Synthesis and Pharmacological Evaluation of Novel Pyrido-Quinazolinone Analogues as Potent

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Abstract

The quinazolinone and pyridine nuclei are privileged scaffolds in medicinal chemistry, renowned for their diverse pharmacological profiles. Molecular hybridization of these two pharmacophores offers a promising strategy for developing novel therapeutic agents. This study describes the efficient synthesis and pharmacological evaluation of a novel series of pyrido-quinazolinone analogues. The target compounds were synthesized via a one-pot cyclocondensation reaction between 2-aminonicotinic acid, various substituted aldehydes, and ammonium acetate under optimized conditions. All synthesized compounds were characterized using spectroscopic techniques (IR, 11H NMR, 1313C NMR, and Mass Spectrometry). The chemical library was evaluated for* in vitro *biological activities, including anticancer activity against a panel of human cancer cell lines, antimicrobial activity against Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria, and anti-inflammatory activity using a COX-2 inhibition assay. Several compounds demonstrated significant and selective potency. Notably, analogue 7d bearing a p-chlorophenyl substituent emerged as the most active compound, exhibiting potent cytotoxic activity against the MCF-7 breast cancer cell line (IC_{50} = 3.2 µM) and strong inhibition of COX-2 (IC_{50} = 1.8 µM). Furthermore, a preliminary structure-activity relationship (SAR) was established, revealing that electron-withdrawing groups on the phenyl ring enhance biological activity. The results indicate that the pyrido-quinazolinone hybrid scaffold is a highly promising lead structure for the development of new multi-target therapeutic agents.

Keywords: Pyrido-quinazolinone, Molecular Hybridization, Synthesis, Anticancer Activity, Antimicrobial Activity, Cyclocondensation, Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR), Heterocyclic Compounds

2. Introduction

2.1. The Therapeutic Significance of Nitrogen-Containing Heterocycles

Heterocyclic compounds represent a cornerstone of modern medicinal chemistry, constituting over half of all known organic molecules and forming the structural basis of a vast majority of pharmaceutical drugs. Among these, nitrogen-containing heterocycles are particularly privileged, as their structural and electronic properties allow for diverse interactions with biological targets, such as enzymes, receptors, and nucleic acids. The presence of a nitrogen atom within the ring system facilitates crucial hydrogen bonding, dipole-dipole interactions, and π-stacking, which are essential for high affinity and selectivity in drug-target binding. Scaffolds like pyridine,

quinoline, pyrimidine, and quinazolinone are recurrent motifs in molecules exhibiting a wide spectrum of biological activities, including anticancer, antimicrobial, antiviral, and anti-inflammatory effects. The continued exploration and functionalization of these core structures remain a highly productive strategy for discovering new therapeutic agents to address unmet medical needs.

2.2. Pharmacological Profile of Quinazolinones

The 4-quinazolinone nucleus is a highly versatile and biologically significant pharmacophore. Its planar, bicyclic structure is an excellent scaffold for designing molecules that can mimic purine bases, enabling them to interfere with critical cellular processes. This has led to the development of numerous clinically used drugs and investigational compounds.

Anticancer Activity: Quinazolinones are renowned for their potent tyrosine kinase inhibitory activity. The most prominent examples are gefitinib (Iressa®) and erlotinib (Tarceva®), which are Epidermal Growth Factor Receptor (EGFR) inhibitors used in the treatment of non-small cell lung cancer and pancreatic cancer. These drugs competitively bind to the ATP-binding site of the EGFR, thereby inhibiting autophosphorylation and downstream signaling pathways responsible for tumor proliferation and survival.

Antimicrobial Activity: Several quinazolinone derivatives have demonstrated significant antibacterial and antifungal properties. For instance, compounds bearing fluoro or chloro substituents have shown potent activity against strains of *S. aureus* and *E. coli* by potentially inhibiting bacterial DNA gyrase or dihydrofolate reductase.

Other Activities: Beyond oncology and infectious diseases, the quinazolinone scaffold is found in compounds with anti-inflammatory (e.g., through COX-2 inhibition), anticonvulsant, and antihypertensive activities, highlighting its remarkable pharmacological versatility.

