

REVIEW ARTICLE

Exploring the Efficacy of Metal Complexes of Coumarin Derivative: Open New Avenues for Discovery of Noval Therapeutic Agents

Reema Sinha*, Pankaj Kumar, Karishma

ABSTRACT

Coumarins are fused six-membered oxygen-containing benzoheterocyclic compounds consisting of an α -pyrone and a benzene ring. Coumarins and their derivatives exhibit a range of biological activities, including antiallergic, insecticidal, antifungal, antiviral, and antibacterial effects. Hydroxycoumarins, as typical phenolic compounds, act as potent metal chelators and free radical scavengers. The metal complexes of coumarins have attracted significant attention from synthetic chemists, medicinal scientists, and pharmacists due to their broad biological applications. These coumarin-derived metal complexes demonstrate various therapeutic properties, such as antibacterial, antifungal, anticancer, antioxidant, anthelmintic, pesticidal, and nematocidal activities. This review highlights recent synthetic methodologies and the known bioactivities of coumarin-metal complexes, emphasizing their potential as promising scaffolds for the development of novel therapeutic agents.

Keywords: Coumarin, Metal complex, Antibacterial, Antifungal

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INTRODUCTION

Coumarins (2H-chromen-2-ones), oxygen-containing benzo-fused heterocycles, represent one of the most important classes of compounds in medicinal chemistry due to their diverse pharmacological activities (Figure 1). Metal ions play a crucial role in various biological processes (35). Our study focuses on coumarin-based metal complexes, which have shown promise as antibacterial, antifungal, antitubercular and antioxidant agents (12). The ligands and their corresponding metal complexes have been screened for antibacterial activity

against *Escherichia coli*, *Pseudomonas aeruginosa*, *Bacillus cereus*, and *Staphylococcus aureus*, as well as for antifungal activity against *Candida albicans* and *Aspergillus flavus*. Metal ions play essential roles at the molecular level in biological systems. The formation of metal chelates increases the lipophilicity of the drug, enhancing its permeability and bioavailability, thereby improving its pharmacological efficacy(4)(5). Moreover, interactions between metal ions and antibiotics may enhance the antimicrobial activity compared to free ligands (30). The exploration of coumarin derivatives represents a promising direction for the development of new therapeutic agents with improved efficacy and reduced side effects (5). These investigations significantly advance medicinal chemistry by contributing novel compounds that can potentially meet currently unmet medical needs and improve human health (1)(3).

Coumarin synthesis via various name reaction

several named reactions have been reported for the synthesis of coumarin derivatives, including the Perkin reaction, Pechmann reaction, Claisen rearrangement, Knoevenagel reaction, Kostanecki-Robinson coupling reaction, Reformatsky reaction, Heck-lactonization reaction, and the Baylis-Hillman reaction. These syntheses are often carried out in the presence of either metal-free or metal-based homogeneous and

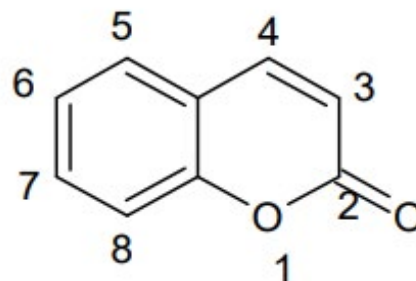


Fig. 1: Structure of coumarin

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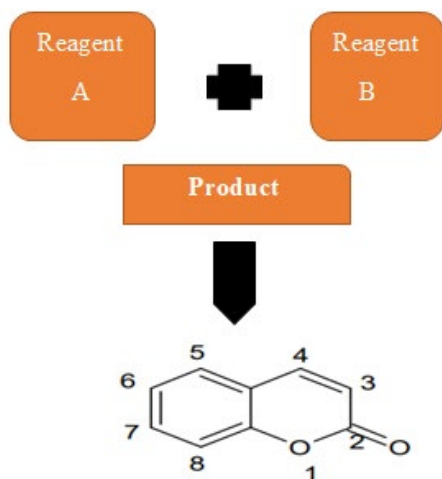
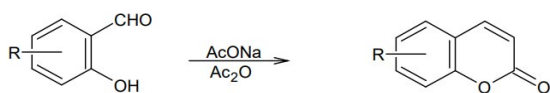


Fig 2: Structure of Coumarin

heterogeneous catalytic systems. The following sections summarize these key reactions used to construct coumarin motifs (2) (Figure 2).

