

**Principal Component Analysis of Data from NMR Titration Experiment of Uniformly
¹⁵N Labelled Amyloid Beta (1–42) Peptide with Osmolytes and Phenolic Compounds**

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Highlight:

- Principal component analysis (PCA) was introduced to analyze chemical shift perturbation (CSP) experiment data.
- NMR titration of uniformly ¹⁵N-labeled amyloid β (1-42) peptide with fibrilization inhibitors were analyzed.
- Conventional CSP analysis failed to distinguish the relevant binding residues.

- PCA diagram suggested that osmolytes induced structural change of A β peptide.

Abstract:

A simple NMR method to analyze the data obtained by NMR titration experiment of amyloid formation inhibitors against uniformly ^{15}N -labeled amyloid- β 1-42 peptide (A β (1-42)) was described. By using solution nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR) measurement, the simplest method for monitoring the effects of A β fibrilization inhibitors is the NMR chemical shift perturbation (CSP) experiment using ^{15}N -labeled A β (1-42). However, the flexible and dynamic nature of A β (1-42) monomer may hamper the interpretation of CSP data. Here we introduced principal component analysis (PCA) for visualizing and analyzing NMR data of A β (1-42) in the presence of amyloid inhibitors including high concentration osmolytes. We measured ^1H - ^{15}N 2D spectra of A β (1-42) at various temperatures as well as of A β (1-42) with several inhibitors, and subjected all the data to PCA (PCA-HSQC). The PCA diagram succeeded in differentiating the various amyloid inhibitors, including epigallocatechin gallate (EGCg), rosmarinic acid (RA) and curcumin (CUR) from high concentration osmolytes. We hypothesized that the CSPs reflected the conformational equilibrium of intrinsically

disordered A β (1–42) induced by weak inhibitor binding rather than the specific molecular interactions.

Keywords

principal component analysis; solution NMR; amyloid fibril formation; Alzheimer's disease; real time thioflavin-T assay; chemical shift perturbation mapping

1. Introduction

Alzheimer's disease (AD) is one of the most common dementias among the aged population [1]. The characteristic pathology of AD includes the progressive deposition of amyloid- β proteins ($A\beta$) outside the neuron cells [2] and accumulation of insoluble aggregates of tau protein inside the neuron cells [3] in the patients' brains. These $A\beta$ peptides commonly include $A\beta(1-40)$ and $A\beta(1-42)$, and are known to form amyloid fibrils and soluble oligomers, both toxic and less toxic [1,2,4-8]. More than 300 small synthetic and naturally-occurring molecules have been reported as $A\beta$ fibrilization inhibitors [9]. However, among these inhibitors, since different types of modes of action may exist in parallel (amyloid nucleation inhibition, amyloid growth inhibition, amyloid solubilization or oligomer formation inhibition), rational design of amyloid inhibitor seems difficult [9]. In the literatures, we found that only a limited number of reports mentioned $A\beta(1-42)$ in terms of both a time-dependent fluorescence Thioflavin-T (ThT) assay and an interaction study using solution nuclear magnetic resonance (NMR), for example, a designed synthetic molecule CLR01 [10] and a flavonoid myricetin [11].

In this study, the amyloid fibril formation inhibitors shown in Figure 1 were systematically examined using two methods: a thioflavin T (ThT) fluorescence assay and a ^1H - ^{15}N two-dimensional NMR study. These natural amyloid inhibitors include

epigallocatechin gallate (EGCg) [10,12], rosmarinic acid (RA) [11,13,14], and curcumin (CUR) [11,15](Figure 1). The ThT fluorescence assay was used to assess the ability of each compound to inhibit amyloid fibril formation. On the other hand, the NMR experiments with A β (1–42) monomer and amyloid inhibitors may indicate how the inhibitor influences the monomer peptide (for example, via specific or non-specific interaction). Although the NMR titration experiment (formerly also known as chemical shift perturbation (CSP) mapping experiment) is an excellent indicator of protein-ligand interfaces, it may fail to map the interface when the entire protein may change conformation, such as intrinsically flexible A β (1–42) peptide [16].

Herein, we introduced the principal component analysis (PCA) of NMR-CSP data instead of mapping to the surface of A β (1–42) peptide structure. The signal changes are possibly attributed to a shift in the equilibrium among multiple local conformations of the intrinsically disorder A β (1–42) monomer, rather than a direct interaction between the peptide and the compound.

2. Materials and Method

Preparation of ¹⁵N-labeled A β (1–42) peptide and NMR experiments

To produce human A β (1–42) peptide, we used a pET-based *Escherichia coli* expression plasmid that carried a hexa-histidine tag and an N-terminal yeast ubiquitin tag. To produce ^{15}N -labeled A β (1–42), cells were grown at 37°C in 1 L of M9 minimal media containing $^{15}\text{NH}_4\text{Cl}$ as the sole nitrogen source, followed by A β (1–42), according to our previous report [17]. Unlabeled A β (1–42) was also prepared in the same manner. The purified peptides were lyophilized, re-dissolved in hexafluoroisopropanol at the concentration no greater than 100 μM , lyophilized again, and then stored at –20°C until use [17].

