

Edited by
Jieping Zhu, Qian Wang, and Mei-Xiang Wang

Multicomponent Reactions in Organic Synthesis



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Contents

List of Contributors *XIII*

Preface *XVII*

1	General Introduction to MCRs: Past, Present, and Future	1
	<i>Alexander Dömling and AlAnod D. AlQahtani</i>	
1.1	Introduction	1
1.2	Advances in Chemistry	2
1.3	Total Syntheses	4
1.4	Applications in Pharmaceutical and Agrochemical Industry	4
1.5	Materials	10
1.6	Outlook	10
	References	11
2	Discovery of MCRs	13
	<i>Eelco Ruijter and Romano V.A. Orru</i>	
2.1	General Introduction	13
2.2	The Concept	14
2.3	The Reaction Design Concept	15
2.3.1	Single Reactant Replacement	17
2.3.2	Modular Reaction Sequences	19
2.3.3	Condition-Based Divergence	21
2.3.4	Union of MCRs	23
2.4	Multicomponent Reactions and Biocatalysis	23
2.4.1	Multicomponent Reactions and (Dynamic) Enzymatic Kinetic Resolution	26
2.4.2	Multicomponent Reactions and Enzymatic Desymmetrization	29
2.5	Multicomponent Reactions in Green Pharmaceutical Production	31
2.6	Conclusions	36
	Acknowledgments	36
	References	36

3	Aryne-Based Multicomponent Reactions	39
	<i>Hiroto Yoshida</i>	
3.1	Introduction	39
3.2	Multicomponent Reactions of Arynes via Electrophilic Coupling	41
3.2.1	Multicomponent Reactions under Neutral Conditions	42
3.2.1.1	Isocyanide-Based Multicomponent Reactions	42
3.2.1.2	Imine-Based Multicomponent Reactions	46
3.2.1.3	Amine-Based Multicomponent Reactions	47
3.2.1.4	Carbonyl Compound-Based Multicomponent Reactions	49
3.2.1.5	Ether-Based Multicomponent Reactions	50
3.2.1.6	Miscellaneous	53
3.2.2	Multicomponent Reactions under Basic Conditions	53
3.3	Transition Metal-Catalyzed Multicomponent Reactions of Arynes	60
3.3.1	Annulations	60
3.3.2	Cross-Coupling-Type Reactions	65
3.3.3	Mizoroki–Heck-Type Reactions	65
3.3.4	Insertion into σ -Bond	65
3.4	Concluding Remarks	69
	References	69
4	Ugi–Smiles and Passerini–Smiles Couplings	73
	<i>Laurent El Kaïm and Laurence Grimaud</i>	
4.1	Introduction	73
4.1.1	Carboxylic Acid Surrogates in Ugi Reactions	75
4.1.2	Smiles Rearrangements	76
4.2	Scope and Limitations	77
4.2.1	Phenols and Thiophenols	77
4.2.2	Six-Membered Ring Hydroxy Heteroaromatics and Related Mercaptans	84
4.2.3	Five-Membered Ring Hydroxy Heteroaromatic and Related Mercaptans	88
4.2.4	Related Couplings with Enol Derivatives	90
4.2.5	The Joullié–Smiles Coupling	90
4.2.6	The Passerini–Smiles Reaction	91
4.3	Ugi–Smiles Postcondensations	94
4.3.1	Postcondensations Involving Reduction of the Nitro Group	94
4.3.2	Transformations of Ugi–Smiles Thioamides	96
4.3.3	Postcondensations Involving Transition Metal-Catalyzed Processes	97
4.3.4	Reactivity of the Peptidyl Unit	101
4.3.5	Radical Reactions	103
4.3.6	Cycloaddition	103
4.4	Conclusions	105
	References	105

5	1,3-Dicarbonyls in Multicomponent Reactions	109
	<i>Xavier Bugaut, Thierry Constantieux, Yoann Coquerel, and Jean Rodriguez</i>	
5.1	Introduction	109
5.2	Achiral and Racemic MCRs	111
5.2.1	Involving One Pronucleophilic Reactive Site	111
5.2.2	Involving Two Reactive Sites	115
5.2.2.1	Two Nucleophilic Sites	115
5.2.2.2	One Pronucleophilic Site and One Electrophilic Site	120
5.2.3	Involving Three Reactive Sites	134
5.2.4	Involving Four Reactive Sites	139
5.3	Enantioselective MCRs	142
5.3.1	Involving One Reactive Site	143
5.3.2	Involving Two Reactive Sites	146
5.3.3	Involving Three Reactive Sites	149
5.4	Conclusions and Outlook	150
	References	151
6	Functionalization of Heterocycles by MCRs	159
	<i>Esther Vicente-García, Nicola Kielland, and Rodolfo Lavilla</i>	
6.1	Introduction	159
6.2	Mannich-Type Reactions and Related Processes	160
6.3	β -Dicarbonyl Chemistry	164
6.4	Hetero-Diels–Alder Cycloadditions and Related Processes	166
6.5	Metal-Mediated Processes	168
6.6	Isocyanide-Based Reactions	171
6.7	Dipole-Mediated Processes	175
6.8	Conclusions	176
	Acknowledgments	178
	References	178
7	Diazoacetate and Related Metal-Stabilized Carbene Species in MCRs	183
	<i>Dong Xing and Wenhao Hu</i>	
7.1	Introduction	183
7.2	MCRs via Carbonyl or Azomethine Ylide-Involved 1,3-Dipolar Cycloadditions	184
7.2.1	Azomethine Ylide	184
7.2.2	Carbonyl Ylide	185
7.3	MCRs via Electrophilic Trapping of Protic Onium Ylides	187
7.3.1	Initial Development	187
7.3.2	Asymmetric Examples	190
7.3.2.1	Chiral Reagent Induction	190
7.3.2.2	Chiral Dirhodium(II) Catalysis	190
7.3.2.3	Enantioselective Synergistic Catalysis	190
7.3.3	MCRs Followed by Tandem Cyclizations	196

