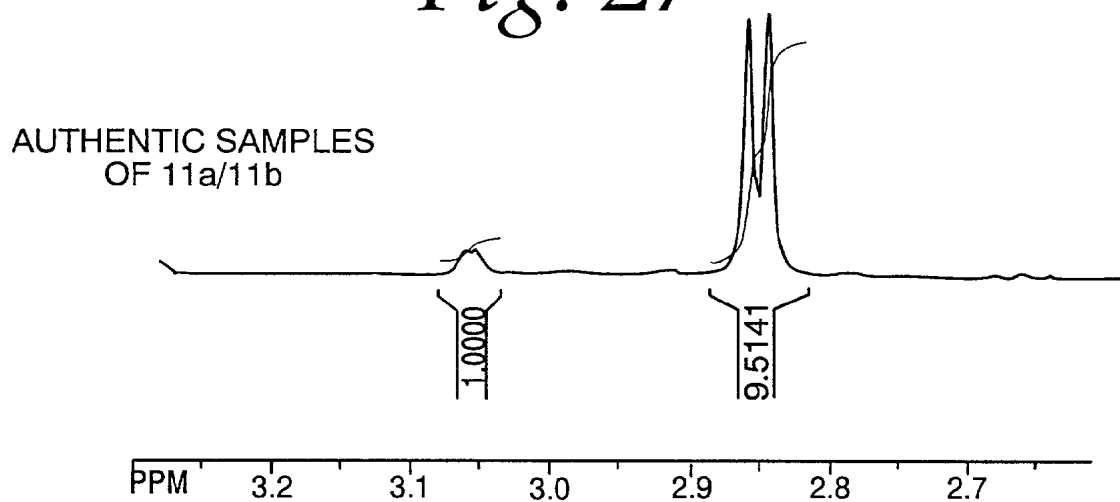


Fig. 28

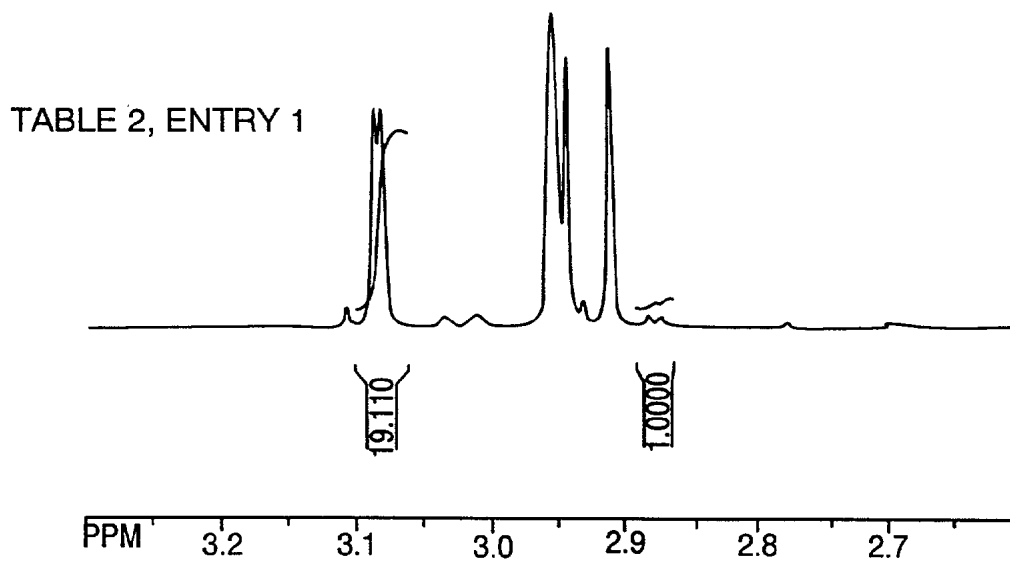


Fig. 29

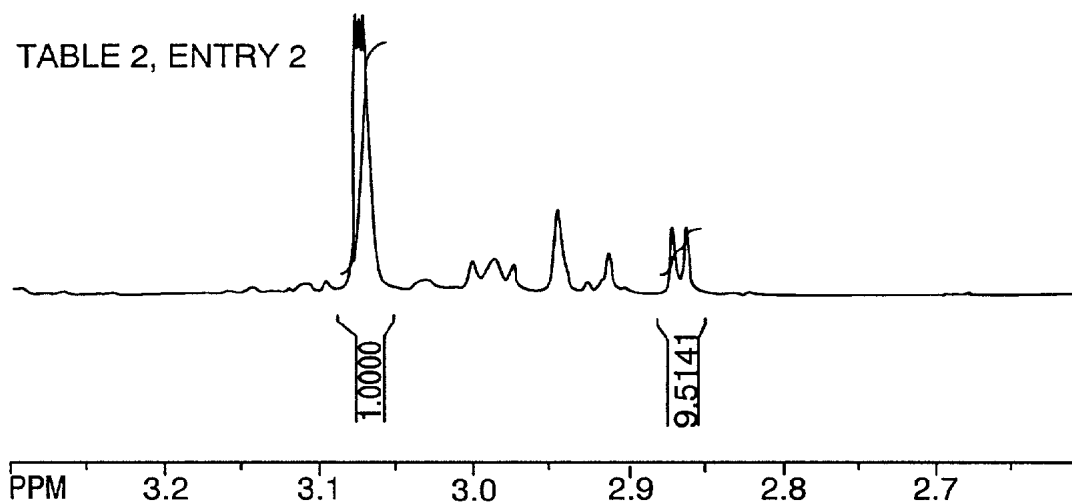


Fig. 30

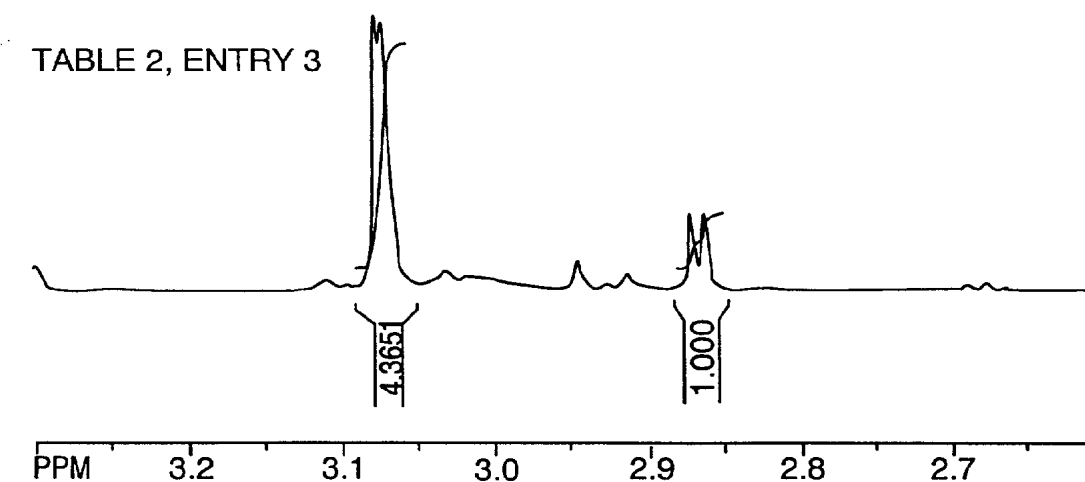


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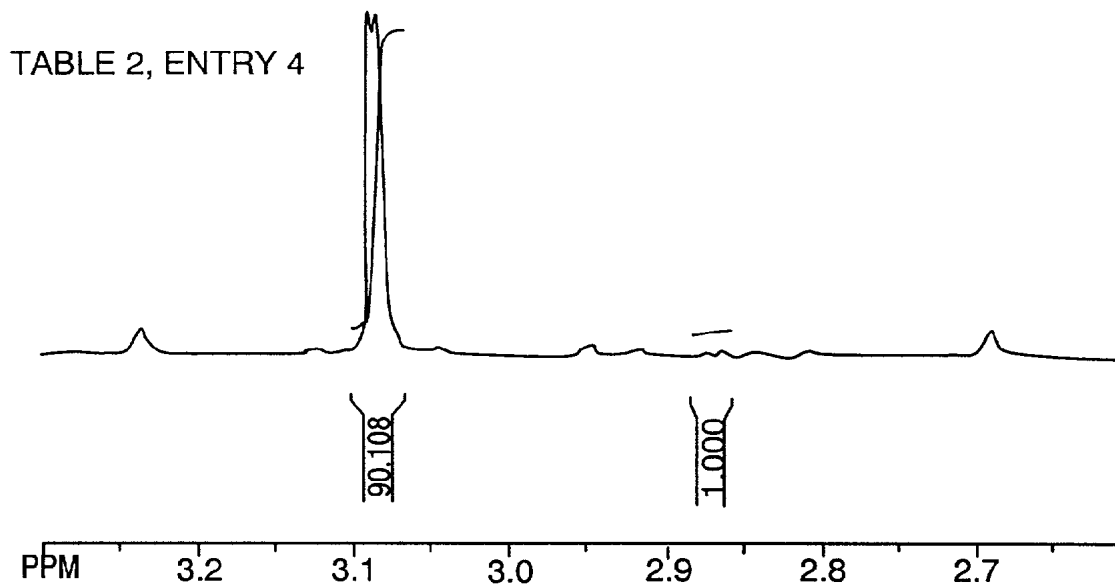
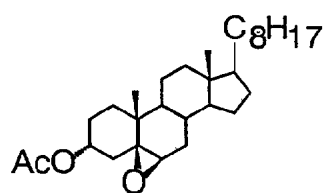


Fig. 32



12b

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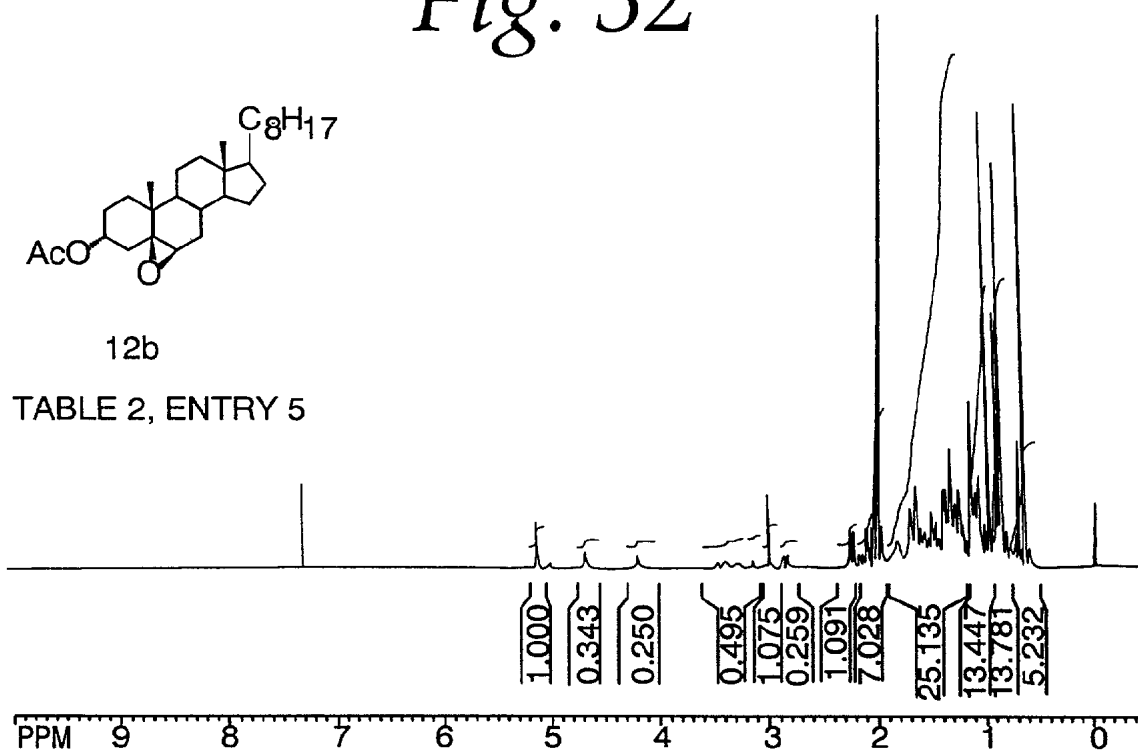


