

BRIASTECHOLIDE N: A NEW CHLORINE-CONTAINING BRIARANE DITERPENOID DERIVING FROM CULTURED *BRIAREUM STECHEI*

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Abstract – A new chlorine-containing briarane-type diterpenoid, briastecholide N (**1**) was isolated from cultured octocoral *Briareum stechei* via chemical screening. The structure of **1** was corroborated by 2D NMR experiments and confirmed backed by single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis. The study found that **1** is capable of increasing the release of alkaline phosphatase (ALP) at 10 μ M.

Briarane-type natural products are a group of diterpenoids based on bicyclo[8.4.0]tetradecane ring system, mostly with a γ -lactone moiety. Since the discovery of briarane, briarein A, 46 years ago,¹ over 800 briaranes have been found in various marine invertebrates, with octocorals under genus *Briareum* proven to be the most important sources.² Waters in the tropical Indo-Pacific Ocean have been found to be habitats of marine life and organisms with remarkable biodiversity.³ Given the close correlation between biodiversity and natural product diversity, an encrusting octocoral *Briareum stechei* (Kükenthal 1908) (phylum: Cnidaria, sub-phylum: Anthozoa, class: Octocorallia, order: Scleralcyonacea, family: Briareidae)^{4,5} distributed in the waters of Taiwan and Okinawan was collected as a representative specimen,^{6,7} due to its rich biota. In order to protect the population and habitats of this endangered species from overexploitation and uphold bioactive materials,^{8,9} the study successfully isolated a new highly-oxygenated briarane, briastecholide N (**1**) (Figure 1) from cultured *B. stechei*, in addition to ascertaining the structure and alkaline phosphatase (ALP) activity of **1**. The structure, including the absolute configuration of **1**, was further confirmed *via* a single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis using a diffractometer equipped with the molybdenum radiation (Mo K α) source.

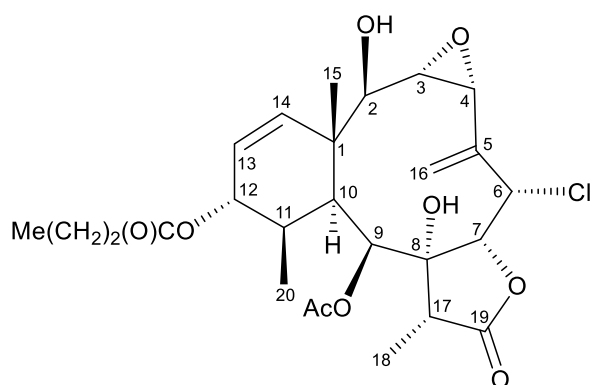


Figure 1. Structure of briastecholide N (**1**)

In the shape of amorphous powder, briastecholide N (**1**) was put into methanol solution for generating colorless crystals, $[\alpha]_D^{25} +45$ (c 0.05, CHCl_3). The ESIMS spectrum exhibiting a pair of isotopic $[\text{M} + \text{Na}]^+ / [\text{M} + 2 + \text{Na}]^+$ ion peaked in a ratio of 3:1, underscoring the presence of a chlorine atom in **1**. The following is the molecular formula of **1**: $\text{C}_{26}\text{H}_{35}\text{ClO}_9$ using HRESIMS data (m/z 549.18632 $[\text{M} + \text{Na}]^+$, Calcd for $\text{C}_{26}\text{H}_{35}\text{ClO}_9 + \text{Na}$, 549.18618), which needs nine degrees of unsaturation. Its IR bands revealed the presence of hydroxy (ν_{max} 3432 cm^{-1}), γ -lactone (ν_{max} 1774 cm^{-1}), and ester carbonyl (ν_{max} 1734 cm^{-1}) groups. Plus analysis of the ^1H NMR (Table 1), HSQC, and HMBC spectroscopic data, it was suggested that there should be two exchangeable protons in **1**. Because trace amount of **1** was obtained, the ^1H and ^{13}C NMR data were assigned with the assistance of HSQC and HMBC spectra (Table 1). The HSQC and HMBC spectra indicated the presence of disubstituted olefin (δ_{C} 149.3/CH-13, 142.2/CH-14), while the