7.4	MCRs via Electrophilic Trapping of Zwitterionic Intermediates	198
7.5	MCRs via Metal Carbene Migratory Insertion	199
7.6	Summary and Outlook	203
	References	204
8	Metal-Catalyzed Multicomponent Synthesis of Heterocycles	207
	<i>Fabio Lorenzini, Jevgenijs Tjutris, Jeffrey S. Quesnel, and Bruce A. Arndtsen</i>	
8.1	Introduction	207
8.2	Multicomponent Cross-Coupling and Carbonylation Reactions	208
8.2.1	Cyclization with Alkyne- or Alkene-Containing Nucleophiles	208
8.2.2	Cyclization via Palladium–Allyl Complexes	210
8.2.3	Fused-Ring Heterocycles for <i>ortho</i> -Substituted Arene Building Blocks	211
8.2.4	Multicomponent Cyclocarbonylations	214
8.2.5	Cyclization of Cross-Coupling Reaction Products	216
8.2.6	C–H Functionalization in Multicomponent Reactions	218
8.3	Metallacycles in Multicomponent Reactions	221
8.4	Multicomponent Reactions via 1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition	223
8.5	Concluding Remarks	227
	References	227
9	Macrocycles from Multicomponent Reactions	231
	<i>Ludger A. Wessjohann, Ricardo A.W. Neves Filho, Alfredo R. Puentes, and Mijel C. Morejon</i>	
9.1	Introduction	231
9.2	IMCR-Based Macrocyclizations of Single Bifunctional Building Blocks	237
9.3	Multiple MCR-Based Macrocyclizations of Bifunctional Building Blocks	245
9.4	IMCR-Based Macrocyclizations of Trifunctionalized Building Blocks (MiB-3D)	256
9.5	Sequential IMCR-Based Macrocyclizations of Multiple Bifunctional Building Blocks	259
9.6	Final Remarks and Future Perspectives	261
	References	261
10	Multicomponent Reactions under Oxidative Conditions	265
	<i>Andrea Basso, Lisa Moni, and Renata Riva</i>	
10.1	Introduction	265
10.2	Multicomponent Reactions Involving <i>In Situ</i> Oxidation of One Substrate	266
10.2.1	Isocyanide-Based Multicomponent Reactions	266
10.2.1.1	Passerini Reactions	266
10.2.1.2	Ugi Reactions with <i>In Situ</i> Oxidation of Alcohols	271
10.2.1.3	Ugi Reaction with <i>In Situ</i> Oxidation of Secondary Amines	273

10.2.1.4	Ugi–Smiles Reaction with <i>In Situ</i> Oxidation of Secondary Amines	275
10.2.1.5	Ugi-Type Reactions by <i>In Situ</i> Oxidation of Tertiary Amines	277
10.2.1.6	Synthesis of Other Derivatives	279
10.2.2	Other Multicomponent Reactions	280
10.3	Multicomponent Reactions Involving Oxidation of a Reaction Intermediate	284
10.3.1	Reactions without Transition Metal-Mediated Oxidation	285
10.3.2	Reactions Mediated by Transition Metal Catalysis	292
10.4	Multicomponent Reactions Involving Oxidants as Lewis Acids	295
10.5	Conclusions	297
	References	297
11	Allenes in Multicomponent Synthesis of Heterocycles	301
	<i>Hans-Ulrich Reissig and Reinhold Zimmer</i>	
11.1	Introduction	301
11.2	Reactions with 1,2-Propadiene and Unactivated Allenes	302
11.2.1	Palladium-Catalyzed Multicomponent Reactions	302
11.2.2	Copper-, Nickel-, and Rhodium-Promoted Multicomponent Reactions	310
11.2.3	Multicomponent Reactions without Transition Metals	314
11.3	Reactions with Acceptor-Substituted Allenes	316
11.3.1	Catalyzed Multicomponent Reactions	316
11.3.2	Uncatalyzed Multicomponent Reactions	318
11.4	Reactions with Donor-Substituted Allenes	323
11.5	Conclusions	329
	List of Abbreviations	329
	References	329
12	Alkynes in Multicomponent Synthesis of Heterocycles	333
	<i>Thomas J.J. Müller and Konstantin Deilhof</i>	
12.1	Introduction	333
12.2	σ -Nucleophilic Reactivity of Alkynes	335
12.2.1	Acetylide Additions to Electrophiles	335
12.2.1.1	Alkyne–Aldehyde–Amine Condensation – A^3 -Coupling	335
12.2.1.2	Alkyne–(Hetero)Aryl Halide (Sonogashira) Coupling as Key Reaction	337
12.2.2	Conversion of Terminal Alkynes into Electrophiles as Key Reactions	341
12.3	π -Nucleophilic Reactivity of Alkynes	345
12.4	Alkynes as Electrophilic Partners	351
12.5	Alkynes in Cycloadditions	356
12.5.1	Alkynes as Dipolarophiles	356
12.5.2	Alkynes in Cu(I)-Catalyzed 1,3-Dipolar Azide–Alkyne Cycloaddition	358

