

# Synthesis and *in Vitro* Cytotoxic Activity of Novel Pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylates

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## ABSTRACT

*N*-Aryl-*C*-ethoxycarbonylnitrile imines (**3a-g**) react with ethyl cyanoacetate **1** in 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition to yield novel pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylates (**4a-g**) in moderate yields. The reaction of pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylates (**4a, d**) with hydrazine afforded pyrazolo[4,3-*d*]pyridazine-4,7-diones (**5a, d**) in good yields. All compounds were fully characterized by spectroscopic methods. Some of the newly synthesized compounds were evaluated for their cytotoxic activity against murine P815 mastocytoma cell line.

**Keywords:** Nitrile Imines; Cycloaddition; Pyrazoles; Cytotoxic Activity

## 1. Introduction

Pyrazole and its derivatives, occupy an important position in medicinal chemistry with a wide range of bioactivities. They possess anti-obesity [1], receptor antagonists [2], HIV reverse transcriptase inhibitors [3], and anti-hyperglycemic activities [4]. They are also used as anti-inflammatory [5,6], antipyretic [7], antiarrhythmic [8], antitumor [9,10], monoamine oxidase inhibiting [11] and antibacterial agents [12]. Considering the important biological properties of pyrazole compounds, numerous methods toward pyrazoles syntheses have been developed over the past decades [13-17]. Despite numerous diverse approaches toward syntheses of pyrazoles developed so far, it is still challenging to prepare polysubstituted pyrazoles with various substituents from readily available building blocks. Herein we report a facile approach to provide polysubstituted pyrazoles via 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of ethyl cyanoacetate with *N*-Aryl-*C*-ethoxycarbonylnitrile imines. Evaluation of their cytotoxic activity toward cell line P815 is reported.

## 2. Results and Discussion

### 2.1. Chemistry

The ethyl hydrazone- $\alpha$ -bromoglyoxyates (**2a-g**) (Figure 1) selected to generate the corresponding *N*-aryl-*C*-ethoxycarbonylnitrile imines were prepared from the reaction of the adequate diazonium salts with ethyl acetoac-

tate, followed by bromination of the resulting azoacetic esters [18]. The nitrile imines were generated *in situ* by basic treatment of the hydrazone- $\alpha$ -bromoglyoxyates [19,20].

We performed the cycloaddition reaction of ethyl cyanoacetate with nitrile imines obtained initially *in situ* from the treatment of hydrazone bromides with sodium ethoxide in dry ethanol at room temperature. The progress of the reaction was followed by TLC until all nitrilimines has been consumed. The overall reaction yielded a polysubstituted pyrazoles in moderate yields 40% - 56% (Scheme 1).

The structures of compounds (**4a-g**) were deduced from their IR,  $^1\text{H}$  NMR,  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR and MS spectra. For example, the  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectrum of (**4a**) exhibited two signals at 1.33, 1.39 for the methyl of ethoxy group and a broad signal at 5.40 ppm for  $\text{NH}_2$  group, along with multiplets for the aromatic protons at *N*-1 position of the pyrazolic cycle. In the IR spectrum of (**4a**), two absorption bands at 1725 and 1696  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ , which are related to

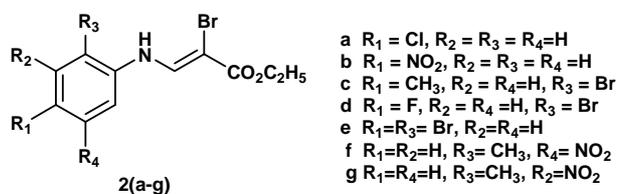
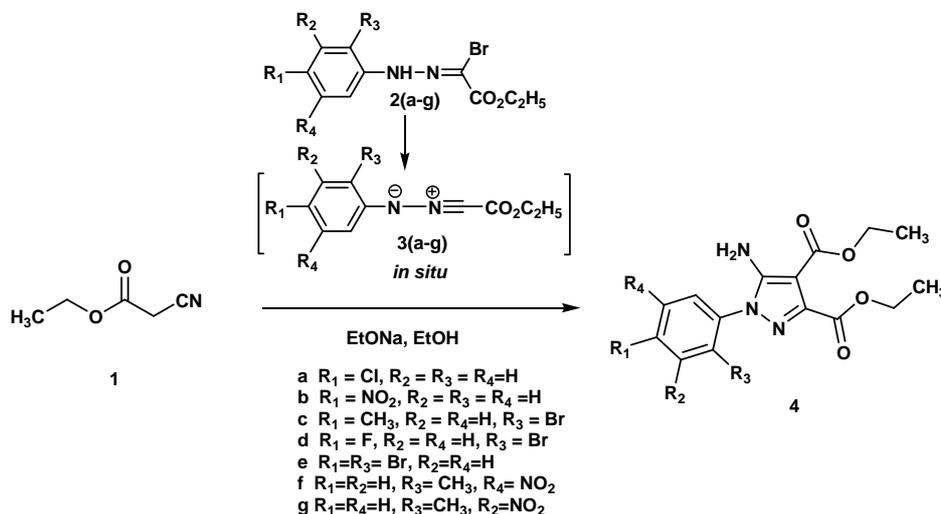