NMR experiments were conducted using Bruker Avance III and Avance (600 MHz) NMR spectrometers (Bruker, Karlsruhe, Germany) equipped with cryogenic triple-resonance TCI and TXI probes, respectively. The lyophilized A β (1–42) powder was first dissolved in a few d_6 -dimethyl sulfoxide (DMSO) and then immediately diluted with the solution conditions for NMR. For the temperature shift experiments, a 75- μM sample of A β (1–42) was dissolved in 300 μL of 0.5 \times PBS (pH 7.4) containing 1% d_6 -DMSO and 10% D_2O in a Shigemi NMR tube (Shigemi, Co. Ltd). Following this, ^1H – ^{15}N HSQC or ^1H – ^{15}N SOFAST-HMQC spectra [18] were recorded at five temperatures: 283 K, 288 K, 298 K, 303 K, and 310 K. We observed severe signal broadening at 303 K and 310 K, thereby omitting these two datasets from the following PCA calculation. For the inhibitor CSP study, a 75-

μM sample of $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ was dissolved in $300 \mu\text{L}$ of $0.5\times$ PBS (pH 7.4) containing 1% d_6 -DMSO and 10% D_2O , and $^1\text{H}-^{15}\text{N}$ HSQC spectra were measured in the presence of the indicated final concentration of ligand. Assignments for the $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ signals were taken from the literature [10,19]. For adding osmolytes to $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$, pre-weighted lyophilized powder of trehalose (TRH), sucrose (SUC), and glucose (GLC.) were used. For adding natural inhibitors (scyllo-inositol (sINO), RA, CUR, and EGCg, 10 mM stock solution in d_6 -DMSO were used. NMR CSP experiments were conducted at 283 K. All spectra were processed using NMRPipe software [20] and analyzed using SPARKY software [21]. CSP, also known as a normalized chemical shift change in the $^1\text{H}-^{15}\text{N}$ HSQC (SOFAST-HMQC) spectra upon addition of osmolytes or amyloid inhibitors were calculated as $\text{CSP} = \{ \Delta\delta\text{H}^2 + [\Delta\delta\text{N}/6]^2 \}^{1/2}$, where $\Delta\delta\text{H}$ and $\Delta\delta\text{N}$ are chemical shift changes in amide proton and amide nitrogen, respectively. We performed the titration experiments of the natural inhibitors with 37.5, 75, 375, and 750 μM (0.5, 1, 5, and 10 molecular equivalents, respectively). Except sINO, some precipitation was observed at higher concentration. For further analysis, the chemical shift data with a minimal obvious precipitation, 750 μM sINO, 375 μM EGCg, 75 μM RA, and 37.5 μM CUR, were used.

PCA of the $^1\text{H}-^{15}\text{N}$ HSQC spectra was performed according to the method of Sakurai et al. [22]. First, the chemical shift data from each spectrum were represented as

a one-dimensional vector that contains δN and δH values in this order. Both δN and δH values were normalized using the average and the standard deviation of the δN and δH values, respectively. Following this, 10 vectors (three from the temperature shift experiments and seven from the inhibitor CSP experiments) were concatenated to build a two-dimensional matrix. Some row vectors lacking standardized chemical shift data due to missing NMR signals were omitted before PCA. The matrix size was 66 [33 (number of traceable residues) \times 2 (δH and δN)] \times 10 (measured temperature and compound points). A standard singular value decomposition analysis was performed by using the “princomp” function of the program octave 3.8.0 and a statistics package [23].

Real-time ThT fluorescence assay

Fluorescence enhancement upon ThT binding to amyloid was recorded with the Hitachi F-7000 Fluorescence Spectrophotometer (Hitachi, Co. Ltd). An excitation wavelength of 440 nm and an emission wavelength of 484 nm were used. ThT and protein concentrations were 5 μM and 25 μM , respectively, according to our previous report [17]

Electron microscopy

For negatively stained electron microscopy, 25 μ M (0.1mg/mL) A β (1–42) was allowed to form amyloid fibrils in 0.5 \times phosphate-buffered saline (PBS, pH 7.4) at 37°C (310K). 0.5 \times PBS was prepared from 20 times dilution of PBS (\times 10) solution purchased from Nacalai Tesque (Kyoto, Japan, cat. No. 27575-31). Aliquots (5 μ L) of the solution before amyloid fibril formation and 60 min after amyloid fibril formation were stained on a glow-discharged, carbon-supported copper grid (elastic carbon substrate on STEM100Cu grids, 100-mm grid pitch, Okenshoji Co., Ltd, Tokyo, Japan). Sample staining was performed with 5 μ L of 2% uranyl acetate, and the samples were washed then three times (total, 10 μ L) with the uranyl acetate solution. Images were collected using a JEM-1200 EX-II microscope (JEOL, Co, Tokyo, Japan) operated at an acceleration voltage of 70 kV and recorded using Electron-Microscopic Film FG (FUJIFILM, Co Ltd, Tokyo, Japan).