Fig. 33

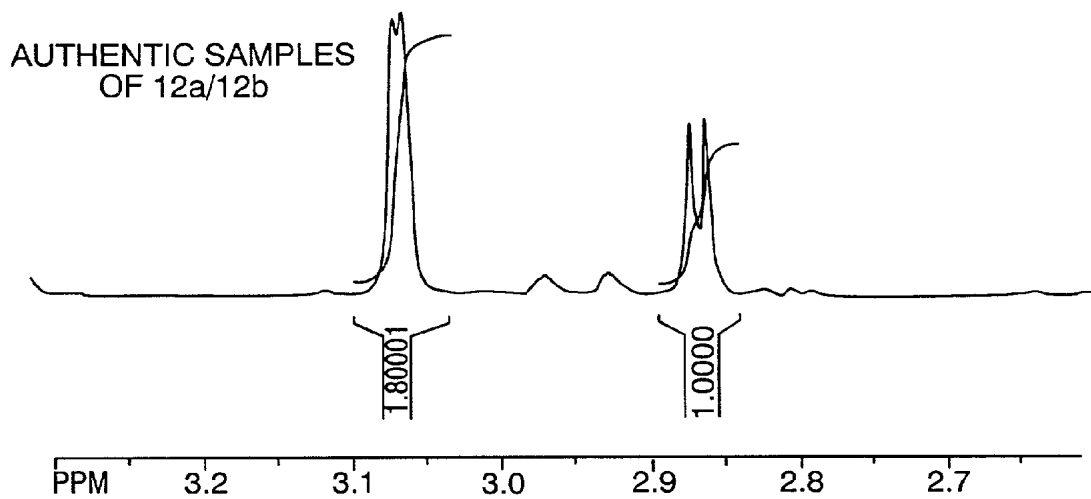


Fig. 34

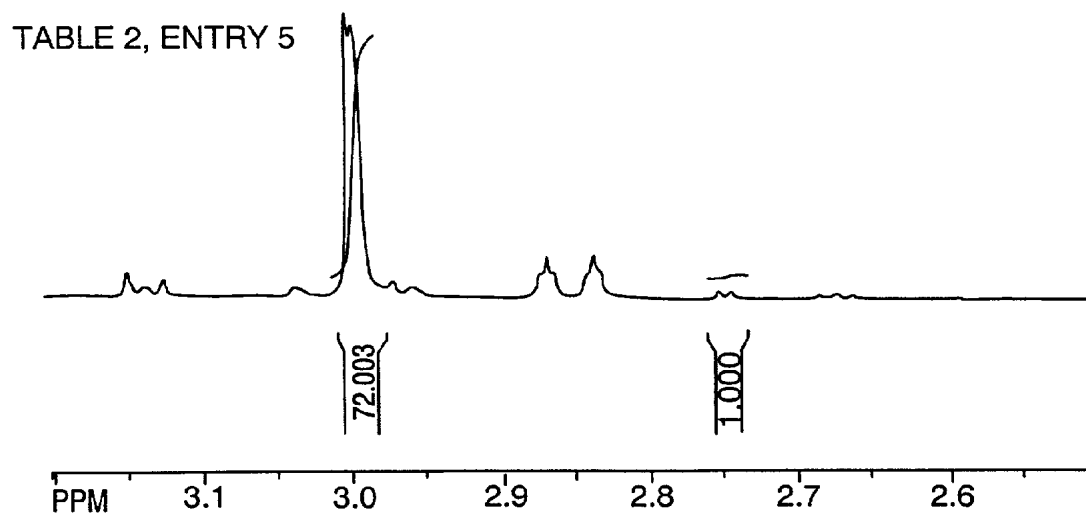


Fig. 35

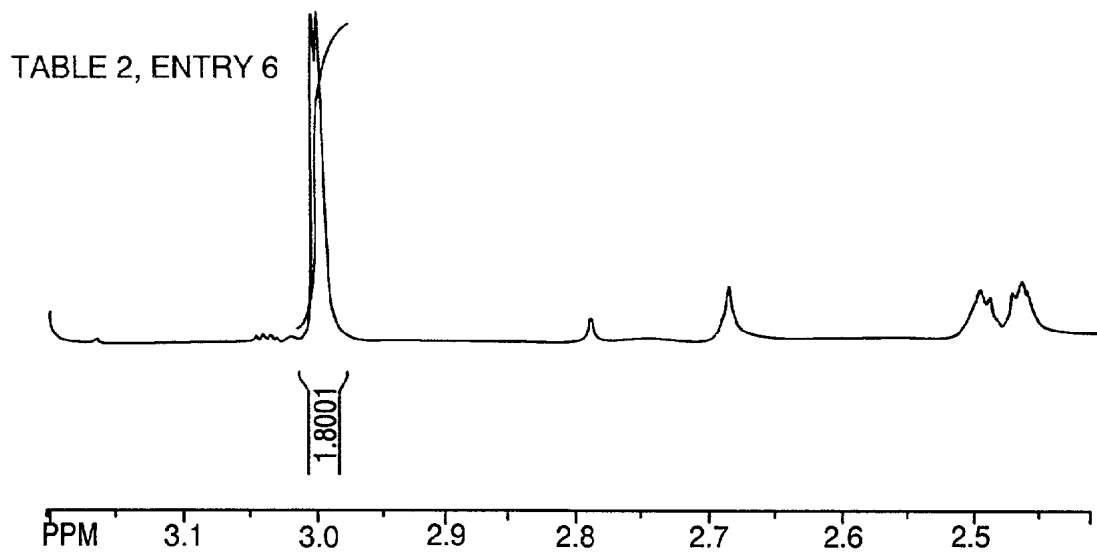


Fig. 36

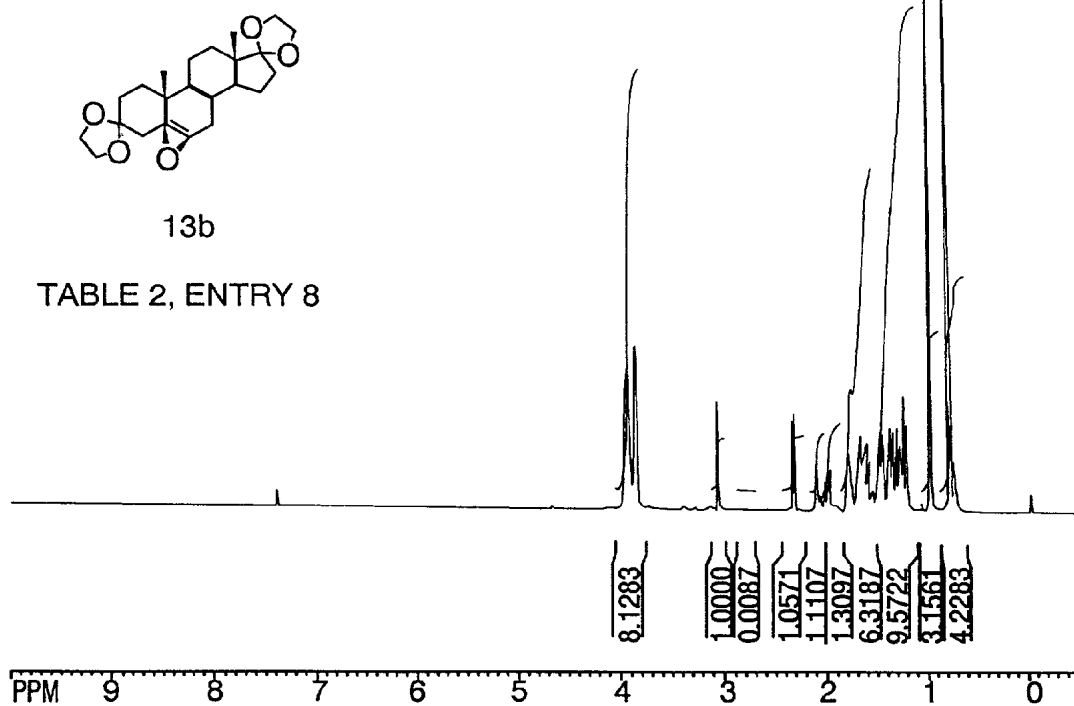


Fig. 37

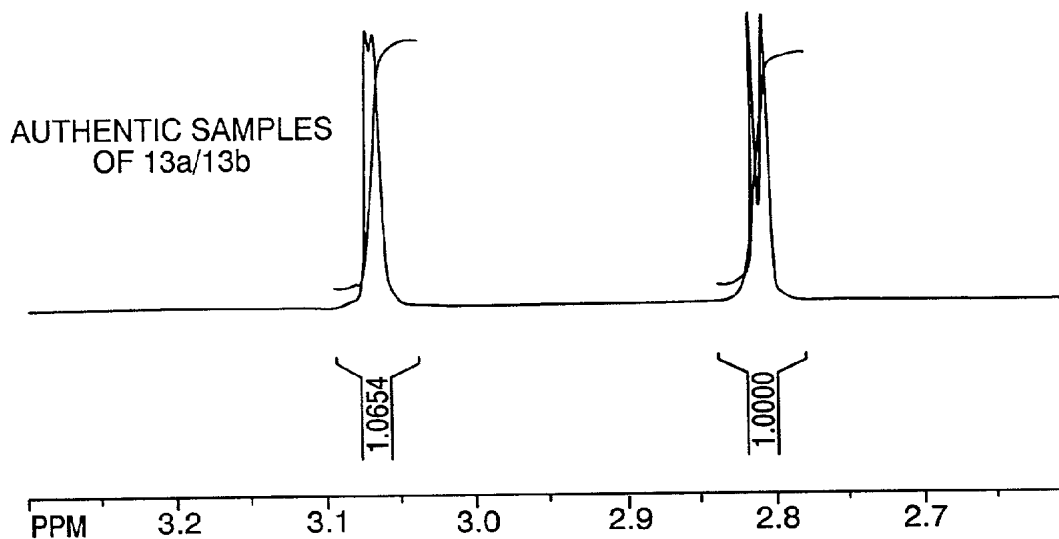


Fig. 38

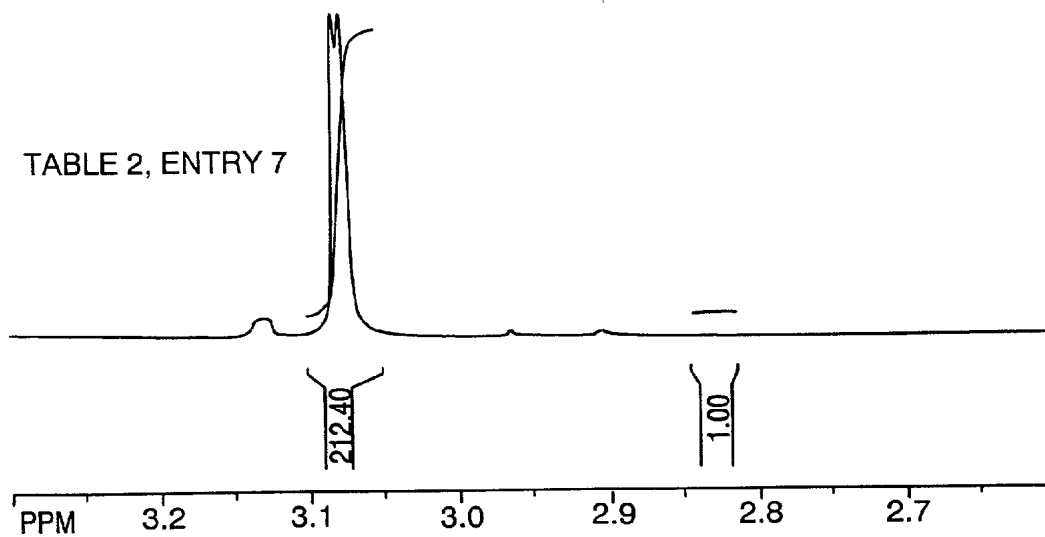


Fig. 39

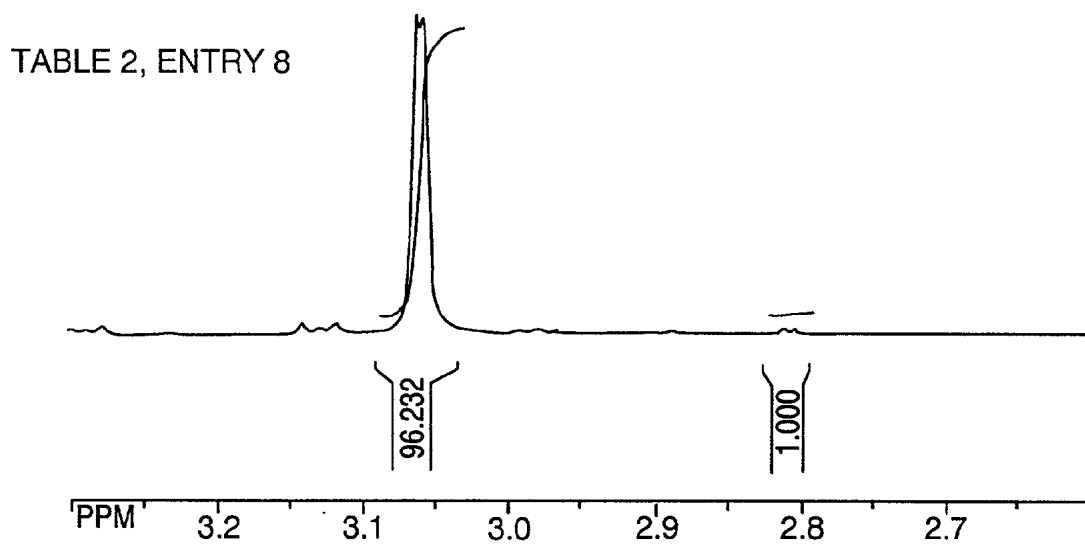


Fig. 40

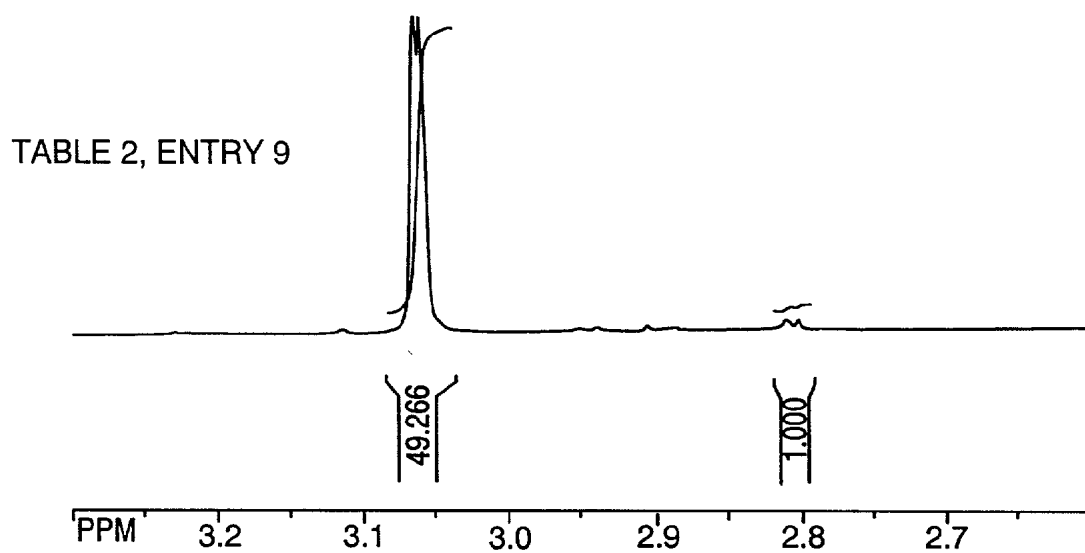


Fig. 41

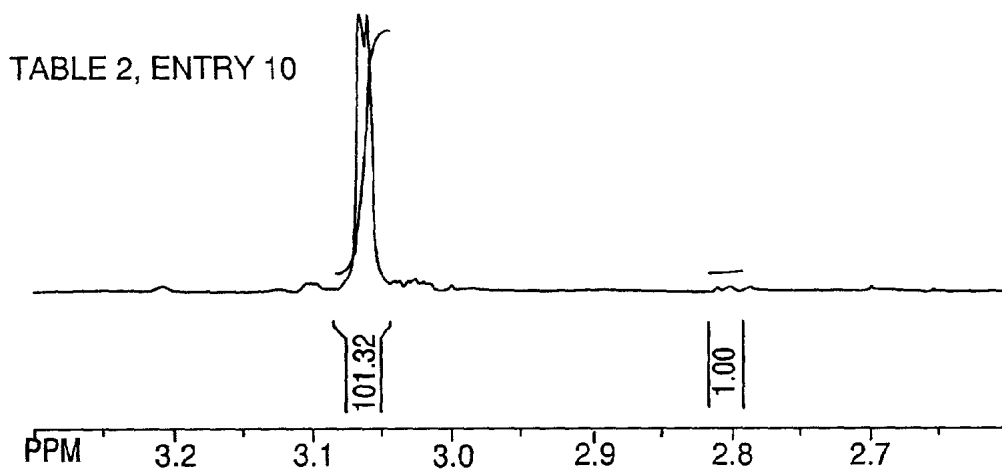


Fig. 42

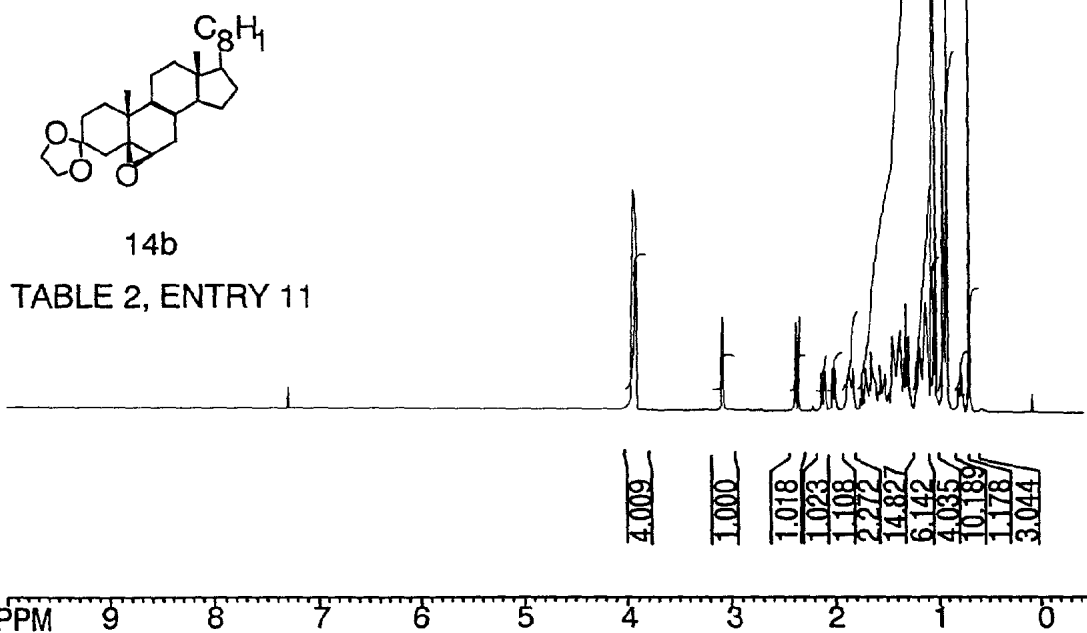


Fig. 43

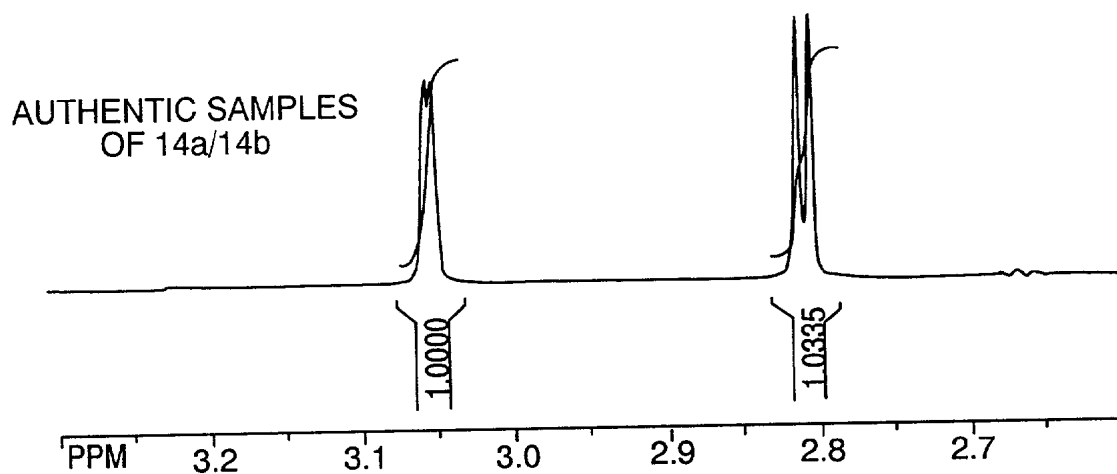


Fig. 44

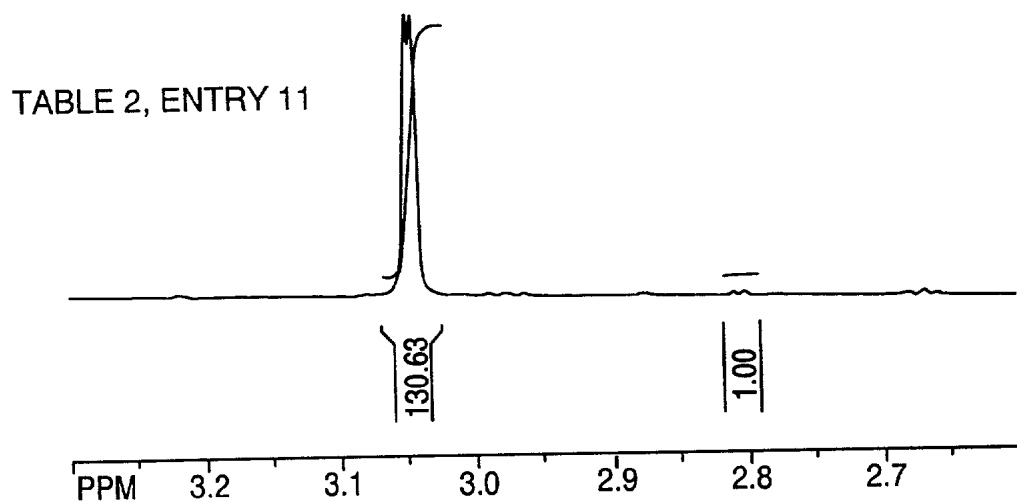


Fig. 45

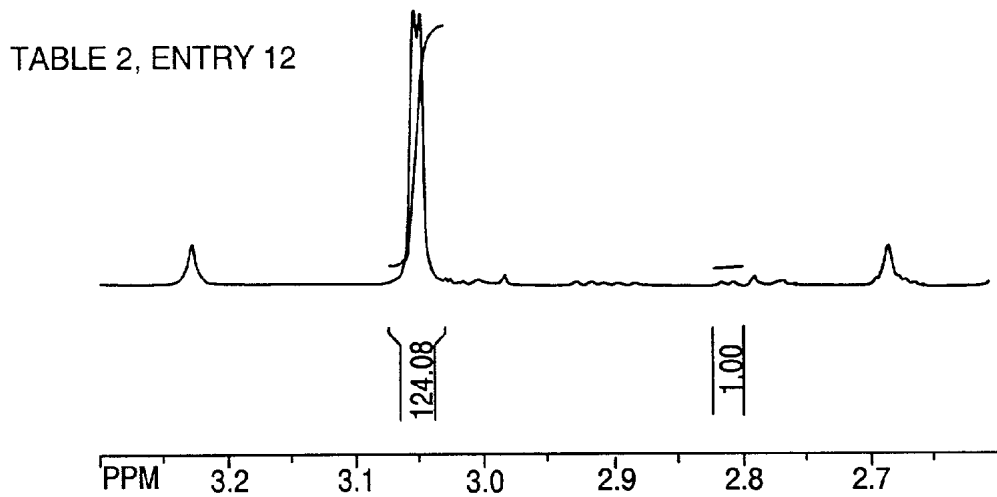


Fig. 46

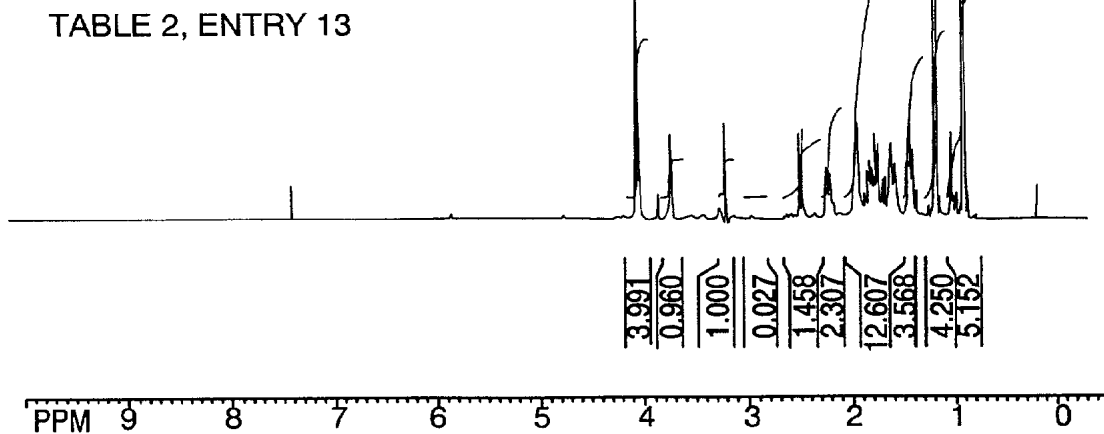
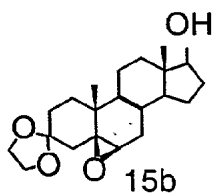


Fig. 47

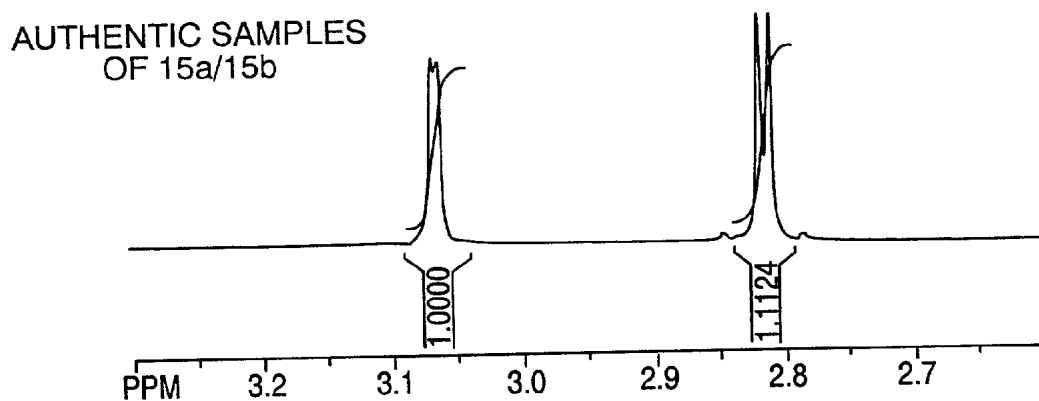


Fig. 48

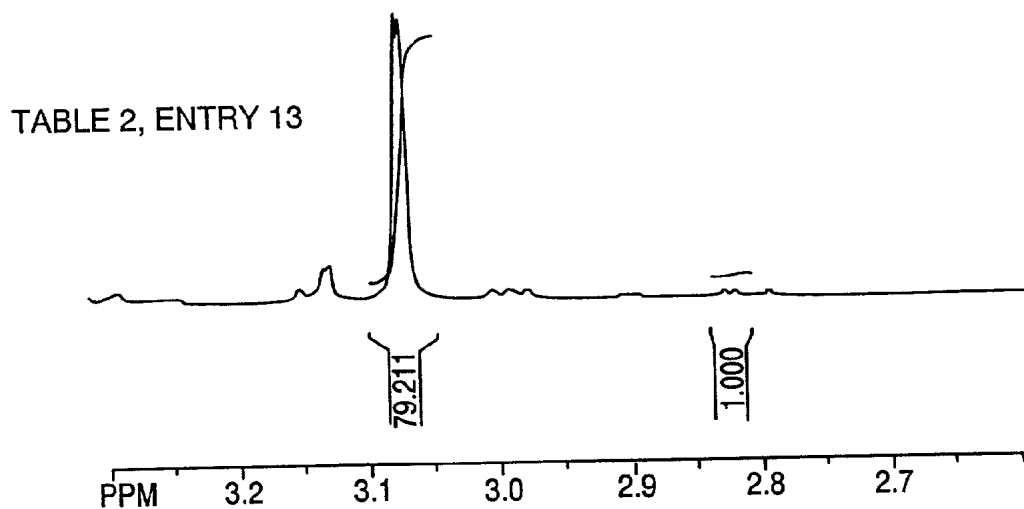


Fig. 49

TABLE 2, ENTRY 14

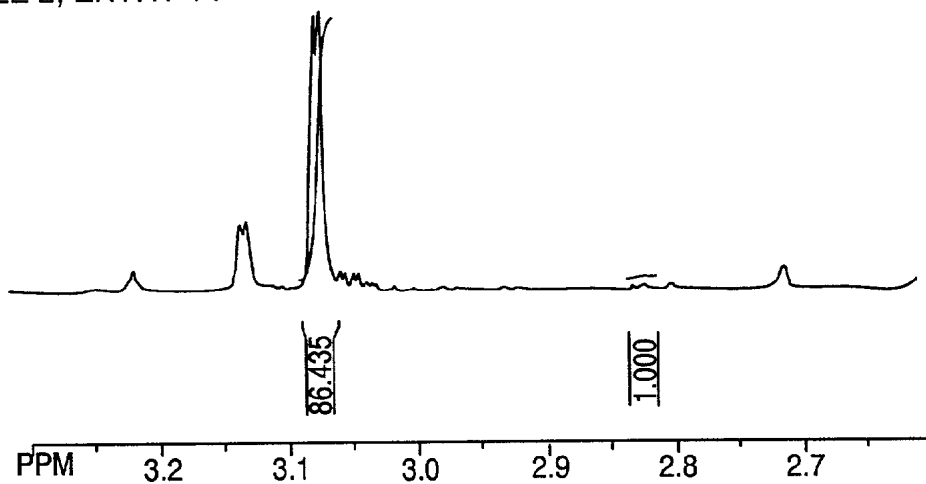


Fig. 50

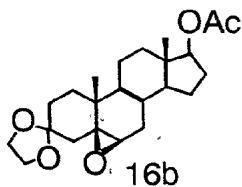


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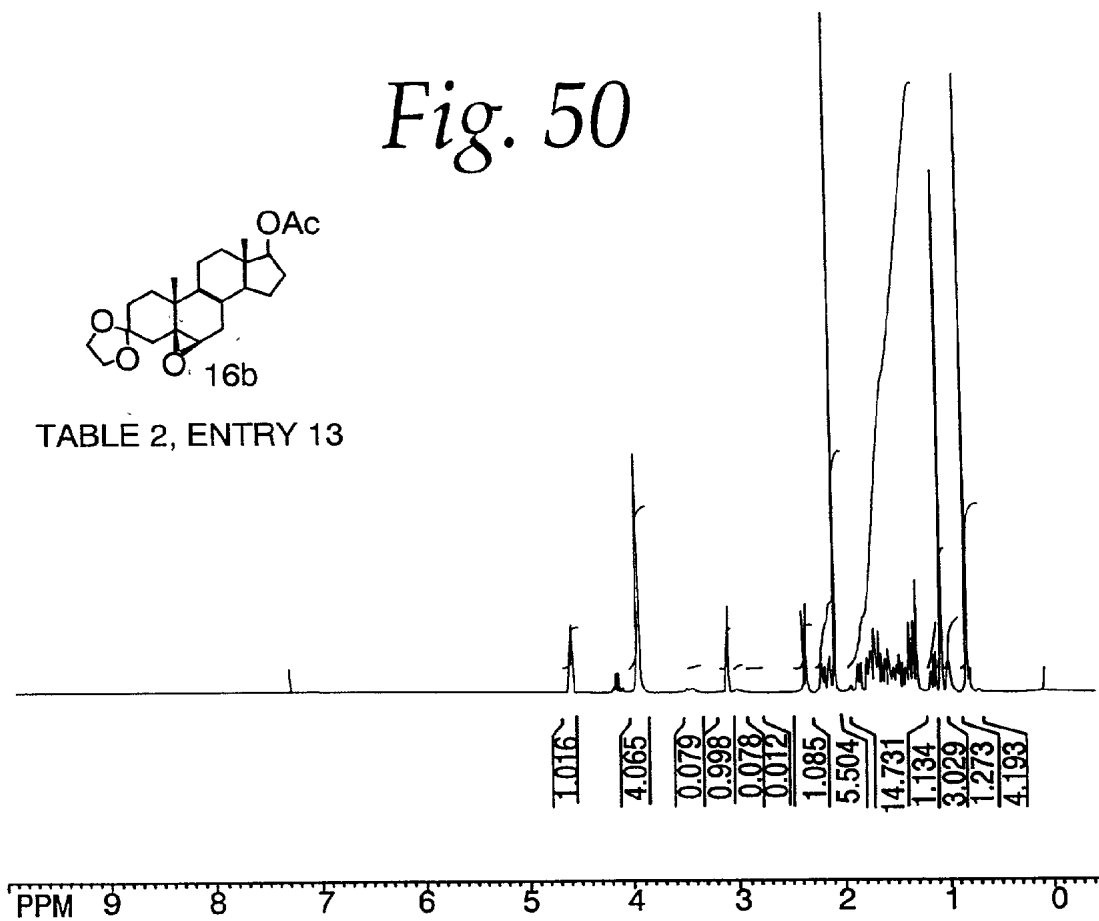