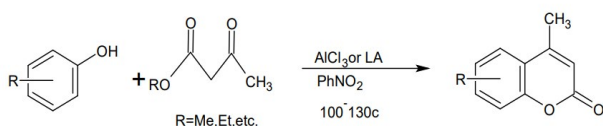
Perkin Reaction

The Perkin reaction is a classical method for the synthesis of coumarins. It involves the condensation of salicylaldehyde with acetic anhydride under basic conditions. The reaction forms an α , β -unsaturated aromatic acid intermediate, which undergoes intramolecular cyclization in the presence of sodium acetate to yield substituted coumarins (2).



Pechmann Reaction

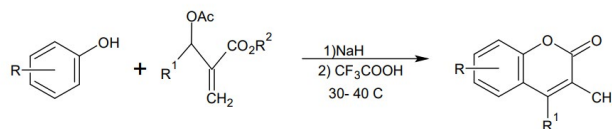
The Pechmann reaction involves the synthesis of coumarins via the acid-catalyzed condensation of phenols (e.g., carbolic acid) with β -keto esters containing an α -carbonyl group. This process typically proceeds through esterification or transesterification, followed by electrophilic substitution and intramolecular cyclization to form the coumarin ring system (2).



Claisen Rearrangement

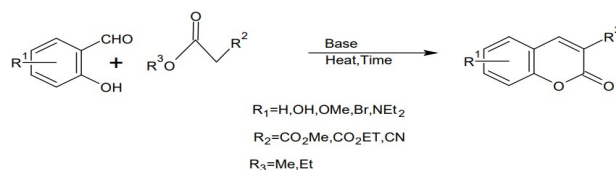
The Claisen rearrangement is employed in the synthesis of 3,4-substituted coumarins. This reaction involves the rearrangement of allyl aryl ethers (such as phenol and protected allyl alcohol) in the presence of trifluoroacetic

acid (TFA) under moderately basic conditions and mild heating. The process yields 3,4-substituted coumarins in good yields (2).



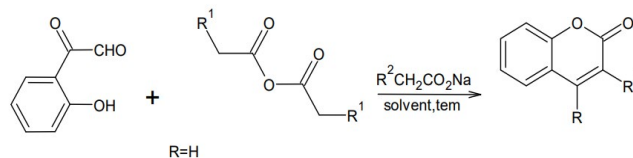
Knoevenagel reaction

Knoevenagel reaction utilized for the synthesis of 3-substituted coumarin derivative. The reaction of 2-hydroxy benzaldehydes with coupling partner containing an active methylene group in the presence of the base under heating conditions and produced coumarin product in good yield. Various reports for the synthesis of Knoevenagel reaction in the presence of ultrasound solvent-free conditions (2).



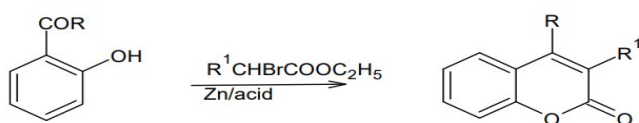
Kostanecki-Robinson coupling reaction

Kostanecki-Robinson coupling reaction utilized for the synthesis of coumarin derivative. The reaction of aliphatic anhydride and aryl ketone with a substitution of the hydroxyl group which gives the desired product as coumarin with good yield (2).



Reformatsky reaction

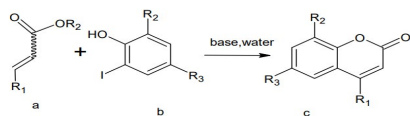
The Reformatsky reaction of aldehydes or ketones with α -halo esters in presence of a zinc to form β -hydroxy-esters and converts 3,4-disubstituted coumarins from α , β -unsaturated ester (2).



Heck-lactonization reaction

The Heck-Lactonization reaction utilized for the synthesis of coumarin analogues in presence of Pd catalysis. Different reaction conditions using aqueous water and organic

solvent. Even with 10 mol% of the PdCl₂ or Pd (OAc)₂-catalyst used for enoate reacted with iodo compound to produce coumarin in good yields under conditions A and B with water. The condition C was indicating low chemical yield and the proposed catalytic cycle (2).