presence of exocyclic olefin was confirmed by the typical signal of an sp^2 methylene at δ_C 118.3 (CH₂-16) and exomethylene proton signals at δ_H 5.54 (1H, d, $J = 3.0$ Hz, H-16a) and 5.98 (1H, d, $J = 3.0$ Hz, H-16b). In addition, three carbonyls resonating at δ_C 174.0, 172.5, and 169.4 in the ¹³C NMR spectrum revealed the presence of a γ -lactone and two other ester groups. In the ¹H NMR spectrum, an acetate methyl (δ_H 2.21, 3H, s) and an *n*-butyrate (δ_H 0.94, 3H, t, $J = 7.2$ Hz; 1.63, 2H, sext, $J = 7.2$ Hz; 2.22, 2H, t, $J = 7.2$ Hz) were observed. The aforementioned findings showed that five double bonds accounted for five unsaturated degrees, with the remaining four degrees ascertaining **1** as a tetracyclic molecule. A disubstituted epoxy group was identified by the chemical shifts of two oxymethine carbons at δ_C 62.4 (CH-3) and 58.0 (CH-4), as well as their proton signals at δ_H 3.41 (1H, dd, $J = 8.4, 3.6$ Hz, H-3) and 3.71 (1H, d, $J = 3.6$ Hz, H-4), respectively.

Table 1. ¹H and ¹³C NMR data for **1**

Position	δ_H^a (J in Hz)	δ_C^b (mult.) ^c
1		40.5, C
2	3.14 dd (8.4, 3.0)	76.2, CH
3	3.41 dd (8.4, 3.6)	62.4, CH
4	3.71 d (3.6)	58.0, CH
5		n. o. ^d
6	5.42 ddd (3.0, 3.0, 3.0)	60.8, CH
7	5.08 d (3.0)	76.2, CH
8		85.0, C
9	5.49 d (9.6)	68.6, CH
10	2.28 dd (9.6, 3.0)	35.9, CH
11	2.25 m	35.0, CH
12	4.88 dd (6.0, 2.4)	70.0, CH
13	5.76 ddd (10.2, 6.0, 1.2)	149.3, CH
14	6.24 d (10.2)	142.2, CH
15	1.06 s	15.2, Me
16a/b	5.54 d (3.0); 5.98 d (3.0)	118.3, CH ₂
17	2.46 q (7.2)	44.8, CH
18	1.22 d (7.2)	5.9, Me
19		174.0, C
20	1.04 d (7.2)	12.7, Me
OAc-9		169.4, C
	2.21 s	21.7, Me
OC(O) <i>n</i> -Pr-12		172.5, C
	2.22 t (7.2)	35.9, CH ₂
	1.63 sext (7.2)	18.1, CH ₂
	0.94 t (7.2)	13.8, Me
OH-2	2.05 d (3.0)	
OH-8	3.16 s	

^a 600 MHz in CDCl₃. ^b 150 MHz in CDCl₃. ^c Multiplicity deduced from HSQC and HMBC spectra. ^d n. o. = not observed.

The H-2/H-3/H-4, H-6/H-7, H-9/H-10/H-11/H-12/H-13/H-14, and H-17/H₃-18 spin systems, measured in a ¹H–¹H COSY experiment (Figure 2), were fit into the regiochemistry of vicinal couplings in **1**. The fused tetracyclic network was established in HMBC experiments, particularly *via* the ²*J*- and ³*J*-¹H–¹³C long-

range correlations between protons and non-protonated carbons such as H₃-15/C-1, H₃-18/C-8, and H₃-18/C-19 (Figure 2), thus enabling elucidation of the main carbon skeleton of **1**.