Fig. 51

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OF 16a/16b

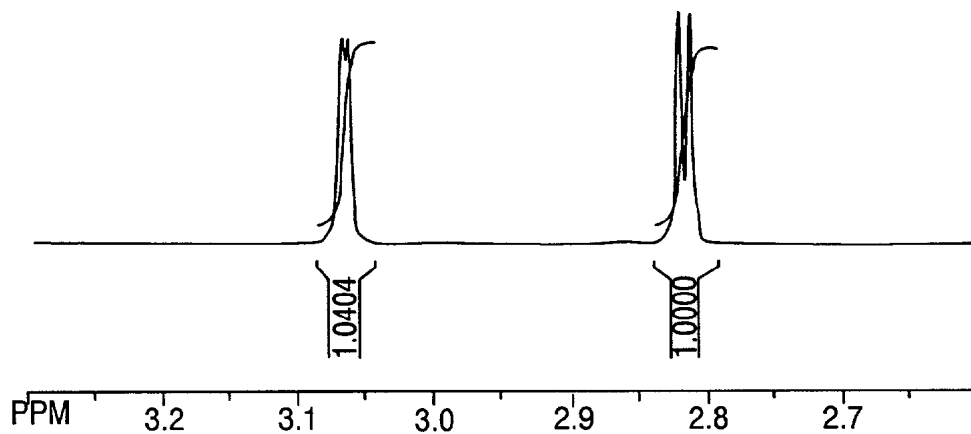


Fig. 52

TABLE 2, ENTRY 15

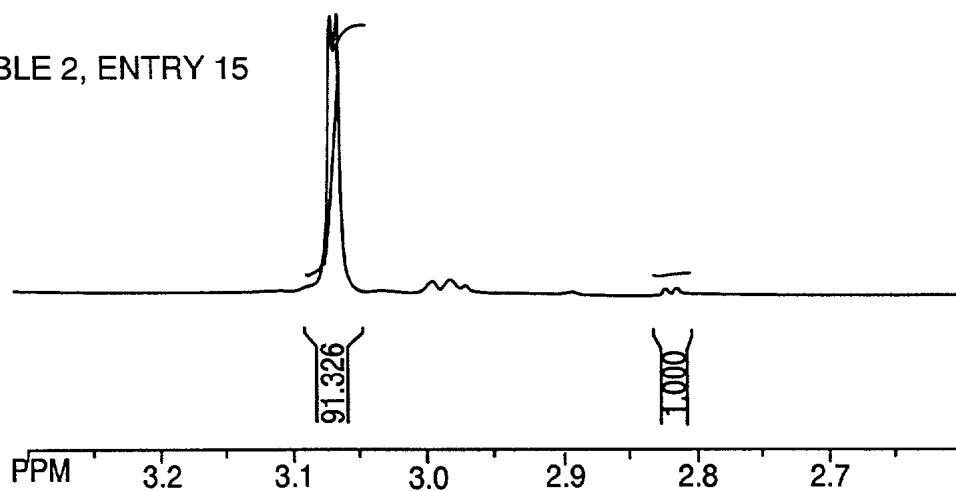


Fig. 53

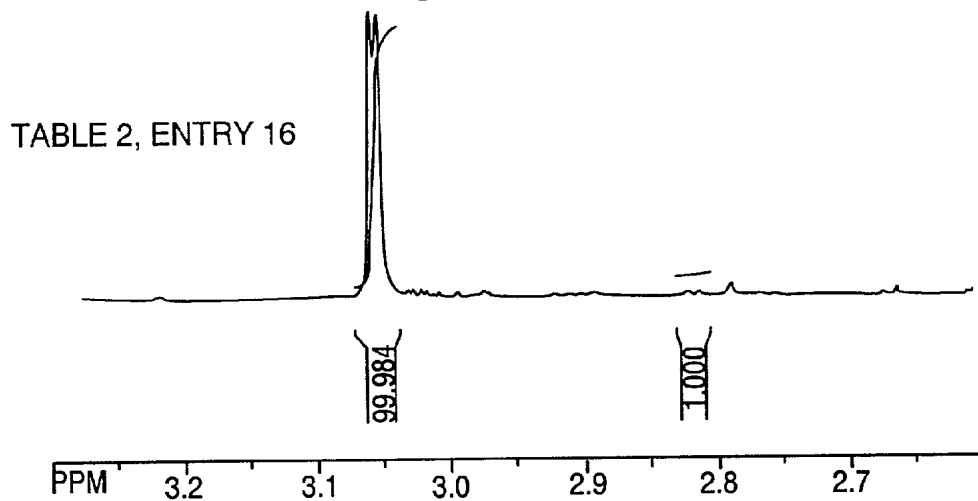


Fig. 54

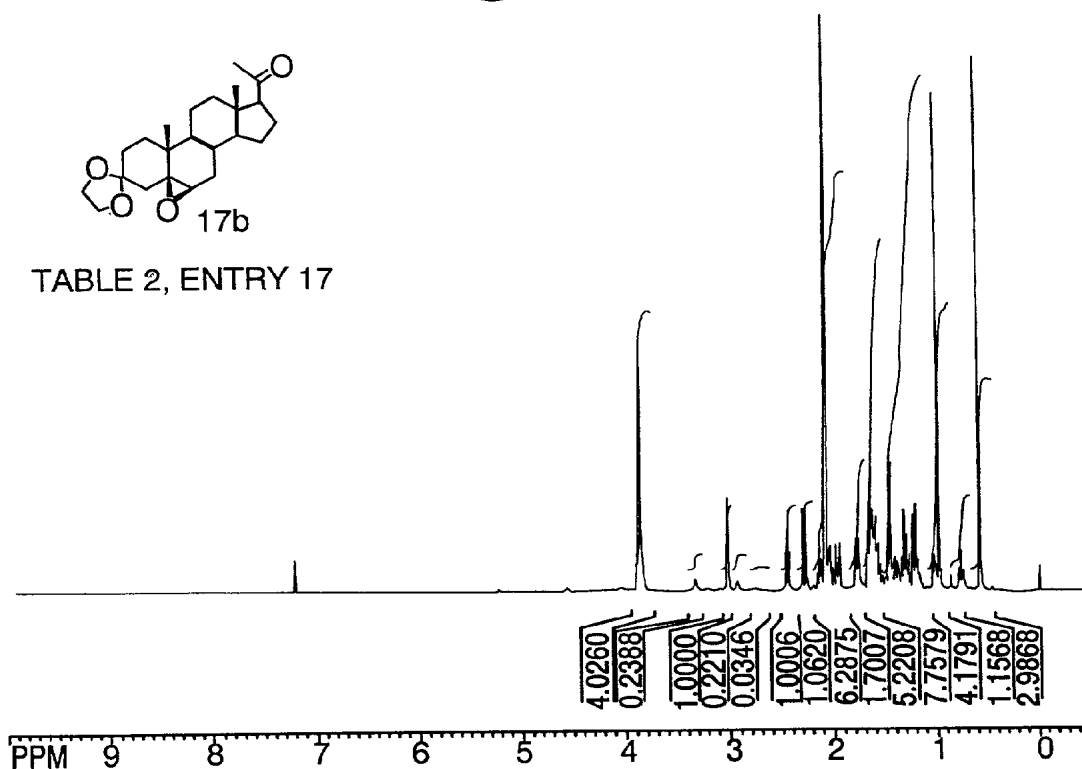


Fig. 55

AUTHENTIC SAMPLES
OF 17a/17b

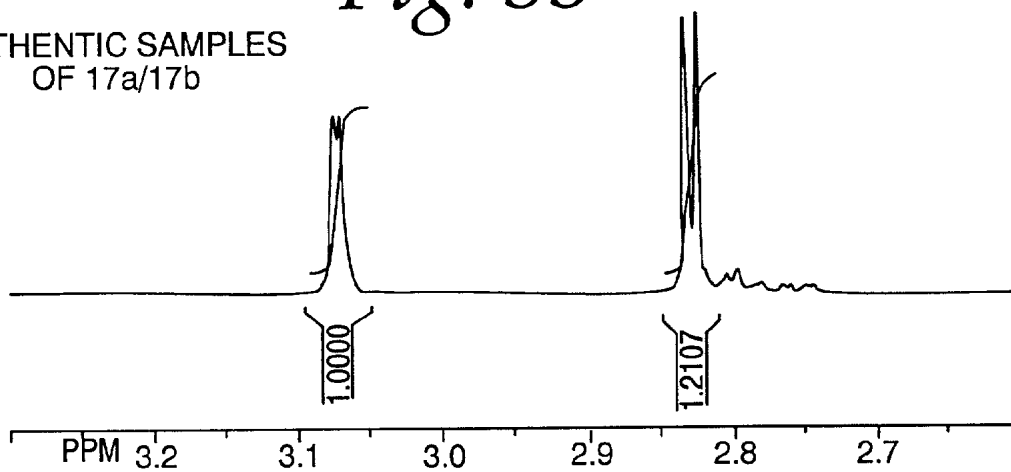


Fig. 56

TABLE 2, ENTRY 17

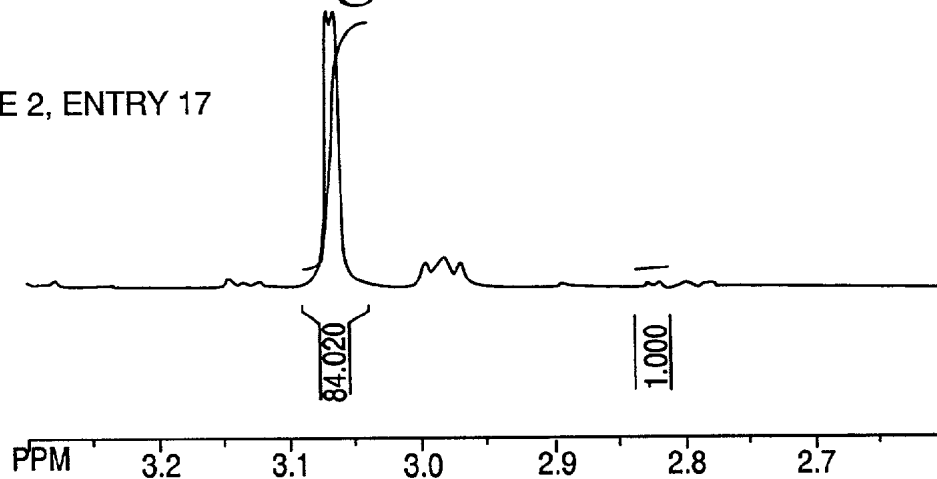


Fig. 57

TABLE 2, ENTRY 18

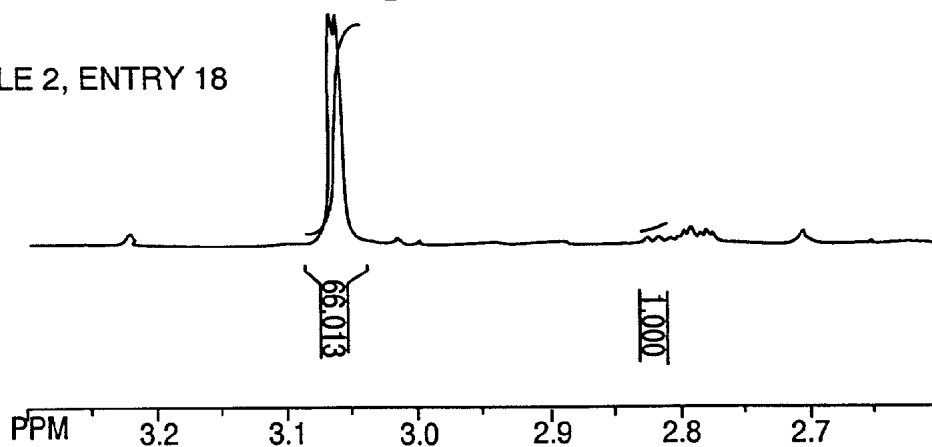


Fig. 58

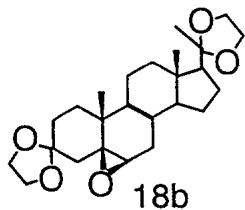


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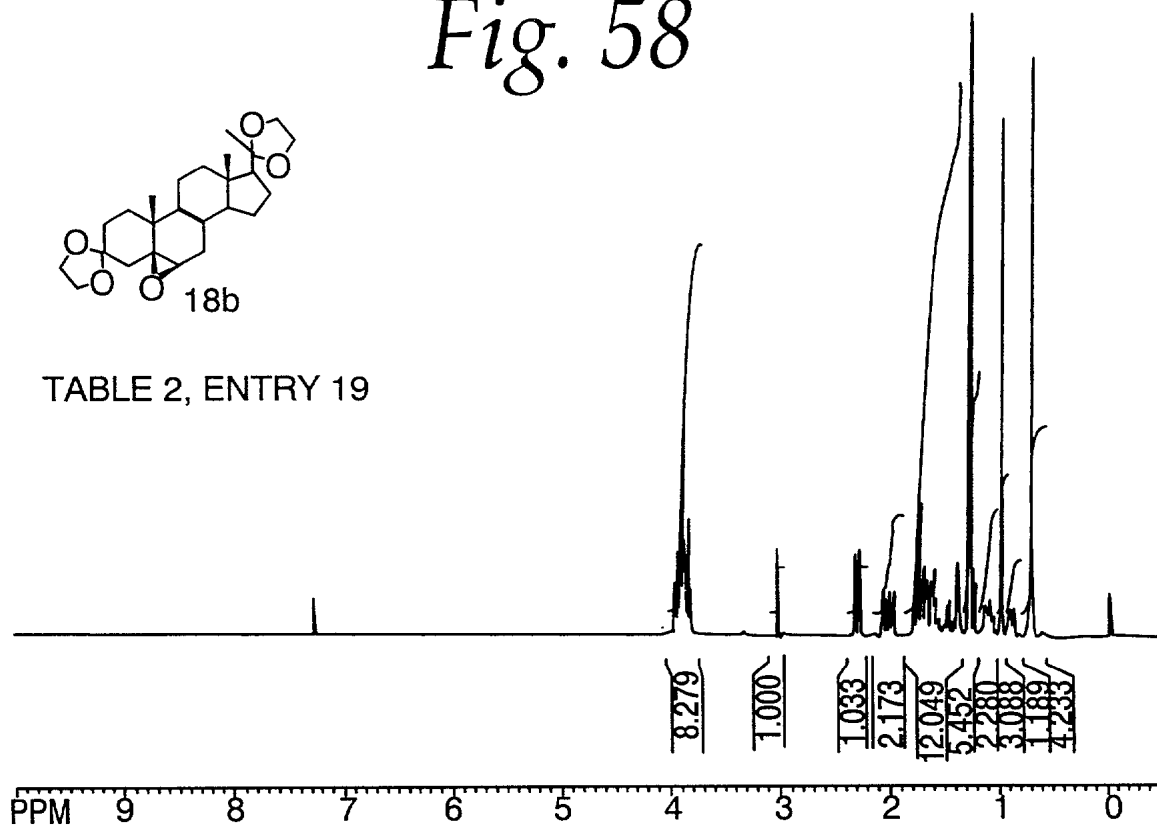


Fig. 59

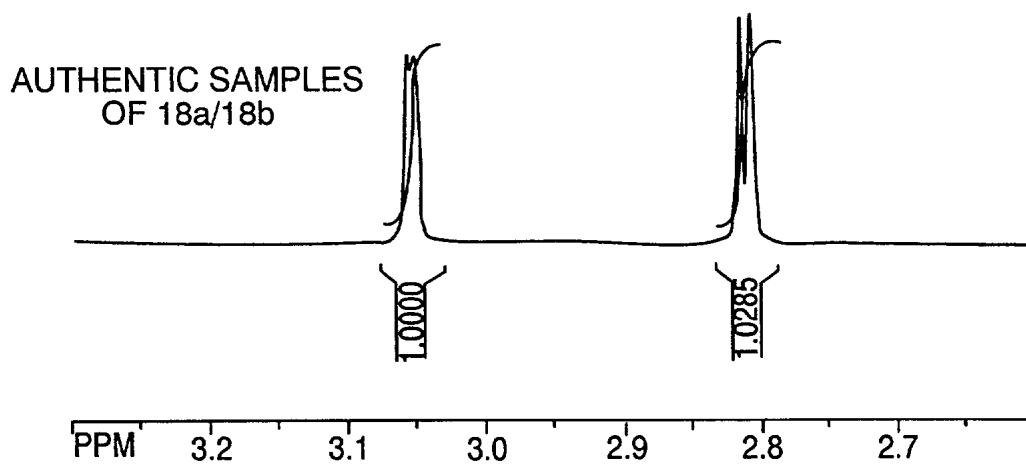


Fig. 60

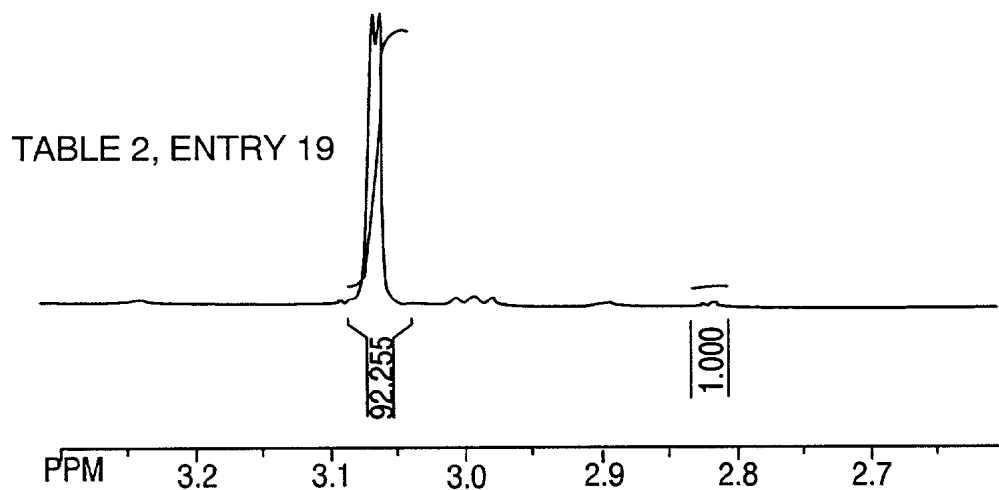


Fig. 61

TABLE 2, ENTRY 19
(10 mmol Scale)