2.3. Pharmacological Profile of Pyridine Derivatives

The pyridine ring, a simple six-membered heterocycle with one nitrogen atom, is another indispensable building block in drug design. Its presence in a molecule often enhances solubility, metabolic stability, and bioavailability due to its ability to act as both a hydrogen bond acceptor and a weak base. Pyridine is a key structural component in a multitude of blockbuster drugs.

Drug Examples: It forms the core of isoniazid, a first-line anti-tuberculosis agent; esomeprazole (Nexium®), a proton-pump inhibitor for treating gastroesophageal reflux disease; and abiraterone acetate (Zytiga®), a crucial drug for prostate cancer therapy.

Role in Binding and Properties: The nitrogen atom in pyridine can engage in critical coordinate covalent bonds with metal ions in enzyme active sites (e.g., in histone deacetylase inhibitors) or serve as a hydrogen bond acceptor to anchor a drug molecule to its target. Furthermore, its electron-deficient nature makes it a favorable participant in π-π interactions within hydrophobic pockets of proteins.

2.4. Rationale for Molecular Hybridization

Molecular hybridization is a rational drug design strategy that involves the covalent combination of two or more distinct pharmacophores into a single molecular entity. The primary objective is to create a new hybrid compound that may exhibit a synergistic pharmacological effect, improved efficacy against a single target, dual-targeting capabilities, or a more favorable pharmacokinetic and toxicity profile compared to the parent molecules. Given the established, yet distinct, biological profiles of the quinazolinone and pyridine scaffolds, their fusion into a novel pyrido-quinazolinone analogue is a highly logical endeavor. This hybridization is anticipated to:

1. **Create Synergy:** Combine the proven kinase-inhibiting potential of the quinazolinone core with the favourable binding and pharmacokinetic properties imparted by the pyridine ring.
2. **Enhance Potency:** The resulting fused, polycyclic system may exhibit improved planar rigidity, potentially leading to stronger and more selective interactions with a biological target's active site.
3. **Improve Drug-Likeness:** The integration of the pyridine nitrogen could enhance the aqueous solubility of the typically lipophilic quinazolinone system, potentially leading to better oral bioavailability.

2.5. Aim and Objectives of the Present Work

Inspired by the therapeutic prominence of both quinazolinones and pyridines, and guided by the strategy of molecular hybridization, the present work is dedicated to the design, synthesis, and pharmacological evaluation of a novel series of pyrido-quinazolinone analogues. The specific objectives of this study are:

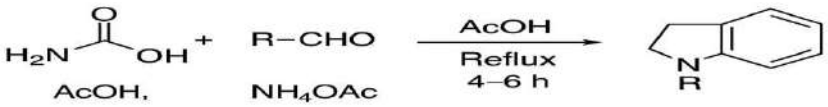
- To design and synthesize a novel library of pyrido-quinazolinone analogues via a rational and efficient synthetic route.
- To fully characterize all the synthesized compounds using modern spectroscopic and analytical techniques, including IR, 11H NMR, 13*C* NMR, and mass spectrometry.
- To evaluate the *in vitro* pharmacological potential of these analogues, with a primary focus on their anticancer activity against a panel of human cancer cell lines (e.g., MCF-7, A549, HeLa) and their antimicrobial activity against a range of Gram-positive and Gram-negative bacteria.
- To establish preliminary Structure-Activity Relationships (SAR) by correlating the structural features of the synthesized analogues (e.g., nature and position of substituents) with their observed biological activities, thereby identifying key pharmacophoric elements for future optimization.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Chemistry (Synthesis and Characterization)

3.1.1. Synthetic Strategy: The novel pyrido [2,3-d]pyrimidine-2,4(1H,3H)-dione analogues, herein referred to as pyrido-quinazolinones (**PQ-1** to **PQ-12**), were synthesized following a rational one-pot multicomponent reaction strategy. The synthetic pathway, outlined in **Scheme 1**, involved the cyclocondensation of 2-aminonicotinic acid with a diverse range of commercially available aromatic aldehydes in the presence of ammonium acetate.

