

Nitric Oxide Donors

For Pharmaceutical and Biological Applications

*Edited by Peng George Wang, Tingwei Bill Cai,
Naoyuki Taniguchi*



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Contents

Part 1 Chemistry of NO Donors 1

1	NO and NO Donors 3
	<i>Tingwei Bill Cai, Peng George Wang, and Alvin A. Holder</i>
1.1	Introduction to NO Biosynthesis and NO donors 3
1.1.1	Nitric Oxide Synthases 3
1.1.2	Chemistry of Reactive Nitrogen Species 6
1.2	Classification of NO Donors 7
1.3	New Classes of NO Donors under Development 9
1.3.1	Nitroarene 9
1.3.2	Hydroxamic Acids 10
1.4	Development of NO-Drug Hybrid Molecules 10
1.4.1	Nitrate Hybrid Molecules 11
1.4.2	Furoxan Hybrid Molecules 13
1.5	New Therapeutic Applications of NO Donors 14
1.5.1	NO Donors against Cancer 15
1.5.1.1	Diazoniumdiolates (NONOates) as Promising Anticancer Drugs 15
1.5.1.2	The Synergistic Effect of NO and Anticancer Drugs 17
1.5.1.3	NO-NSAIDs as a New Generation of Anti-tumoral Agents 17
1.5.1.4	Other NO Donors with Anticancer Activity 18
1.5.2	NO against Virus 19
1.5.2.1	HIV-1 Induces NO Production 19
1.5.2.2	Antiviral and Proviral Activity of NO 21
1.5.3	Inhibition of Bone Resorption 22
1.5.4	Treatment of Diabetes 23
1.5.5	Thromboresistant Polymeric Films 23
1.5.6	Inhibition of Cysteine Proteases 24
1.6	Conclusion 24
	References 26

2	Organic Nitrates and Nitrites 33
	<i>Roger Harrison</i>
2.1	Organic Nitrates 34
2.1.1	Direct Chemical Reaction between Organic Nitrates and Thiols 35
2.1.2	Glutathione-S-transferase 36
2.1.3	Cytochrome P-450-dependent Systems 37
2.1.4	Membrane-bound Enzyme of Vascular Smooth Muscle Cells 38
2.1.5	Xanthine Oxidoreductase 38
2.1.6	Mitochondrial Aldehyde Dehydrogenase 40
2.1.7	Tolerance 42
2.2	Organic Nitrites 44
2.3	Conclusions 45
	References 47
3	N-Nitroso Compounds 55
	<i>Arindam Talukdar, Peng George Wang</i>
3.1	Introduction 55
3.2	N-Nitrosamines 56
3.2.1	Synthesis of Nitrosamines 58
3.2.2	Physical Properties and Reactions of N-Nitrosamines 59
3.2.3	Structure–Activity Relationship of N-Nitrosamines 61
3.2.4	Application of N-Nitrosamines 62
3.3	N-Hydroxy-N-nitrosoamines 63
3.3.1	Biologically Active N-Hydroxy-N-nitrosamine Compounds 64
3.3.2	Synthesis of N-Hydroxy-N-nitrosamines 66
3.3.3	Properties of N-Hydroxy-N-nitrosamines 68
3.3.4	Reactivity of N-Hydroxy-N-nitrosamines 70
3.4	N-Nitrosimines 72
3.4.1	Mechanism of Thermal Reaction of N-Nitrosoimine 73
3.4.2	Properties of N-Nitrosoimines 74
3.4.3	Synthesis of N-Nitrosoimines 75
3.5	N-Diazeniumdiolates 75
3.5.1	Mechanism of NO Release 76
3.5.2	Synthesis of N-Diazeniumdiolates 77
3.5.2.1	Ionic Diazeniumdiolates 79
3.5.2.2	O-derivatized Diazeniumdiolates 79
3.5.3	Reactions of N-Diazeniumdiolates 79
3.5.4	Clinical Applications 80
3.5.4.1	Reversal of Cerebral Vasospasm 80
3.5.4.2	Treatment of Impotency 81
3.5.4.3	Nonthrombogenic Blood-contact Surfaces 81
3.5.5	Future Directions 81
	References 83