Results

Quality control of *E. coli* derived recombinant A β (1–42) in terms of amyloid fibril formation by using electron microscopy

All A β (1–42) used in this study was prepared using an *E. coli* expression system in our laboratory. Finder et al. reported that *E. coli*-derived recombinant A β (1–42)

and the synthetic A β (1–42) showed different fibrilization time course, and *E. coli*-derived recombinant A β (1–42) may contain much more seeds for amyloid fibril formation [24,25]. Thus, before starting the experiments, we confirmed the quality of our recombinant A β (1–42) sample. As shown in Figure 2A, we succeeded in reproducing the reported phenomenon. Even without adding external seeds, our A β (1–42) peptide began to form amyloid 30 min after initiating the reaction (Figure 3, filled circle). The growth curve for the amyloid fibril formation clearly shows a typical sigmoidal process that includes three distinct phases: a lag phase, fibril growth phase, and plateau phase. We further confirmed the shapes of the amyloid fibrils using negatively stained electron microscopy. Figure 2A and B shows electron micrographs of the samples taken before and 60 min after starting the amyloid fibril formation reaction. In Figure 2B, we can readily see linear fibrils with a uniform diameter.

Real-time ThT fluorescence assays with selected natural amyloid fibril formation inhibitors

Next, we assessed the amyloid fibril formation inhibition activity of the known natural amyloid inhibitors listed in Figure 1. In this study, we selected several compounds whose amyloid inhibition activity has already been reported in the

literature [11,26–29]. Nevertheless, we found that the real-time ThT fluorescent assay data were not completely accumulated for all amyloid inhibitors. We are aware of the importance of the profile of real-time ThT assay, because it is useful to discriminate whether the inhibitors affect nucleation phase or elongation phase of amyloid fibril formation [30]. However, experimental reproducibility of *in vitro* fibril formation is sensitive for many initial conditions, such as the molecular species examined [$A\beta(1-40)$ or $A\beta(1-42)$], peptide concentration, temperature, buffer conditions, and amounts of pre-existing amyloid seeds in the sample [17]. Therefore, we performed real-time ThT assays for each of the amyloid inhibitors (Figure 1) under unified conditions (Figure 3A and 3B).

First, we focused on a series of sugars, including TRH, SUC, and GLC. The effects of sugars on proteins have been widely investigated. These sugars are known as osmolytes; they may stabilize the native state of the protein through preferential hydration mechanisms [31–38]. In our previous study, we reported that fibrillation of $A\beta(1-42)$ was attenuated by 1.5 M SUC after incubation for 60 h under physiological conditions [28]. Other articles reported that 250 mM TRH and SUC could suppress membrane damage induced by an $A\beta$ oligomer. Under the unified conditions used in this study, High concentrations of TRH and SUC generally suppressed amyloid fibril

formation, whereas GLC showed only partial inhibition (Figure 3A). Lower (100 mM and 250 mM) sugar concentrations were also examined (data not shown). Under these conditions, the inhibitory activity of SUC was weaker than that of TRH. Thus, the amyloid inhibition activity of these sugars can be placed in the following order: TRH > SUC > GLC. In case of addition of 0.5M GLC, amyloid formation was only partially inhibited.

Accordingly, we compared the activities of the selected natural amyloid inhibitors that inhibit fibril formation (Figure 1). Interestingly, sINO did not inhibit amyloid fibril formation under our experimental conditions. Instead, sINO seemingly accelerated amyloid fibril formation (Figure 3B). RA also failed to inhibit, however, RA at the indicated concentration showed a certain delay of the lag phase, suggesting partial inhibition of nucleation process as well as fibril elongation [39]. EGCg was the most potent inhibitor in this study. We intended to apply the same method to CUR but failed because the strong UV absorption of CUR overlaps the excitation wavelength for ThT fluorescence.

2.3. Variety of chemical shift changes of A β (1–42) upon temperature shift and inhibitor addition (CSP experiment)

^1H - ^{15}N NMR spectra of $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ as well as $\text{A}\beta(1-40)$ showed a narrow signal dispersion that is typical for IDPs [40]. Among the many NMR analyses of $\text{A}\beta(1-40)$ in solution, Yamaguchi et al. reported a unique temperature-dependent behavior of $\text{A}\beta(1-40)$ [41]. In detail, the HSQC signals of $\text{A}\beta(1-40)$ underwent unusual temperature-dependent changes in both their chemical shifts and signal intensities. A severe signal broadening at higher temperature is attributed to a shift in the dynamic equilibrium between the random coil state and the local short β -turn state [41]. In this study, we succeeded in reproducing the phenomenon with our recombinant $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ (Figure 4A).