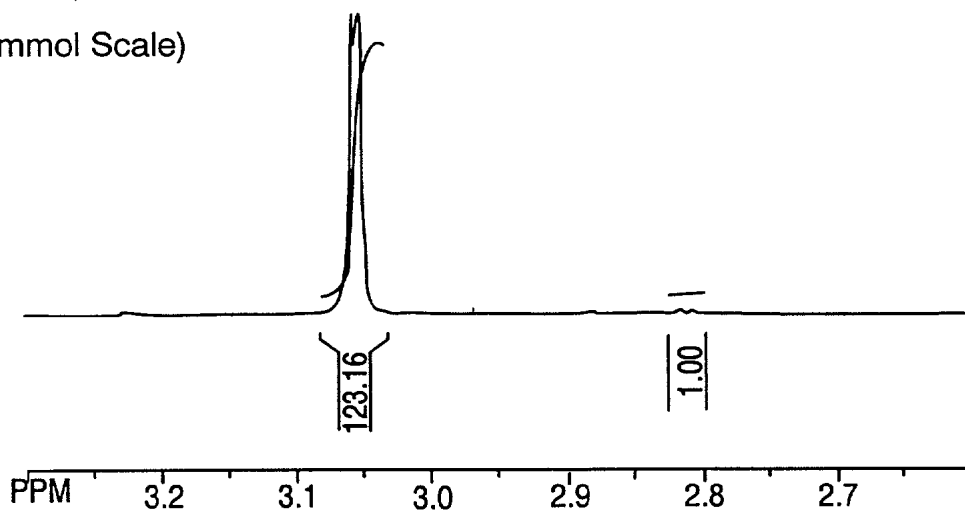


Fig. 62

TABLE 2, ENTRY 20

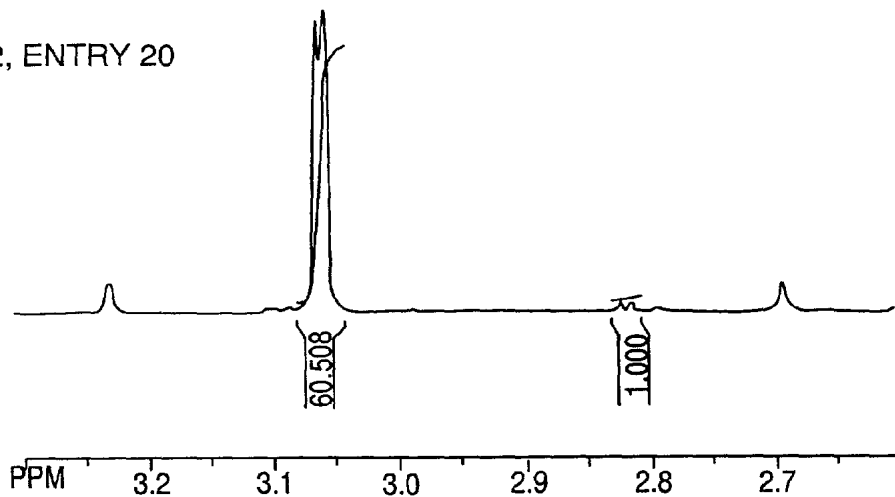


Fig. 63

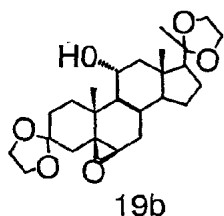


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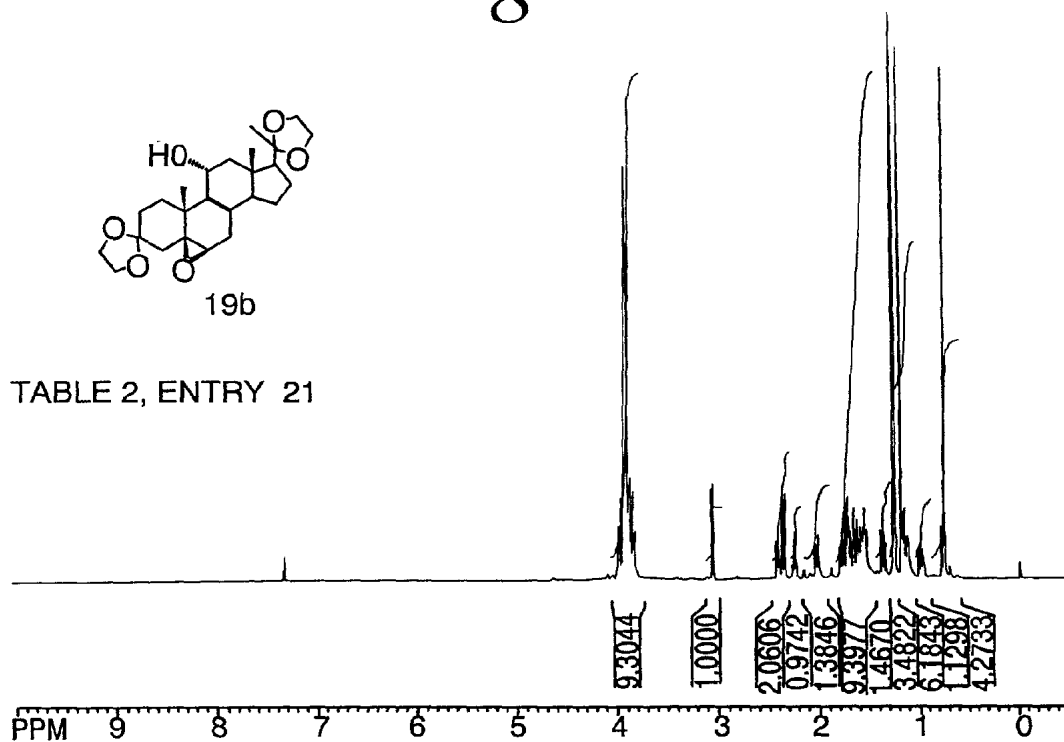


Fig. 64

AUTHENTIC SAMPLES
OF 19a/19b

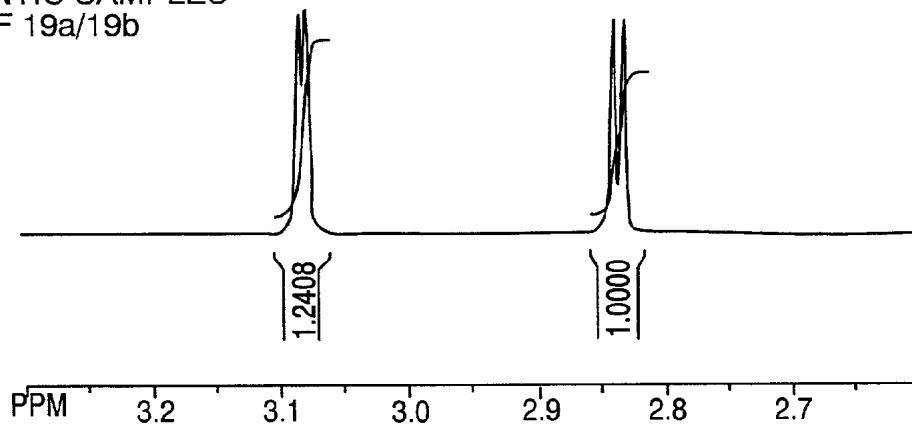


Fig. 65

TABLE 2, ENTRY 21

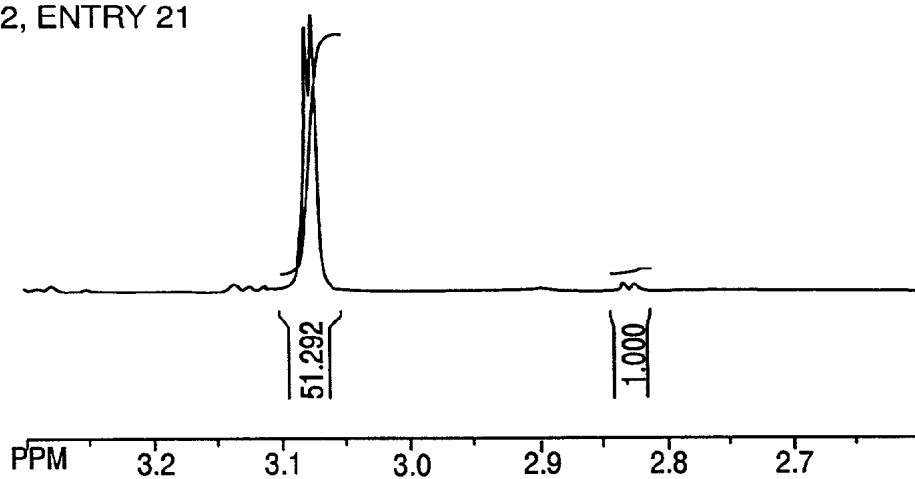


Fig. 66

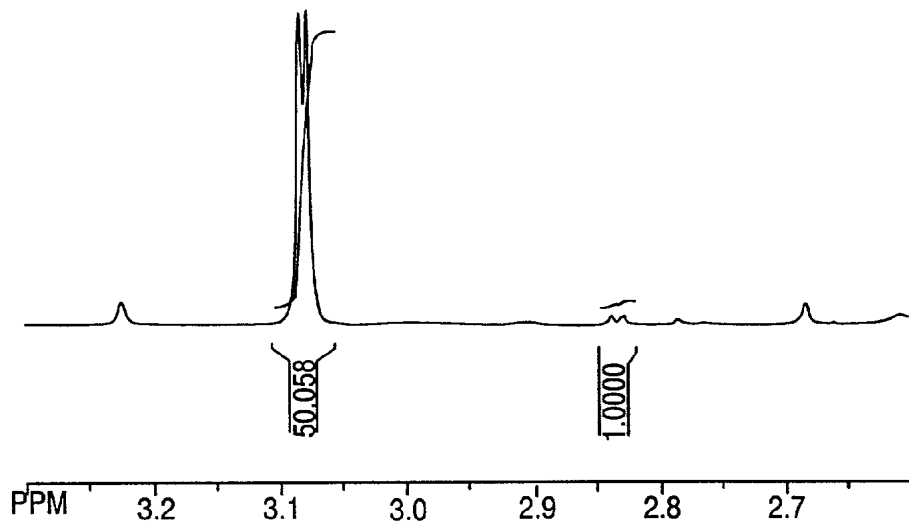


Fig. 67

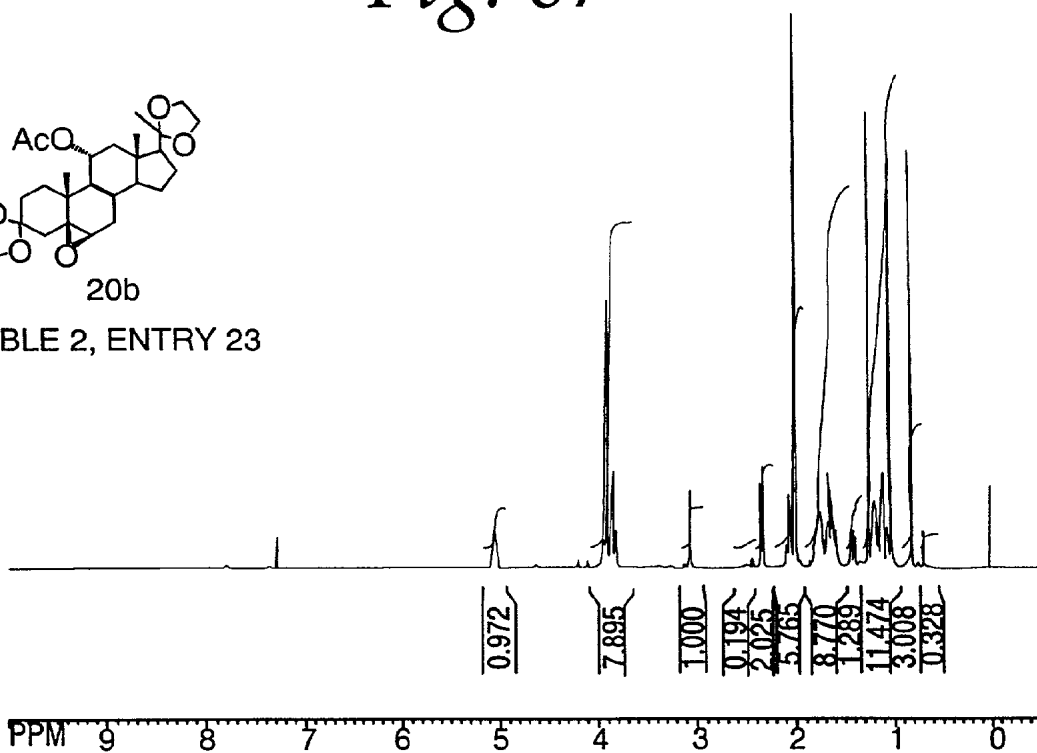
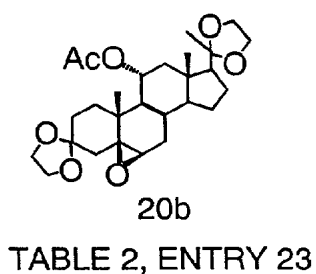


Fig. 68

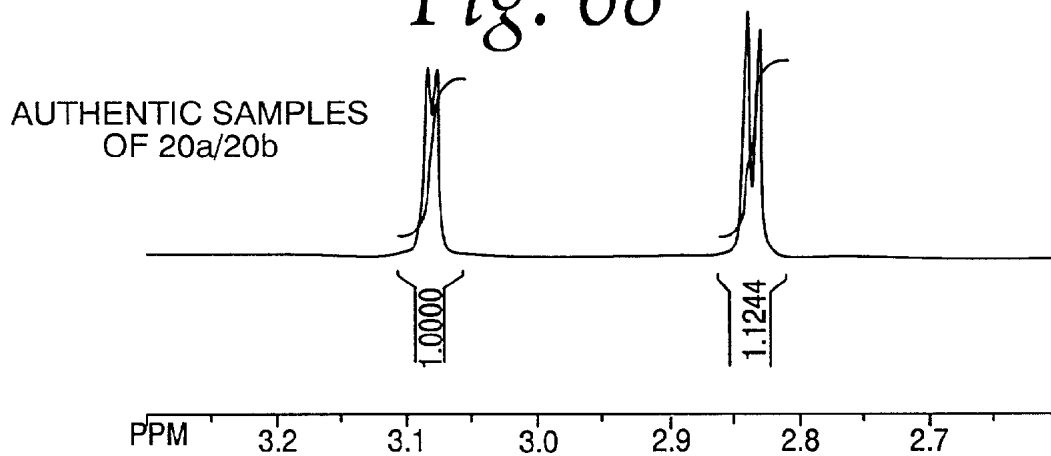


Fig. 69

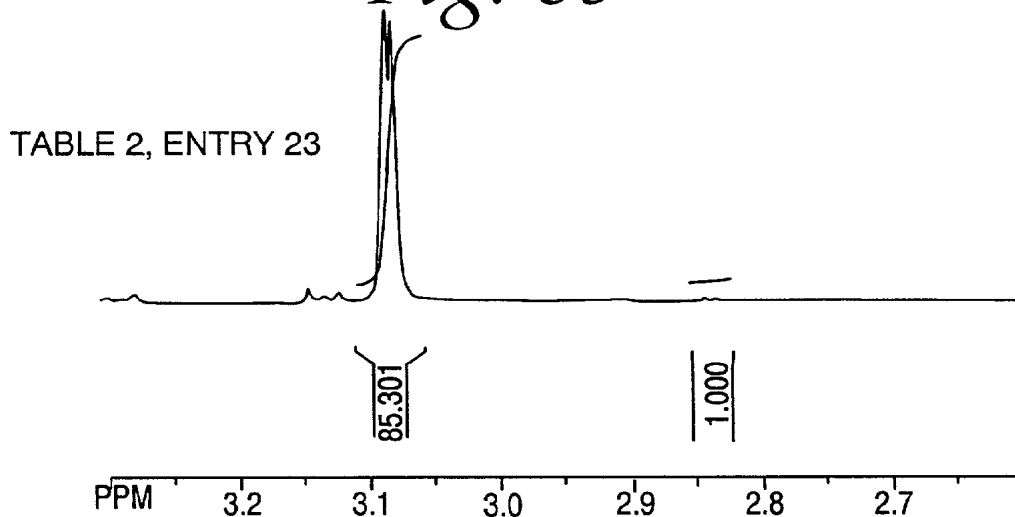
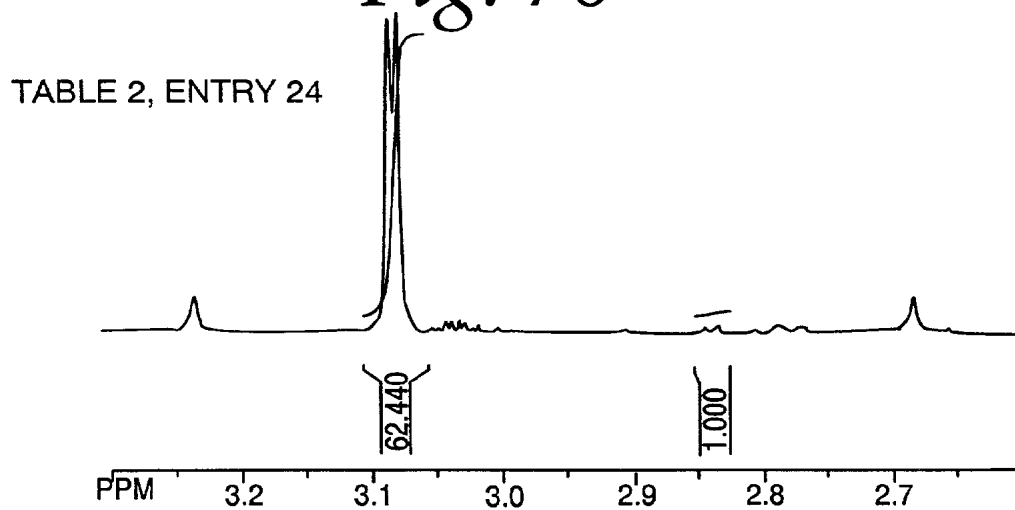


Fig. 70



**METHOD FOR SYNTHESIZING 5BETA,
6BETA-EPOXIDES OF STEROIDS BY A HIGHLY
BETA-SELECTIVE EPOXIDATION OF
DELTA5-UNSATURATED STEROIDS CATALYZED
BY KETONES**

[0001] This application is a continuation-in-part of non-provisional application Ser. No. 09/788,201 filed Feb. 16, 2001, which claims the benefit under 35 U.S.C. 119(e) of U.S. Provisional Application Serial No. 60/183,396 filed Feb. 18, 2000.

TECHNICAL FIELD

[0002] The present invention is directed to the field of synthesizing epoxides of steroids.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003] Steroid epoxides are an important class of oxysterols (oxygenated derivatives of cholesterol) involved in the regulation of cell proliferation and cholesterol homeostasis. They are versatile intermediates for steroid synthesis and useful probes for biochemical studies of enzymes. Steroid epoxides are also useful intermediates for the preparation of other oxysterols. For example, α - and β -epoxides of cholesterol are auto-oxidation products of cholesterol *in vivo*, and both are cytotoxic and mutagenic. The isomeric α - and β -epoxides are hydrolysed by cholesterol 5,6-epoxide hydrolase to cholestane-3 β ,5 α ,6 β -triol which has potent hypocholesterolemic activity. On the other hand, both epoxides inhibit the cholesterol 7 α -hydroxylase which catalyzes the rate-determining step of bile acid synthesis. As 5 α ,6 α -epoxides are readily available via epoxidation of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids with peracids, there have been extensive studies on the biological actions of those epoxides and their derivatives. In contrast, much less is known about the 5 β ,6 β -epoxides and their derivatives because they are difficult to obtain in high selectivity. More importantly, the 5 β ,6 β -epoxy functionality is found in a number of naturally occurring steroids of antitumor activities, e.g., jaborosalactone A, withaferin A, and withanolide D.

[0004] Common organic oxidants such as 3-chloroperoxybenzoic acid (mCPBA) generally give α -epoxides as the major products for epoxidation of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids and show poor selectivities for epoxidation of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids except epi-cholesterol. This is because peracid epoxidation follows a concerted pathway via spiro transition states (α -TS and β -TS (TS=transition state); see FIG. 1). The β -TS suffers from steric interactions between the peracid and the C(10) angular methyl group for epoxidation of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids, while both the β -TS and the α -TS encounter similar steric hindrance for epoxidation of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids. Dioxiranes are new-generation reagents for oxidation under mild and neutral conditions. Unfortunately, poor selectivities were reported in epoxidation of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids by either isolated or *in situ* generated dioxiranes. While dioxiranes also epoxidize olefins through a spiro TS, their steric environment is different from that of peracids. To minimize steric interactions, dioxiranes prefer to approach the C(5)=C(6) double bond of Δ^5 -steroids from the less-substituted side, i.e., away from the C(10)-angular methyl group and the C-ring of steroids (FIG. 1). Therefore, it is the potential steric interactions between the α -substituents of dioxiranes

and the 3 α and 4 β substituents of steroids that determine the facial selectivity of epoxidation.

[0005] Yang et al., in U.S. Pat. No. 5,763,623 and in J. Org. Chem., 1998, vol. 63 pages 8952-8956, disclose the epoxidation of unfunctionalized olefins using various ketones. These references do not teach or suggest the epoxidation of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids.

[0006] Cicala, G., et al., J. Org. Chem., 1982, vol. 47, pages 2670-2673, disclose the epoxidation of a Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid that is not a 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid, and in which the ketone catalyst is acetone.

[0007] Marples, B. A., et al. Tetrahedron Lett., 1991, vol. 32, pages 533-536, disclose the epoxidation reactions of four Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids that are not 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids, and using a variety of ketones. In these reactions either no epoxide was observed, or the β/α -epoxide ratio was about 1:1.

[0008] Bovicelli, P., et al., J. Org. Chem., 1992, vol. 57, pages 2182-2184, disclose the epoxidation of a Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid that is not a 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid, and using dimethyldioxirane. The β/α -epoxide ratio was about 3:1.