Condition A: 10mol% of pd(OAc)₂, H₂O, 3Equiv Et₃N, 80 °C

Condition B: 10 mol% of pdcl₂, H₂O, 3Equiv Et₃N, 80 °C

Condition C: 10mol% of pd(OAc)₂, in the presence or absence of 20 mol % PPh₃, acetone, equiv AgNO₃, reflux

Various methodologies for coumarin synthesis

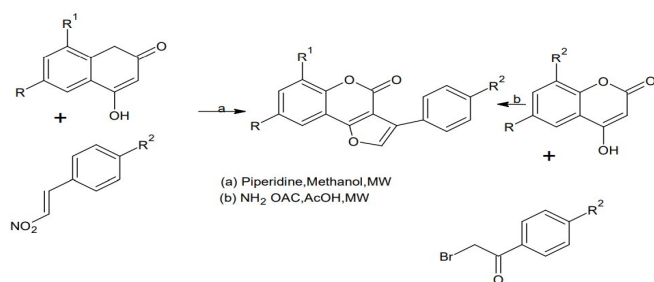
several innovative and eco-friendly methodologies have been developed for the synthesis of coumarin derivatives. These include

- Microwave-assisted synthesis
- Ultrasound-mediated synthesis
- Solvent-free synthesis
- Homogeneous catalytic reactions
- Heterogeneous catalytic reactions

Microwave-Assisted Synthesis

Microwave-assisted synthesis has emerged as a powerful tool in modern organic synthesis, especially in drug discovery, due to its advantages such as higher product yields, reduced reaction times, and improved reproducibility (2). This technique offers a flexible platform for chemical transformations and allows reactions that may not proceed efficiently under conventional heating.

Microwave irradiation accelerates chemical reactions and often produces higher yields in a matter of minutes compared to hours with traditional methods(22). For example, Brahmbatt and co-workers reported the microwave-assisted synthesis of 3-aryl-furo[3,2-c] coumarins, achieving good yields within just 2–4 minutes (16)(17).



Ultrasound mediated synthesis

Ultrasound irradiation has become an important green technique in synthetic organic chemistry. Acoustic cavitation—the rapid formation, growth, and collapse

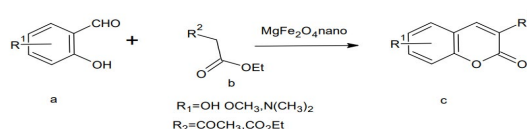
of microbubbles creates localized hot spots of high temperature and pressure that accelerate reactions. Key advantages include:

Very short reaction times compared with conventional heating

Simple experimental setups that often operate under solvent-free or mild condition

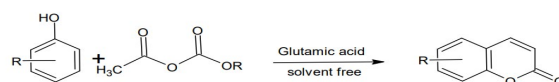
High yields and improved selectivity for many coumarin derivatives

For example, ultrasound-assisted coupling of substrate A (e.g., a phenol bearing R¹ = OH, OCH₃, or N(CH₃)₂) with substrate B (bearing R² = COCH₃ or CO₂Et) at 45 °C under solvent-free conditions rapidly affords the desired coumarin product C through cavitation-induced activation (2).



Solvent-free synthesis

Large volumes of hazardous and volatile organic solvents are used in conventional chemical reactions. Green chemistry aims to replace toxic reaction solvents with safer alternatives. Many researchers have reported the synthesis of coumarin under solvent-free conditions. Sabetpoor et al. (2014) reported the synthesis of simple coumarin analogs under solvent-free conditions using glutamic acid as a catalyst. The reaction was carried out between phenol and keto-ester reactants, and excellent yields were obtained (2).

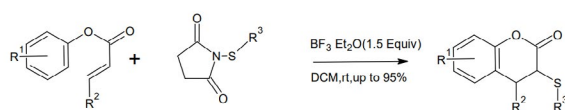


Homogeneous catalytic reaction

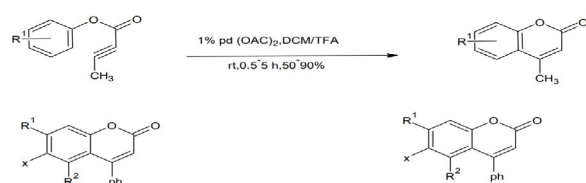
Chang et al. (2014) proposed a metal-free approach to synthesize 3-sulfonylated coumarins through the cyclization of aryl alkynoates and N-sulfanylsuccinimides in the presence of BF₃•Et₂O as a Lewis acid (2).