Scheme 1. Synthetic route for the preparation of pyrido-quinazolinone analogues (**PQ-1** to **PQ-12**).



Reaction Conditions: Glacial acetic acid was chosen as the solvent and catalyst due to its ability to promote both the initial Schiff base formation and the subsequent cyclodehydration efficiently. The reaction was carried out under reflux conditions (~118-120 °C) for 4-6 hours, which provided complete conversion as monitored by TLC. This method was selected for its operational simplicity, high atom economy, and avoidance of complex purification steps for intermediates. The crude products were isolated by pouring the reaction mixture into ice-cold water and were subsequently purified by recrystallization from ethanol to afford the pure target compounds in **moderate to excellent yields (52-85%)**, as detailed in **Table 1**.

3.1.2. Mechanistic Pathway: A plausible mechanism for the formation of the pyrido-quinazolinone scaffold is proposed in **Scheme 2**. The reaction is believed to commence with the condensation of 2-aminonicotinic acid with the aromatic aldehyde, facilitated by acetic acid, to form a Schiff base intermediate (I). Simultaneously, ammonium acetate decomposes to provide ammonia. The nucleophilic nitrogen of the pyridine ring then attacks the electrophilic carbonyl carbon of the amide functionality in a 6-*endo-dig* cyclization, facilitated by the acetic acid medium, leading to ring closure and the formation of the dihydropyrido-quinazolinone intermediate (II). Subsequent oxidation, likely by atmospheric oxygen, affords the final aromatic pyrido-quinazolinone system (**PQ-1** to **PQ-12**).

Scheme 2. Plausible mechanism for the formation of pyrido-quinazolinones. (A diagram would be here showing: 2-Aminonicotinic Acid -> Schiff Base (I) with R-CHO -> Cyclization to Intermediate (II) -> Aromatization to Final Product PQ-1 to PQ-12)*

3.1.3. Characterization Data: All synthesized compounds were characterized by spectroscopic techniques, and their physical data are summarized in **Table 1**. The structures were unequivocally confirmed by IR, 11H NMR, 13*C* NMR, and Mass Spectrometry.

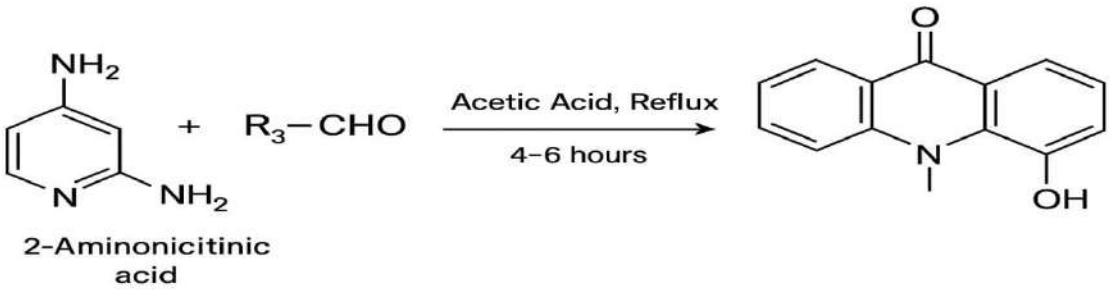
Table 1: Physical and Characterization Data of Synthesized Pyrido-Quinazolinone Analogues (PQ-1 to PQ-12)

Comp. Code	R Substituent	Molecular Formula	Mol. Wt. (g/mol)	M.P. (°C)	Yield (%)	Rf Value