4	The Role of S-Nitrosothiols in the Biological Milieu 91
	<i>Bulent Mutus</i>
4.1	Structure and Cellular Reactivity of RSNOs 91
4.1.1	RSNO Structure 91
4.1.1.1	Enzymatic Consumption of RSNOs 92
4.1.2	Formation of RSNOs in the Biological Milieu 93
4.1.2.1	Nitrite Mediated 93
4.1.2.2	NO Mediated 93
4.1.2.3	NO Oxidation Products Mediated 93
4.1.2.4	Metalloprotein Mediated 95
4.1.2.5	Transnitrosation 98
4.2	Postulated Physiological roles of RSNOs 99
4.2.1	Regulation of Blood Flow by HbSNO 99
4.2.2	Regulation of Ventilatory Response in the Brain by RSNOs 100
4.2.3	Role of RSNOs in Platelet Function 100
4.3	Conclusion 102
	References 103
5	Metal–NO complexes: Structures, Syntheses, Properties and NO-releasing Mechanisms 109
	<i>Tara P. Dasgupta, Danielle V. Aquart</i>
5.1	Iron Complexes 110
5.1.1	Nitroprusside 110
5.1.2	Iron Porphyrin Nitrosyls 114
5.1.3	Dinitrosyl Complexes (DNICs) 116
5.1.4	Iron–Sulfur Cluster Nitrosyls 117
5.2	Ruthenium Complexes 118
5.3	Other Metal Nitrosyls 121
5.4	Conclusion 122
	References 123
6	The NO-releasing Heterocycles 131
	<i>Alberto Gasco, Karl Schoenafinger</i>
6.1	Heterocyclic N-oxides 131
6.1.1	Furoxans 131
6.1.1.1	General Properties 132
6.1.1.2	Synthesis 134
6.1.1.2.1	Dimerisation of nitrile oxides 134
6.1.1.2.2	Dehydrogenation of α -dioximes (glyoximes) 135
6.1.1.2.3	Action of nitrogen oxides on olefins 136
6.1.1.2.4	Other methods 137
6.1.1.3	NO-release 137
6.1.1.4	Biological Actions 140

6.1.1.4.1	Condensed furoxans	140
6.1.1.4.2	Furoxan sulfones and carbonitriles	141
6.1.1.4.3	Furoxancarboxamides	144
6.1.1.5	NO-donor Hybrid Furoxans	145
6.1.2	3,4-Dihydro-1,2-diazete 1,2-dioxides (1,2-diazetine 1,2-dioxides)	147
6.1.2.1	Generalities	147
6.1.2.2	Synthesis	148
6.1.2.3	NO-release	149
6.1.2.4	Biological Properties	150
6.1.3	Other Heterocyclic N-oxides	151
6.1.3.1	4H-pyrazol-4-one 1,2-dioxides (pyrazolone N,N-dioxides)	152
6.1.3.2	2H-1,2,3-triazole 1-oxides	153
6.1.3.3	1,2,3,4-Benzotetrazine 1,3-dioxides and 1,2,3-Benzotriazine 3-oxides	153
6.2	Mesoionic Heterocycles	154
6.2.1	Sydnonimines	155
6.2.1.1	General Properties	155
6.2.1.2	Synthesis	156
6.2.1.3	NO-release	157
6.2.1.4	Biological Properties	161
6.2.2	Mesoionic Oxatriazoles	163
6.2.2.1	Synthesis	164
6.2.2.2	NO-release	165
6.2.2.3	Biological Properties	167
6.3	Other Heterocyclic Systems	168
	References	170

7 **C-Nitroso Compounds, Oximes, N-Hydroxyguanidines and N-Hydroxyureas** 177

S. Bruce King

7.1	Introduction	177
7.2	C-Nitroso Compounds	177
7.2.1	Alkyl and Aryl C-Nitroso Compounds	177
7.2.1.1	Syntheses and Properties	177
7.2.1.2	NO-releasing Mechanisms	178
7.2.2	Acyl C-Nitroso Compounds	179
7.2.2.1	Syntheses and Properties	179
7.2.2.2	NO-releasing Mechanisms	180
7.2.2.3	Structure–Activity Relationships	181
7.3	Oximes	182
7.3.1	Syntheses and Properties	182
7.3.2	NO-releasing Mechanisms	184
7.3.3	Structure–Activity Relationships	185
7.4	N-Hydroxyguanidines	186

- 7.4.1 Syntheses and Properties 186
- 7.4.2 NO-releasing Mechanisms 187
- 7.4.3 Structure–Activity Relationships 188
- 7.5 *N*-Hydroxyureas 189
- 7.5.1 Syntheses and Properties 189
- 7.5.2 NO-releasing Mechanisms 191
- 7.5.3 Structure–Activity Relationships 193
- References 195