Heterogeneous catalytic reaction

Heterogeneous catalysis plays a vital role in converting petroleum and natural gas into cleaner, more efficient



fuels. Yuzo Fujiwara *et al.* (2000) reported a novel method for synthesizing coumarins and quinolinones via intermolecular hydroarylation. Different aryl alkynoates and alkynanilides were quickly converted to the required coumarin derivatives at 25–27°C using Pd(OAc)₂ as a catalyst in a mixture of TFA and DCM solvents (2).



Preparation of coumarins catalysed by PtCl₄.

In 2004, Chuan and coworkers reported a gold(III)-mediated intermolecular hydroarylation reaction of aryl alkynoates in the presence of 5 mol% AuCl₃ and AgOTf. Higher temperatures (up to 70°C) were required in some cases. Catalysis by Pd(II), Pt(II), Pt(IV), and Ru(II) has also been described (2).

Metal Complex

Metal complexes of coumarin derivatives have garnered significant attention due to their enhanced biological activities compared to parent coumarin ligands (Fig -3) (4) (5). These complexes are formed by coordinating coumarin derivatives with metal ions, resulting in compounds that exhibit broad-spectrum biological properties, including anticancer, antibacterial, antioxidant, and enzyme-mimicking activities (15). The chelation property of these compounds increases the lipophilicity of the drug, improving its permeability and enhancing drug action (7)(14). Although coumarin itself can be toxic to the liver and kidneys, its biological activity significantly increases upon binding with metal ions, often with reduced toxicity (6)(43). Coumarins are a class of compounds that combine a broad spectrum of biological activities with excellent chelating properties, making them suitable candidates for the synthesis of novel complexes. Many reviews on transition metal coumarin complexes with biological

activity have been published over the previous decade (Balcioglu *et al.*, 2020; Balewski *et al.*, 2021; Patil *et al.*, 2022). The present review aims to inform the reader on the latest developments of metal complex of Schiff base of Coumerin which is new approach (3). Cu(II), Zn (II), Co (III) are used for metal complex as these metals have shown good activity.

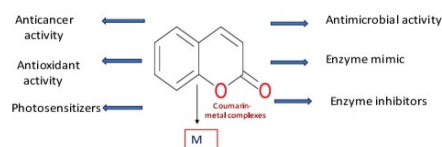


Figure.3: Biological properties of coumarin-metal complexes

Metal coordination tends to improve biological activity. This would be in agreement Overtone's concept of cell permeability - the cellular membrane tends to favor the passage of hydrophobic molecules. Chelation theory suggests partial sharing of the positive charge of the transition metal ion with the donor groups, combined with π -delocalization within the chelate ring. As a result, lipophilicity and, hence, membrane permeation and biological activity tend to increase. As demonstrated by (Mujahid *et al.*, 2023), there are additional factors at play - if biological activity is realized by the metal ion its particular coordination mode determines whether it is (3).

MEDICINAL APPLICATION OF COUMARIN METAL COMPLEX

- Coumarin complexes with antimicrobial activity.
- Coumarin complexes with anticancer activity.
- Coumarin complexes as photodynamic and photochemotherapeutic agents.
- Coumarin complexes as enzyme inhibitors

Antimicrobial activity

With the rise of resistance to commonly used antibiotics, there is a need for novel therapeutic agents and drugs. The therapeutic options for many bacteria strains are still limited and the research aimed at discovering new antimicrobial drugs with metal complexes. Valuable information regarding antimicrobial metal complexes of coumarins can be found in recently published papers (12) (30)

Aldovic and coworkers synthesized several coumarin-derived ligands and coordinated with Pd(II) (Avdović *et al.*, 2019). Compounds manifested moderate to low antimicrobial activity. Ligand and its corresponding compound manifested minimal inhibitory concentration

(MIC) of 125 µg/mL and 62.5 µg/mL respectively toward *Aspergillus flavus* ATCC, comparable value to the standard fluconazole with MIC = 62.5 µg/mL. The same compounds had MICs of 62.5 µg/mL when tested against *Bacillus subtilis* IP 5832 and *Bacillus cereus*, compared to less than 2.0 µg/mL exhibited by the standard substance doxycycline. Generally, coordination of the ligands with Pd(II) tended to increase antibacterial activity. (8)