The HMBC correlations between H₃-15/C-1, C-2, C-10, C-14; H₃-18/C-8, C-17, C-19; and H₃-20/C-10, C-11, C-12, indicated that Me-15, Me-18, and Me-20 were located at C-1, C-17 and C-11, respectively. The allylic couplings between H-6/H₂-16 ($J = 3.0, 3.0$ Hz) revealed the presence of an exocyclic carbon-carbon double bond at C-5 and the hydroxy group situated at C-2 manifested a COSY correlation between H-2 (δ_{H} 3.14) and a hydroxy proton resonating at δ_{H} 2.05 (1H, d, $J = 3.0$ Hz). The remaining acetoxy and *n*-butyroy groups appeared to be positioned at either C-9 or C-12, two oxymethines, according to analysis of key ¹H–¹H COSY correlations and characteristic NMR signals (δ_{H} 5.49, 1H, d, $J = 9.6$ Hz/ δ_{C} 68.6, CH-9; δ_{H} 4.88, 1H, dd, $J = 6.0, 2.4$ Hz/ δ_{C} 70.0, CH-12), but the positions couldn't be confirmed, due to absence of HMBC correlation between H-9/H-12 and the ester carbonyl carbons.

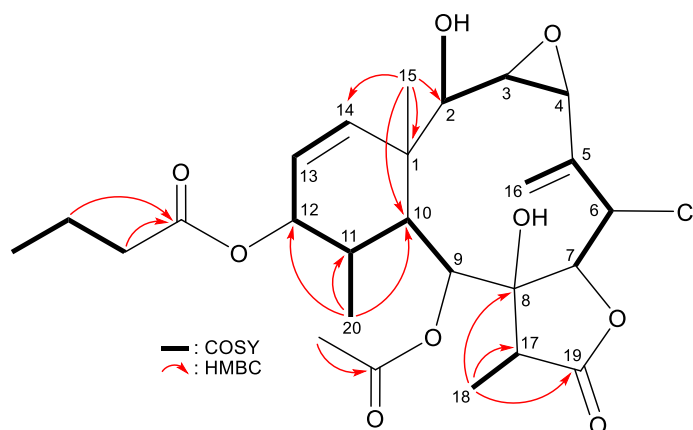


Figure 2. Key COSY and HMBC correlations of compound **1**. Due to absence of HMBC correlation between H-9/H-12 and the ester carbonyl carbons. The structure that shown in Figure 2 was tentative.

Eight of the nine oxygen atoms in the molecular formula accounted for a γ -lactone moiety, an acetoxy, an *n*-butyroy, an epoxy, and a hydroxy group, with the remaining hydroxy group being positioned at C-8 (δ_{C} 85.0, C-8), based on the chemical shift of an oxygenated quaternary carbon. The methine unit at δ_{C} 60.8 was better shielded than expected as an oxygenated C atom and correlated with the methine proton at δ_{H} 5.42 in the HSQC spectrum. This proton showed a ³ J -correlation with H-7 ($J = 3.0$ Hz), in the COSY spectrum, underlining the attachment of a chlorine atom at C-6.

The relative configuration of **1** was deduced mainly from the interactions observed in a NOESY experiment and backed by MM2 force field analysis,¹⁰ demonstrating a stable conformer, as shown in Figure 3. As per convention, when analyzing the stereochemistry of naturally-occurring briaranes, H-10 and the ring junction C-15 methyl group were assigned to the α - and β -faces, respectively, backed by stereochemical analysis, due to absence of correlation between H-10 and H₃-15. In the NOESY spectrum, H-10 correlated

with H-2/H-11/OH-8, suggesting location of H-2, H-11, and the hydroxy group at C-8 on the same face, capable to be assigned as α protons, as C-15 methyl is β -oriented at C-1 and H-10 was not correlated with H₃-15. H-9 was correlated with H-11, H-17, H₃-18, and H₃-20. Molecular model showed that reasonably close to H-11, H-17, H₃-18, and H₃-20, H-9 could be placed on the α -face in the 10-membered ring of **1**. H-17 was found to be correlated with H-9 and H-7 but uncorrelated with OH-8, suggesting that H-17 and H-7 should be placed on β -face in the γ -lactone moiety. There existed a small coupling constant between H-6 and H-7 ($J = 3.0$ Hz), plus correlation between these two protons, indicating that the dihedral angle between H-6 and H-7 was approximately 70° ,¹¹ and H-6 was β -oriented, according to modeling study. The *cis* geometry of C-13/14 double bond was indicated by a 10.2 Hz coupling constant between H-13 (δ_{H} 5.76) and H-14 (δ_{H} 6.24) and backed by a response between these two olefin protons. Furthermore, H-3 was correlated with H-4 and H₃-15; and H-4 showed correlations with H-6 and H-7, suggesting the 3,4-epoxy group was α -oriented.