12.5.3	Alkynes as Dienophiles in MCRs	366
12.6	Alkynes as Reaction Partners in Organometallic MCRs	370
12.7	Conclusions	374
	List of Abbreviations	374
	Acknowledgment	375
	References	375
13	Anhydride-Based Multicomponent Reactions	379
	<i>Kevin S. Martin, Jared T. Shaw, and Ashkaan Younai</i>	
13.1	Introduction	379
13.2	Quinolones and Related Heterocycles from Homophthalic and Isatoic Anhydrides	380
13.2.1	Introduction: Reactivity of Homophthalic and Isatoic Anhydrides	380
13.2.2	Imine–Anhydride Reactions of Homophthalic Anhydride	380
13.2.3	MCRs Employing Homophthalic Anhydride	382
13.2.4	Imine–Anhydride Reactions of Isatoic Anhydride	383
13.3	α,β -Unsaturated Cyclic Anhydrides: MCRs Involving Conjugate Addition and Cycloaddition Reactions	385
13.3.1	Maleic Anhydride MCRs	385
13.3.2	MCRs of Itaconic Anhydrides	388
13.3.3	Diels–Alder Reactions	390
13.4	MCRs of Cyclic Anhydrides in Annulation Reactions and Related Processes	392
13.4.1	MCR-Based Annulations: Succinic and Phthalic Anhydrides	393
13.5	MCRs of Acyclic Anhydrides	395
13.6	Conclusions	398
	References	399
14	Free-Radical Multicomponent Processes	401
	<i>Virginie Liautard and Yannick Landais</i>	
14.1	Introduction	401
14.2	MCRs Involving Addition Across Olefin C=C Bonds	402
14.2.1	Addition of Aryl Radicals to Olefins	402
14.2.2	MCRs Using Sulfonyl Derivatives as Terminal Trap	404
14.2.3	Carboallylation of Electron-Poor Olefins	406
14.2.4	Carbohydroxylation, Sulfenylation, and Phosphorylation of Olefins	407
14.2.5	Radical Addition to Olefins Using Photoredox Catalysis	410
14.2.6	MCRs Based on Radical–Polar Crossover Processes	414
14.3	Free-Radical Carbonylation	419
14.3.1	Alkyl Halide Carbonylation	419
14.3.2	Metal-Mediated Atom-Transfer Radical Carbonylation	420
14.3.3	Alkane Carbonylation	421
14.3.4	Miscellaneous Carbonylation Reactions	423

14.4	Free-Radical Oxygenation	424
14.5	MCRs Involving Addition Across π -C=N Bonds	427
14.5.1	Free-Radical Strecker Process	427
14.5.2	Free-Radical Mannich-Type Processes	429
14.6	Miscellaneous Free-Radical Multicomponent Reactions	432
14.7	Conclusions	434
	References	435
15	Chiral Phosphoric Acid-Catalyzed Asymmetric Multicomponent Reactions	439
	<i>Xiang Wu and Liu-Zhu Gong</i>	
15.1	Introduction	439
15.2	Mannich Reaction	439
15.3	Ugi-Type Reaction	442
15.4	Biginelli Reaction	444
15.5	Aza-Diels–Alder Reaction	446
15.6	1,3-Dipolar Cycloaddition	454
15.7	Hantzsch Dihydropyridine Synthesis	458
15.8	The Combination of Metal and Chiral Phosphoric Acid for Multicomponent Reaction	459
15.9	Other Phosphoric Acid-Catalyzed Multicomponent Reactions	465
15.10	Summary	467
	References	467
	Index	471

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Preface

The quote by Aristotle “the whole is greater than the sum of its parts” nicely reflects the power of multicomponent reactions (MCRs) in which three or more reactants are combined in a single operation to produce adducts that incorporate substantial portions of all the components. Indeed, the ability of MCRs to create value-added molecules from simple building blocks is now well appreciated.

The Wiley-VCH book entitled “Multicomponent Reactions” published in 2005 was warmly received by research communities in academia and industry alike. As predicted in the preface of the very first monograph on the subject, extensive research on the development of new MCRs and their applications in the synthesis of natural products as well as designed bioactive molecules have been continuing at an explosive pace. Nowadays, there is hardly a chemical journal in the broad area of organic chemistry that does not contain papers related to multicomponent reactions. In light of the recent tremendous advances in the field, it became clear to us that a follow-up of this book is needed. While planning the contents of this book, we tried to focus on the synthesis aspects and to make the book complementary rather than an update to the first edition.

The book starts with a general introduction to MCRs (Chapter 1) followed by a detailed discussion on the many facets of discovering novel MCRs (Chapter 2). Inherent to the nature of the reaction, the MCR employs generally at least one substrate with multireactive centers. We therefore classified the MCRs according to the key substrate used, including arynes (Chapter 3), isonitriles (Chapter 4), 1,3-dicarbonyls (Chapter 5), heterocycles (Chapter 6), diazoacetate (Chapter 7), allenes (Chapter 11), alkynes (Chapter 12), and anhydrides (Chapter 13). In a more broad sense, metal-catalyzed (Chapter 8), radical-based (Chapter 14), oxidative (Chapter 10), and enantioselective (Chapter 15) MCRs and synthesis of macrocycles by MCRs (Chapter 9) are subjects of other five chapters. The authors of 15 chapters who outline the essence of the each subject and provide valuable perspectives of the field are all world leaders. It is interesting to point out that some of these subjects were virtually unexplored before 2005, the year the first book was published.

The present monograph, in combination with “Multicomponent Reactions (2005),” is intended to provide an essential reference source for most of the

important topics of the field and to provide an efficient entry point to the key literature and background knowledge for those who plan to be involved in MCRs. We hope that the book will be of value to chemists at all levels in both academic and industrial laboratories. Finally, we hope that this monograph will stimulate the further development and application of this exciting research field.

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1

General Introduction to MCRs: Past, Present, and Future*Alexander Dömling and AlAnod D. AlQahtani*

1.1

Introduction

Multicomponent reactions (MCRs) are generally defined as reactions in which three or more starting materials react to form a product, where basically all or most of the atoms contribute to the newly formed product [1]. Their usefulness can be rationalized by multiple advantages of MCRs over traditional multistep sequential assembly of target compounds. In MCRs, a molecule is assembled in one convergent chemical step in one pot by simply mixing the corresponding starting materials as opposed to traditional ways of synthesizing a target molecule over multiple sequential steps. At the same time, considerably complex molecules can be assembled by MCRs. This has considerable advantages as it saves precious time and drastically reduces effort.

MCRs are mostly experimentally simple to perform, often without the need of dry conditions and inert atmosphere. Molecules are assembled in a convergent way and not in a linear approach using MCRs. Therefore, structure–activity relationships (SARs) can be rapidly generated using MCRs, since all property-determining moieties are introduced in one step instead of sequentially [2]. Last but not least, MCRs provide a huge chemical diversity and currently more than 300 different scaffolds have been described in the chemical literature. For example, more than 40 different ways to access differentially substituted piperazine scaffolds using MCRs have been recently reviewed [3].