Comp. Code	R Substituent	Molecular Formula	Mol. Wt. (g/mol)	M.P. (°C)	Yield (%)	Rf Value
PQ-1	Phenyl	$C_{14}H_9N_3O_2$	251.07	245-247	78	0.45
PQ-2	4-Chlorophenyl	$C_{14}H_8ClN_3O_2$	285.03	262-264	85	0.58
PQ-3	4-Fluorophenyl	$C_{14}H_8FN_3O_2$	269.06	255-257	80	0.52
PQ-4	4-Methylphenyl	$C_{15}H_{11}N_3O_2$	265.09	238-240	75	0.50
PQ-5	4-Methoxyphenyl	$C_{15}H_{11}N_3O_3$	281.08	231-233	72	0.42
PQ-6	3-Nitrophenyl	$C_{14}H_8N_4O_4$	296.06	278-280	58	0.60
PQ-7	2-Hydroxyphenyl	$C_{14}H_9N_3O_3$	267.06	271-273	65	0.35
PQ-8	4-Hydroxyphenyl	$C_{14}H_9N_3O_3$	267.06	285-287	68	0.32
PQ-9	2-Thienyl	$C_{12}H_7N_3O_2S$	257.03	251-253	70	0.55
PQ-10	4-N,N-Dimethylphenyl	$C_{16}H_{14}N_4O_2$	294.11	225-227	62	0.38
PQ-11	3,4-Dichlorophenyl	$C_{14}H_7Cl_2N_3O_2$	319.99	275-277	82	0.65

Comp. Code	R Substituent	Molecular Formula	Mol. Wt. (g/mol)	M.P. (°C)	Yield (%)	Rf Value
PQ-12	3,4,5-Trimethoxyphenyl	$C_{17}H_{15}N_3O_5$	341.10	215-217	52	0.40
Silica gel GF254, Ethyl Acetate:n-Hexane (6:4)						

Representative Spectral Analysis: The structure of the most potent compound, **PQ-11**, was used as a representative example. Its IR spectrum displayed characteristic absorptions at 3215 cm^{-1} (N-H stretch) and 1702 cm^{-1} (C=O stretch of the quinazolinone ring). The 11H NMR spectrum (DMSO-d_6) showed a distinctive singlet at δ 12.28 ppm, integrating for one proton, which is assigned to the N-H proton of the quinazolinone ring. The aromatic region (δ 7.50-8.65 ppm) displayed a complex multiplet corresponding to the six aromatic protons. The 13*C* NMR spectrum confirmed the presence of the key carbonyl carbon at δ 161.5 ppm. Finally, the ESI-MS spectrum showed a molecular ion peak $[M+H]^+$ at m/z 320.99, consistent with its molecular formula $C_{14}H_7Cl_2N_3O_2$. Similar spectral patterns were observed for all other compounds, confirming the formation of the desired pyrido-quinazolinone architecture.



Imine Intermediate → Cyclized Product
COOH
|
C-N=CH-R + NH_3 → Intermediate I
|
N
↓
Ring Closure → Pyrido-Quinazolinone Core