Part 2 NO Donors' Applications in Biological Research 201

8 Vasodilators for Biological Research 203

Anthony Robert Butler, Russell James Pearson

- 8.1 NO-donor Drugs for Biological Research 203
- 8.2 Sodium Nitrite (NaNO_2) 203
- 8.3 *S*-Nitrosothiols 204
- 8.4 Metallic Nitrosyls 209
- 8.5 Sodium Nitroprusside ($\text{Na}_2[\text{Fe}(\text{CN})_5\text{NO}] \cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$) 209
- 8.6 Organic Nitrates 212
- 8.7 Organic Nitrites 215
- 8.8 NONOates 216
- 8.9 NO Inhalation; NO Gas as an NO Donor 219
- 8.10 Sydnominines 222
- 8.11 Conclusion 225
- References 226

9 NO Donors as Antiplatelet Agents 233

Anna Kobsar, Martin Eigenthaler

- 9.1 Introduction 233
- 9.2 Molecular Mechanisms of NO-mediated Platelet Inhibition 233
- 9.2.1 cGMP-dependent NO Signaling Mechanisms 234
- 9.2.1.1 Regulation of cGMP Levels 235
- 9.2.1.2 Effector Sites of cGMP 236
- 9.2.1.3 cGMP-PK I Substrates in Platelets 237
- 9.2.1.3.1 Inositol triphosphate (IP_3) receptor 237
- 9.2.1.3.2 Rap 1b 238
- 9.2.1.3.3 Vasodilator stimulated phosphoprotein (VASP) 238
- 9.2.1.3.4 Heat shock protein hsp27 239
- 9.2.1.3.5 LASP 239
- 9.2.1.3.6 Thromboxane A_2 (TxA_2) receptor 240
- 9.2.1.3.7 Phosphodiesterase PDE5 240
- 9.2.2 cGMP-independent NO Signaling Mechanisms 240

9.3	Effects of Different Groups of NO Donors on Platelets	241
9.3.1	Diazeniumdiolates	241
9.3.1.1	DEA/NO (Sodium 2-(<i>N,N</i> -diethylamino)-diazene-2-oxide)	241
9.3.1.2	DETA NONOate ((<i>Z</i>)-1-[<i>N</i> -(2-Aminoethyl)- <i>N</i> -(2-ammonioethyl)amino]diazene-1-ium-1,2-diolate)	241
9.3.1.3	MAHMA NONOate ((<i>Z</i> -1-[<i>N</i> -Methyl- <i>N</i> -[6-(<i>N</i> -methylammoniohexyl) amino]]diazene-1-ium-1,2-diolate)	242
9.3.2	Sodium Nitroprusside (SNP)	242
9.3.3	Molsidomine (3-Morpholino-sidnonimine; SIN-1)	242
9.3.4	<i>S</i> -Nitrosothiols	243
9.3.4.1	SNAP (<i>S</i> -Nitroso- <i>N</i> -acetyl- <i>D</i> ,1-penicillamine)	243
9.3.4.2	SNVP (<i>S</i> -Nitroso- <i>N</i> -valerylpenicillamine)	243
9.3.4.3	GSNO (<i>S</i> -nitroso-glutathione)	243
9.3.4.4	CysNO (<i>S</i> -Nitrosocysteine)	244
9.3.4.5	SNAC (<i>S</i> -Nitroso- <i>N</i> -acetyl-cysteine)	244
9.3.4.6	HomocysNO (<i>S</i> -Nitrosohomocysteine)	244
9.3.4.7	RIG200 (<i>N</i> -(<i>S</i> -Nitroso- <i>N</i> -acetylpenicillamine)-2-amino-2-deoxy-1,3,4,6, tetra- <i>O</i> -acetyl-beta- <i>D</i> -glucopyranose)	244
9.3.5	Organic Nitrates	245
9.3.5.1	GTN (Glyceryl Trinitrate, Nitroglycerin, NTG)	245
9.3.6	Mesoionic Oxatriazole Derivatives	245
9.3.6.1	GEA-3162 (1,2,3,4-Oxatriazolium, 5-amino-3-(3,4-dichlorophenyl)-, chloride)	245
9.3.6.2	GEA-3175 (1,2,3, 4-Oxatriazolium, -3-(3-chloro-2-methylphenyl)-5-[[[4-methylphenyl] sulfonyl]amino]-, Hydroxide Inner Salt)	246
9.3.7	Other NO Donors	246
9.3.7.1	OXINO (Sodium trioxdinitrate or Angel's Salt)	246
9.3.7.2	B-NOD (2-Hydroxy-benzoid acid 3-nitrooxymethyl-phenyl ester)	246
9.3.8	<i>L</i> -Arginine (<i>L</i> -Arg)	246
9.4	Activators of Soluble Guanylyl Cyclase	247
9.4.1	YC-1 (3-(5'-Hydroxymethyl-2'-furyl)-1-benzyl indazole)	247
9.4.2	BAY 41-2272 (3-(4-Amino-5-cyclopropylpyrimidine-2-yl)-1-(2-fluorobenzyl)-1 <i>H</i> -pyrazolo [3,4- <i>b</i>]pyridine)	247
9.5	cGMP Analogs	247
9.6	Inhaled NO and Platelet Inhibition	248
9.7	Conclusion	248
	References	249
10	Control of NO Production	255
	<i>Noriko Fujiwara, Keiichiro Suzuki, Naoyuki Taniguchi</i>	
10.1	Introduction	255
10.2	Structure of Nitric Oxide Synthase	256