Although MCR chemistry is almost as old as organic chemistry and was first described as early as 1851, it should be noted that early chemists did not recognize the enormous engineering potential of MCRs. However, it took another >100 years until Ivar Ugi in a stroke of a genius discovered his four-component condensation and also recognized the enormous potential of MCRs in applied chemistry (Figure 1.1) [4].

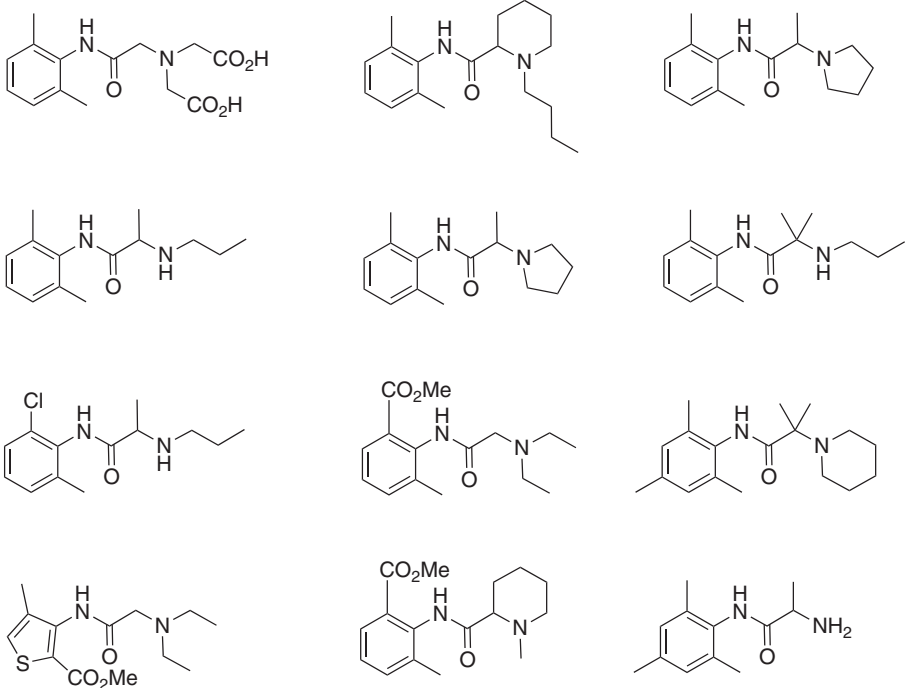
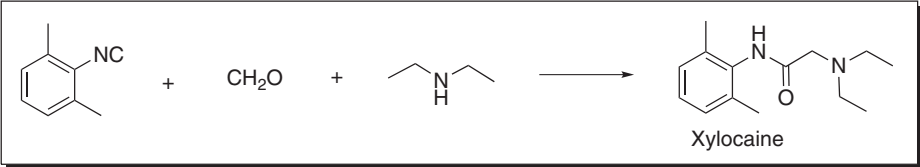


Figure 1.1 A three-component reaction toward the local anesthetic xylocaine and the first combinatorial library of small molecules proposed by Ivar Ugi in the 1960.

1.2

Advances in Chemistry

Many MCRs have been described in the past one and a half century and recently not many fundamental advances in finding new MCRs have been made [5–7]. A strategy to enhance the size and diversity of current MCR chemical space is the concept of combining a MCR and a subsequent secondary reaction, also known as postcondensation or Ugi–deprotection–cyclization (UDC) [2]. Herein, bifunctional orthogonally protected starting materials are used and ring cyclizations can take place in a secondary step upon deprotection of the secondary functional groups. Many different scaffolds have been recently described using this strategy. One example is shown in Figure 1.2.

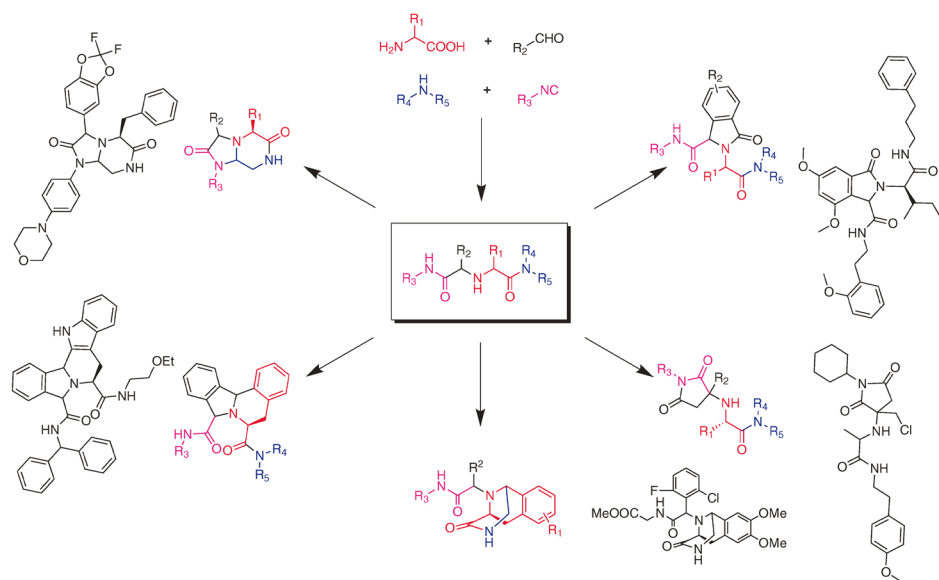
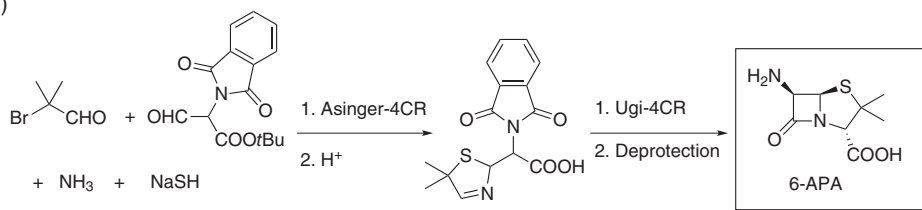


Figure 1.2 Discovery of the Ugi-5C-4CR variation employing unprotected α -amino acids, oxo components, primary or secondary amines, and isocyanides, and the synthesis of several heterocyclic scaffolds using orthogonally protected bifunctional starting materials. Generalized scaffolds are shown in color, and synthesized examples in black and white.