Next, we performed the NMR CSP experiment using ^{15}N -labeled $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ by titrating the natural amyloid inhibitors. From these NMR CSP experiments, it was demonstrated that the interactions between $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ and the selected amyloid inhibitors were in the fast exchange regime. It should be noted that (1) in most cases, the chemical shift changes induced by the compounds are smaller than that induced by the temperature change, (2) the chemical shift changes were widely distributed over the entire molecule of $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$, and (3) the residues exhibited the temperature-induced changes and that of the compounds-induced changes are overlapped (Figure 5). In Figure 5, the selected normalized chemical shift changes upon temperature change, addition of osmolyte (TRH) and polyphenols (EGCg, RA and CUR) are plotted against

the residue number of A β (1-42). Although each chemicals have different chemical structures and their molecular sizes, chemical shift changes were observed along the whole A β (1-42) residues. Based on these data, we failed to identify the critical binding residues of A β (1-42) to CUR, RA, and EGCg. We assume that CSP may reflect both the structural change of intrinsically disordered A β (1-42) peptide upon addition of chemicals as well as the direct interaction to the inhibitors. We hypothesized that this difficulty may due to the nature of A β (1-42) as an IDP. If A β (1-42) would adopt a single stable globular conformation in solution, such the chemical shift changes upon compounds titration is readily explained as the result of the specific molecular interactions. As an IDP, A β (1-42) exists in a dynamic equilibrium among many semi-stable conformations, but does not adopt to a single conformation. Only the time-averaged chemical shifts of these states are being observed. Thus, we analyzed the NMR spectra of CSP experiments and temperature-shift experiments together using a PCA method, instead of a chemical-shift-mapping representation (PCA-HSQC method, Figure 6).

2.4. Performance and limitation of the PCA-HSQC method

The use of a PCA method for the analysis of a series of spectra is essentially identical to a singular value decomposition (SVD) analysis assuming that each spectrum is a linear combination of a few basis spectra. In NMR, this assumption is always valid when they are in the fast exchange regime with respect to NMR chemical shift timescale. This case is very likely that the exchange regime is fast and reversible, therefore the case of A β (1-42) and the compounds meets the criteria above. We are referring to the report by Sakurai et al., who successfully introduced the PCA method during their analysis of the protein folding intermediate of β MG [22,42], with slight modification. After performing a singular value decomposition, we succeeded in obtaining 10 components and their corresponding contribution ratios. The contribution ratios of the first three principal components were 99.23 %, 0.74 %, and 0.02 %, respectively, and the sum of these three principal components was 99.99 %. Notably, relatively large contribution ratio of PC1 (> 85 %) was also reported by Sakurai et al [22]. After PCA analysis, all 10 normalized HSQC spectra data have the same PC1 values (PC1 = 0.32). The PC1 may represent the average spectrum of all the spectra analyzed, and the characteristic values according to the CSP are expressed by PC2 and PC3. Accordingly, we represented each data point using these three principal components and visualized the data as a 2D scattered graph only using PC2 and PC3 (Figure 6).

3. Discussion

In this study, we focused that the order of amyloid inhibitory activity of the three osmolytes (TRH > SUC > GLU) are well consistent to the order of their potential of preferential hydration. These osmolytes are active only at very high (> 250 mM) concentration. Under high osmolyte condition, preferential hydration effectively contributes to protein stability of folded proteins. Our previous study demonstrated that amyloid fibril formation of AL amyloidosis retarded under high sugar concentration condition because compact native-like structure were stabilized by preferential hydration. In preferential hydration theory, both exclusion of osmolyte and delivery of water are occurred at protein surface of unfolded state rather than native state. This water compulsion may also be occurred around intrinsically unstructured A β (1-42) preferentially. Therefore, we assumed that the amyloid inhibitor activity of the osmolytes should be attributed to their stabilizing action to the “native-like” structure. Even if A β (1-42) is an IDP that does not adopt into any of fixed conformations, the osmolytes can stabilize some of the possible “transient” compact conformations by water compulsion, resulting in amyloid fibril formation inhibition.

Figure 6 demonstrated that the data points including the temperature shift experiments and the osmolyte CSP experiments are categorized into two major series along the two lines. The first line includes temperature shift experiments, and the second line contains compound-induced CSP experiments with osmolytes. The first data series are roughly parallel to PC2 axis, whereas the second data series lie along the PC3 axis. In other words, although many residues of A β (1-42) exhibited both the compound-induced and the temperature-induced chemical shift changes, these two distinct physicochemical events were well separated by PCA. In addition, the similar tendency of the osmolytes-induced chemical shift changes observed in this study is readily visualized in the PCA diagram. The effects of the osmolytes upon A β (1-42) are thus discriminated from the other perturbations, such as the temperature shifts and EGCg. In contrast, all the other polyphenolic compounds in this study (except for sINO), are plotted at different positions from the former two data series, the temperature shift experiments and the osmolytes CSP experiments. Notably, the two phenolic compounds RA and CUR are both close to the red line, but opposite sides from the origin (the point of 0 eq, 10°C). This means that the residues indicated CSPs upon RA and CUR titration were mostly overlapped, whereas the signs of the induced chemical shift changes were

totally opposite, thereby suggesting the different molecular mechanism of amyloid inhibition.