10.3	NO Formation	257
10.4	L-Arginine and L-Arginine Derivatives	257
10.4.1	Inhibitors	258
10.4.2	Substrates	259
10.5	Non-amino Acid Inhibitors and Non-amino Acid Substrates	261
10.5.1	Guanidine	262
10.5.1.1	Inhibitor	262
10.5.1.2	Substrates	262
10.5.2	Isothiourea (ITU)	265
10.5.3	Amidine	267
10.5.4	Cyclic Amidines are Potent iNOS Selective Inhibitors	268
10.5.5	Indazole	269
10.6	Inhibition of NOS Function Targeted towards Cofactors	270
10.7	Regulators of NOS Gene Expression	270
10.8	NO Formation by an NOS-independent Pathway	271
10.8.1	Oxime	272
10.8.2	Hydroxyurea	272
10.9	Summary	273
	References	274

Part 3 Clinical Applications of NO Donors 283

11	Nitric Oxide Donors in Cardiovascular Disease 285	
	<i>Martin Feelisch, Joseph Loscalzo</i>	
11.1	Introduction	285
11.2	Clinical Cardiovascular Applications of NO Donor Therapy – Past and Present	285
11.3	Pharmacological Cardiovascular Mechanism of Action of NO Donors	288
11.4	Clinically Available NO Donors: Structures and Mechanism of Action	290
11.5	Nitrate Tolerance	293
11.6	Is Nitrate Therapy Associated with Adverse Vascular Effects?	295
11.7	Conclusions	295
	References	297
12	Nitric Oxide Donors as Anti-platelet Agents for Thromboembolic Disorders: Clinical Status and Therapeutic Prognosis 299	
	<i>David R. Janero, David S. Garvey</i>	
12.1	Introduction	299
12.2	Human Platelets, Thromboembolic Disorders, and NO	300
12.3	Nitrovasodilators	307

12.3.1	Glyceryl Trinitrate, Nitroglycerin (GTN) 307
12.3.2	Isosorbide Dinitrate (ISDN) and Isosorbide Mononitrate (ISMN) 311
12.3.3	Sodium Nitroprusside (SNP) 312
12.4	Oxatriazolium NO Donors 314
12.4.1	Sydnonimines 314
12.5	Nitrosothiol NO Donors 316
12.5.1	S-Nitroso-glutathione (GSNO) 316
12.6	L-Arginine {S(+)-2-Amino-5-[(aminoiminomethyl)amino]pentanoic acid} (L-arg) 318
12.7	NCX-4016 [2-Acetoxybenzoate 2-(1-nitroso-methyl)-phenyl ester] 319
12.8	Conclusion and Future Prospects 320
	References 323

13 NO and Gene Regulation 329

Jie Zhou, Bernhard Brüne

13.1	Formation of NO and RNI-signaling 329
13.2	p53 Regulation under the Impact of RNI 331
13.2.1	Basic Considerations: p53 Phosphorylation and Mdm2 Binding 331
13.2.2	Molecular Mechanisms of RNI-evoked p53 Stabilization 332
13.3	HIF-1 α Regulation under the Impact of RNI 333
13.3.1	Lessons from Hypoxia: Basic Considerations of HIF-1 α Stability Regulation 333
13.3.2	Stability Regulation of HIF-1 α by NO/RNI in Normoxia versus Hypoxia 335
13.4	RNI, p53 and HIF-1 in Tumor Biology 337
13.5	Conclusions 339
	Abbreviations 341
	References 342

14 Nitric Oxide and Central Nervous System Diseases 347

Elizabeth Mazzio, Karam F. A. Soliman

14.1	General Overview – Gaining Control over Various NOS Enzymes that Concurrently Contribute to Degenerative CNS Diseases 347
14.2	Signaling Controls – Neuronal NOS: TYPE-I 349
14.2.1	Neurotransmission 349
14.2.2	Neuronal Calcium Homeostasis 351
14.3	Signaling Controls, Endothelial NOS: Type-3 352
14.3.1	EDRF/Vascular Tone 352
14.3.2	eNOS, Cyclic AMP/GMP Regulation 353
14.4	Signaling Controls, Inducible NOS: Type-2 354
14.4.1	Inflammation, Microglia and Astrocytes 354
14.4.2	Stress Activated and Extra-cellular Kinases 355
14.4.3	Cyclic AMP/Protein Kinase a 356