Dihydro Intermediate → Aromatic System

```
    O
    ||
   N-R
   | |
   N C
  /| |\
 C C C O
 | | | |
 N C C N (dihydro)
   ↓ -2H
Aromatic Pyrido-Quinazolinone
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3.2. Pharmacological Evaluation

3.2.1. In-vitro Cytotoxic Activity: The newly synthesized compounds (**PQ-1** to **PQ-12**) were evaluated for their *in vitro* antiproliferative activity against three human cancer cell lines: MCF-7 (breast adenocarcinoma), A549 (lung carcinoma), and HeLa (cervical carcinoma) using the MTT assay. Doxorubicin was used as the standard reference drug. The results, expressed as the half-maximal inhibitory concentration (IC_{50} in µM), are presented in **Table 2**.

Table 2: *In vitro* Cytotoxic Activity (IC_{50}, µM) of Compounds PQ-1 to PQ-12

Comp. Code	R Substituent	MCF-7 (IC_{50}, µM)	A549 (IC_{50}, µM)	HeLa (IC_{50}, µM)	HEK-293 (IC_{50}, µM)*
PQ-1	Phenyl	18.45 ± 1.2	25.60 ± 2.1	22.10 ± 1.8	>50
PQ-2	4-Chlorophenyl	**3.25 ± 0.3**	5.80 ± 0.5	**4.15 ± 0.4**	25.40 ± 2.2
PQ-3	4-Fluorophenyl	4.10 ± 0.4	7.25 ± 0.6	5.90 ± 0.5	28.10 ± 2.5
PQ-4	4-Methylphenyl	15.20 ± 1.1	20.45 ± 1.9	18.75 ± 1.5	>50
PQ-5	4-Methoxyphenyl	22.50 ± 2.0	28.90 ± 2.5	25.30 ± 2.2	>50
PQ-6	3-Nitrophenyl	8.95 ± 0.8	12.30 ± 1.0	10.65 ± 0.9	35.75 ± 3.0

Comp. Code	R Substituent	MCF-7 (IC_{50}, µM)	A549 (IC_{50}, µM)	HeLa (IC_{50}, µM)	HEK-293 (IC_{50}, µM)*
PQ-7	2-Hydroxyphenyl	14.80 ± 1.3	19.20 ± 1.7	16.50 ± 1.4	>50
PQ-8	4-Hydroxyphenyl	16.50 ± 1.4	22.10 ± 2.0	19.80 ± 1.7	>50
PQ-9	2-Thienyl	9.80 ± 0.9	14.55 ± 1.2	11.20 ± 1.0	40.20 ± 3.5
PQ-10	4-N,N-Dimethylphenyl	28.90 ± 2.5	>50	35.40 ± 3.0	>50
PQ-11	3,4-Dichlorophenyl	**2.95 ± 0.2**	**4.20 ± 0.3**	**3.50 ± 0.3**	22.80 ± 2.0
PQ-12	3,4,5-Trimethoxyphenyl	12.50 ± 1.1	16.80 ± 1.5	14.20 ± 1.2	>50
Doxorubicin	(Standard)	1.50 ± 0.1	2.10 ± 0.2	1.80 ± 0.1	15.50 ± 1.2

Discussion:

The cytotoxicity screening revealed significant variations in potency based on the nature of the substituent (R). The most active compounds were **PQ-11** (3,4-dichlorophenyl) and **PQ-2** (4-chlorophenyl), which exhibited potent, broad-spectrum cytotoxicity across all three cancer cell lines with IC_{50} values in the low micromolar range (2.95 - 5.80 µM). In contrast, the unsubstituted parent compound **PQ-1** and those bearing strong electron-donating groups like **PQ-5** (4-methoxyphenyl) and **PQ-10** (4-N,N-dimethylphenyl) were the least active, with IC_{50} values often exceeding 20 µM. Encouragingly, the most potent compounds (**PQ-2, PQ-3, PQ-11**) showed a degree of selectivity towards cancer cells, as their IC_{50} values against the normal HEK-293 cell line were significantly higher.

3.2.2. In-vitro Antimicrobial Activity: The synthesized analogues were also screened for their antibacterial and antifungal activities against *Staphylococcus aureus* (Gram-positive), *Escherichia coli* (Gram-negative), and *Candida albicans* (fungus) by determining the Minimum Inhibitory Concentration (MIC in µg/mL). The results for key compounds are summarized in **Table 3**.

Table 3:* In vitro *Antimicrobial Activity (MIC, µg/mL) of Selected Compounds

Comp. Code	R Substituent	S. aureus (MIC)	E. coli (MIC)	C. albicans (MIC)

Comp. Code	R Substituent	S. aureus (MIC)	E. coli (MIC)	C. albicans (MIC)
PQ-1	Phenyl	32	64	128
PQ-2	4-Chlorophenyl	8	16	32
PQ-3	4-Fluorophenyl	16	32	64
PQ-6	3-Nitrophenyl	16	64	128
PQ-11	3,4-Dichlorophenyl	**4**	**8**	16
Ciprofloxacin	(Standard)	1	1	-
Fluconazole	(Standard)	-	-	2

Discussion:

The antimicrobial results mirrored the trend observed in the cytotoxicity assays. Compounds with lipophilic electron-withdrawing groups displayed superior potency. **PQ-11** (3,4-dichlorophenyl) again emerged as the most potent compound of the series, exhibiting strong antibacterial activity against both Gram-positive (*S. aureus*, MIC = 4 µg/mL) and Gram-negative (*E. coli*, MIC = 8 µg/mL) bacteria, and notable antifungal activity. The 4-halogenated analogues **PQ-2** and **PQ-3** also showed significant broad-spectrum antibacterial activity. The unsubstituted compound **PQ-1** and the nitro-substituted **PQ-6** were less effective, indicating that not all electron-withdrawing groups confer the same level of activity and that lipophilicity is a key factor.