Finally, this study showed a potential of the PCA-HSQC method to analyze the complicated effects of the various inhibitor on A β (1–42) HSQC signals during titrations. When focusing on the signal changes experienced by each residue in A β (1–42), a wide variety of spectral changes hampers our understanding of the overview of dynamic changes caused by each compound. According to this assumption, we hypothesized that the similarity and difference of HSQC spectra is useful to further discriminate the other amyloid inhibitors by their individual mechanism-on-action. For example, although some researchers pointed out the similarity of the chemical structure among RA, CUR, and EGCg, the mechanism of amyloid inhibition may be different, considering our results in PCA-HSQC method. In contrast, the real-time ThT assay profiles seems less informative to discriminate the mechanism-on-action of the amyloid inhibitors.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

Sample Availability: The expression vector of A β (1–42) is available from the authors.

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Figure legends

Figure 1. Structures of β -amyloid fibril formation inhibitors used in this study.

Figure 2. Negatively stained electron microscopic analysis of the bacterially expressed $A\beta(1-42)$ used in this study. Samples were analyzed before amyloid fibril formation (A) and 60 min after the initiation of amyloid fibril formation (B). Scale bars represent 500 nm.

Figure 3. Real-time ThT fluorescence assay for the inhibition of β -amyloid fibril formation. The inhibitors and concentrations used are shown in the figure. (A) Effect of osmolytes GLC (0.5 M, gray diamond), SUC (0.5 M, closed triangle), TRH (0.5 M, gray square), and $A\beta(1-42)$ alone (closed circle). (B) Effect of amyloid fibril formation inhibitors sINO (100 μ M, gray square), RA (25 μ M, cross), EGCg (100 μ M, closed triangle), and $A\beta(1-42)$ alone (closed circle).

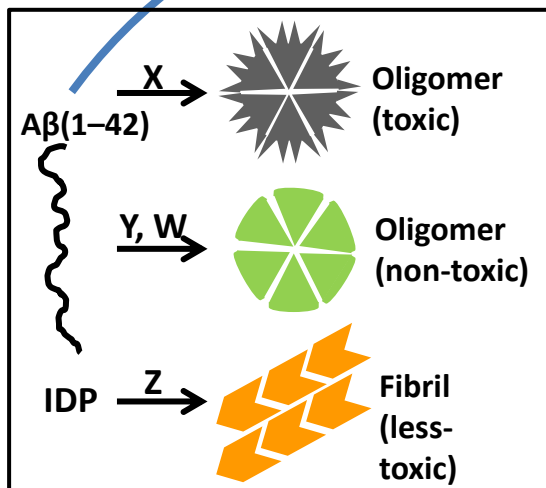
Figure 4. Expanded HSQC spectra of 15 N-labeled $A\beta(1-42)$. (A) Overlay of HSQC spectra measured at various temperatures. Spectra recorded at 283 K (black), 288 K (blue), 298 K (orange), 303 K (green), and 310 K (purple) were overlaid. (B) Overlay of HSQC spectra with 500 mM osmolytes measured at 283K. $A\beta(1-42)$ with GLC (purple), SUC (orange), TRH (cyan), and $A\beta(1-42)$ alone (black). (C) Overlay of HSQC spectra

with 750 μM (1:10) sINO (magenta), 75 μM (1:1) RA (green), 37.5 μM (1:0.5) CUR (blue), 375 μM (1:5) EGCg (orange), and $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ alone (black).

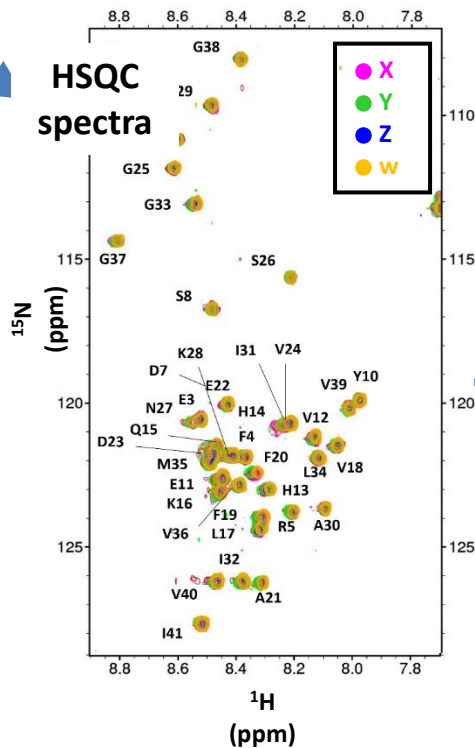
Figure 5. Normalized chemical shift changes of the ^1H - ^{15}N NMR spectra of ^{15}N -labeled $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ upon temperature shift or addition of chemicals. black, temperature shift (from 283K to 285K); red, 0.5 M TRH; light green, 375 μM (1:5) EGCg; magenta, 75 μM (1:1) RA; sky blue; 37.5 μM (1:0.5) CUR.