In 2019, *Belkhir-Talbi et al.* described copper (II) and zinc(II) complexes of 3-(2-hydroxybenzoyl)-2H-chromen-2-one as effective agents against Gram-positive bacteria strain: *Staphylococcus aureus* (ATCC 25923) (*Belkhir-Talbi et al.*, 2019). It was found that both complexes exhibited moderate antibacterial activity and diameters of inhibition zones (range of 14–17 mm) in comparison to reference second-generation cephamycin group antibiotic - cefoxitin (diameter of inhibition zone: 20 mm). Furthermore, complexes showed a higher activity comparison to the free ligand. ADMET and drug-likeness profile of these compounds confirmed their non-toxic and non-carcinogenic properties. (1)

Huang and coworkers synthesized a coumarin-bearing ligand and together with a series of ancillary ligands, coordinated with Ru(II). The ancillary ligands were 2,2'-bipyridine and 2,2'-bipyridine disubstituted at positions 4 and 4' with methyl methoxy, and tert-butyl substituents. The novel complexes were tested against gram negative *E. coli* and *P. aeruginosa* and found to be inactive. Compound manifested antibacterial activity against gram-negative *S. aureus* (MIC = 1.56 µg/mL). Further studies showed could interact with phospholipids in the bacterial membrane, generating reactive oxygen species, consequently impairing membrane integrity. (3)(28)

Anticancer Activity

Coumarin-metal complexes have shown significant potential in cancer therapy. For instance complexes with metals like copper and platinum exhibit strong antiproliferative effects against cancer cell lines, including cervical and breast cancer. These complexes can induce DNA damage and inhibit tumor-associated inflammation, effective in targeting cancer cells while minimizing harm to normal tissues. (1)(3) The ability of these complexes to interact with DNA suggests a mechanism that could be exploited for novel anticancer drug development. (4)(10)

Antioxidant activity

The antioxidant capabilities of coumarin-metal complexes are particularly valuable in combating oxidative stress-related diseases. These complexes can effectively

scavenge reactive oxygen species (ROS), which are implicated in cancer, neurodegenerative diseases, and other pathologies. By protecting normal cells from oxidative damage while targeting tumor cells, these compounds hold promise for therapeutic strategies in hematologic cancers. (1)(13)

Enzyme Inhibition

Coumarin-metal complexes exhibit enzyme-inhibiting properties, can be harnessed for therapeutic purposes. For example, they inhibit cyclooxygenase enzymes involved in inflammation and pain pathways, offering a approach to managing conditions like arthritis and other inflammatory diseases. (1)

Photodynamic Therapy

Coumarin-metal complexes are increasingly being investigated for use in photodynamic therapy (PDT). The unique fluorescent properties of coumarins make them suitable as photosensitizers when coordinated with transition metals. (45) These complexes can generate reactive oxygen species upon light activation, leading to targeted destruction of cancer cells. Recent studies have focused on optimizing these complexes for enhanced photodynamic activity.

Antioxidant Properties

Recent research highlights that coumarin-metal complexes possess superior antioxidant capabilities. The metal ions can modify the radical-scavenging properties of the coumarin ligands, allowing these complexes to effectively neutralize reactive oxygen species (ROS) associated with various diseases, including cancer and neurodegenerative disorders. This modification not only protects normal cells but also selectively targets tumor cells.

CONCLUSION

The integration of metal ions into coumarin derivatives improve biological activity and avenues for the creation of novel therapeutic agents with improved efficacy against various diseases. The Authors may concluded that their ability to modify safety profile and enhance therapeutic efficacy which makes them attractive candidates for further investigation. Future studies are expected to focus on elucidating structure-activity relationships and exploring new synthetic pathways to optimize their biological activities. The integration of metal ions into coumarin derivatives not only augments their biological functions but also opens avenues for discovery of novel therapeutic agents with improved efficacy against various diseases and reduce the toxicity. Future studies

are expected to focus on elucidating structure-activity relationships and exploring new synthetic pathways to optimize their biological activity. The ongoing research into coumarin-metal complexes underscores their potential therapeutic agents with enhanced biological activities. The combination of coumarins with various metal ions not only improves their pharmacological profiles but also opens new avenues for treatment strategies in pharmacology and infectious diseases. Continued exploration of these compounds is yield innovative solutions in drug development and therapeutic applications. The integration of metal ions into coumarin derivatives improve biological activity and avenues for the creation of novel therapeutic agents with improved efficacy against various diseases.

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