[0009] Boehlow, T. R., et al., Tetrahedron Lett., 1998, vol. 39, pages 1839-1842, disclose the epoxidation of a Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid that is not a 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid, and using a variety of ketone catalysts.

[0010] Shi, Y., in PCT Publication No. WO 01/12616 A1, Feb. 22, 2001, discloses an epoxidation method combining an olefin substrate, a ketone catalyst, a nitrile compound, and hydrogen peroxide.

[0011] Shi, Y., in PCT Publication No. WO 98/15544, Apr. 16, 1998, discloses the use of a chiral ketal and an oxidizing agent with an olefin to generate an epoxide with high enantioselectivity.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0012] In accordance with the invention, a method is provided for producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids using certain ketones as the catalyst along with an oxidizing agent, or by using certain dioxiranes. In another aspect of the invention, a method is provided for producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3 α -position by an epoxidation reaction using a ketone along with an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides, or using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides.

[0013] A whole range of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids, bearing different functional groups such as hydroxy, carbonyl, acetyl or ketal group, as well as different side chains, are converted to the corresponding synthetically and biologically interesting 5 β ,6 β -epoxides with excellent β -selectivities and high yields.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0014] FIG. 1 is a diagrammatic representation of the general epoxidation reaction between Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids and mCPBA or dioxirane;

[0015] FIG. 2 is a listing of chemical structures corresponding to ketones 1-4 and steroids 5-20;

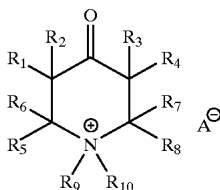
[0016] FIG. 3 is a diagrammatic representation of the epoxidation reaction of the present invention; and

[0017] FIGS. 4-70 are ^1H NMR spectra of 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids and 5 α ,6 α -epoxides of steroids including those epoxides of steroids synthesized as products by the method of the present invention and purified epoxides of steroids used as comparative control standards (referred to as "authentic samples").

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0018] The present invention provides highly β -selective epoxidation of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids catalyzed by ketones or mediated by dioxiranes. More specifically, the present invention demonstrates that high β -selectivity can be achieved by increasing the steric size of either the α -substituents of dioxiranes or the 3 α substituents of Δ^5 -steroids. In some embodiments of the invention, the epoxidation reaction can provide said epoxides in at least about 5:1 β/α -epoxide ratio.

[0019] In one aspect of the invention, a method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids comprises an epoxidation reaction using a ketone and an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides, wherein the ketone is selected from compounds of generic formula I,



[0020] in which R_1 or R_4 in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0021] R_2 or R_3 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0022] R_5 , R_6 , R_7 or R_8 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

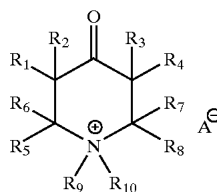
[0023] R_9 or R_{10} in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

[0024] A in formula (I) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆.

[0025] In another aspect of the invention, a method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3 α -position comprises an epoxidation reaction using a ketone and an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides. The substituent at the 3 α -position can be selected from OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_nOR (where n=1, 2 or 3, R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_mSO_nR (where n=1, 2 or 3; m=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), OSO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OPO_nR (where n=2 or 3; R=alkyl or aryl), NR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CONR₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁SO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R_1 =H, alkyl or aryl, R_2 =alkyl or aryl), NPhth (Phth=phthaloyl group), NR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 , or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), SiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 , or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), SO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), SCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, NO₂, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl).

[0026] Further in accordance with this aspect of the invention, the Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid having a substituent at the 3 α -position can be selected from the group consisting of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a ketal derivative of ketone group or a thioketal derivative of ketone group at the 3-position.

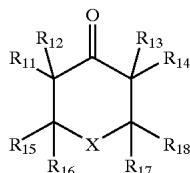
[0027] Further in accordance with this aspect of the invention, the ketone used in the epoxidation reaction can be selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula II, III, IV, and V wherein



[0028] R_1 , R_2 , R_3 , or R_4 in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0029] R_5 , R_6 , R_7 , R_8 , R_9 or R_{10} in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

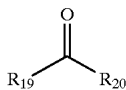
[0030] A in formula (ii) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;



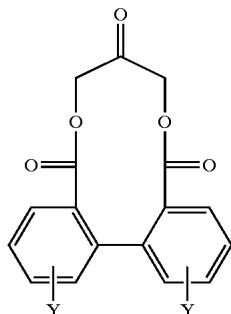
[0031] X in formula (III) is selected from $(CR_1R_2)_n$ (where $n=1, 2, 3, 4, \text{ or } 5$; R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), O, S, SO, SO_2 , and NR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$);

[0032] $R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{13}, \text{ or } R_{14}$ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOOR (where $R=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $OCOR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), and halogen;

[0033] $R_{15}, R_{16}, R_{17}, \text{ or } R_{18}$ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $CONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$);



[0034] R_{19} or R_{20} in formula (IV) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2NR_3COOR_4$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$, $R_4=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2NR_3COR_4$ (where R_1, R_2, R_3 or $R_4=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $CR_1R_2NR_3SO_2R_4$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_4=\text{alkyl or aryl}$); and

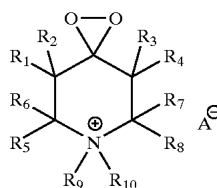


[0035] Y in formula (V) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO_2 , CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where $R=H$ or alkyl), OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSO_2R (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), SO_2R (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), SO_3R (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), SOON

III

R_1R_2 (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), NR_1SOOR_2 (where $R_1=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_2=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), NR_1SOR_2 (where $R_1=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_2=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2OR_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1(OR_2)_2$ (where $R_1=H$ or alkyl; $R_2=\text{alkyl}$), $CF_3, CF_2CF_3, OTf, OTs, OCOR$ (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$).

[0036] In yet another aspect of the invention, a method of producing mostly 5,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids comprises an epoxidation reaction using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides, wherein said dioxirane is selected from compounds of generic formula VI,



VI

IV

[0037] R_1 or R_4 in formula (VI) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOOR (where $R=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $OCOOCH_2R$ (where $R=\text{aryl}$), $OCOR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), and halogen;

[0038] R_2 or R_3 in formula (VI) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOOR (where $R=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $OCOOCH_2R$ (where $R=\text{aryl}$), $OCOR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), and halogen;

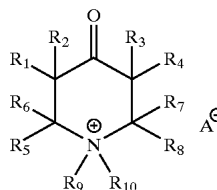
[0039] R_5, R_6, R_7 or R_8 in formula (VI) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $CONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$);

[0040] R_9 or R_{10} in formula (VI) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

V

[0041] A in formula (VI) is selected from halogen, OTf, $BF_4, OAc, NO_3, BPh_4, PF_6,$ and SbF_6 .

[0042] The dioxirane can be generated in situ from a ketone and an oxidizing agent selected from potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids, wherein said ketone is selected from compounds of generic formula I,



I

[0043] R_1 or R_4 in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0044] R_2 or R_3 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0045] R_5 , R_6 , R_7 or R_8 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

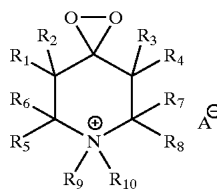
[0046] R_9 or R_{10} in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

[0047] A in formula (I) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆.

[0048] In yet another aspect of the invention, a method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3 α -position comprises an epoxidation reaction using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides. In accordance with this aspect of the invention, the substituent at the 3 α -position can be selected from OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_nOR (where n=1, 2 or 3, R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_mSO_nR (where n=1, 2 or 3; m=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), OSO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OPO_nR (where n=2 or 3; R=alkyl or aryl), NR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CONR₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁SO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R_1 =H, alkyl or aryl, R_2 =alkyl or aryl), NPhth (Phth=phthaloyl group), ⁺NR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 , or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), SiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 , or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), SO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), SCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, NO₂, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl).

[0049] Further in accordance with this aspect of the invention, the Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid having a substituent at the 3 α -position can be selected from the group consisting of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a ketal derivative of a ketone group or a thioketal derivative of a ketone group at the 3-position.

[0050] Further in accordance with this aspect of the invention, the dioxirane can be selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula VII, VIII, IX and X.

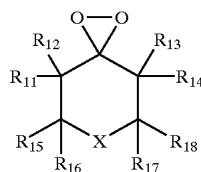


VII

[0051] R_1 , R_2 , R_3 , or R_4 in formula (VII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0052] R_5 , R_6 , R_7 , R_8 , R_9 or R_{10} , in formula (VII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

[0053] A in formula (VII) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

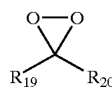


VIII

[0054] X in formula (VIII) is selected from (CR₁R₂)_n, (where n=1, 2, 3, 4, or 5; R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), O, S, SO, SO₂, and NR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl);

[0055] R_{11} , R_{12} , R_{13} , or R_{14} in formula (VIII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

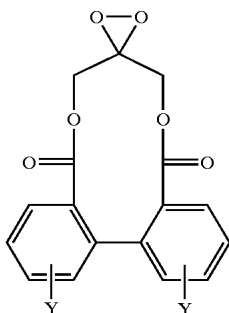
[0056] R_{15} , R_{16} , R_{17} , or R_{18} in formula (VIII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);



IX

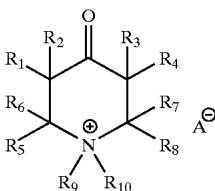
[0057] R_{19} or R_{20} in formula (IX) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, CR₁R₂OCOR₃ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂OCOOR₃ (where R_1 or R_2 =H,

alkyl or aryl; R_3 =alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3COOR_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl, R_4 =alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3COR_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 , R_3 or R_4 =H, alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3SO_2R_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl; R_4 =alkyl or aryl); and



[0058] Y in formula (X) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO_2 , CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSO_2R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO_2R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO_3R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), $SOONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), NR_1SOOR_2 (where R_1 =H, alkyl or aryl; R_2 =alkyl or aryl), NR_1SOR_2 (where R_1 =H, alkyl or aryl; R_2 =alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2OR_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), $CR_1(OR_2)_2$ (where R_1 =H or alkyl; R_2 =alkyl), CF_3 , CF_2CF_3 , OTf, OTs, OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl).

[0059] The dioxirane can be generated in situ from a ketone and an oxidizing agent selected from potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids. In such embodiments of the invention, the ketone can be selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula II, III, IV, and V,

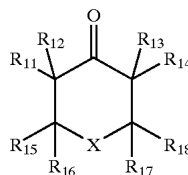


[0060] R_1 , R_2 , R_3 , or R_4 in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), $OCOOCH_2R$ (where R=aryl), $OCONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0061] R_5 , R_6 , R_7 , R_8 , R_9 or R_{10} in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and $CONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

[0062] A in formula (II) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF_4 , OAc, NO_3 , BPh_4 , PF_6 , and SbF_6 ;

X



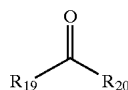
III

[0063] X in formula (III) is selected from $(CR_1R_2)_n$ (where $n=1, 2, 3, 4$, or 5 ; R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), O, S, SO, SO_2 , and NR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl);

[0064] R_{11} , R_{12} , R_{13} , or R_{14} in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), $OCOOCH_2R$ (where R=aryl), $OCONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl), $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

[0065] R_{15} , R_{16} , R_{17} , or R_{18} in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and $CONR_1R_2$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

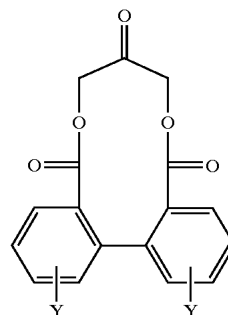
IV



[0066] R_{19} or R_{20} in formula (IV) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl; R_3 =alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3COOR_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl, R_4 =alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3COR_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 , R_3 or R_4 =H, alkyl or aryl), $CR_1R_2NR_3SO_2R_4$ (where R_1 , R_2 or R_3 =H, alkyl or aryl; R_4 =alkyl or aryl); and

II

V

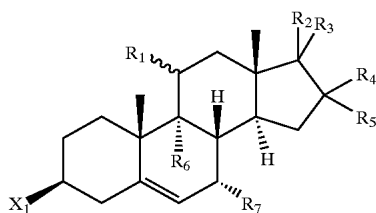


[0067] Y in formula (V) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO_2 , CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSO_2R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO_2R (where R=H,

alkyl or aryl), SO_3R (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), SOON R_1R_2 (where R_1 or $\text{R}_2=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), NR_1SOOR_2 (where $\text{R}_1=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl; $\text{R}_2=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), NR_1SOR_2 (where $\text{R}_1=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl; $\text{R}_2=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{CR}_1\text{R}_2\text{OR}_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or $\text{R}_3=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), $\text{CR}_1(\text{OR}_2)_2$ (where $\text{R}_1=\text{H}$ or alkyl; $\text{R}_2=\text{alkyl}$), CF_3 , CF_2CF_3 , OTf , OTs , OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), and $\text{OSiR}_1\text{R}_2\text{R}_3$ (where R_1 , R_2 or $\text{R}_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl).

[0068] Epoxidation reactions in accordance with the invention and using dioxiranes can be carried out in a solvent selected from acetonitrile, dimethoxymethane, acetone, dioxane, dimethoxyethane, tetrahydrofuran, dichloromethane, chloroform, benzene, toluene, diethylether, water and mixtures thereof.

[0069] In accordance with one embodiment of the invention herein, a method of producing mostly $5\beta,6\beta$ -epoxides of steroids comprises epoxidation reactions of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids of generic formula XI catalyzed by ketones of generic formula XII, wherein



XI

[0070] X_1 in formula (XI) is selected from H, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCH_2OCH_3 , OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), halogen, CN, alkyl, aryl, and COOR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl);

[0071] R_1 in formula (XI) is selected from H, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), OCH_2OCH_3 , halogen, CF_3 , and CF_2CF_3 ;

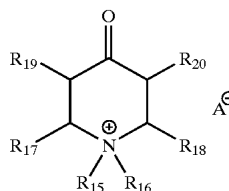
[0072] R_2 and R_3 in formula (XI) are each selected from the group consisting of H, alkyl, aryl, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), COR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$), COCH_2OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), COCH_2OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), COCH_2F , COOR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), $\text{C}(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})\text{R}$ (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$), $\text{C}(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})\text{CH}_2\text{OR}$ (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), $\text{C}(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})\text{CH}_2\text{OCOR}$ (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), and $\text{C}(\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O})\text{CH}_2\text{F}$; or, are selected from the group consisting of O, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$, and $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$;

[0073] R_4 in formula (XI) is selected from H, C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), and $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl);

[0074] R_5 in formula (XI) is selected from H, C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), and $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl);

[0075] R_6 in formula (XI) is selected from H, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), and OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl);

[0076] R_7 in formula (XI) is selected from H, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), and OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl);



XII

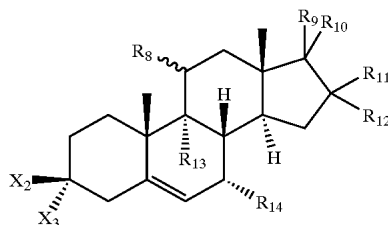
[0077] R_{15} and R_{16} in formula (XII) are each selected from alkyl and aryl;

[0078] R_{17} and R_{18} in formula (XII) are each selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), and CONR_1R_2 (where R_1 or $\text{R}_2=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl);

[0079] R_{19} and R_{20} in formula (XII) are each selected from C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and halogen; and

[0080] A in formula (XII) is selected from OTf , BF_4 , OAc , NO_3 , BPh_4 , PF_6 , and SbF_6 .

[0081] In another embodiment of the instant invention, a method of producing mostly $5\beta,6\beta$ -epoxides of steroids comprises epoxidation reactions of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids of generic formula XIII catalyzed by ketones of generic formula XIV, XV, XVI, and XVII, wherein



XIII

[0082] X_2 in formula (XIII) is selected from the group consisting of H, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCH_2OCH_3 , OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), halogen, CN, alkyl, aryl, and COOR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$, alkyl or aryl), and,

[0083] X_3 in formula (XIII) is selected from the group consisting of OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCH_2OCH_3 , OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), halogen, CN, NO_2 , alkyl, and aryl; or,

[0084] X_2 and X_3 in formula (XIII) are selected from the group consisting of O, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$, and $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$;

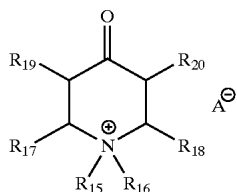
[0085] R_8 in formula (XIII) is selected from H, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), OCH_2OCH_3 , halogen, CF_3 , and CF_2CF_3 ;

[0086] R_9 and R_{10} in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, alkyl, aryl, halogen, OR (where $\text{R}=\text{H}$ or alkyl), OCOR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), $\text{OSiR}'_1\text{R}'_2\text{R}'_3$ (where R'_1 , R'_2 or $\text{R}'_3=\text{alkyl}$ or aryl), COR (where $\text{R}=\text{alkyl}$),

COCH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), COCH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), COCH₂F, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)R (where R=alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂F; or R₉ and R₁₀ in formula (XIII) are selected from the group consisting of O, OCH₂CH₂O, and OCH₂CH₂CH₂O;

[0087] R₁₁ and R₁₂ in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, C₁-C₄ alkyl halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or aryl);

[0088] R₁₃ and R₁₄ in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);



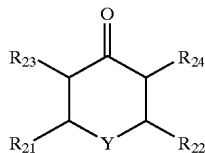
XIV

[0089] R₁₅ or R₁₆ in formula (XIV) is selected from alkyl and aryl;

[0090] R₁₇ or R₁₈ in formula (XIV) is selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

[0091] R₁₉ or R₂₀ in formula (XIV) is selected from H, C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and halogen; and

[0092] A in formula (XIV) is selected from OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

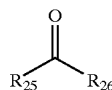


XV

[0093] Y in formula (XV) is selected from CH₂, O, S, SO, SO₂, and NR (where R=H or alkyl);

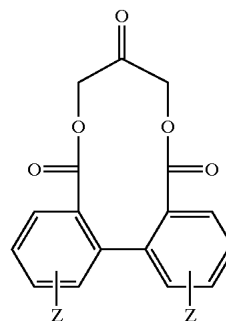
[0094] R₂₁ or R₂₂ in formula (XV) is selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

[0095] R₂₃ or R₂₄ in formula (XV) is selected from H, halogen, C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);



XVI

[0096] R₂₅ or R₂₆ in formula (XVI) is selected from C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, CH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl); and



XVII

[0097] Z in formula (XVII) is selected from H, C₁-C₄ alkyl, aryl, NO₂, CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=alkyl), CH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), CH(OR)₂ (where R=alkyl), CF₃, CF₂CF₃, OTf, OTs, OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or

[0098] In each of the disclosed embodiments, C₁-C₄ alkyl can be selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, normal-propyl, iso-propyl, normal-butyl, iso-butyl, sec-butyl, and tert-butyl; and said aryl can be selected from the group consisting of phenyl, substituted phenyl, naphthyl, and substituted naphthyl groups. The epoxidation reactions can be carried out in a homogeneous solvent system selected from the group consisting of dimethoxymethane-acetonitrile-water, acetonitrile-water, acetone-water, dioxane-water, dimethoxyethane-water, and tetrahydrofuran-water, and mixtures thereof. Alternatively, the epoxidation reactions can be carried out in a biphasic solvent system selected from the group consisting of dichloromethane-water, chloroform-water, benzene-water, toluene-water, dimethoxymethane-water, or diethylether-water and mixtures thereof.

[0099] Suitable oxidation agents for the epoxidation reactions of the instant invention include potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

[0100] The epoxidation reactions of the instant invention catalyzed by a ketone can be carried out at a temperature within the range from about -10° C. to about 40° C. Direct dioxirane epoxidation reactions of the instant invention can be carried out at a temperature within the range of from about -40° C. to about 40° C. Some epoxidation reactions of the instant invention can be carried out at about room temperature.

[0101] The epoxidation reactions of the instant invention can be carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0. Some such epoxidation reactions can be carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 7.5. The pH can be controlled by using a pH-stat machine such as is known in the art, or a buffer. Suitable buffers include solutions of sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium borate, sodium hydrogenphosphate, sodium dihydrogenphosphate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydrogenphosphate, potassium dihydrogenphosphate, potassium bicarbonate, potassium carbonate and potassium hydroxide.

[0102] We first examined four efficient ketone catalysts **1-4** for the in situ epoxidation of cholesterol **5** (FIG. 2). A modified homogeneous solvent system (a mixture of DMM/CH₃CN/H₂O in a 3:1:2 ratio) was used to increase the solubility of steroid substrates (FIG. 3). The results are summarized in Table 1. The ratio of β/α -epoxides was determined by integration of C(6) proton signals in the ¹H NMR spectra of the crude residues (δ 3.00-3.15 ppm for β -epoxides and 67 2.75-2.95 ppm for α -epoxides). While ketones **1-3** exhibited poor β -selectivities (β/α epoxide ratio ca. 1:1; entries 1-3), ketone **4** with the most bulky α -substituent gave the best β -selectivity (β/α epoxide ratio 15.1:1; entry 4). A variety of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids **6-10** (FIG. 2) were then subjected to the in situ epoxidation conditions with 20-30 mol % of ketone **4**. The results revealed that ketone **4** generally gave high β -selectivities (β/α epoxide ratio >8.5:1) and high yields (entries 4-10). It is interesting to note that Δ^5 -steroids with a free C3-OH group were directly converted to their 5 β ,6 β -epoxides with high selectivity and yields (entries 4, 5, and 7-9). (Note: The free 3-OH group of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids is not compatible with some metal-based oxidants in the epoxidation reactions.) Meanwhile, a wide range of functional groups such as hydroxyl, methoxyl, methoxymethyl ether, and carbonyl group were well tolerated under the mild and neutral reaction conditions (room temperature, pH 7-7.5).