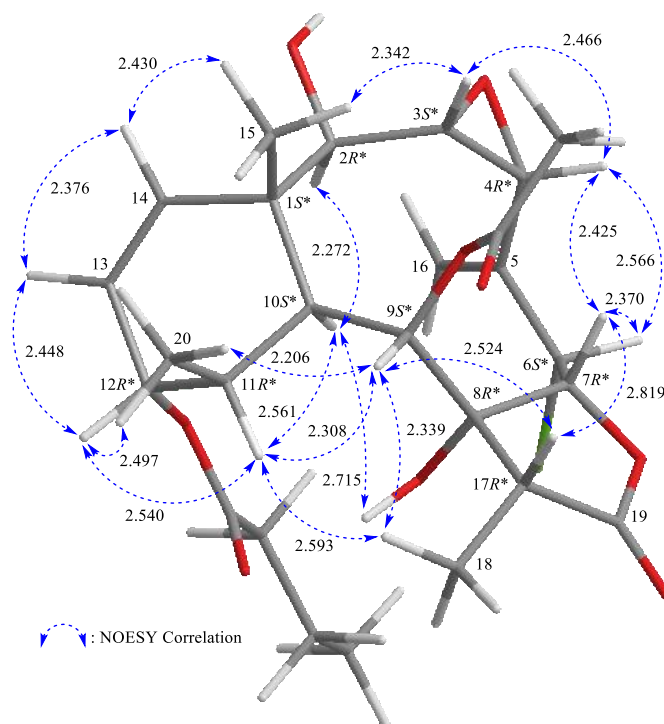


Figure 3. Stereoview of **1** and calculated distances (Å) between particular pairs protons that have crucial NOESY correlations. Due to absence of HMBC correlation between H-9/H-12 and the ester carbonyl carbons. The structure that shown in Figure 3 was tentative. 3D Structure was created with ChemDraw software in MM2 force field.

A single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis was conducted to validate the structure of **1**, which was established with X-ray crystallography and observed with Mo K α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073$ Å). The X-ray structure (Figure 4) shows the locations of acetoxy and *n*-butyryloxy groups on the β - and α -orientations of C-9 and C-12, respectively, while exhibiting a heavy atom (chlorine) in the structure of **1**. The stereogenic

centers in **1** were assigned as C-1(*S*), C-2(*R*), C-3(*S*), C-4(*R*), C-6(*S*), C-7(*R*), C-8(*R*), C-9(*S*), C-10(*S*), C-11(*R*), C-12(*R*) and C-17(*R*).¹² The structure, including the absolute configuration, was thus elucidated.

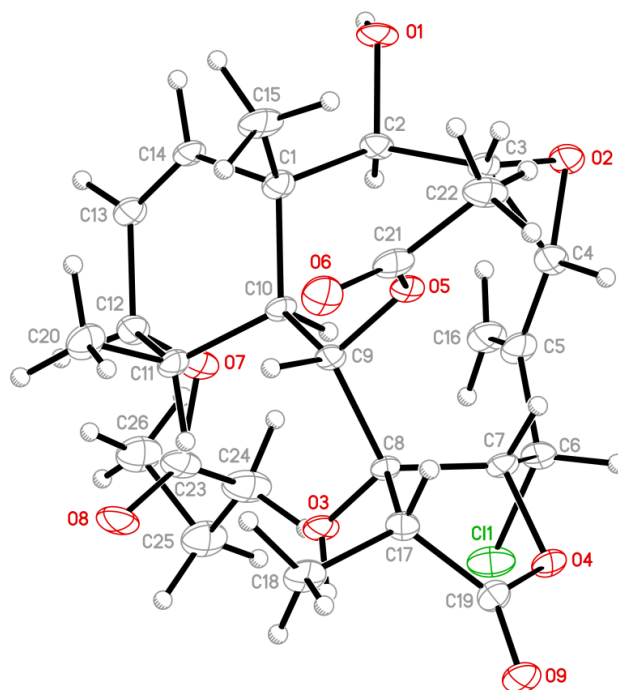


Figure 4. ORTEP structure of briastecholide N (**1**)