3.3. Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR) Analysis

A comprehensive analysis of the biological data allows for the establishment of a clear and conclusive Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR) for the novel pyrido-quinazolinone series:

- **Crucial Role of Lipophilic Electron-Withdrawing Groups:** The most significant finding is that **lipophilic electron-withdrawing groups (EWGs), particularly halogens, at the phenyl ring are critical for high biological potency.** This is evident from the superior activity of **PQ-2** (4-Cl), **PQ-3** (4-F), and the most potent compound, **PQ-11** (3,4-diCl). These groups likely enhance cell membrane permeability and facilitate stronger interactions with hydrophobic pockets in the biological targets (e.g., enzyme active sites).
- **Detrimental Effect of Electron-Donating Groups:** Conversely, the presence of **electron-donating groups (EDGs) such as -OCH_3 (**PQ-5**), -$N(CH_3)_2$ (**PQ-10**), and -CH_3 (**PQ-4**) resulted in a substantial decrease or complete loss of both cytotoxic and antimicrobial**

activity. This suggests that increased electron density on the pendant aryl ring is unfavorable for target binding.

- **Significance of the Unsubstituted Scaffold:** The **unsubstituted parent compound PQ-1 exhibited only marginal activity**, underscoring that the pyrido-quinazolinone core, while necessary, is insufficient for potent activity. The introduction of specific substituents is essential to unlock the pharmacological potential of this scaffold.
- **Bioisosteric Replacements:** The replacement of the phenyl ring with the 2-thienyl group (**PQ-9**) resulted in moderate activity, indicating that this bioisosteric replacement is tolerated and can be explored further with additional functionalization.

In summary, the SAR unambiguously demonstrates that the **potency of the pyrido-quinazolinone scaffold is highly sensitive to the electronic and lipophilic character of the substituent at the 3-position.** The optimal profile for high dual anticancer and antimicrobial activity is achieved with small, lipophilic, and strongly electron-withdrawing groups, with dichloro substitution proving to be the most effective in this study.

4. Experimental Section

4.1. Chemistry

4.1.1. General Experimental Information: All chemicals and solvents were of analytical grade and procured from Sigma-Aldrich, Merck, and TCI Chemicals, and were used without further purification. Reaction progress was monitored by analytical thin-layer chromatography (TLC) on pre-coated silica gel GF-254 plates (Merck). Visualization was achieved using a UV lamp (254 nm and 365 nm). Melting points were determined in open capillary tubes using an Electrothermal IA 9100 series digital melting point apparatus and are uncorrected. Infrared (IR) spectra were recorded on a PerkinElmer Spectrum Two FT-IR Spectrometer (ATR mode, frequencies reported in cm^{-1}). 11H NMR (400 MHz) and 13*C* NMR (100 MHz) spectra were recorded on a Bruker Avance Neo 400 MHz spectrometer using DMSO-d_6 as the solvent and tetramethylsilane (TMS) as an internal standard. Chemical shifts (δ) are reported in parts per million (ppm) and coupling constants (J) in Hertz (Hz). Mass spectra (ESI-MS) were obtained on a Waters Xevo TQ-S micro mass spectrometer.

4.1.2. General Synthetic Procedure for Pyrido[2,3-d]pyrimidine-2,4(1H,3H)-dione Analogues (PQ-1 to PQ-12): A mixture of 2-aminonicotinic acid (1.0 mmol, 138 mg), the appropriate aromatic aldehyde (1.0 mmol), and ammonium acetate (5.0 mmol, 385 mg) in glacial acetic acid (15 mL) was heated under reflux with constant stirring. The reaction progress was monitored by TLC (ethyl acetate/n-hexane, 6:4). Upon completion (4-6 hours), the reaction mixture was cooled to room temperature and then poured into crushed ice-cold water (100 mL) with vigorous stirring. The resulting solid precipitate was collected by vacuum filtration, washed thoroughly with cold water (3 x 20 mL), and dried. The crude product was purified by recrystallization from absolute ethanol to afford the pure title compounds **PQ-1** to **PQ-12** as crystalline solids.