Figure 1. Structures of ethyl hydrazone- $\alpha$ -bromoglyoxyates used in this study as the precursors of *N*-aryl-*C*-ethoxycarbonylnitrile imines.

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Scheme 1. Cycloaddition reaction of ethyl cyanoacetate with nitrile imines obtained.

two C=O stretching frequencies, clearly indicated the most significant functional groups of the product.

Pyrazoles (**4a-g**) are suitable intermediates for the preparation of new pyrazolopyridazinedione derivatives. In fact, the reaction between hydrazine hydrate and pyrazoles (**4a, d**) afforded pyrazolo[4,3-d]pyridazine-4,7-diones (**5a, d**) in good yields (Scheme 2).

The structures of the synthesized compounds (**5a, d**) were established on the basis of IR,  $^1\text{H}$  NMR, and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectral data. In the IR spectra of compound (**5a**) the absence of the absorption band at  $1725\text{ cm}^{-1}$  and  $1696\text{ cm}^{-1}$ , for C=O ester confirms the formation of pyridazinedione cycle. The  $^1\text{H}$  NMR spectra of **5a** exhibited two broad signals at  $\delta = 10.05$  and  $12.11$  ppm, respectively, due to the NH proton.

## 2.2. Cytotoxic Activity

The preliminary cytotoxic activities of some compounds against the murine P815 mastocytoma cell line were evaluated in vitro as shown in Table 1. The  $\text{IC}_{50}$  represents the drug concentration ( $\mu\text{g/mL}$ ) required to inhibit cell growth by 50%. The polysubstituted pyrazoles (**4a**), (**4c**) and (**4g**) have shown slight cytotoxic activity against cell line P815. Compound (**4a**) ( $R_1 = \text{Cl}$ ) showed significant activity against cell line P815 ( $\text{IC}_{50} = 32\ \mu\text{g/mL}$ ). It should be noted that the substituent at the position of benzene in compounds (**4a-d**), (**4f**), (**4g**) may also play an important role in determining relative activities.

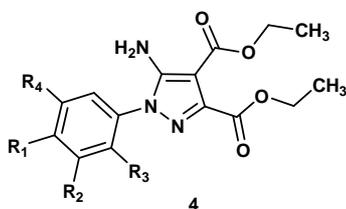


Table 1. *In vitro* cytotoxicity of some new substituted pyrazoles against the murine mastocytoma cell line P815

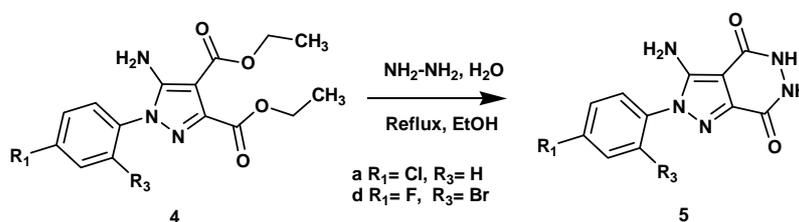
Compound	$R_1, R_2, R_3, R_4$	$\text{IC}_{50}$ ( $\mu\text{g/mL}$ )
<b>4a</b>	$R_1 = \text{Cl}, R_2 = R_3 = R_4 = \text{H}$	32
<b>4b</b>	$R_1 = \text{NO}_2, R_2 = R_3 = R_4 = \text{H}$	105
<b>4c</b>	$R_1 = \text{CH}_3, R_2 = R_4 = \text{H}, R_3 = \text{Br}$	75
<b>4d</b>	$R_1 = \text{F}, R_2 = R_4 = \text{H}, R_3 = \text{Br}$	98
<b>4f</b>	$R_1 = R_2 = \text{H}, R_3 = \text{CH}_3, R_4 = \text{NO}_2$	110
<b>4g</b>	$R_1 = R_4 = \text{H}, R_3 = \text{CH}_3, R_2 = \text{NO}_2$	107