In previous studies, briarane-type natural products were found to be as a new natural scaffold to remedy osteoclastogenic disease.^{13,14} To investigate the effect of briarane **1** on alkaline phosphatase (ALP) activity, the study carried out an ALP ELISA assay with MG63 human mesenchymal stem cells (Table 2), finding that **1** enhanced ALP activity, resulting in a level of 16.72 king unit/mgprot without cytotoxic effect. Moreover, an MTT assays indicated that **1** increased the proliferation rate of MG63 cells to 130.23%, suggesting that briarane **1** may be conducive to osteoblast proliferation.

Table 2. The ALP activity was assessed after treating MG63 cells with briastecholide N (**1**) and alendronate sodium (positive control) at a concentration of 10 μ M for 72 h.

Compounds	ALP activity (king unit/mgprot)	MTT (% control)
1	16.72 \pm 0.38 ***	130.23 \pm 3.57***
Alendronate sodium	21.45 \pm 5.21 **	95.14 \pm 12.24
Control	2.53 \pm 0.63	100.03 \pm 2.28

Data are expressed with the mean standard error of the mean (SEM) ($n = 3$). The significance was determined by Student's *t*-test. ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$ and compared with untreated cells.

EXPERIMENTAL

General Experimental Procedures. Optical rotation values were ascertained with JASCO P-2000 digital polarimeter, IR spectra were learned with Thermo Scientific Nicolet iS5 FT-IR spectrophotometer, and ^1H and ^{13}C NMR spectra were depicted with Jeol ECZ NMR spectrometer at 600 MHz for ^1H NMR and 150 MHz for ^{13}C NMR, respectively. Chemical shifts were reported in parts per million (δ) and coupling constants (J) expressed in Hertz (Hz). The residual peaks of the deuterated solvent, CDCl_3 , taken as reference points, stood at δ_{H} 7.26 and δ_{C} 77.0 ppm, respectively. ESIMS and HRESIMS were recorded with Bruker 7 Tesla solariX FTMS system, equipped with an ESI ion source in positive ionization mode. The extracted samples were separated with column chromatography (C. C.) using silica gel (particle size, 230–400 mesh; Merck, Germany). TLC was performed on plates precoated with silica gel 60 (DC-Fertigfolien Alugram Xtra SIL G/UV₂₅₄, layer thickness 0.20 mm, Macherey-Nagel, Germany) and RP-18 F_{254s} (layer thickness 0.16–0.20 mm, Merck), and for the visualization of the TLC plates, an aqueous solution of 10% H_2SO_4 was heated to show the spots of signals. Normal-phase HPLC (NP-HPLC) separation was conducted with a system consisting of a pump (Hitachi, model L-7110, Japan), in conjunction with an injection port (Rheodyne, model: 7725, U.S.A.); the system was equipped with a semi-preparative normal-phase column (Supelco Ascentis Si, Cat#: 581514-U, 250 \times 10 mm, 5 μm , Sigma-Aldrich, U.S.A.). Reverse-phase HPLC (RP-HPLC) separation was carried out with a system containing a pump (Hitachi, model L-7110) with a photo-diode array detector (Hitachi, model L-2455), equipped with a reverse-phase column (Luna, 5 μm , C18(2) 100 \AA , 250 \times 21.2 mm, Phenomenex, U.S.A.).

Animal Materials. The study employed as specimens *Briareum stechei*, collected from the coast of Pingtung County, Taiwan, in April 2016 and kept in an 80-ton culture reservoir containing a flowing seawater filtration system at the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium (NMMBA), Taiwan. The species were identified via comparison of its morphology and micrographs of the coral sclerites with descriptions in previous studies.^{4,5} Samples organisms used as reference were kept in our coral culture reservoirs, and specimens in use as sample vouchers were also stored at the NMMBA (voucher number: NMMBA-TW-GC-2016-031).