14.4.4	Cyclic AMP–Phosphodiesterase Inhibitors	358
14.4.5	Peroxisome Proliferator-activated Receptor-gamma	358
14.5	The Neurotoxicity of NO	359
14.5.1	Oxidative Stress	359
14.5.2	Mitochondrial Impairment	361
14.5.3	Permeability Transition Pore Complex, Apoptosis	363
14.5.4	Excitotoxicity, Poly(ADP-ribose)-polymerase-1	365
	References	369

Index 385

Preface

The discovery of the physiological and pathophysiological roles of nitric oxide (NO) during the 1980s was one of the most surprising and exciting developments in biological research. NO exhibits a broad range of biological activities. Thus, it comes as no surprise that, as far back as 1992, the editors of the journal *Science* called NO the molecule of the year, and in 1998, three scientists, R.F. Furchgott, L.J. Ignarro, and F. Murad, were awarded the Nobel Prize in physiology and medicine for their contribution to elucidating the role of nitric oxide in the functions of living organisms.

As a simple diatomic free radical, NO is generally considered to represent the biologically important form of the endothelium-derived relaxing factor (EDRF). Cellular NO is almost exclusively generated *via* the oxidation of L-arginine, which is catalyzed by nitric oxide synthetases (NOS). Under physiological conditions, NO directly activates soluble guanylate cyclase (sGC) to transform guanosine triphosphate (GTP) into cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP), followed by kinase-mediated signal transduction. The endogenous formation of NO plays a key role in many bioregulatory systems, including smooth muscle relaxation, platelet inhibition, neurotransmission, and immune stimulation.

Due to the instability and inconvenient handling of aqueous solutions of authentic NO, there is increasing interest in using compounds capable of generating NO *in situ*. These compounds are called NO donors, or NO releasing agents. Glyceryl trinitrate (GTN) may be the most well known NO donor. Although the use of GTN for medicinal purposes dates back more than 150 years, little had been revealed about its physiological mechanism of action before the 1980s. It is well known that the epoch-making invention realized by Alfred Nobel in 1863 paved the way for controlled detonation of GTN. Therefore, when Nobel's physician recommended GTN as a treatment of his angina pectoris, Nobel wrote: "Isn't it the irony of fate that I have been prescribed N/G 1 [nitroglycerine] to be taken internally! They called it Trinitrin, so as not to scare the chemist and the public." Nobel would not have found it ironic if he had known that it was NO, released from GTN *in vivo*, that helps relieve angina.

In addition to organic nitrates, many other chemicals can be transformed into NO *in vitro* or *in vivo*. Due to the diversity of NO donor structures, the pathway for each class of compounds to generate NO could differ significantly, e.g., enzymatical vs.

non-enzymatical, reductive vs. oxidative, etc. As each class of compounds offers distinct biochemical properties, this allows us to choose a compound that best meets the demands of specific investigations.

Insufficient NO production causes serious medical problems. Many diseases such as hypertension, atherosclerosis and restenosis involve the deficiency of NO production. Therefore, a compound that can release NO under specific conditions can be used therapeutically to palliate NO underproduction. In fact, the best known NO donor, glyceryl trinitrate, has been used for over a century to relieve acute attacks of angina pectoris. In 1998, Carl Djerassi published a book entitled “NO”, where he plotted the success of a biotech company producing NO donor compounds to treat male impotence. In reality, NO donor compounds have a variety of biomedical applications. Our latest search using the keyword “nitric oxide donor” at ScienceFinder revealed that there are 2,880 published research papers on NO donors. More importantly, there have been 105 US and world patents on the applications of NO donors in the treatment of cardiovascular diseases, central nervous systems diseases, diseases related to immunity, physiological disorders and many other medical situations. Besides supplementation of NO in a situation where a NO insufficiency may underlie the pathology, NO donors can also regulate NO-based physiological pathways, i.e., male erectile dysfunction, and improve drug safety and efficacy, such as gastrointestinal toxicity of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs.