[0103] Epoxidation reactions of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids **11-20** were also carried out with ketone catalysts **1-4** (FIG. 2) and the ketone catalyst acetone. For epicholesterol **11** with a 3 α -OH group, the epoxidation reactions catalyzed by ketones **1** and **4** gave much higher selectivities than those by ketones **2** and **3** (Table 2; entries 1-4) and acetone (see Table 3). This is because ketones **1** and **4** have larger α -substituents. For substrates with 3 α -substituents larger than the OH group (**12-20**), the in situ epoxidation catalyzed by ketones **1-4** and acetone produced almost single 5 β ,6 β -isomers (Table 2, β/α ratio>49:1, entries 5-24; Table 3). Substrates with 3-ketal group are of particular interest since highly α -selective epoxidation with trifluoroacetic acid has been reported for this class of Δ^5 -steroids. Epoxidation of substrates **13-20** with mCPBA gave ca. 1:1 ratio of β/α -epoxides. The epoxidation reactions catalyzed by ketone **2** were highly efficient as only 5 mol % of the catalyst was needed even on a preparative scale. For example, a multi-gram scale (10 mmol) epoxidation of substrate **18** catalyzed by ketone **2** (5 mol %) provided almost a single

β -epoxide (β/α -epoxide ratio>99:1) in 88% yield. These results clearly demonstrate the power of ketone-catalyzed epoxidation method.

[0104] In summary, we have developed a general, efficient and environmentally friendly method for highly β -selective epoxidation of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids. With this method in hand, a library of 5 β ,6 β -epoxides and their derivatives can be readily constructed and then screened for potential ligands that bind to orphan nuclear receptors. This is crucial for elucidating the biological functions of those receptors as well as for drug discovery.

General Experimental

[0105] The ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra (FIGS. 4-70) were recorded in deuteriochloroform (CDCl₃) with tetramethylsilane (TMS) as internal standard at ambient temperature on a Bruker Avance DPX 300 or 500 Fourier Transform Spectrometer. Infrared absorption spectra were recorded as a solution in CH₂Cl₂ on a Bio-Rad FTS 165 Fourier Transform Spectrophotometer. Mass spectra were recorded with a Finnigan MAT 95 mass spectrometer for both low resolution and high resolution mass spectra.

[0106] Substrates **5, 6, 8, 9**, ketone **1**, tetrahydrothiopyran-4-one (precursor of ketone **2**), and Oxone® were purchased from Aldrich or Acros Chemical Co. and used without further purification. Substrates **7, 10, 11, 12, 13-20**, and ketones **3, 4** were prepared according to the literature procedures.

Typical Procedure for in situ Epoxidation Reactions

[0107] Epoxidation of Cholesterol **5** Catalyzed by Ketone **4** (Table 1, Entry 4). To a solution of cholesterol **5** (116 mg 0.3 mmol) and ketone **4** (41 mg, 0.09 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (DMM, 9 mL) and acetonitrile (CH₃CN, 3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂-EDTA solution (6 mL, 4 \times 10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over the reaction period. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. The ratio of α/β -epoxides was determined by ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue which was obtained after removal of the solvent under reduced pressure. Pure products were obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (99 mg, 82% yield).

[0108] Epoxidation of Substrate **13** Catalyzed by Ketone **2** (Table 2, Entry 8). To a solution of substrate **13** (112 mg 0.3 mmol) and tetrahydrothiopyran-4-one (1.7 mg, 0.015 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (DMM, 9 mL) and acetonitrile (CH₃CN, 3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂. EDTA solution (6 mL, 4 \times 10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 1.5 h. The reaction was complete in 2 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers

were dried over anhydrous MgSO_4 and filtered through a pad of silica gel. The ratio of α/β -epoxides was determined by ^1H NMR analysis of the crude residue which was obtained after removal of the solvent under reduced pressure. Pure epoxide was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (110 mg, 94% yield).

Procedure for Preparative Scale Epoxidation Reactions

[0109] Epoxidation of Substrate **9** Catalyzed by Ketone **4** (Table 1, Entry 9). To a solution of substrate **9** (3.17 g 10 mmol) and ketone **4** (1.37 g, 3 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (DMM, 300 mL) and acetonitrile (CH_3CN , 100 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na_2EDTA solution (200 mL, 4×10^{-4} M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (30.74 g, 50 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (13.02 g, 155 mmol) over a period of 8 h. The reaction was complete in 10 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO_4 and filtered through a pad of silica gel. The ratio of α/β -epoxides was determined by ^1H NMR analysis of the crude residue which was obtained after removal of the solvent under reduced pressure. Pure products were obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (2.86 g, 86% yield).

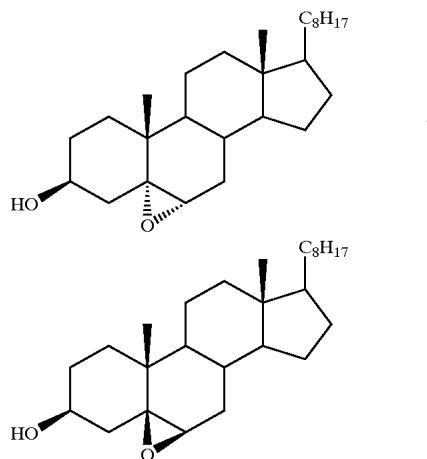
[0110] Epoxidation of Substrate **18** Catalyzed by Ketone **2** (Table 2, Entry 19). To a solution of substrate **18** (4.03 g 10 mmol) and tetrahydrothiopyran-4-one (58 mg, 0.5 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (DMM, 300 mL) and acetonitrile (CH_3CN , 100 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na_2EDTA solution (200 mL, 4×10^{-4} M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (30.74 mg, 50 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (13.02 g, 155 mmol) over a period of 4 h. The reaction was complete in 5 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO_4 and filtered through a pad of silica gel. The ratio of α/β -epoxides was determined by ^1H NMR analysis of the crude residue which was obtained after removal of the solvent under reduced pressure. Pure epoxide was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (3.68 g, 88% yield).

General Procedure for Epoxidation of Δ^5 -Unsaturated Steroids with mCPBA

[0111] Sodium bicarbonate (0.4 mmol) and mCPBA (0.2 mmol) were added to a solution of substrate (0.1 mmol) in CH_2Cl_2 (3 ml). The resulting mixture was stirred at room temperature for 2 h and quenched with a solution of saturated aqueous $\text{Na}_2\text{S}_2\text{O}_3$. The reaction mixture was diluted with ethyl acetate and washed with a solution of saturated aqueous NaHCO_3 and brine. The organic layer was dried over anhydrous MgSO_4 and filtered through a pad of silica gel. The product analysis was performed as above.

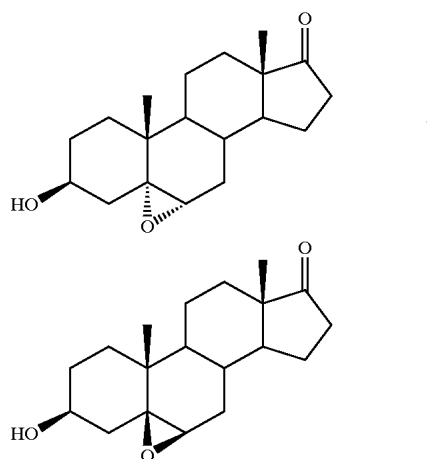
Characterization Data for Epoxides

[0112]



[0113] 5a and 5b (as a mixture of 1:15.1 ratio; Table 1, Entry 4):

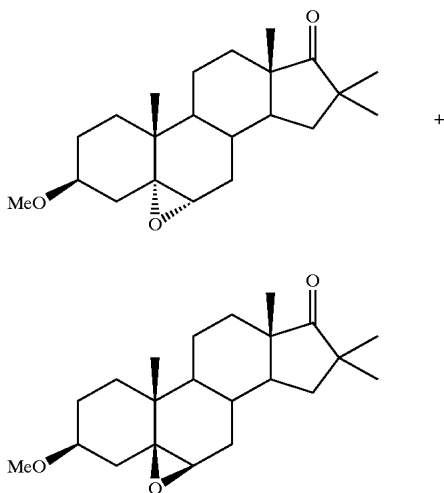
[0114] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 83.94-3.86 (m, 1/16.1 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.74-3.64 (m, 15.1/16.1 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.06 (d, J=2.2 Hz, 15.1/16.1 \times 1H, 6 α -H), 2.90 (d, J=4.3 Hz, 1/16.1 \times 1H, 6 β -H), 1.06 (s, 1/16.1 \times 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.99 (s, 15.1/16.1 \times 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.89 (d, J=6.6 Hz, 15.1/16.1 \times 3H, 21- CH_3), 0.86 (d, J=6.6 Hz, 15.1/16.1 \times 6H, 26- CH_3 and 27 CH_3), 0.64 (s, 15.1/16.1 \times 3H, 18- CH_3), 0.61 (s, 1/16.1 \times 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR of 5b (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 69.32, 63.76, 63.04, 56.21, 56.20, 51.32, 42.27, 42.18, 39.82, 39.48, 37.22, 36.12, 35.71, 34.84, 32.59, 30.97, 29.76, 28.14, 27.99, 24.18, 23.80, 22.81, 22.55, 21.98, 18.66, 17.05, 11.75.



[0115] 6a and 6b (as a mixture of 1:10.4 ratio; Table 1, Entry 5):

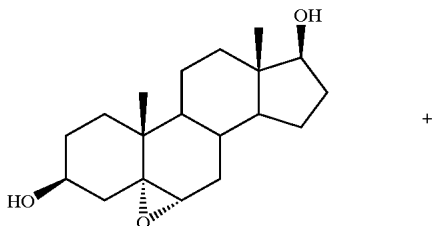
[0116] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 83.95-3.85 (m, 1/11.4 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.76-3.65 (m, 10.4/11.4 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.13

(d, $J=2.5$ Hz, 10.4/11.4×1H, 6 α -H), 2.95 (d, $J=4.3$ Hz, 1/11.4×1H, 6 β -H), 1.09 (s, 1/11.4×3H, 19-CH₃), 1.03 (s, 10.4/11.4×3H, 19-CH₃), 0.85 (s, 10.4/11.4×3H, 18-CH₃), 0.82 (s, 1/11.4×3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR of 6b (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 220.97, 69.21, 63.32, 63.05, 51.47, 51.18, 47.49, 42.05, 37.24, 35.74, 35.10, 31.51, 31.46, 30.93, 29.47, 21.73, 21.28, 17.08, 13.47.

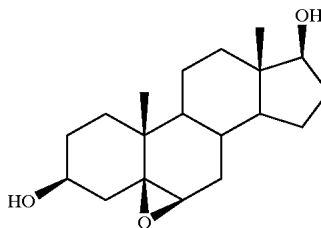


[0117] 7a and 7b (as a mixture of 1:9; Table 1, Entry 6):

[0118] ¹H NMR (500 MHz, CDCl₃) δ =3.45-3.38 (m, 1/10×1H, 3 α -H), 3.34 (s, 3H, OCH₃), 3.28-3.22 (m, 9/10×1H, 3 α -H), 3.11 (d, $J=2.4$ Hz, 9/10×1H, 6 α -H), 2.95 (d, $J=4.4$ Hz, 1/10×1H, 6 β -H), 1.18 (s, 9/10×3H, 19-CH₃), 1.17 (s, 1/10×3H, 19-CH₃), 1.02 (s, 9/10×6H, 20-CH₃ and 21-CH₃), 0.87 (s, 9/10×3H, 18-CH₃), 0.85 (s, 1/10×3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR of 9b (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ =225.00, 77.70, 63.15, 63.04, 55.71, 51.37, 48.52, 48.01, 45.15, 38.63, 37.82, 36.75, 35.54, 32.30, 31.66, 28.93, 27.27, 27.02, 25.95, 21.08, 17.13, 14.08; IR (CH₂Cl₂) 1730 cm⁻¹; LRMS (EI, 20 eV) m/z 346 (100), 314 (15), 123 (31), 108 (22); HRMS (EI, 20 eV) calcd for C₂₂H₃₄O₃ (M⁺): 346.2508, found: 346.2508; Anal. Calcd for C₂₂H₃₄O₃: C, 76.26; H, 9.89; Found: C, 76.14; H, 9.90.

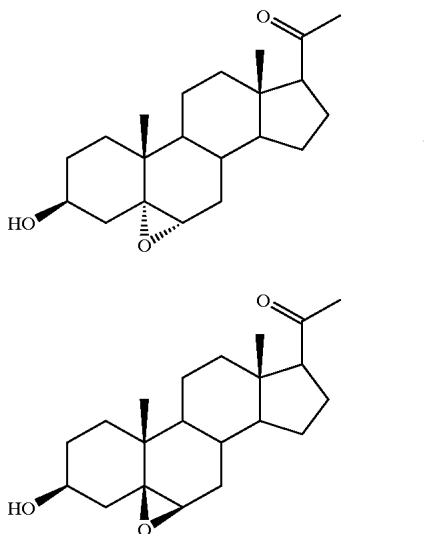


-continued



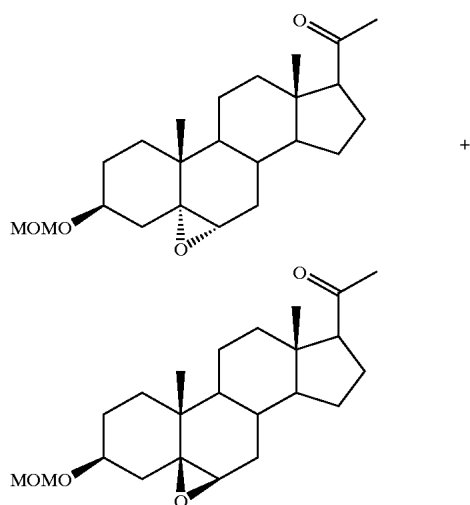
[0119] 8a and 8b (as a mixture of 1:8.8 ratio; Table 1, Entry 7):

[0120] ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 3.95-3.84 (m, 1/9.8×1H, 3 α -H), 3.74-3.64 (m, 8.8/9.8×1H, 3 α -H), 3.60 (t, $J=8.5$ Hz, 1H, 17 α -H), 3.07 (d, $J=2.4$ Hz, 8.8/9.8×1H, 6 α -H), 2.91 (d, $J=4.4$ Hz, 1/9.8×1H, 6 β -H), 1.07 (s, 1/9.8×3H, 19-CH₃), 1.01 (s, 8.8/9.8×3H, 19-CH₃), 0.72 (s, 8.8/9.8×3H, 18-CH₃), 0.69 (s, 1/9.8×3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR of 8b (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 81.81, 69.31, 63.51, 63.01, 51.48, 50.74, 42.67, 42.15, 37.25, 36.62, 34.99, 32.19, 30.97, 30.42, 29.81, 23.31, 21.60, 17.12, 10.86.



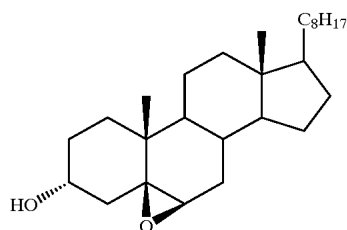
[0121] 9a and 9b (as a mixture of 1:11.6; Table 1, Entry 8):

[0122] ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 3.94-3.87 (m, 1/12.6×1H, 3 α -H), 3.75-3.65 (m, 11.6/12.6×1H, 3 α -H), 3.08 (d, $J=2.3$ Hz, 11.6/12.6×1H, 6 α -H), 2.92 (d, $J=4.4$ Hz, 1/12.6×1H, 6 β -H), 2.11 (s, 11.6/12.6×3H, 21-CH₃), 1.06 (s, 1/12.6×3H, 19-CH₃), 1.00 (s, 11.6/12.6×3H, 19-CH₃), 0.59 (s, 11.6/12.6×3H, 18-CH₃), 0.56 (s, 1/12.6×3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR of 9b (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 209.48, 69.29, 63.67, 63.50, 62.89, 56.33, 51.19, 43.89, 42.12, 38.84, 4.92, 32.51, 31.46, 30.97, 29.76, 24.36, 22.77, 21.96, 17.07, 13.11.



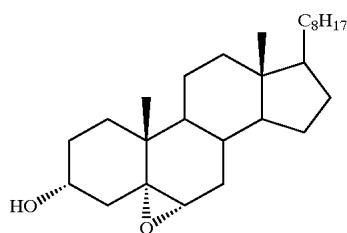
[0123] 10a and 10b (as a mixture of: 18.5; Table 1, Entry 10):

[0124] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.73-4.64 (m, 2H, OCH_2O), 3.83-3.74 (m, 1/9.5 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.65-3.55 (m, 8.5/9.5 \times 1H, 3 α -H), 3.36 (s, 8.5/9.5 \times 3H, OCH_3), 3.35 (s, 1/9.5 \times 3H, OCH_3), 3.08 (d, $J=2.3$ Hz, 8.5/9.5 \times 1H, 6 α -H), 2.91 (d, $J=4.3$ Hz, 1/9.5 \times 1H, 6 α -H), 2.11 (s, 8.5/9.5 \times 3H, 21- CH_3), 1.06 (s, 1/9.5 \times 3H, 19- CH_3), 1.00 (s, 8.5/9.5 \times 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR of **11b** (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 209.35, 94.67, 74.18, 63.67, 63.44, 62.82, 56.33, 55.26, 51.08, 43.88, 39.43, 38.84, 37.07, 35.16, 32.48, 31.45, 29.74, 28.13, 24.35, 22.77, 21.94, 17.07, 13.11; IR (CH_2Cl_2) 1700 cm^{-1} ; EIMS (20 eV) m/z 376 (100), 314 (90), 133 (36), 95 (33); HRMS (EI, 20 eV) calcd for $\text{C}_{23}\text{H}_{36}\text{O}_4$ (M^+): 376.2614, found: 376.2617; Anal. Calcd for $\text{C}_{23}\text{H}_{36}\text{O}_4$: C, 73.37; H, 9.64; Found: C, 73.11; H, 9.68.



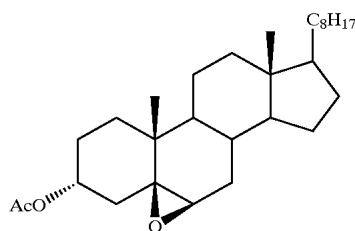
[0125] 11b:

[0126] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.19 (br s, 1H, 3 α -H), 3.07 (d, $J=2.0$ Hz, 1H, 6 α -H), 0.97 (s, 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.89 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 3H, 21- CH_3), 0.86 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 6H, 26- CH_3 and 27- CH_3), 0.64 (s, 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 67.03, 63.70, 61.97, 56.31, 56.20, 50.38, 42.31, 39.87, 39.86, 39.49, 36.14, 35.74, 35.53, 33.19, 32.37, 29.82, 28.40, 28.17, 27.99, 24.18, 23.83, 22.81, 22.55, 21.69, 18.67, 17.00, 11.78.



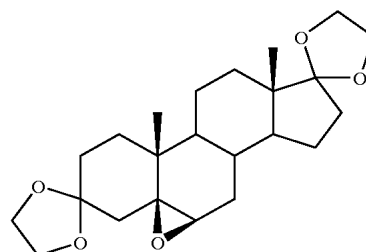
[0127] 11a:

[0128] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.10-4.07 (m, 1H, 3 β -H), 2.87 (d, $J=4.5$ Hz, 1H, 6 β -H), 1.04 (s, 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.89 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 3H, 21- CH_3), 0.86 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 6H, 26- CH_3 and 27- CH_3), 0.61 (s, 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 67.98, 65.43, 57.79, 56.86, 55.84, 42.66, 42.32, 39.49, 39.36, 36.41, 36.13, 35.76, 35.52, 29.62, 28.92, 28.63, 28.59, 28.07, 28.00, 24.02, 23.84, 22.82, 22.56, 20.28, 18.64, 15.34, 11.86.



[0129] 12b:

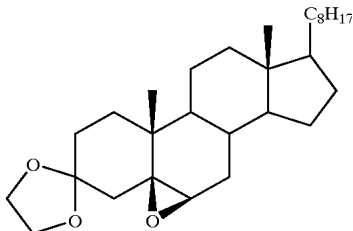
[0130] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 5.12-5.10 (m, 1H, 3 β -H), 3.00 (d, $J=2.0$ Hz, 1H, 6 α -H), 2.04 (s, 3H, CH_3COO), 0.99 (s, 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.89 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 3H, 21- CH_3), 0.86 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 6H, 26- CH_3 and 27- CH_3), 0.65 (s, 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 170.52, 70.50, 63.28, 61.69, 56.33, 56.27, 50.20, 42.34, 39.86, 39.49, 36.63, 36.15, 35.76, 35.43, 33.78, 32.43, 29.81, 28.19, 28.01, 25.47, 24.19, 23.85, 22.82, 22.56, 21.71, 21.34, 18.68, 17.13, 11.78.



[0131] 13b:

[0132] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 3.97-3.79 (m, 8H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.06 (d, $J=2.1$ Hz, 1H, 6 α -H), 1.00 (s, 3H, 19- CH_3), 0.82 (s, 3H, 18- CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 119.12, 109.19, 64.97, 64.33, 64.12, 63.94, 62.90,

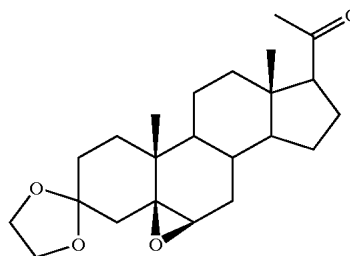
62.76, 49.81, 49.53, 45.50, 41.29, 35.43, 34.97, 33.91, 31.44, 30.64, 30.38, 29.78, 22.44, 21.20, 16.94, 13.96.