Extraction and Isolation. The freeze-dried coral specimen (wet/dry weight = 3980/1860 g) was sliced and then subjected to a 1:1 mixture solvent of MeOH and CH_2Cl_2 at room temperature to generate crude extract, which was subsequently applied on a silica gel C. C. and eluted with a gradient solvent system of *n*-hexane/EtOAc mixtures (from 50:1–1:2, stepwise) to obtain 12 fractions A–L. Fractions H and I were combined and then separated with Si C. C. using *n*-hexane/EtOAc mixtures (stepwise from 50:1–pure EtOAc) to obtain 8 fractions H1–H8. Fraction H6 was further chromatographed with Si C. C. with a mixture solvent system of *n*-hexane/EtOAc/acetone (*n*-hexane/EtOAc 2:1, 1:1 (v/v), pure EtOAc, and pure acetone) to obtain 11 fractions H6A–H6K. Fraction H6E4 was purified again with NP-HPLC containing an isocratic

solvent system of CH₂Cl₂/acetone (2:1), thereby yielding 11 fractions H6E1A–H6E1K. Fraction H6E1G was further purified with RP-HPLC using an isocratic solvent system of MeCN/H₂O mixture (60:40; flow rate = 3 mL/min) to form **1** (0.5 mg).

Briastecholide N (1): colorless prisms (MeOH); [α]_D +45 (*c* 0.05, CHCl₃); IR (KBr) ν_{\max} 3432, 1774, 1734 cm⁻¹; ¹H (600 MHz, CDCl₃) and ¹³C (150 MHz, CDCl₃) NMR data, see Table 1; ESIMS *m/z* 549 (M + Na)⁺, 551 (M + 2 + Na)⁺; HRESIMS *m/z* 549.18632 (Calcd for C₂₆H₃₅ClO₉ + Na, 549.18618).

Single-Crystal X-Ray Crystallography of Briastecholide N (1). Suitable colorless prisms of **1** were obtained from MeOH solution. Crystal (0.378 × 0.068 × 0.033 mm³) was identified as an orthorhombic system, space group *P*2₁2₁2 (#18), with *a* = 11.3978(9) Å, *b* = 26.717(2) Å, *c* = 8.7890(7) Å, *V* = 2676.4(4) Å³, *Z* = 4, *D*_{calcd} = 1.308 Mg/m³ and λ (Mo K α) = 0.71073 Å. Intensity data were generated with a crystal diffractometer (Bruker, model: D8 Venture), up to θ_{\max} of 25.000°. All the measurement data of 18772 reflections were collected, of which 4713 was independent. The structure was solved with direct methods and refined with full-matrix least-squares on *F*² procedure.^{15,16} The refined structural model converged to final *R*¹ = 0.1085, with *wR*² = 0.2538 for 2353 observed reflections [*I* > 2 σ (*I*)] and 334 variable parameters.¹⁷

Molecular Mechanics Calculations. A 3D model was created via implementation of the MM2 hydrocarbon force field¹⁰ in 3D Ultra software from CambridgeSoft Corporation (version 15.00).

Alkaline Phosphatase (ALP) Activity Assay. The release of ALP assay was employed to assess the activity of compound **1** from MG63 human mesenchymal stem cells, in line with suggestion of literature.¹⁷

Cell Viability Assay. Cells were seeded at a density of 1 × 10³ cells/well in a 96-well plate. After 24 h, 0.01 μ M alendronate sodium hydrate or 10 μ M of a specific drug mixed with culture medium was added to the cells. Following incubation at 37 °C for 72 h, the cells were washed, and then treated with 10 μ L of MTT solution (5 mg/mL) mixed with 90 μ L of culture medium per well, followed by an incubation at 37 °C for 4 h. The formazan crystals in each well were dissolved in 100 μ L of DMSO, and once fully dissolved, the optical density was measured using an ELISA reader (Thermo Fischer, Waltham, MA, USA) at a wavelength of 570 nm.¹⁸

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17. Crystallographic data for the structure of **1** have been deposited with the Cambridge Crystallographic Data Center as supplementary publication number CCDC 2264781. These data can be obtained free of charge via <http://www.ccdc.cam.ac.uk/conts/retrieving.html> (or from the CCDC, 12 Union Road, Cambridge CB2 1EZ, UK; fax: +44 1223 336033; e-mail: deposit@ccdc.cam.ac.uk).
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