Since the mid-1980s, the development of new NO donors has offered several advantages over the previous NO donors, such as spontaneous releasing NO, donating NO under controlled rates, and even targeting NO to certain tissues. The current trends in NO donor development include discovery of new NO donors, finding novel applications of old NO donors, development of NO-drug hybrids and site-specific delivery of NO. Although a number of reviews and books on NO have been published, we felt that there was a need to publish a comprehensive text addressing the basic principles of all aspects of NO donors. This book is not only an informative resource for basic scientists in the NO field, but also for all clinicians and biologists interested in the applications of NO donors. This 14-chapter book is divided into three sections ranging from the basic chemistry of NO donors to clinically applied science. The first seven chapters present a review of medicinal chemistry of all classes of NO donors. The next three chapters continue to discuss the application of NO donors and NO inhibition in biological research. The final four chapters of the book address other important issues on biological functions of NO donors.

Integrating internationally recognized authors for each chapter was not an easy job. We really appreciate the help from all these hard-working authors. We are also grateful to the editors at Wiley-VCH – without their continuous support this project would never have been possible. We would like to sincerely thank faculty members, postdoctoral fellows, graduate and undergraduate students who have contributed so much in Wang’s and Taniguchi’s laboratories on nitric oxide research. These people are Libing Yu, Zhengmao Guo, Andrea McGill, Johnny Ramirez, Jun Li, Ming Xian, Adam Janczuk, Yongchun Hou, Vladislav Telyatnikov, Yingxin Zhang, Xuejun Wu, Alvin A. Holder, Qiang Jia, Zhong Wen, Xiaoping Tang, Xinchao Chen, Jaime Martin Franco, Mingchuan Huang, Dongning Lu, Arindam Talukdar, Noriko

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Nitric Oxide Donors

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Part 1 Chemistry of NO Donors

1

NO and NO Donors

Tingwei Bill Cai, Peng George Wang, and Alvin A. Holder

Nitric oxide (NO), a magic free radical gas molecule, has been shown to be involved in numerous physiological and pathophysiological processes. Among its diverse functions, NO has been implicated in the relaxation of vascular smooth muscle, the inhibition of platelet aggregation, neurotransmission (Viagra reverses impotence by enhancing an NO-stimulated pathway), and immune regulation [1]. It was named the molecule of the year in 1992 by *Science* and was the subject of the Nobel Prize in 1998. NO has limited solubility in water (2–3 mM), and it is unstable in the presence of various oxidants. This makes it difficult to introduce as such into biological systems in a controlled or specific fashion. Consequently, the development of chemical agents that release NO is important if we are to target its bioeffector roles to specific cell types for biological and pharmacological applications. Based on our comprehensive review of NO donors [2], this chapter focuses on recent progress and current trends in NO donor development and novel applications which are not covered by the following chapters.

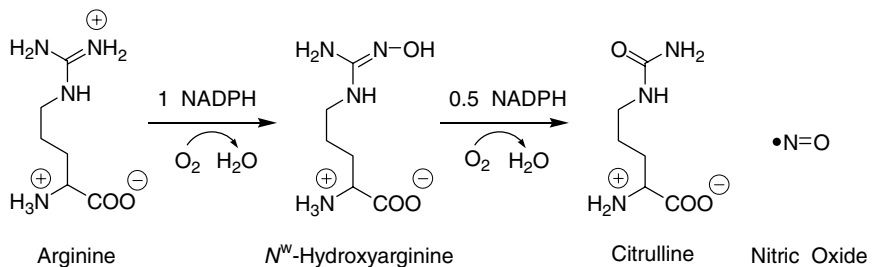
1.1

Introduction to NO Biosynthesis and NO donors

1.1.1

Nitric Oxide Synthases

Endogenous NO is produced almost exclusively by L-arginine catabolism to L-citrulline in a reaction catalyzed by a family of nitric oxide synthases (NOSs) [3]. In the first step, Arg is hydroxylated to an enzyme-bound intermediate *N*^ω-hydroxy-L-arginine (NHA), and 1 mol of NADPH (nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide phosphate, reduced form) and O₂ are consumed. In the second step, NHA is oxidized to citrulline and NO, with consumption of 0.5 mol of NADPH and 1 mol of O₂ (Scheme 1.1). Oxygen activation in both steps is carried out by the enzyme-bound heme, which derives electrons from NADPH. Mammalian NOS consists of an N-terminal oxy-



Scheme 1.1 Endogenous synthesis of nitric oxide.