(a)



(b)

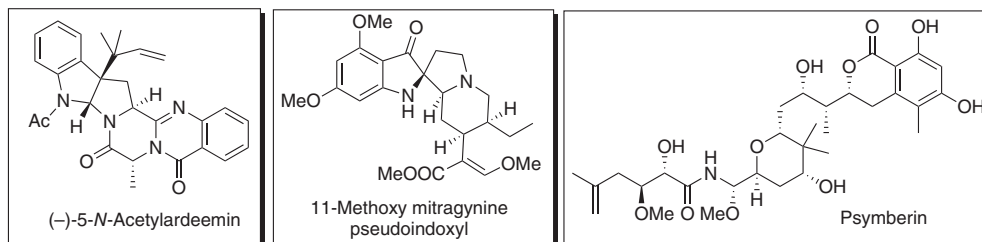


Figure 1.3 (a) The union of the Asinger-4CR and the Ugi-4CR allows for the convergent and fast assembly of 6-aminopenicillanic acid natural product. (b) Recent synthetic targets of MCR natural product chemistry.

It is based on a recently discovered variation of the Ugi reaction of α -amino acids, oxo components, and isocyanides, now including primary and secondary amines [8–10].

1.3

Total Syntheses

While the Bucherer–Bergs and the related Strecker synthesis are well-established methods for the one-pot synthesis of natural and unnatural amino acids, the complex antibiotic penicillin was synthesized 50 years ago in a highly convergent approach by Ivar Ugi by using two MCRs, the Asinger reaction and his own reaction (Figure 1.3) [11]. Other recent natural product targets using MCR as a key step in their synthesis are also shown in Figure 1.3. Although early example of the advantageous use of MCR in the conscious total synthesis of complex natural products leads the way, its use has been neglected for decades and only recently realized by a few organic chemists [12–17].

1.4

Applications in Pharmaceutical and Agrochemical Industry

Two decades ago, MCR chemistry was almost generally neglected in pharmaceutical and agro industry. The knowledge of these reactions was often low and it

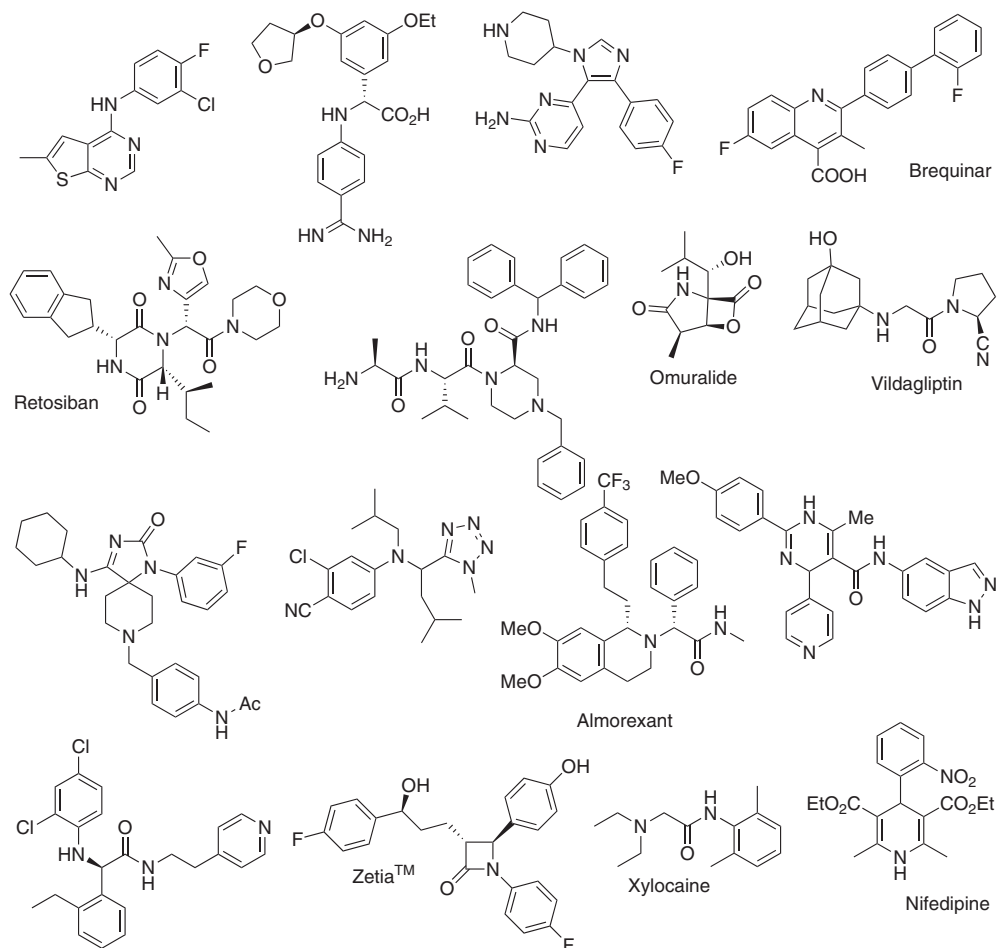


Figure 1.4 Examples of marketed drugs or drugs under (pre)clinical development and incorporating MCR chemistry.