Figure 6. A 2D scatter plot of the ^1H - ^{15}N NMR spectra of ^{15}N -labeled $\text{A}\beta(1-42)$ analyzed by principal component analysis. The sample conditions (i.e., temperature in temperature shift experiments and compound with a given concentration for inhibitor CSP experiments) are labeled in the figure. The plots for 10°, 0 eq of compounds and for 750 μM sINO were overlapped.

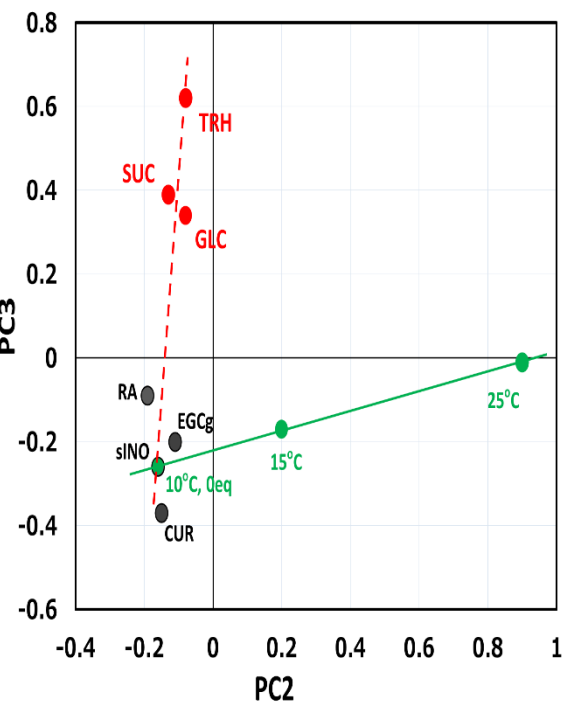
NMR titration experiments



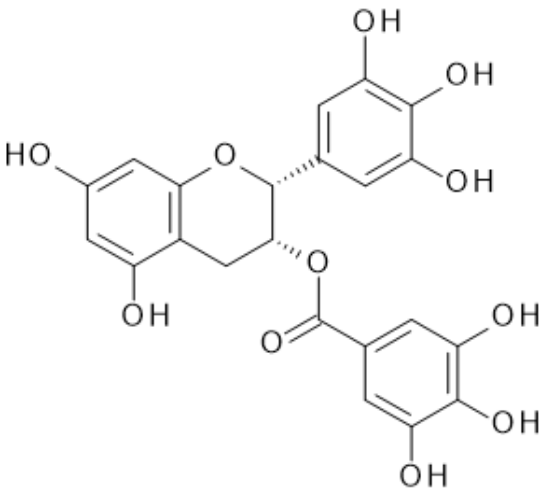
HSQC spectra



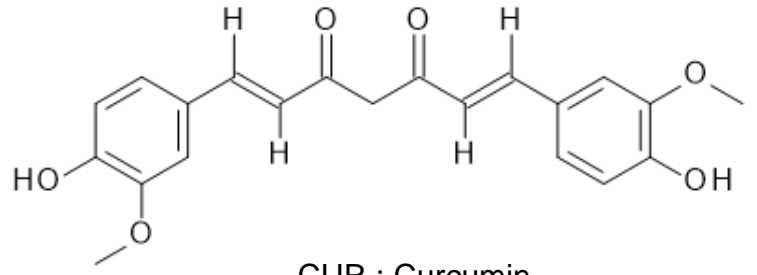
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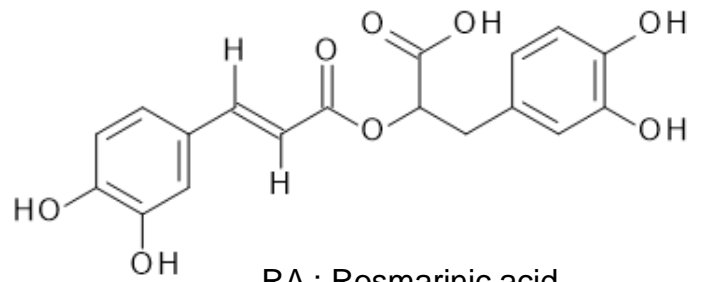
TOC-revised