## 3. Conclusion

In summary, with a simple approach, a new series of pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylates (**4a-g**) was synthesized by 1,3-dipolar cycloaddition of *N*-aryl-*C*-ethoxycarbonyl nitrile imines with ethyl cyanoacetate. Novel pyrazolo[4,3-d]pyridazine-4,7-diones were also prepared by condensation reaction of hydrazine with pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylates. In vitro cytotoxicity of some compounds were assessed and showed a lower cytotoxicity on murine mastocytoma cell line P815. Pyrazole (**4a**) with chlorine atom substitution on pyrazole-3,4-carboxylate at para position of benzene group, showed significant activity against cell line P815 ( $\text{IC}_{50} = 32\ \mu\text{g/mL}$ ). Compound (**4a**) can be useful as a lead for the development of novel anticancer agents.

## 4. Experimental Section

Melting points were determined using a Büchi-Tottoli apparatus and are uncorrected. IR spectra were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer 577 spectrometer using KBr disks; only noteworthy IR absorptions are listed ( $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ).  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR spectra were recorded in  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ,  $\text{DMSO-d}_6$  and



Scheme 2. The reaction between hydrazine hydrate and pyrazoles.

solution (unless otherwise specified) with TMS as an internal reference using a Bruker AC 300 ( $^1\text{H}$ ) or 75MHz ( $^{13}\text{C}$ ) instruments. Chemical shifts are given in  $\delta$  parts per million (ppm) downfield from TMS. Multiplicities of  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR resources were assigned by distortionless enhancement by polarization transfer (DEPT) experiments. Low-resolution mass spectra (MS) were recorded on a Perkin-Elmer Sciex API 3000 spectrometer. Column chromatography was carried out on  $\text{SiO}_2$  (silica gel 60 Merck 0.063 - 0.200 mm). Thin-layer chromatography (TLC) was carried out on  $\text{SiO}_2$  (silica gel 60, F 254 Merck 0.063 - 0.200 mm), and the spots were located with UV light. Commercial reagents were used without further purification unless stated.

**Synthesis of polysubstituted pyrazoles (4a-g).** To a solution of ethyl cyanoacetate **1** (0.56 g, 0.005 mol) and hydrazonyl bromides **2a-g** (0.005 mol) in dry ethanol, ethoxide sodium (0.68 g, 0.01 mol) was added. The mixture was stirred at room temperature for 12 h, during which the bromide dissolved and the crude pyrazole precipitated. The precipitate was filtered, washed with cold water, dried and purified by column chromatography (EtOAc/hexane 2/8).