was generally believed that MCR scaffolds are associated with useless drug-like properties (absorption, distribution, metabolism, excretion, and toxicity (ADMET)). Now MCR technology is widely recognized for its impact on drug discovery projects and is strongly endorsed by industry as well as academia [18]. An increasing number of clinical and marketed drugs were discovered and assembled by MCR since then (Figure 1.4). Examples include nifedipine (Hantzsch-3CR), praziquantel, or ZetiaTM. Two oxytocin receptor antagonists for the treatment of preterm birth and premature ejaculation, epelsiban and atosiban, are currently undergoing human clinical trials. They are both assembled by the classical Ugi MCR [19–21]. Interestingly, they show superior activity for the oxytocin receptor and selectivity toward the related vasopressin receptors

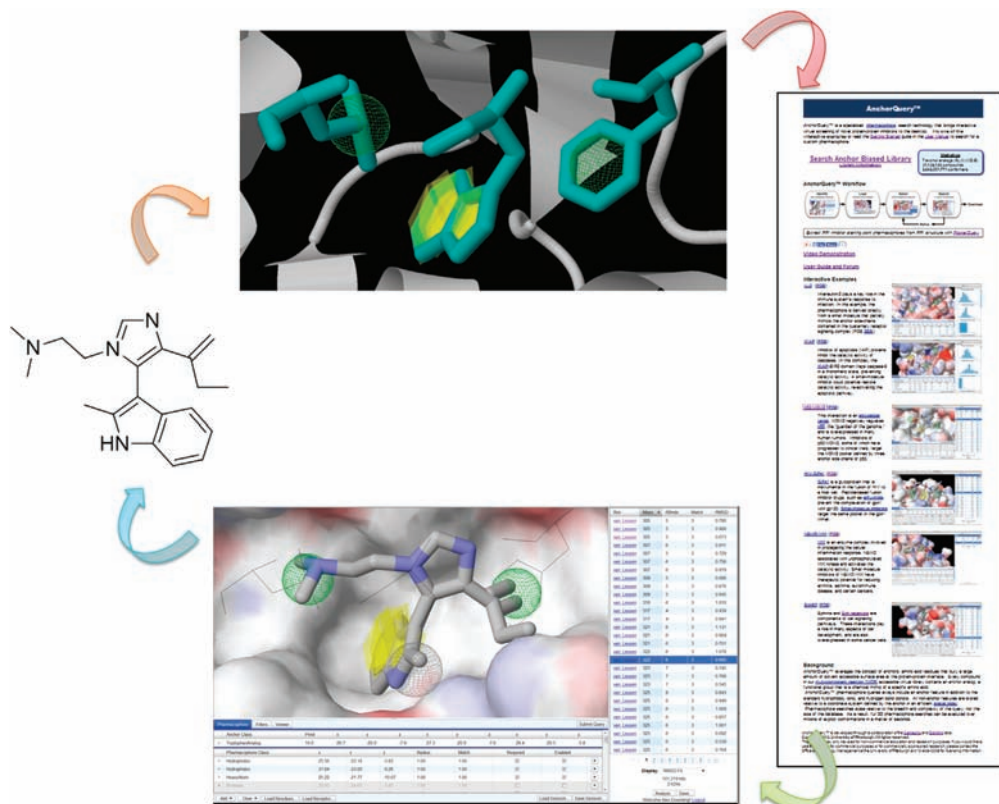


Figure 1.5 MCR-based computational methods can help to effectively query the very large chemical MCR space. Clockwise: generation of a pharmacophore model based on a 3D structure, screening of the pharmacophore model against a very large MCR 3D compound database (AnchorQuery), synthesis, and refinement of hits.

than the peptide-based compounds currently used clinically. Perhaps against the intuition of many medicinal chemists, the Ugi diketopiperazines are orally bio-available, while the currently used peptide derivatives are i.v. only and must be stabilized by the introduction of terminal protecting groups and unnatural amino acids. An example of a MCR-based plant protecting antifungal includes mandipropamide [22]. These examples show that pharmaceutical and agro-chemical compounds with preferred ADMET properties and superior activities can be engineered based on MCR chemistry.

The very high compound numbers per scaffold based on MCR may be regarded as friend or foe. On the one hand, it can be fortunate to have a MCR product as a medicinal chemistry starting point, since a fast and efficient SAR elaboration can be accomplished; on the other hand, the known chemical space based on MCRs is incredibly large and can neither be screened nor exhaustively synthesized with reasonable efforts. The currently preferred path

to medicinal chemistry starting points in industry, the high-throughput screening (HTS), however, is an expensive process with rather low efficiency yielding hits often only in low double-digit or single-digit percentage. Modern postgenomic targets often yield zero hits. The initial hits are often ineffective to elaborate due to their complex multistep synthesis. Thus, neither the screening even of a very small fraction of the chemical space accessible by the classical Ugi-4CR and other scaffolds, nor the synthesis is possible. Recent advances in computational chemical space enumeration and screening, however, allow for an alternative process to efficiently foster a very large chemical space. The free web-, anchor-, and pharmacophore-based server AnchorQueryTM (anchorquery.ccbb.pitt.edu/), for example, allows for the screening of a very large virtual MCR library with over a billion members (Figure 1.5) [23]. AnchorQuery builds on the role deeply buried amino acid side chains or other anchors play in protein–protein interactions. Proposed virtual screening hits can be instantaneously synthesized and tested using convergent MCR chemistry. The software was instrumental to the discovery of multiple potent and selective MCR-based antagonists of the protein–protein interaction between p53 and MDM2 [24–26]. Thus, computational approaches to screen MCR libraries will likely play a more and more important role in the early drug discovery process in the future.