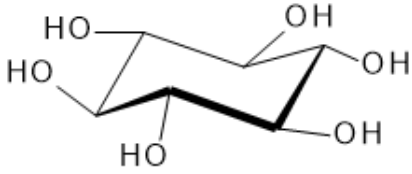
EGCg : (-)-Epigallocatechin gallate



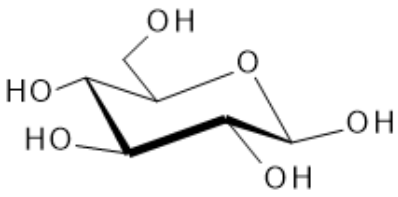
CUR : Curcumin



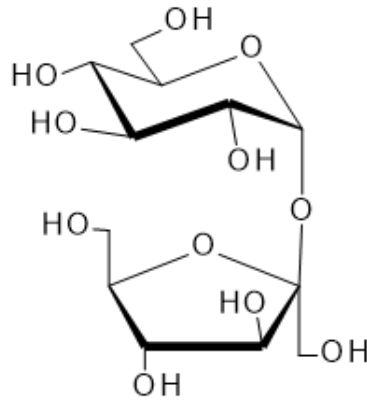
RA : Rosmarinic acid



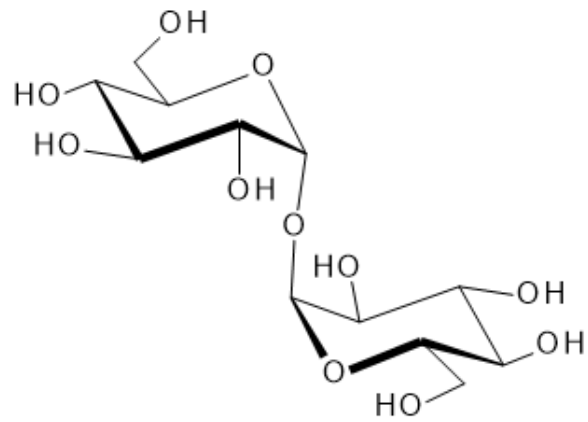