[0133] 14b:

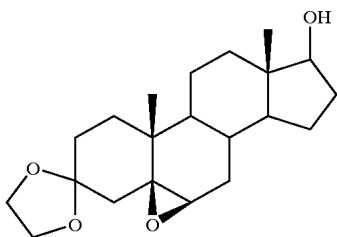
[0134] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 3.97-3.85 (m, 4H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.05 (d, $J=1.9$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 0.99 (s, 3H, 19-CH_3), 0.89 (d, $J=6.7$ Hz, 3H, 21-CH_3), 0.86 (d, $J=6.6$ Hz, 6H, 26-CH_3 and 27-CH_3), 0.64 (s, 3H, 18-CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 109.45, 64.27, 64.09, 63.29, 56.24, 56.15, 49.85, 42.28, 41.46, 39.81, 39.47, 36.11, 35.71, 35.61, 35.01, 32.27, 30.82, 29.67, 28.15, 27.98, 24.16, 23.79, 22.81, 22.54, 21.89, 18.66, 17.06, 11.75.

CDCl_3) δ 171.20, 109.34, 82.64, 64.30, 64.14, 63.09, 63.00, 50.53, 49.94, 42.33, 41.45, 36.79, 35.68, 35.14, 31.85, 30.78, 29.52, 27.43, 23.44, 21.39, 21.15, 17.11, 11.84.



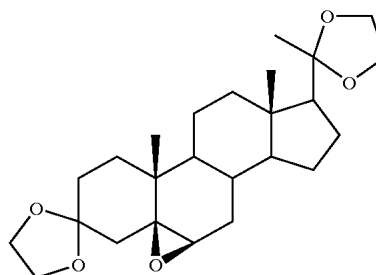
[0139] 17b:

[0140] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 3.95-3.90 (m, 4H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.07 (d, $J=2.1$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 2.11 (s, 3H, 21-CH_3), 1.00 (s, 3H, 19-CH_3), 0.60 (s, 3H, 18-CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 209.41, 109.37, 64.33, 64.16, 63.66, 63.15, 62.95, 56.40, 49.84, 43.92, 41.42, 38.85, 35.71, 35.10, 32.21, 31.47, 30.82, 29.70, 24.36, 22.78, 21.90, 17.09, 13.12.



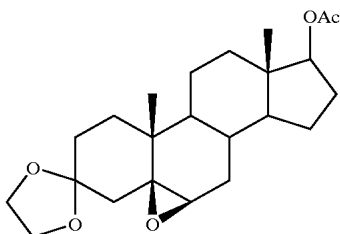
[0135] 15b:

[0136] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 3.97-3.87 (m, 4H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.60 (t, $J=8.5$ Hz, 1H, $17\alpha\text{-H}$), 3.07 (d, $J=2.2$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 1.01 (s, 3H, 19-CH_3), 0.72 (s, 3H, 18-CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 109.41, 81.78, 64.31, 64.14, 63.14, 63.05, 50.79, 50.07, 42.70, 41.45, 36.63, 35.66, 35.17, 31.87, 30.81, 30.45, 29.73, 23.31, 21.53, 17.14, 10.88.



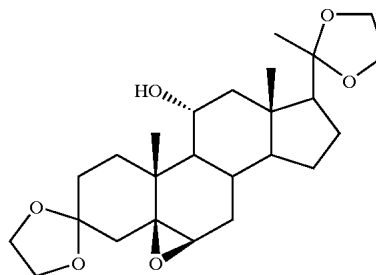
[0141] 18b:

[0142] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.04-3.81 (m, 8H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.06 (d, $J=1.8$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 1.28 (s, 3H, 21-CH_3), 1.00 (s, 3H, 19-CH_3), 0.74 (s, 3H, 18-CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 111.85, 109.44, 65.16, 64.29, 64.12, 63.26, 63.19, 63.00, 58.21, 56.12, 49.87, 41.75, 9.44, 35.62, 35.06, 32.18, 30.82, 29.22, 24.54, 23.70, 22.90, 21.67, 17.10, 12.76.



[0137] 16b:

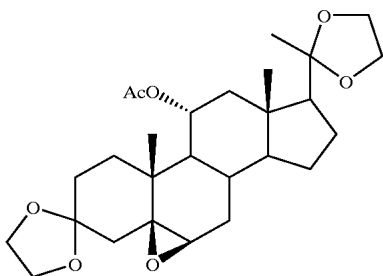
[0138] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.56 (dd, $J=9.0, 7.9$ Hz, 1H, $17\alpha\text{-H}$), 3.95-3.89 (m, 4H, $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.07 (d, $J=2.2$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 2.03 (s, 3H, CH_3COO), 1.00 (s, 3H, 19-CH_3), 0.77 (s, 3H, 18-CH_3); ^{13}C NMR (75.5 MHz,



[0143] 19b:

[0144] ^1H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl_3) δ 4.03-3.81 (m, 9H, $11\beta\text{-H}$ and $\text{OCH}_2\text{CH}_2\text{O}$), 3.08 (d, $J=2.6$ Hz, 1H, $6\alpha\text{-H}$), 1.28

(s, 3H, 21-CH₃), 1.20 (s, 3H, 19-CH₃), 0.76 (s, 3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 111.47, 109.02, 68.68, 64.98, 64.17, 64.04, 63.35, 63.10, 62.90, 57.80, 57.01, 55.22, 50.60, 42.45, 41.81, 37.41, 35.87, 31.40, 30.57, 27.91, 24.40, 23.42, 22.97, 15.55, 13.86.



[0145] 20b:

[0146] ¹H NMR (300 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 5.07 (td, J=10.9, 4.8 Hz, 1H, 11β-H), 3.99-3.83 (m, 8H, OCH₂CH₂O), 3.08 (d, J=2.7 Hz, 1H, 6α-H), 2.01 (s, 3H, CH₃COO), 1.24 (s, 3H, 21-CH₃), 1.02 (s, 3H, 19-CH₃), 0.82 (s, 3H, 18-CH₃); ¹³C NMR (75.5 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 169.76, 111.42, 108.87, 72.38, 64.96, 64.28, 64.17, 63.16, 63.02, 62.69, 57.73, 55.09, 53.57, 45.36, 42.23, 41.86, 37.02, 35.85, 31.56, 30.70, 28.09, 24.46, 23.52, 23.19, 21.87, 16.06, 13.58.

Determination of the Ratio of β/α-epoxides

[0147] The ratio of β/α-epoxides was determined by integration of the C(6) proton signals in the ¹H NMR spectra (300 or 500 MHz) of crude residues (δ 3.00-3.15 ppm for β-epoxides and δ 2.75-2.95 ppm for α-epoxides). The authentic samples of 5a/5b-20a/20b were prepared by epoxidation of substrates **5-20** with mCPBA according to the literature procedure.

EXAMPLES

Example 1

5β,6β-Epoxycholestan-3β-yl (Catalyzed by Ketone **4**)

[0148] To a solution of cholesterol (116 mg 0.3 mmol) and ketone **4** (41 mg, 0.09 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (9 mL) and acetonitrile (3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (6 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over the reaction period. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the product showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was 15.1:1. Pure products were obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (99 mg, 82% yield).

Example 2

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone **1**)

[0149] To a solution of 5-androstene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal (112 mg 0.3 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (9

mL) and acetonitrile (3 mL) was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (6 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M), the resulting solution was cooled to 0-1° C., followed by addition of 1,1,1-trifluoroacetone (0.54 mL, 6 mmol). To this solution was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 0.5 h. The reaction was complete in 1 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was >99:1. 5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (101 mg, 86% yield).

Example 3

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone **2**)

[0150] To a solution of 5-androstene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal (112 mg 0.3 mmol) and tetrahydrothiopyran-4-one (1.7 mg, 0.015 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (9 mL) and acetonitrile (3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (6 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 1.5 h. The reaction was complete in 2 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was 96:1. 5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (110 mg, 94% yield).

Example 4

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone **3**)

[0151] To a solution of 5-androstene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal (112 mg 0.3 mmol) and ketone **3** (9 mg, 0.03 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (9 mL) and acetonitrile (3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (6 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 1 h. The reaction was complete in 1.5 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was 49:1. 5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (109 mg, 93% yield).

Example 5

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Acetone)

[0152] To a solution of 5-androstene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal (112 mg 0.3 mmol) and acetone (522 mg, 9

mmol) in dimethoxymethane (9 mL) and acetonitrile (3 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (6 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 4 h. The reaction was complete in 5 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was >99:1. 5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (110 mg, 94% yield).

Example 6

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Acetone as Catalyst and Cosolvent)

[0153] To a solution of 5-androstene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal (112 mg 0.3 mmol) in acetone (15 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (5 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (922 mg, 1.5 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (391 mg, 4.65 mmol) over a period of 1.5 h. The reaction was complete in 2 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was >99:1. 5β,6β-Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (105 mg, 90% yield).

Example 7

5β,6β-Epoxy-3β-Hydroxypregnan-20-one (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0154] To a solution of pregnenolone (3.17 g 10 mmol) and ketone 4 (1.37 g, 3 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (300 mL) and acetonitrile (100 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (200 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (30.74 g, 50 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (13.02 g, 155 mmol) over a period of 8 h. The reaction was complete in 10 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the product showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was 16.0:1. Pure products were obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (2.86 g, 86% yield).

Example 8

5β,6β-Epoxy-11α-hydroxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0155] To a solution of 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal (4.03 g 10 mmol) and tetrahydrothiopyran-4-one (58 mg, 0.5 mmol) in dimethoxymethane (300 mL) and acetonitrile (100 mL) at room temperature was added an aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (200 mL, 4×10⁻⁴ M). To this

mixture was added in portions a mixture of Oxone® (30.74 mg, 50 mmol) and sodium bicarbonate (13.02 g, 155 mmol) over a period of 4 h. The reaction was complete in 5 h as shown by TLC. The reaction mixture was poured into water, and extracted with ethyl acetate three times. The combined organic layers were dried over anhydrous MgSO₄ and filtered through a pad of silica gel. ¹H NMR analysis of the crude residue showed that the ratio of β/α-epoxides was >99:1. 5β,6β-Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was obtained after flash column chromatography on silica gel (3.68 g, 88% yield).

Example 9

5β,6β-Epoxy-3β-hydroxyandrostane-17-one (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0156] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, dehydroisandrosterone was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxy-3β-hydroxyandrostane-17-one.

Example 10

5β,6β-Epoxy-16,16-dimethyl-3β-methoxyandrostane-17-one (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0157] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 16,16-dimethyl-3β-methoxy-5-androstene-17-one was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxy-16,16-dimethyl-3β-methoxyandrostane-17-one.

Example 11

5β,6β-Epoxyandrostane-3β,17β-diol (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0158] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 5-androstene-3β,17β-diol was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxyandrostane-3β,17β-diol.

Example 12

5β,6β-Epoxy-3β-methoxymethoxypregnan-20-one (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0159] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 3β-methoxymethoxy-5-pregnen-20-one was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxy-3β-methoxymethoxypregnan-20-one.

Example 13

5β,6β-Epoxycholestan-3α-ol (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0160] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, epicholesterol was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxycholestan-3α-ol.

Example 14

5β,6β-Epoxy-3β-acetoxycholestane (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0161] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 3α-acetoxycholest-5-ene was epoxidized to 5β,6β-epoxy-3α-acetoxycholestane.

Example 15

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-3 α -acetoxycholestane (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0162] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 3 α -acetoxycholest-5-ene was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-3 α -acetoxycholestane.

Example 16

5 β ,6 β -Epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0163] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 5-cholestene-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 17

5 β ,6 β -Epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0164] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 5-cholestene-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 18

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-17 β -hydroxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0165] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 17 β -hydroxyandrost-5-en-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-17 β -hydroxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 19

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-17 β -hydroxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0166] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 17 β -hydroxyandrost-5-en-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-17 β -hydroxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 20

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0167] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 17 β -acetoxyandrost-5-en-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 21

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0168] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 17 β -acetoxyandrost-5-en-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrost-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 22

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0169] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 23

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0170] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 24

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0171] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 25

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0172] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 26

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -hydroxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0173] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 11 α -hydroxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -hydroxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene ketal.

Example 27

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -hydroxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0174] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 11 α -hydroxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -hydroxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene ketal.

Example 28

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0175] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 11 α -acetoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene ketal.

Example 29

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0176] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 11 α -acetoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-diethylene ketal.

Example 30

5 β ,6 β -Epoxycholestan-3 α -ol (catalyzed by Ketone 1)

[0177] Following the procedure of Example 2 above, epi-cholesterol was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxycholestan-3 α -ol.

Example 31

5 β ,6 β -Epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0178] Following the procedure of Example 1 above 5-cholestene-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxyandrostene-3,17-dione 3,17-diethylene ketal.

Example 32

5 β ,6 β -Epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Acetone)

[0179] Following the procedure of Example 5 above, 5-cholestene-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxycholestane-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 33

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrostan-3-one 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Acetone)

[0180] Following the procedure of Example 5 above, 17 β -acetoxyandrost-5-en-3-one 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-17 β -acetoxyandrostan-3-one 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 34

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0181] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 35

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0182] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3-ethylene ketal.

Example 36

5 β ,6 β -Epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Acetone)

[0183] Following the procedure of Example 5 above, 5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 37

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Acetone)

[0184] Following the procedure of Example 5 above, 11 α -hyrdoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 38

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0185] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 11 α -hyrdoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 39

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0186] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 11 α -hyrdoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -hyrdoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 40

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 2)

[0187] Following the procedure of Example 3 above, 11 α -acetoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

Example 41

5 β ,6 β -Epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene Ketal (Catalyzed by Ketone 4)

[0188] Following the procedure of Example 1 above, 11 α -acetoxy-5-pregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal was epoxidized to 5 β ,6 β -epoxy-11 α -acetoxypregnene-3,20-dione 3,20-diethylene ketal.

[0189] The invention has been described with reference to preferred embodiments. Those skilled in the art will perceive improvements, changes and modifications. Such improvements, changes and modifications are intended to be within the scope of the claims.

TABLE 1

Stereoselective epoxidation of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids by dioxiranes generated in situ.^a

entry	ketone catalyst	substrate	catalyst loading (equivalent)	reaction time (h) ^b	yield (%) ^c	β/α -epoxide ratio ^{d,e}
1	1 ^f	5	20	1.5	91	1/1.1 (1/4.0)
2	2	5	0.05	1.5	93	1.1/1
3	3	5	0.1	3	92	1/1.1
4	4	5	0.3	16	82	15.1/1

TABLE 1-continued

Stereoselective epoxidation of 3 β -substituted Δ^5 -steroids by dioxiranes generated in situ. ^a						
entry	ketone catalyst	substrate	catalyst loading (equivalent)	reaction time (h) ^b	yield (%) ^c	β/α -epoxide ratio ^{d,e}
5	4	6	0.2	9	91	10.4/1 (1/3.9)
6	4	7	0.2	20	88	9.0/1 (1/3.1)
7	4	8	0.2	16	85	8.8/1 (1/3.1)
8	4	9	0.2	9	93	11.6/1 (1/4.3)
9 ^g	4	9	0.3	10	86	16.0/1
10	4	10	0.2	20	83	8.5/1 (1/3.7)

^aUnless otherwise indicated, reaction conditions were as follows: room temperature, 0.3 mmol of substrate, indicated amount of ketone, 1.5 mmol of Oxone®, 4.65 mmol of NaHCO₃, 9 mL of dimethoxymethane (DMM), 3 mL of CH₃CN, and 6 mL of aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (4 × 10⁻⁴ M).

^bTime for complete epoxidation as shown by TLC.

^cIsolated yield.

^dThe ratio of β/α -epoxides was determined by ¹H NMR spectroscopy (500 or 300 MHz).

^eThe value in parentheses was the ratio of β/α -epoxides obtained with mCPBA as the oxidant.

^fThe epoxidation reaction was carried out at 0–1° C.

^gOn a 10 mmol scale.

[0190] Note: An additional experiment was performed using ketone 4 and substrate 9 in which the catalyst loading and reaction time were 0.2 and 12 h, respectively. The subsequent epoxidation reaction resulted in an 89% yield and a β/α -epoxide ratio of 11.4/1.

TABLE 2

Stereoselective epoxidation of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids by dioxiranes generated in situ ^a						
entry	ketone	substrate	catalyst loading (equivalent)	reaction time (h) ^b	yield (%) ^c	β/α -epoxide ratio ^{d,e}
1	1 ^f	11	20	2	90	19:1
2	2	11	0.05	2	93	5:1
3	3	11	0.1	3.5	91	4:1
4	4	11	0.2	8	92	90:1
5	2	12	0.05	4	82	72:1(2:1)
6	4	12	0.3	18	84 ^g	>99:1
7	1 ^e	13	20	1	86	>99:1
8	2	13	0.05	2	94	96:1
9	3	13	0.1	1.5	93	49:1
10	4	13	0.3	12	84	>99:1
11	2	14	0.05	3.5	95	>99:1
12	4	14	0.3	18	86 ^h	>99:1
13	2	15	0.05	2	88	79:1 (1:1)
14	4	15	0.2	10	83	86:1
15	2	16	0.05	3	95	91:1
16	4	16	0.2	12	82	>99:1
17	2	17	0.05	1	91	84:1 (1:1)
18	4	17	0.2	15	81	66:1
19	2	18	0.05	3.5	96	92:1
20	4	18	0.2	12	84	61:1

TABLE 2-continued

Stereoselective epoxidation of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids by dioxiranes generated in situ ^a						
entry	ketone	substrate	catalyst loading (equivalent)	reaction time (h) ^b	yield (%) ^c	β/α -epoxide ratio ^{d,e}
21	2	19	0.05	2	92	51:1
22	4	19	0.2	9	91	50:1
23	2	20	0.05	2	92	85:1(1:1)
24	4	20	0.3	12	82	62:1

^aUnless otherwise indicated, reaction conditions were as follows: room temperature, 0.3 mmol of substrate, indicated amount of ketone, 1.5 mmol of Oxone®, 4.65 mmol of NaHCO₃, 9 mL of dimethoxymethane (DMM), 3 mL of CH₃CN, and 6 mL of aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (4 × 10⁻⁴ M).

^bTime for complete epoxidation as shown by TLC.

^cIsolated yield unless otherwise noted.

^dThe ratio of β/α -epoxides was determined by ¹H NMR spectroscopy (500 or 300 MHz).

^eThe value in parentheses was the ratio of β/α -epoxides obtained with mCPBA as the oxidant.

^fThe epoxidation reaction was carried out at 0–1° C.

^gBased on recovered starting material (82% conversion).

^hBased on recovered starting material (61% conversion).

[0191]

TABLE 3

Stereoselective epoxidation of 3 α -substituted Δ^5 -steroids catalyzed by acetone.					
Entry	substrate	catalyst loading (equivalent)	reaction time (h) ^b	yield (%) ^c	β/α -epoxide ratio ^{d,e}
1	11	20	5	90	3:1 (1:9.5)
2	13	20	5	94	>99:1 ^f (1:1)
3	14	20	6	93	>99:1 (1:1)
4	16	20	3.5	93	>99:1 (1:1)
5	18	20	6	92	>99:1 (1:1)
6	19	20	5	91	43:1 (1:1)

^aUnless otherwise indicated, reaction conditions were as follows: room temperature, 0.3 mmol of substrate, indicated amount of ketone, 1.5 mmol of Oxone®, 4.65 mmol of NaHCO₃, 9 mL of dimethoxymethane (DMM), 3 mL of CH₃CN, and 6 mL of aqueous Na₂EDTA solution (4 × 10⁻⁴ M).

^bTime for complete epoxidation as shown by TLC.

^cIsolated yield.

^dThe ratio of β/α -epoxides was determined by ¹NMR spectroscopy (500 or 300 MHz).

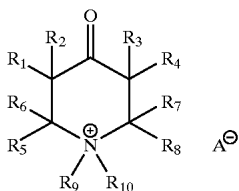
^eThe value in parentheses was the ratio of β/α -epoxides obtained with mCPBA as the oxidant.

^fIn another run, the ratio of β/α -epoxides was >99:1 with acetone and water (3:1) as solvents.

What is claimed is:

1. A method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 β -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids by an epoxidation reaction using a ketone and an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides.

wherein said ketone is selected from compounds of generic formula I.



R_1 or R_4 in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R_2 or R_3 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R_5 , R_6 , R_7 or R_8 in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

R_9 or R_{10} in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

A in formula (I) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆.

2. The method of claim 1 wherein said oxidizing reagent is selected from the group consisting of potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

3. The method of claim 2 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out using potassium peroxomonosulfate as an oxidizing agent.

4. The method of claim 1 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out in a homogeneous solvent system containing dimethoxymethane-acetonitrile-water, acetonitrile-water, acetone-water, dioxane-water, dimethoxyethane-water, tetrahydrofuran-water, or a biphasic solvent system containing dichloromethane-water, chloroform-water, benzene-water, toluene-water, dimethoxymethane-water, or diethylether-water, or mixtures thereof.

5. The method of claim 1 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a temperature within the range from about -10° C. to about 40° C.

6. The method of claim 5 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at room temperature.

7. The method of claim 1 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

8. The method of claim 7 wherein said pH is within the range from about 7.0 to about 7.5.

9. The method of claim 7 wherein said pH is controlled by using a pH-stat or a buffer.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein said buffer is selected from the solutions consisting of sodium bicarbonate, sodium

carbonate, sodium borate, sodium hydrogenphosphate, sodium dihydrogenphosphate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydrogenphosphate, potassium dihydrogenphosphate, potassium bicarbonate, potassium carbonate, potassium hydroxide, or mixtures thereof.