More and more high-resolution structural information on MCR molecules bound to biological receptors is available (Figure 1.6) [18]. With the advent of

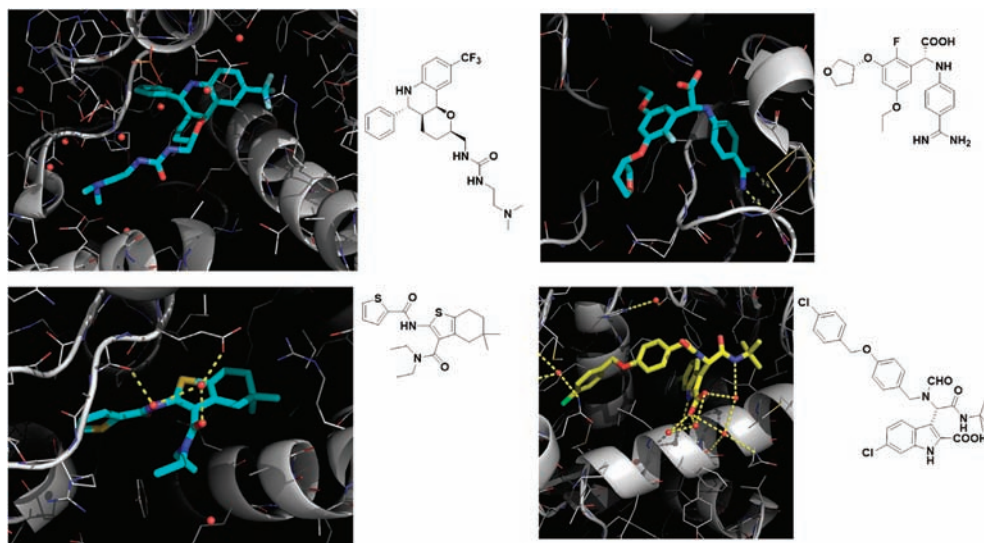


Figure 1.6 Examples of cocrystal structures of MCR molecules bound to biological receptors. Clockwise left: Povarov-3CR molecule bound to kinesin-5 (PDB ID 3L9H) [27], Ugi-3CR molecule bound to

FVlla (PDB ID 2BZ6) [28], Ugi-4CR molecule bound to MDM2 (PDB ID 4MDN) [26], and Gewald-3CR molecule targeting motor protein KSP (PDB ID 2UYM) [29].

structure-based design and fragment-based approaches in drug discovery, access to binding information of MCR molecules to their receptors is becoming crucial. Once the binding mode of a MCR molecule is defined, hit-to-lead transitions become more facile and time to market can be shortened and attrition rate in later clinical trials can be potentially reduced.

Other worthwhile applications of MCRs in medicinal chemistry are in route scouting for shorter, convergent, and cheaper syntheses. An excellent showcase is the synthesis of the recently approved HCV protease inhibitor telaprevir [30]. The complex compound is industrially produced using a lengthy, highly linear strategy relying on standard peptide chemistry exceeding 20 synthetic steps. Orru and coworkers were able to reduce the complexity of the synthesis of telaprevir by almost half using a biotransformation and two multicomponent reactions as the key steps. Another example is the convergent synthesis of the schistosomiasis drug praziquantel using key Ugi and Pictet–Spengler reactions (Figure 1.7) [31]. Clearly, more synthetic targets are out there, which can be

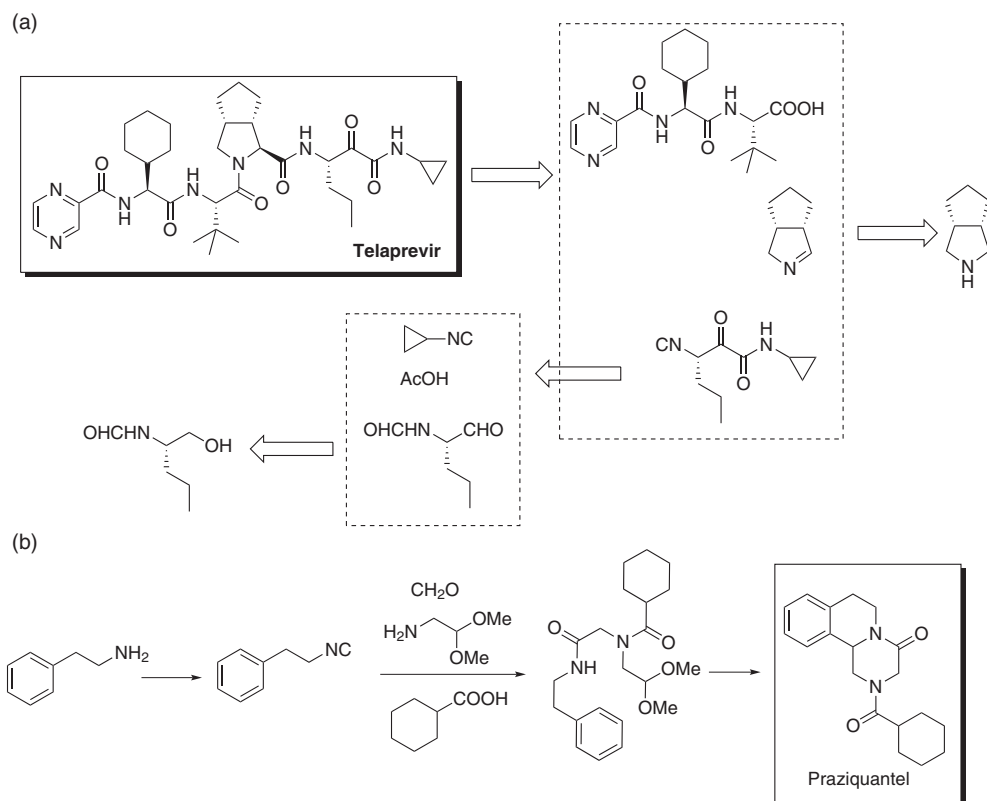


Figure 1.7 Use of MCR chemistry for the easy and cheap synthesis and process improvement of marketed drugs. (a) Telaprevir structure and MCR retrosynthesis. (b) Three-step praziquantel synthesis involving Ugi and Pictet–Spengler reactions.