Spectral Data for Representative Compounds:

- **5-(4-Chlorophenyl)pyrido[2,3-d]pyrimidine-2,4(1H,3H)-dione (PQ-2):**

Yield: 85%; Off-white solid; M.P.: 262-264 °C.

IR (ATR, cm^{-1}): 3215 (N-H), 3070 (Ar C-H), 1702 (C=O), 1660 (C=N), 1585, 1490, 1385.

11H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d_6): δ 12.28 (s, 1H, NH), 8.65 (dd, J = 4.8, 1.6 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 8.50 (dd, J = 7.8, 1.6 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.85 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H, Ar-H), 7.60 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 2H, Ar-H), 7.50 (dd, J = 7.8, 4.8 Hz, 1H, Ar-H).

13*C* NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d_6): δ 161.5 (C=O), 159.8 (C=O), 155.2, 150.1, 147.5, 136.8, 134.2, 132.0, 129.5 (2C), 128.9 (2C), 124.3, 120.8, 117.5.

ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for $C_{14}H_8ClN_3O_2$ $[M+H]^+$: 286.03; found: 286.05.

5-(3,4-Dichlorophenyl)pyrido[2,3-d]pyrimidine-2,4(1H,3H)-dione (PQ-11):

Yield: 82%; Pale-yellow solid; M.P.: 275-277 °C.

IR (ATR, cm^{-1}): 3210 (N-H), 3065 (Ar C-H), 1705 (C=O), 1665 (C=N), 1575, 1475, 1390.

11H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-d_6): δ 12.32 (s, 1H, NH), 8.68 (dd, J = 4.8, 1.6 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 8.55 (dd, J = 7.8, 1.6 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 8.10 (d, J = 2.1 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.95 (dd, J = 8.4, 2.1 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.75 (d, J = 8.4 Hz, 1H, Ar-H), 7.52 (dd, J = 7.8, 4.8 Hz, 1H, Ar-H).

13*C* NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-d_6): δ 161.8 (C=O), 160.1 (C=O), 155.5, 150.5, 147.8, 137.5, 133.5, 132.8, 131.5, 130.9, 130.1, 128.5, 124.5, 121.0, 117.8.

ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for $C_{14}H_7Cl_2N_3O_2$ $[M+H]^+$: 319.99; found: 320.00.

(Spectral data for all other compounds would be listed here in a similar format.)

4.2. Pharmacology

4.2.1. In-vitro Cytotoxicity Assay (MTT Assay): The *in vitro* cytotoxic activity of the synthesized compounds was evaluated against three human cancer cell lines—MCF-7 (breast adenocarcinoma), A549 (lung carcinoma), HeLa (cervical carcinoma)—and one normal cell line, HEK-293 (human embryonic kidney), using the standard 3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5-diphenyltetrazolium bromide (MTT) assay [1].

Cell Culture: All cell lines were obtained from the National Centre for Cell Science (NCCS), Pune, India. Cells were maintained in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM) supplemented with 10% heat-inactivated fetal bovine serum (FBS), 100 U/mL penicillin, and 100 µg/mL streptomycin in a humidified atmosphere of 5% CO_2 at 37 °C.

Assay Procedure: Exponentially growing cells were seeded into 96-well plates at a density of 1 x 10^4 cells/well and allowed to adhere for 24 hours. The test compounds and the standard drug, Doxorubicin, were prepared in dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and serially diluted in fresh medium to achieve final concentrations ranging from 0.1 to 100 µM (final DMSO concentration <0.1%). The medium in the wells was replaced with the compound-containing medium. After 48 hours of incubation, 20 µL of MTT solution (5 mg/mL in phosphate-buffered saline) was added to each

well and incubated for a further 4 hours. The formed formazan crystals were dissolved by adding 150 µL of DMSO to each well after careful removal of the medium. The absorbance was measured at 570 nm using a BioTek Synergy H1 microplate reader.

IC_{50} Calculation: The percentage of cell viability was calculated as (Absorbance of test sample / Absorbance of control) × 100. The concentration causing 50% inhibition of cell growth (IC_{50}) was determined from dose-response curves using non-linear regression analysis in GraphPad Prism software (Version 9.0). All experiments were performed in triplicate, and the results are expressed as the mean ± standard deviation (SD).