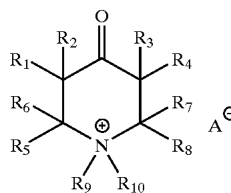
11. The method of claim 1 wherein said epoxidation reaction provides said epoxides in at least about 5:1 β/α -epoxide ratio.

12. A method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 α -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3 β -position by an epoxidation reaction using a ketone and an oxidizing agent under conditions effective to generate epoxides.

13. The method of claim 12 wherein said substituent is selected from OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_nOR (where n=1, 2 or 3, R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_mSO_nR (where n=1, 2 or 3; m=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), OSO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OPO_nR (where n=2 or 3; R=alkyl or aryl), NR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CONR₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁SO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R₁=H, alkyl or aryl, R₂=alkyl or aryl), NPhth (Phth=phthaloyl group), ⁺NR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂, or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), SiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂, or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), SO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), SCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, NO₂, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl).

14. The method of claim 12 wherein said Δ^5 -unsaturated steroid having a substituent at the 3 α -position is selected from the group consisting of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids having a ketal derivative of ketone group or a thioacetal derivative of ketone group at the 3-position.

15. The method of claim 12 wherein said ketone is selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula II, III, IV, and V wherein

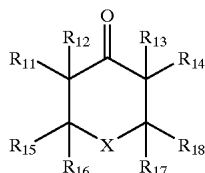


R_1 , R_2 , R_3 , or R_4 in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R_5 , R_6 , R_7 , R_8 , R_9 or R_{10} in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

A in formula (II) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

II

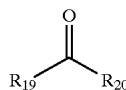


III

X in formula (III) is selected from $(CR_1R_2)_n$ (where $n=1, 2, 3, 4, \text{ or } 5$; R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), O, S, SO, SO_2 , and NR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$);

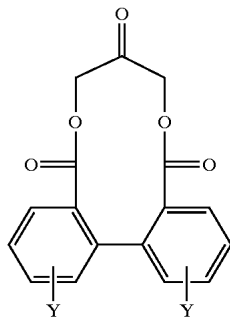
$R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{13}, \text{ or } R_{14}$ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OCOOR (where $R=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), OCONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), and halogen;

$R_{15}, R_{16}, R_{17}, \text{ or } R_{18}$ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and CONR₁R₂ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$);



IV

R_{19} or R_{20} in formula (IV) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2OCOR_3$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_2NR_3COOR_4$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$, $R_4=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2NR_3COR_4$ (where R_1, R_2, R_3 or $R_4=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $CR_1R_2NR_3SO_2R_4$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_4=\text{alkyl or aryl}$); and



V

Y in formula (V) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO_2 , CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where $R=H$ or alkyl), OR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSO_2R (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), OSR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), SO_2R (where

$R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), SO_3R (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $SOON R_1R_2$ (where R_1 or $R_2=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $NR SOOR_2$ (where $R_1=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_2=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), NR_1SOR_2 (where $R_1=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$; $R_2=\text{alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1R_2OR_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), $CR_1(OR_2)_2$ (where $R_1=H$ or alkyl; $R_2=\text{alkyl}$), CF_3 , CF_2CF_3 , OTf, OTs, OCOR (where $R=H, \text{ alkyl or aryl}$), and $OSiR_1R_2R_3$ (where R_1, R_2 or $R_3=\text{alkyl or aryl}$).

16. The method of claim 12 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out in a homogeneous solvent system containing dimethoxymethane-acetonitrile-water, acetonitrile-water, acetone-water, dioxane-water, dimethoxyethane-water, tetrahydrofuran-water, or a biphasic solvent system containing dichloromethane-water, chloroform-water, benzene-water, toluene-water, dimethoxymethane-water, or diethylether-water, or mixtures thereof.

17. The method of claim 12 wherein said oxidizing reagent is selected from the group consisting of potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

18. The method of claim 17 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out using potassium peroxomonosulfate as an oxidizing agent.

19. The method of claim 12 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a temperature within the range from about -10°C . to about 40°C .

20. The method of claim 19 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at room temperature.

21. The method of claim 12 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said pH is within the range from about 7.0 to about 7.5.

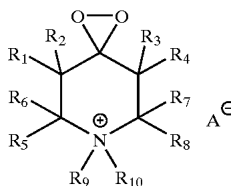
23. The method of claim 21 wherein said pH is controlled by using a pH-stat or a buffer.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said buffer is selected from the solutions consisting of sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium borate, sodium hydrogenphosphate, sodium dihydrogenphosphate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydrogenphosphate, potassium dihydrogenphosphate, potassium bicarbonate, and potassium carbonate, potassium hydroxide, and mixtures thereof.

25. The method of claim 12 wherein said epoxidation reaction provides said epoxides in at least about 5:1 β/α -epoxide ratio.

26. A method of producing mostly 5 β ,6 α -epoxides of steroids from Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids by an epoxidation reaction using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides,

wherein said dioxirane is selected from compounds of generic formula VI,



VI

R₁ or R₄ in formula (VI) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R₂ or R₃ in formula (VI) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

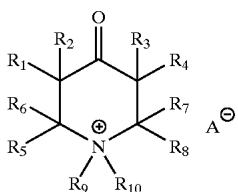
R₅, R₆, R₇ or R₈ in formula (VI) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

R₉ or R₁₀ in formula (VI) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

A in formula (VI) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆.

27. The method of claim 26 wherein said dioxirane is generated in situ from a ketone and an oxidizing agent selected from potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

wherein said ketone is selected from compounds of generic formula I,



R₁ or R₄ in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R₂ or R₃ in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R₅, R₆, R₇ or R₈ in formula (I) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

R₉ or R₁₀ in formula (I) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and aryl; and

A in formula (I) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆.

28. The method of claim 26 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out in a solvent selected from acetonitrile, dimethoxymethane, acetone, dioxane, dimethoxyethane, tetrahydrofuran, dichloromethane, chloroform, benzene, toluene, diethylether, water, and mixtures thereof.

29. The method of claim 26 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a temperature within the range from about -40° C. to about 40° C.

30. The method of claim 26 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

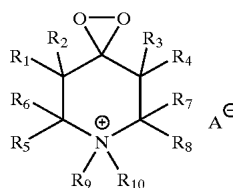
31. The method of claim 26 wherein said epoxidation reaction provides said epoxides in at least about 5:1 β/α-epoxide ratio.

32. A method of producing mostly 5β,6α-epoxides of steroids from Δ⁵-unsaturated steroids having a substituent at the 3α-position by an epoxidation reaction using a dioxirane under conditions effective to generate epoxides.

33. The method of claim 32 wherein said substituent is selected from OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_nOR (where n=1, 2 or 3, R=H, alkyl or aryl), O(CH₂)_mSO_nR (where n=1, 2 or 3; m=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), OSO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OPO_nR (where where n=2 or 3; R=alkyl or aryl), NR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁CONR₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), NR₁SO_nR₂ (where n=1 or 2; R₁=H, alkyl or aryl, R₂=alkyl or aryl), NPhth (Phth=phthaloyl group), ⁺NR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂, or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), SiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂, or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), SO_nR (where n=0, 1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), SCO_nR (where n=1 or 2; R=H, alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, NO₂, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl).

34. The method of claim 32 wherein said Δ⁵-unsaturated steroid having a substituent at the 3α-position is selected from the group consisting of Δ⁵-unsaturated steroids having a ketal derivative of ketone group or a thioketal derivative of ketone group at the 3-position.

35. The method of claim 32 wherein said dioxirane is selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula VII, VIII, IX and X.

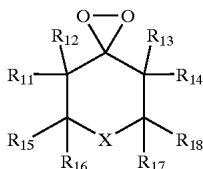


VII

$R_1, R_2, R_3,$ or R_4 in formula (VII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R_5, R_6, R_7, R_8, R_9 or R_{10} , in formula (VII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

A in formula (VII) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

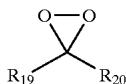


VIII

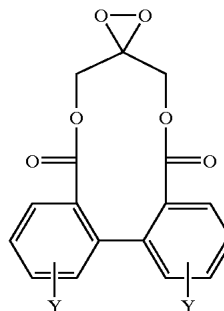
X in formula (VIII) is selected from (CR₁R₂)_n, (where n=1, 2, 3, 4, or 5; R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), O, S, SO, SO₂, and NR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl);

$R_{11}, R_{12}, R_{13},$ or R_{14} in formula (VIII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

$R_{15}, R_{16}, R_{17},$ or R_{18} in formula (VIII) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);



R_{19} or R_{20} in formula (IX) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, CR₁R₂OCOR₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂OCOR₃ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl; R₃=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃COOR₄ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl; R₄=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃COR₄ (where R₁, R₂, R₃ or R₄=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃SO₂R₄ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl; R₄=alkyl or aryl); and

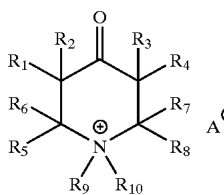


X

Y in formula (X) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO₂, CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSO₂R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO₂R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO₃R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SOON R₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR SOOR₂ (where R₁=H, alkyl or aryl; R₂=alkyl or aryl), NR₁SOR₂ (where R₁=H, alkyl or aryl; R₂=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂OR₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁(OR₂)₂ (where R₁=H or alkyl; R₂=alkyl), CF₃, CF₂CF₃, OTf, OTs, OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl).

36. The method of claim 32 wherein said dioxirane is generated in situ from a ketone and an oxidizing agent selected from potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

37. The method of claim 36 wherein said ketone is selected from the group consisting of compounds of generic formula II, III, IV, and V,

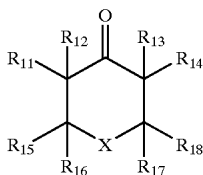


II

$R_1, R_2, R_3,$ or R_4 in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R_5, R_6, R_7, R_8, R_9 or R_{10} in formula (II) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

A in formula (II) is selected from halogen, OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

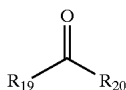


III

X in formula (III) is selected from (CR₁R₂)_n (where n=1, 2, 3, 4, or 5; R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), O, S, SO, SO₂, and NR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl);

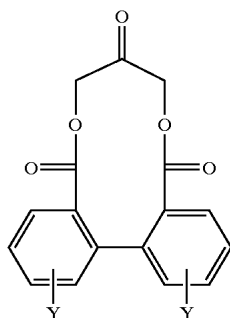
R₁₁, R₁₂, R₁₃, or R₁₄ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OCOOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCOOCH₂R (where R=aryl), OCONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl), and halogen;

R₁₅, R₁₆, R₁₇, or R₁₈ in formula (III) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);



IV

R₁₉ or R₂₀ in formula (IV) is selected from alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, CR₁R₂OCOR₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂OCOR₃ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl; R₃=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃COOR₄ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl, R₄=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃COR₄ (where R₁, R₂, R₃ or R₄=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂NR₃SO₂R₄ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl; R₄=alkyl or aryl); and



V

Y in formula (V) is selected from H, alkyl, halogenated alkyl, aryl, NO₂, CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), OR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSO₂R

(where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), OSR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO₂R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SO₃R (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), SOON R₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl), NR SOOR₂ (where R₁=H, alkyl or aryl; R₂=alkyl or aryl), NR₁SOR₂ (where R₁=H, alkyl or aryl; R₂=alkyl or aryl), CR₁R₂OR₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=H, alkyl or aryl), CR₁(OR₂)₂ (where R₁=H or alkyl; R₂=alkyl), CF₃, CF₂CF₃, OTf, OTs, OCOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁R₂R₃ (where R₁, R₂ or R₃=alkyl or aryl).

38. The method of claim 32 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out in a solvent selected from acetonitrile, dimethoxymethane, acetone, dioxane, dimethoxyethane, tetrahydrofuran, dichloromethane, chloroform, benzene, toluene, diethylether, water and mixtures thereof.

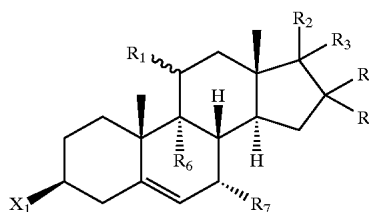
39. The method of claim 32 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a temperature within the range from about -40° C. to about 40° C.

40. The method of claim 32 wherein said epoxidation reaction is carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

41. The method of claim 32 wherein said epoxidation reaction provides said epoxides in at least about 5:1 β/α-epoxide ratio.

42. A method comprising:

producing mostly 5β,6β-epoxides of steroids by epoxidation reactions of Δ⁵-unsaturated steroids of generic formula XI catalyzed by ketones of generic formula XII, wherein



XI

X₁ in formula (XI) is selected from H, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCH₂OCH₃, OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, alkyl, aryl, and COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl);

R₁ in formula (XI) is selected from H, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCH₂OCH₃, halogen, CF₃, and CF₂CF₃;

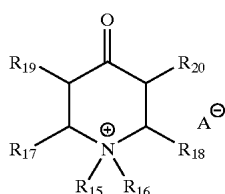
R₂ and R₃ in formula (XI) are each selected from the group consisting of H, alkyl, aryl, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or aryl), COR (where R=alkyl), COCH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), COCH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), COCH₂F, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)R (where R=alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and C(OCH₂CH₂O)CH₂F; or, are selected from the group consisting of O, OCH₂CH₂O, and OCH₂CH₂CH₂O;

R_4 in formula (XI) is selected from H, C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSi $R_1'R_2'R_3'$ (where R_1' , R_2' or R_3' =alkyl or aryl);

R_5 in formula (XI) is selected from H, C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSi $R_1'R_2'R_3'$ (where R_1' , R_2' or R_3' =alkyl or aryl);

R_6 in formula (XI) is selected from H, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);

R_7 in formula (XI) is selected from H, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);



XII

R_{15} and R_{16} in formula (XII) are each selected from alkyl and aryl;

R_{17} and R_{18} in formula (XII) are each selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR R_2 (where R_1 or R_2 =H, alkyl or aryl);

R_{19} and R_{20} in formula (XII) are each selected from C_1 - C_4 alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and halogen; and

A in formula (XII) is selected from OTf, BF $_4$, OAc, NO $_3$, BPh $_4$, PF $_6$, and SbF $_6$.

43. The method of claim 42 wherein said C_1 - C_4 alkyl is selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, normal-propyl, iso-propyl, normal-butyl, iso-butyl, sec-butyl, and tert-butyl; and said aryl selected from the group consisting of phenyl, substituted phenyl, naphthyl, and substituted naphthyl groups.

44. The method of claim 42 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out in a homogeneous solvent system selected from the group consisting of dimethoxymethane-acetonitrile-water, acetonitrile-water, acetone-water, dioxane-water, dimethoxyethane-water, tetrahydrofuran-water, and mixtures thereof.

45. The method of claim 42 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out in a biphasic solvent system selected from the group consisting of dichloromethane-water, chloroform-water, benzene-water, toluene-water, dimethoxymethane-water, or diethylether-water, and mixtures thereof.

46. The method of claim 42 wherein said oxidizing reagent is selected from the group consisting of potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

47. The method of claim 42 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at a temperature within the range from about -10° C. to about 40° C.

48. The method of claim 47 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at room temperature.

49. The method of claim 42 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

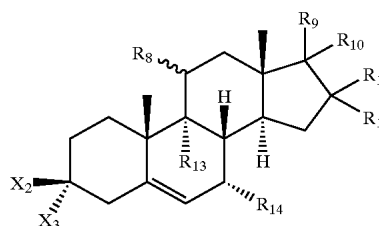
50. The method of claim 49 wherein said pH is within the range from 7.0 to 7.5.

51. The method of claim 49 wherein said pH is controlled by using a pH-stat or a buffer.

52. The method of claim 51 wherein said buffer is selected from the group consisting of sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium borate, sodium hydrogenphosphate, sodium dihydrogenphosphate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydrogenphosphate, potassium dihydrogenphosphate, potassium bicarbonate, potassium carbonate, potassium hydroxide, or mixtures thereof.

53. A method comprising:

producing mostly $5\beta,6\beta$ -epoxides of steroids by epoxidation reactions of Δ^5 -unsaturated steroids of generic formula XIII catalyzed by ketones of generic formula XIV, XV, XVI, and XVII, wherein



XIII

X_2 in formula (XIII) is selected from the group consisting of H, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCH $_2$ OCH $_3$, OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OSi $R_1'R_2'R_3'$ (where R_1' , R_2' or R_3' =alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, alkyl, aryl, and COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and,

X_3 in formula (XIII) is selected from the group consisting of OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCH $_2$ OCH $_3$, OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OSi $R_1'R_2'R_3'$ (where R_1' , R_2' or R_3' =alkyl or aryl), halogen, CN, NO $_2$, alkyl, and aryl; or,

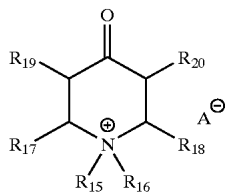
X_2 and X_3 in formula (XIII) are selected from the group consisting of O, OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O, and OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ CH $_2$ O;

R_8 in formula (XIII) is selected from H, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OCH $_2$ OCH $_3$, halogen, CF $_3$, and CF $_2$ CF $_3$;

R_9 and R_{10} in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, alkyl, aryl, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), OSi $R_1'R_2'R_3'$ (where R_1' , R_2' or R_3' =alkyl or aryl), COR (where R=alkyl), COCH $_2$ OR (where R=H or alkyl), COCH $_2$ OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), COCH $_2$ F, COOR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O)R (where R=alkyl), C(OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O)CH $_2$ OR (where R=H or alkyl), C(OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O)CH $_2$ OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and C(OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O)CH $_2$ F; or R_9 and R_{10} in formula (XIII) are selected from the group consisting of O, OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ O, and OCH $_2$ CH $_2$ CH $_2$ O;

R₁₁ and R₁₂ in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or aryl);

R₁₃ and R₁₄ in formula (XIII) are each selected from the group consisting of H, halogen, OR (where R=H or alkyl), and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);



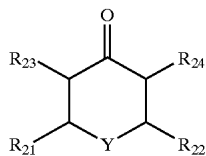
XIV

R₁₅ or R₁₆ in formula (XIV) is selected from alkyl and aryl;

R₁₇ or R₁₈ in formula (XIV) is selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

R₁₉ or R₂₀ in formula (XIV) is selected from H, C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and halogen; and

A in formula (XIV) is selected from OTf, BF₄, OAc, NO₃, BPh₄, PF₆, and SbF₆;

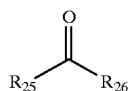


XV

Y in formula (XV) is selected from CH₂, O, S, SO, SO₂, and NR (where R=H or alkyl);

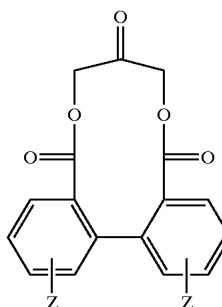
R₂₁ or R₂₂ in formula (XV) is selected from H, alkyl, aryl, COOR (where R=H, alkyl or aryl), and CONR₁R₂ (where R₁ or R₂=H, alkyl or aryl);

R₂₃ or R₂₄ in formula (XV) is selected from H, halogen, C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, and OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl);



XVI

R₂₅ or R₂₆ in formula (XVI) is selected from C₁-C₄ alkyl, halogenated alkyl, CH₂OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl); and



XVII

Z in formula (XVII) is selected from H, C₁-C₄ alkyl, aryl, NO₂, CN, F, Cl, Br, I, COOR (where R=alkyl), CH₂OR (where R=H or alkyl), CH(OR)₂ (where R=alkyl), CF₃, CF₂CF₃, OTf, OTs, OCOR (where R=alkyl or aryl), and OSiR₁'R₂'R₃' (where R₁', R₂' or R₃'=alkyl or aryl).

54. The method of claim 53 wherein said C₁-C₄ alkyl is selected from the group consisting of methyl, ethyl, normal-propyl, iso-propyl, normal-butyl, iso-butyl, sec-butyl, and tert-butyl; and said aryl selected from the group consisting of phenyl, substituted phenyl, naphthyl, and substituted naphthyl groups.

55. The method of claim 53 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out in a homogeneous solvent system selected from the group consisting of dimethoxymethane-acetonitrile-water, acetonitrile-water, acetone-water, dioxane-water, dimethoxyethane-water, and tetrahydrofuran-water, and mixtures thereof.

56. The method of claim 53 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out in a biphasic solvent system selected from the group consisting of dichloromethane-water, chloroform-water, benzene-water, toluene-water, dimethoxymethane-water, or diethylether-water, and mixtures thereof.

57. The method of claim 53 wherein said oxidizing reagent is selected from the group consisting of potassium peroxomonosulfate, sodium hypochlorite, sodium perborate, hydrogen peroxide, and peracids.

58. The method of claim 53 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at a temperature within the range from about -10° C. to about 40° C.

59. The method of claim 58 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at room temperature.

60. The method of claim 53 wherein said epoxidation reactions are carried out at a pH within the range from about 7.0 to about 12.0.

61. The method of claim 60 wherein said pH is within the range from 7.0 to 7.5.

62. The method of claim 60 wherein said pH is controlled by using a pH-stat or a buffer.

63. The method of claim 62 wherein said buffer is selected from the group consisting of sodium bicarbonate, sodium carbonate, sodium borate, sodium hydrogenphosphate, sodium dihydrogenphosphate, sodium hydroxide, potassium hydrogenphosphate, potassium dihydrogenphosphate, potassium bicarbonate, potassium carbonate, potassium hydroxide, or mixtures thereof.

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