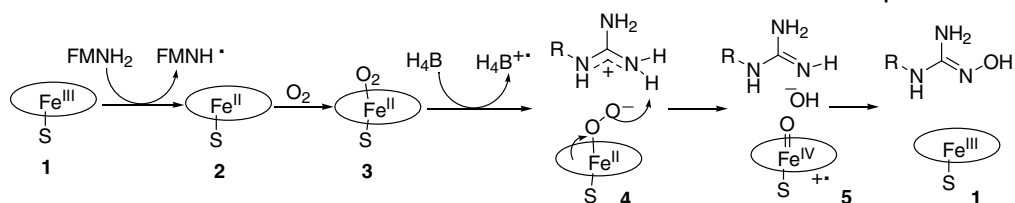
genase domain that binds iron protoporphyrin IX (heme), 6-(*R*)-tetrahydrobiopterin (H_4B) and Arg, and a C-terminal reductase domain that binds FMN (flavin mononucleotide), FAD (flavin adenine dinucleotide), and NADPH, with a calmodulin binding motif located between the two domains. To be active, two NOS polypeptides must form a homodimer. The reductase domains each transfer NADPH-derived electrons, through FAD and FMN, to the heme located in the adjacent subunit. Three distinct isoforms of NOS have been identified – neuronal, macrophage and endothelial types, and each is associated with a particular physiological process (Table 1.1). Constitutive endothelial NOS (eNOS or NOS III) regulates smooth muscle relaxation and blood pressure; constitutive neuronal NOS (nNOS or NOS I) is involved in neurotransmission and long-term potentiation; the NO produced from inducible NOS (iNOS or NOS II) in activated macrophage cells acts as a cytotoxic agent in normal immune defense against microorganisms and tumor cells. The constitutive isoforms (nNOS and eNOS) require added Ca^{2+} and calmidulin for activity and produce a relatively small amount of NO, while the inducible isoform (iNOS) has tightly bound Ca^{2+} and calmodulin, and produces a relatively large amount of NO.

Tab. 1.1: Properties of NOS isoforms.

NOS	Locations	Characteristics	Major Biological Functions
nNOS (NOS-I)	Brain, spinal cord, peripheral	Constitutive, Ca^{2+} dependent	Neuromediator
iNOS (NOS-II)	Macrophages, other tissues	Inducible, Ca^{2+} independent	Host defender, cytotoxic
eNOS (NOS-III)	Endothelium	Constitutive, Ca^{2+} dependent	Vasodilator tone modulator

The first step of an NOS catalyzed reaction is a “classical” P450-dependent *N*-hydroxylation of a guanidine, except for the involvement of H_4B . As shown in Scheme 1.2, Fe(III)heme 1 first accepts one electron to give Fe(II)heme 2, which binds O_2 to produce ferrous-dioxy heme 3. The second electron from H_4B reduces 3 to peroxy-iron 4. Arg donates a proton to 4 to facilitate O–O bond cleavage to generate an oxo-iron (IV) cation radical species 5, which then rapidly hydroxylates the neutral guanidinium to NHA [4].

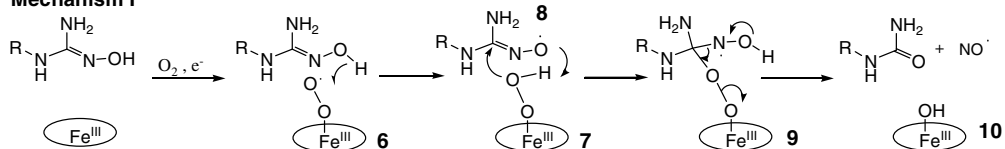
The second step of NOS oxidation is a greater challenge to enzymologists since there is no direct analogy in other systems. A variety of proposed reaction steps can be



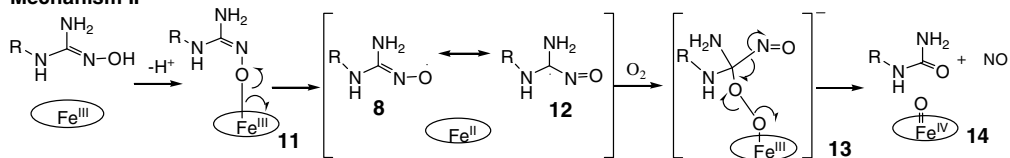
Scheme 1.2 The first step of NOS reaction.

roughly summarized in three mechanisms (Scheme 1.3). The popular Mechanism I was proposed by Marletta and modified by Ingold and others [5, 6], a superoxo-iron(III)heme intermediate **6** abstracts the hydrogen atom of the NHA to furnish an iminoxy radical **8**, which upon nucleophilic attack by the hydroperoxoiron(III)heme **7** on its carbon generates NO and citrulline. This mechanism, however, appears not to be supported by the crystal structure analysis of the NOS-NHA complex [7–9] or by a recent spectral study [10]. The second mechanism was proposed by Groves (Mechanism II), where the NOS-catalyzed aerobic oxidation of NHA occurs via a radical-type auto-oxidation process [11, 12], i.e., NHA is oxidized by the Fe(III) heme to generate an iminoxy radical **8**, which tautomerizes to the α -nitroso radical **12**. Insertion of a dioxygen molecule between **12** and Fe(II) heme forms an energetic α -nitrosoperoxy Fe(III) heme intermediate that decomposes to generate NO [13, 14]. However, direct ligation of NHA to heme iron has been precluded by the X-ray crystallographic data [7–9]. The third mechanism, proposed by Silverman and others [15–18], mainly in-