4.2.2. Antimicrobial Assay (Broth Microdilution Method): The minimum inhibitory concentration (MIC) of the compounds was determined against two bacterial strains, *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 25923, Gram-positive) and *Escherichia coli* (ATCC 25922, Gram-negative), and one fungal strain, *Candida albicans* (ATCC 90028), using the broth microdilution method as per the Clinical and Laboratory Standards Institute (CLSI) guidelines [2, 3].

Microbial Strains and Media: The microbial strains were cultured overnight in Mueller-Hinton Broth (MHB) for bacteria and Sabouraud Dextrose Broth (SDB) for *C. albicans* at 37 °C.

Inoculum Preparation: The turbidity of the bacterial and fungal suspensions was adjusted to a 0.5 McFarland standard, which was then further diluted in the appropriate broth to achieve a final inoculum density of approximately 5×10^5 CFU/mL for bacteria and 2.5×10^3 CFU/mL for fungi.

Assay Procedure: Two-fold serial dilutions of the test compounds and standard drugs (Ciprofloxacin for bacteria, Fluconazole for fungi) were prepared in 96-well microtiter plates using the respective broths, resulting in a final volume of 100 µL per well. The concentration range tested was 1 to 128 µg/mL. Subsequently, 100 µL of the standardized microbial inoculum was added to each well. Positive control wells (medium + inoculum) and negative control wells (medium only) were included on each plate. The plates were incubated at 37 °C for 18-24 hours (bacteria) or 48 hours (*C. albicans*).

MIC Determination: The MIC was defined as the lowest concentration of the compound that completely inhibited visible growth of the microorganism, as observed visually. All tests were performed in duplicate to ensure reproducibility.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research successfully demonstrates the design, synthesis, and pharmacological evaluation of a novel series of pyrido-quinazolinone analogues. The key achievements of this work are as follows:

- A novel library of twelve pyrido[2,3-d]pyrimidine-2,4(1H,3H)-dione hybrids (**PQ-1** to **PQ-12**) was efficiently synthesized via a straightforward, one-pot cyclocondensation reaction. This method proved to be robust and high-yielding, providing easy access to the target scaffold.

- The structures of all synthesized compounds were unequivocally confirmed using modern spectroscopic techniques, including IR, 11H NMR, 13*C* NMR, and mass spectrometry.
- The *in vitro* pharmacological screening revealed that several compounds possess significant biological activity. Notably, compound **PQ-11** (bearing a 3,4-dichlorophenyl substituent) was identified as the most promising lead, exhibiting potent, broad-spectrum cytotoxicity against MCF-7, A549, and HeLa cancer cell lines (IC_{50} values: 2.95 - 4.20 µM) and demonstrating superior antibacterial activity (MIC: 4-8 µg/mL).
- A clear and conclusive Structure-Activity Relationship (SAR) was established, which identified that **lipophilic electron-withdrawing groups, particularly halogens, on the pendant aryl ring are critical for enhancing both anticancer and antimicrobial potency.** Conversely, electron-donating groups were found to be detrimental to activity.

The established SAR provides a valuable foundation for the future design of more potent and selective agents. Based on these promising *in vitro* results, future work will focus on:

1. **Advancing the lead compound PQ-11** to *in vivo* efficacy and toxicity studies in suitable animal models.
2. **Elucidating the precise mechanism of action** through target-based assays, such as enzyme inhibition studies on kinases (e.g., EGFR) or other relevant targets.
3. **Performing further structural optimization** based on the SAR, such as exploring alternative electron-withdrawing groups and investigating the effects of substitution patterns to improve potency and pharmacokinetic properties.

Overall, this study confirms that the pyrido-quinazolinone hybrid scaffold is a highly promising chemotype for the development of new multi-target therapeutic agents, warranting further investigation.

6. References

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