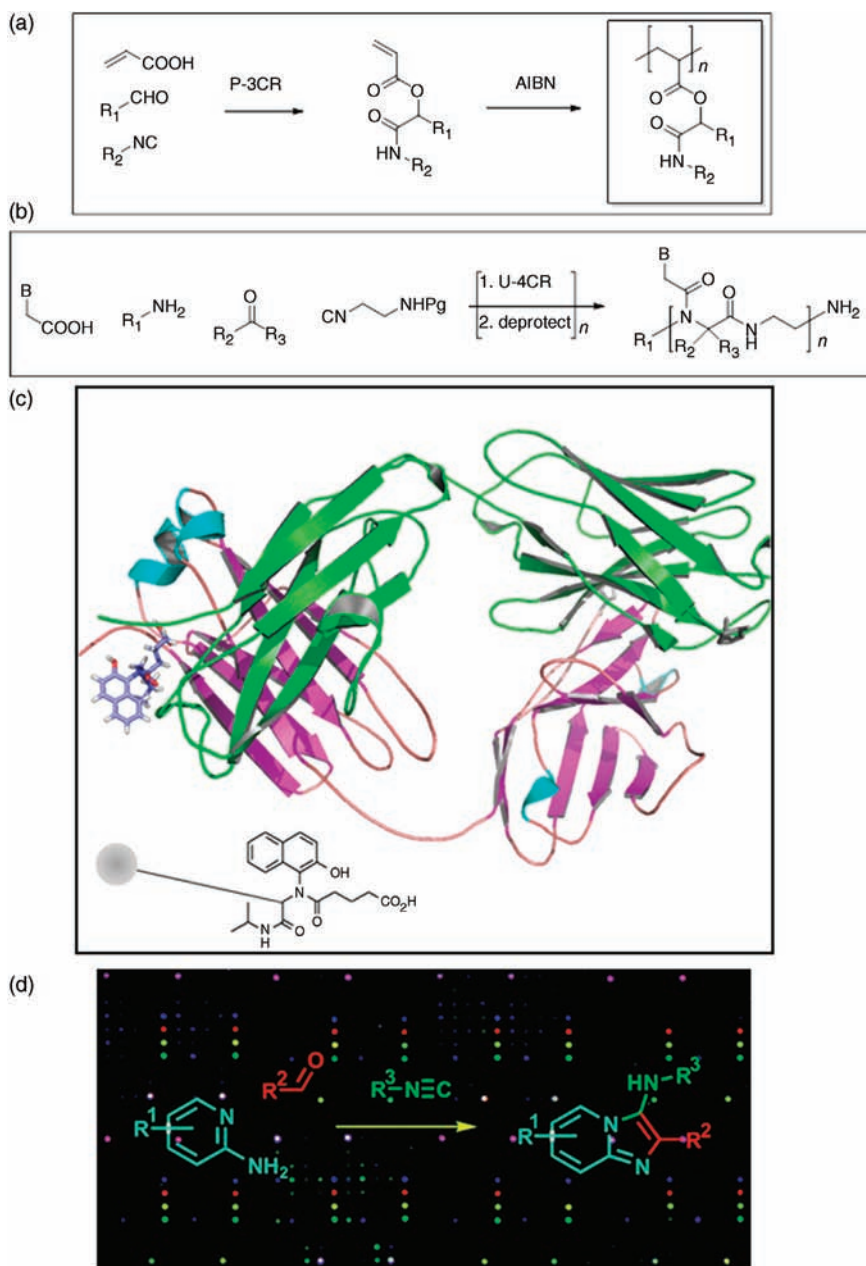


Figure 1.8 Examples of the use of MCRs in material chemistry. (a) Sequence-specific polymer synthesis as exemplified for Passerini reaction-derived acrylic acid monomers. (b) PNA synthesis using the sequential Ugi reaction. (c) Sepharose solid support-bound

Ugi products for the affinity purification of therapeutic Fab fragments. Docking of the best Ugi ligand (blue sticks) into human Fab fragment. (d) GBB-3CR-derived fluorescent Ugi reaction.

potentially accessed in a more convergent and cheaper way using MCR chemistry, thus potentially benefitting the patient.

1.5

Materials

Another application of MCR chemistry far from being leveraged to its full extent is in materials science (Figure 1.8). Precise engineering of macromolecular architectures is of utmost importance for designing future materials. Like no other technology, MCRs can help to meet this goal. Recently, the synthesis of sequence-defined macromolecules without the utilization of any protecting group using a Passerini-3CR has been described [32]. Another sequence-specific polymer synthesis with biological applications comprises the peptide nucleic acid (PNA), which is metabolically stable and can recognize DNA and RNA polymers and which can be accomplished by the Ugi-4CR [33]. Yet another application of MCRs in materials science might underscore the potential opportunities to uncover. Ugi molecule-modified stationary phases have been recently introduced to efficiently separate immunoglobulins (Igs) [34]. Currently, more than 300 monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) are moving toward the market. However, the efficient and high-yielding cleaning of the raw fermentation brew is still a holy grail in technical antibody processing. Thus, it is estimated that approximately half of the fermentation yield of mAbs is lost during purification. Ugi-modified stationary phases have been found in this context to be far superior to purification protocols based on natural Ig-binding proteins, which are expensive to produce, labile, unstable, and exhibit lot-to-lot variability.

Fluorescent pharmacophores were discovered by the Groebke–Blackburn–Bienaymè MCR (GBB-3CR) with potential applications as specific imaging probes using a droplet array technique on glass slides [35]. Another group described the discovery of BODIPY dyes for the *in vivo* imaging of phagocytotic macrophages and assembled by MCRs [36].

1.6

Outlook

From the many applied chemistry examples published in the recent literature, it is obvious that MCR chemistry has a bright future. The use of MCRs in property-driven chemistry has just been scratched at the surface. In which areas will be the next applications of MCR chemistry? Will it be in functional materials, imaging, molecular computing, artificial life, “omics” (lipidomics), theragnostics, functional magnetic resonance imaging, or in different upcoming fields? Clearly, the imagination of molecular engineers (*sic chemists*) will determine future directions or as in the saying “Only the sky is the limit.”