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(4-chlorophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4a).** Yield: 56%, mp:  $95^\circ\text{C} - 97^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3405, 3328 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1725 (CO), 1696 (CO), 1622 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.33 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.29 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.39 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 5.40 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.48 (d, 2H,  $J = 7.8$  Hz), 7.51 (d, 2H,  $J = 7.8$  Hz);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.3 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.8 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 125.6 (2CH), 129.0 (C), 129.2 (2CH), 134.6 (C), 135.3 (C), 144.6 (C), 150.0 (C), 162.8 (CO), 163.7 (CO); MS  $m/z = 338$  [ $M + 1$ ], 340 [ $M + 3$ ].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(4-nitrophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4b).** Yield: 46%, mp:  $138^\circ\text{C} - 140^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3397, 3317 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1728 (CO), 1690 (CO), 1622 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.34 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 1.38 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.30 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.40 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 5.61 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.81 (d, 2H,  $J = 8.0$  Hz), 8.36 (d, 2H,  $J = 8.0$  Hz);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.5 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 62.1 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 119.3 (C), 123.8 (2CH), 124.7 (C), 125.4 (2CH), 142.3 (C), 146.7 (C), 150.2 (C), 162.6 (CO), 163.5 (CO); MS  $m/z = 349$  [ $M + 1$ ].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(2-bromo-4-methylphenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4c).** Yield: 45%, mp:  $93^\circ\text{C} - 95^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3445, 3335 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1730 (CO), 1690 (CO), 1616 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.34 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 2.40 (s, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 4.30 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.39 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 5.01 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.28 (m, 2H), 7.55 (d, 1H,  $J = 1.8$  Hz);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.4 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.2 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.7 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 93.9 (C), 121.8 (C), 129.6 (CH), 129.9 (CH), 132.7 (C), 134.2 (CH), 142.7 (C), 144.3 (C), 151.0 (C), 162.6 (CO), 163.7 (CO); MS  $m/z = 397$  [ $M + 1$ ], 399 [ $M + 3$ ].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(2-bromo-4-fluorophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4d).** Yield: 51%, mp:  $105^\circ\text{C} - 107^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3430, 3354 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1718 (CO), 1697 (CO), 1621 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.35 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.30 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.39 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 5.18 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.19 (m, 1H), 7.46 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.3 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.8 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 94.0 (C), 116.3 (CH), 121.4 (CH), 123.2 (C), 131.7 (CH), 144.6 (C), 151.1 (C), 161.1 (C), 162.2 (C), 163.6 (CO), 164.7 (CO); MS  $m/z = 401$  [ $M + 1$ ], 403 [ $M + 3$ ].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(2,4-dibromophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4e).** Yield: 40%, mp:  $91^\circ\text{C} - 93^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3447, 3333 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1737 (CO), 1693 (CO), 1610 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.35 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.0$  Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.0$  Hz), 4.30 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.0$  Hz), 4.39 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.0$  Hz), 5.24 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.33 (d, 1H,  $J = 7.8$  Hz), 7.61 (dd, 1H,  $J = 7.8$  et 2.1 Hz), 7.91 (d, 1H,  $J = 2.1$  Hz);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.3 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.8 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 94.1 (C), 123.1 (C), 125.2 (C), 131.3 (CH), 132.2 (CH), 134.6 (C), 136.4 (CH), 144.8 (C), 150.9 (C), 162.5 (CO), 163.6 (CO); MS  $m/z = 462$  [ $M + 1$ ], 464 [ $M + 3$ ].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(2-methyl-5-nitrophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4f).** Yield: 49%, mp:  $96^\circ\text{C} - 98^\circ\text{C}$ ; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3443, 3331 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1731 (CO), 1691 (CO), 1617 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.35 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 2.31 (s, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 4.32 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 4.40 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J = 7.2$  Hz), 5.20 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.55 (d, 1H,  $J = 7.1$  Hz), 8.26 (m, 2H);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 18.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.4 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.9 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 94.2

(C), 120.5 (C), 123.5 (CH), 125.1 (CH), 132.6 (CH), 135.6 (C), 144.7 (C), 146.8 (C), 150.8 (C), 162.4 (CO), 163.6 (CO); MS  $m/z$  = 363 [M + 1].

**Diethyl 5-amino-1-(2-methyl-3-nitrophenyl)-1H-pyrazole-3,4-dicarboxylate (4g).** Yield: 52%, mp: 120°C - 122°C; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3381, 3317 ( $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1716 (CO), 1695 (CO), 1626 (C=N);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  1.35 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz), 1.39 (t, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz), 2.29 (s, 3H,  $\text{CH}_3$ ), 4.32 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz), 4.40 (q, 2H,  $\text{OCH}_2$ ,  $J$  = 7.2 Hz), 5.19 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.51 (t, 1H,  $J$  = 7.5), 7.62 (d, 1H,  $J$  = 7.5 Hz), 8.02 (d, 1H,  $J$  = 7.5);  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{CDCl}_3$ ):  $\delta$  14.2 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 14.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 18.3 ( $\text{CH}_3$ ), 60.4 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 61.8 ( $\text{CH}_2\text{O}$ ), 94.1 (C), 126.2 (CH), 127.7 (CH), 132.4 (C), 132.7 (CH), 136.9 (C), 144.8 (C), 150.8 (C), 151.3 (C), 162.4 (CO), 163.6 (CO); MS  $m/z$  = 363 [M + 1].