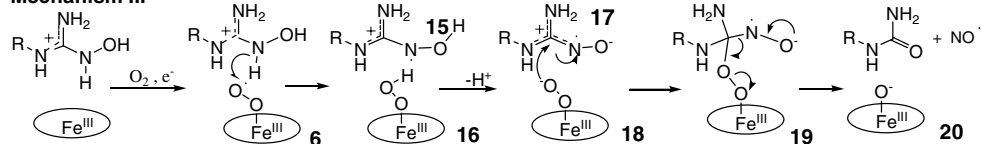
Mechanism I



Mechanism II



Mechanism III



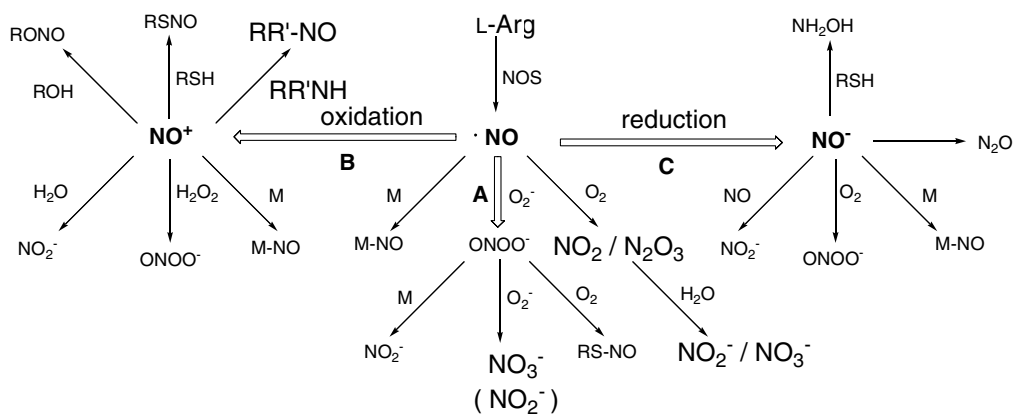
Scheme 1.3 The second step of NOS reaction.

volves the oxidation of the nitrogen on the protonated *N*-hydroxyguanidino moiety (Mechanism III). It was suggested that the initial N–H bond cleavage by superoxo-iron(III)heme **6** generates a radical cation intermediate **15**, which, upon heterolysis of the O–H bond, gives the iminoxy radical **17**. The nucleophilic attack of peroxo-iron(III)heme **18** on **17** gives an intermediate similar to **13**, which decomposes to NO and citrulline. More recently, Stuehr has emphasized the involvement of H₄B in the second step of the NOS reaction [19–21].

1.1.2

Chemistry of Reactive Nitrogen Species

One of NO's major biological actions is to activate guanylate cyclase directly to generate cyclic guanosine monophosphate (cGMP) as an intracellular second messenger, followed by kinase-mediated signal transduction. In another pathway, NO undergoes oxidation or reduction in biological systems to convert to many different reactive nitrogen species (RNS). It can react with molecular oxygen (O₂), superoxide anion (O₂^{•-}) or transition metals (M) to produce RNS such as N₂O₃, NO₂, NO₂⁻, NO₃⁻, peroxy-nitrite (ONOO⁻), and metal-nitrosyl adducts (Route A, Scheme 1.4) [22, 23]. Among these RNS, peroxy-nitrite stands out as an important species [24, 25]. The reaction between NO and O₂^{•-} produces peroxy-nitrite at a diffusion controlled rate [26–28]. Peroxy-nitrite is a strong oxidizing and nitrating species that causes molecular damage leading to disease-causing cellular dysfunction [29, 30]. NO can also be rapidly oxidized by oxygen, superoxide or transition metals to nitrosonium (NO⁺) which reacts with nucleophilic centers such as ROH, RSH and RR'NH to produce RO–NO, RS–NO or RR'N–NO, respectively (Route B, Scheme 1.4) [31, 32]. These products subsequently undergo other reactions to exhibit their biological effects. In addition, NO also undergoes a one-electron reduction to produce nitroxyl (NO⁻) (Route C, Scheme 1.4). The reducing potential of this reduction is approximately +0.25 V [33]. Nitroxyl converts rapidly to N₂O under physiological conditions. Other competing reactions



Scheme 1.4 Oxidation and reduction of reactive nitrogen species.