**Synthesis of pyrazolo[4,3-d]pyridazine-4,7-diones 5 a,d** A mixture of **4a**, **d** ( $12 \times 10^{-3}$  mol) and hydrazine hydrate (3 g,  $6 \times 10^{-2}$  mol) was refluxed for 8 hours in ethanol, after cooling the reaction mixture was poured onto ice. The solid obtained was filtered, dried and crystallized from methanol.

**3-Amino-2-(4-chlorophenyl)-5,6-dihydro-2H-pyrazolo[4,3-d]pyridazine-4,7-dione (5a).** Yield: 94%, mp: 167°C - 169°C; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3380, 3345 ( $\text{NH}$ ,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1665 (CO), 1670 (CO);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ ):  $\delta$  6.46 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.54 (d, 2H,  $J$  = 8.1 Hz), 7.62 (d, 2H,  $J$  = 8.1 Hz); 10.05 (s, 1H,  $\text{NH}$ ), 12.11 (s, 1H,  $\text{NH}$ );  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ ):  $\delta$  93.2 (C), 126.3 (2CH), 129.9 (2CH), 132.7 (C), 136.7 (C), 147.5 (C), 150.8 (C), 159.4 (C), 163.7 (C); MS  $m/z$  = 278 [M + 1], 280 [M + 3].

**3-Amino-2-(2-bromo-4-fluorophenyl)-5,6-dihydro-2H-pyrazolo[4,3-d]pyridazine-4,7-dione (5d).** Yield: 86%, mp: 178°C - 180°C; IR (KBr,  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3385, 3360 ( $\text{NH}$ ,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 1652 (CO), 1670 (CO);  $^1\text{H}$  NMR ( $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ ):  $\delta$  6.82 (s, 2H,  $\text{NH}_2$ ), 7.46 (dd, 1H,  $J$  = 8.4 and 2.7 Hz), 7.69 (d, 1H,  $J$  = 8.4 Hz), 7.86 (d, 1H,  $J$  = 2.7 Hz), 10.39 (s, 1H,  $\text{NH}$ ), 12.59 (s, 1H,  $\text{NH}$ );  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR ( $\text{DMSO-}d_6$ ):  $\delta$  94.3 (C), 116.7 (CH), 121.4 (CH), 123.8 (C), 132.8 (CH), 141.1 (C), 153.0 (C), 154.3 (C), 159.4 (C), 160.3 (C), 162.5 (C), 164.6 (C); MS  $m/z$  = 341 [M + 1], 343 [M + 3].

## 5. Cytotoxic Activity

The cytotoxic activity was studied against P815 (murine mastocytoma cell line) using colorimetric MTT assay as described and modified by Tim Mossman [21]. Cells were washed by centrifugation in PBS (Phosphate Buffered Saline), and incubated in 96-well microtiter plates (Bioster Italy) at a density of  $1.5 \times 10^5$  cells/ml in 100  $\mu\text{l}$  per well of culture medium (D-MEM) supplemented with 5% of foetal calf serum, and 100 UI/ml of penicillin and 100  $\mu\text{g/ml}$  streptomycin, 0.2% sodium bicarbonate).

Then 100  $\mu\text{l}$  of fresh culture medium containing appropriate serial concentrations of the tested compounds were added in each well. After incubation for 48 h at 37°C and 5%  $\text{CO}_2$ , 100  $\mu\text{l}$  of medium were carefully aspirated from each well and replaced by 20  $\mu\text{l}$  of MTT solution (5 mg/ml PBS). After incubation during 4 h in the same conditions, the plates were treated with a mixture of HCl/Isopropanol (24:1) to dissolve the blue intracellular formazan product. One hour later, the optical density in the wells was read on a MicroElisa reader using dual-wavelength mode (540-630 nm). The cytotoxicity (%) =  $100 \times (1 - \text{OD}_t / \text{OD}_o)$ , where  $\text{OD}_o$  and  $\text{OD}_t$  are respectively the optical density of control and treated wells, respectively. Three independent sets of experiments performed in duplicate were evaluated.

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