sINO : scyllo-Inositol



GLC : Glucose



SUC : Sucrose



TRH : Trehalose

Figure 1

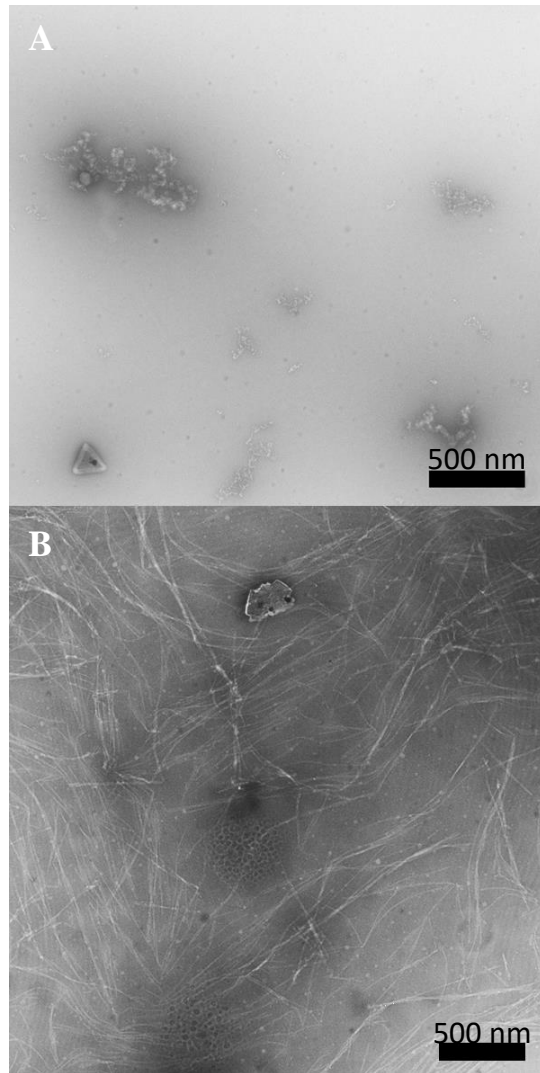


Figure 2

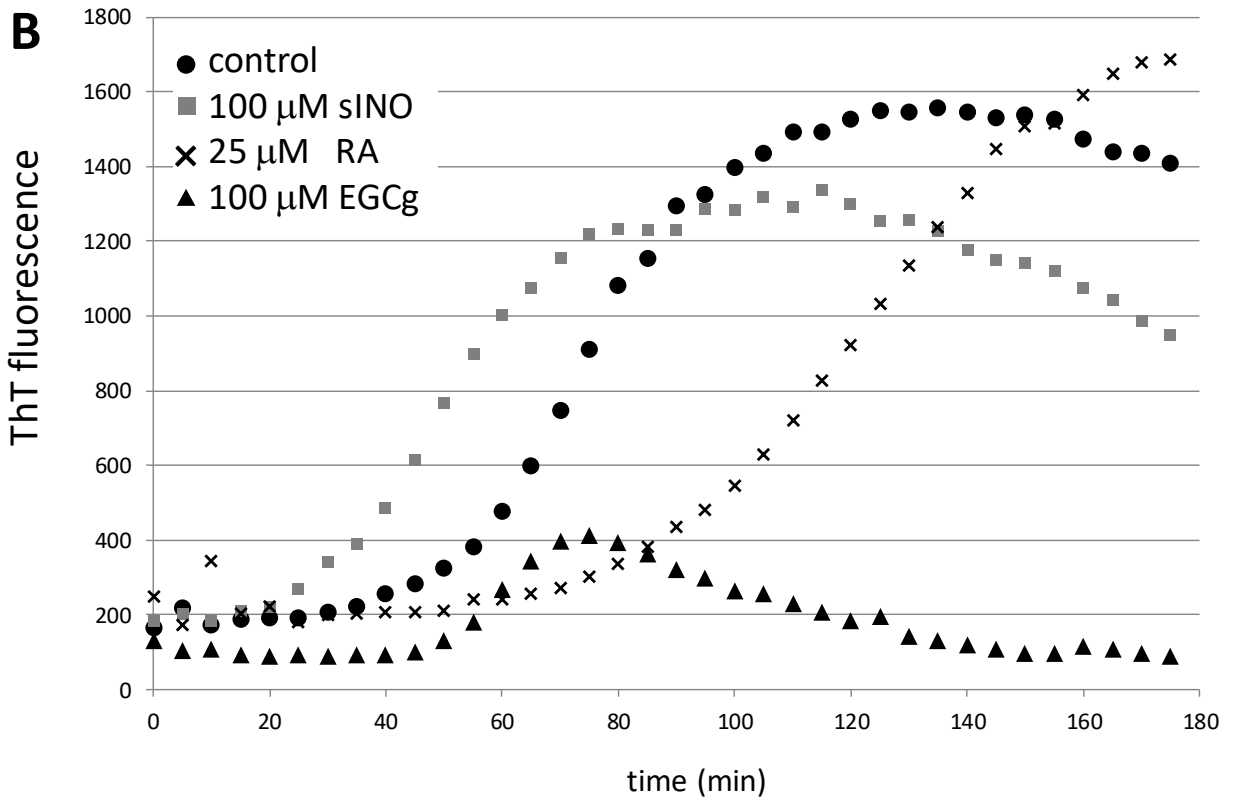
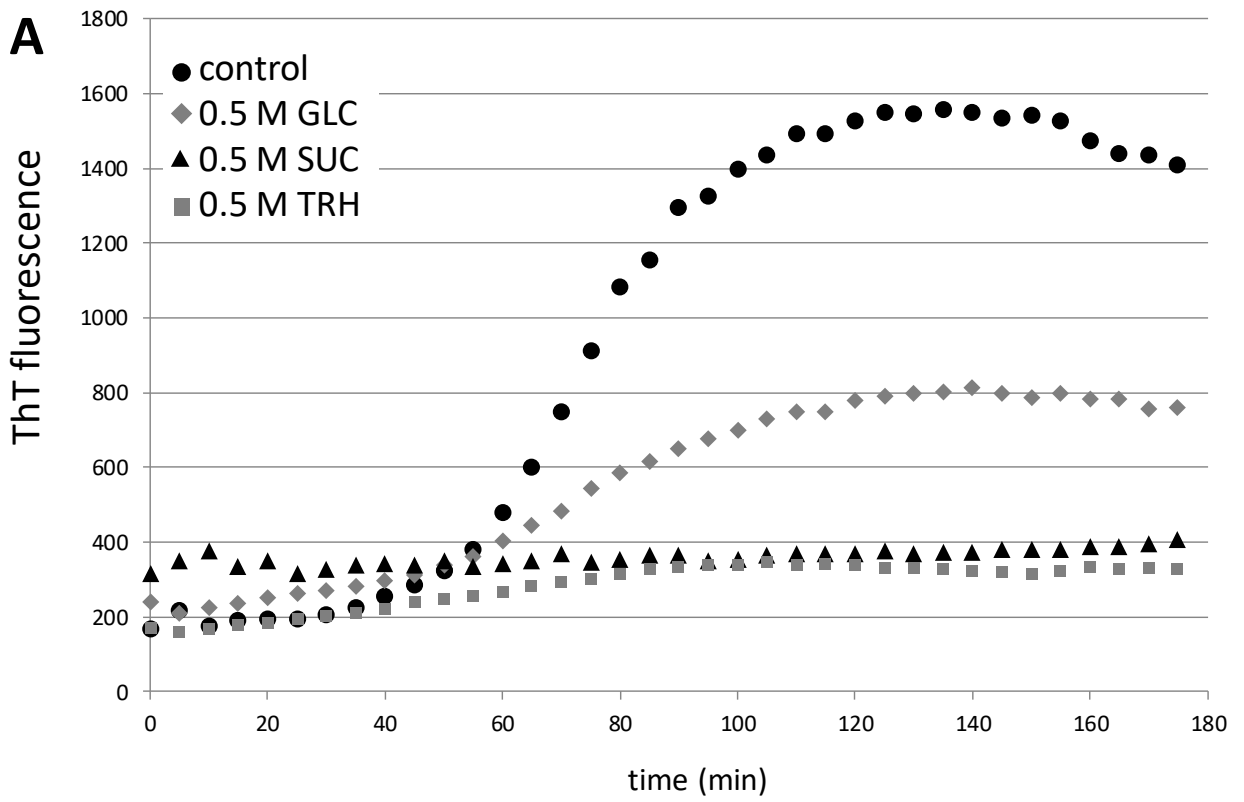


Figure 3

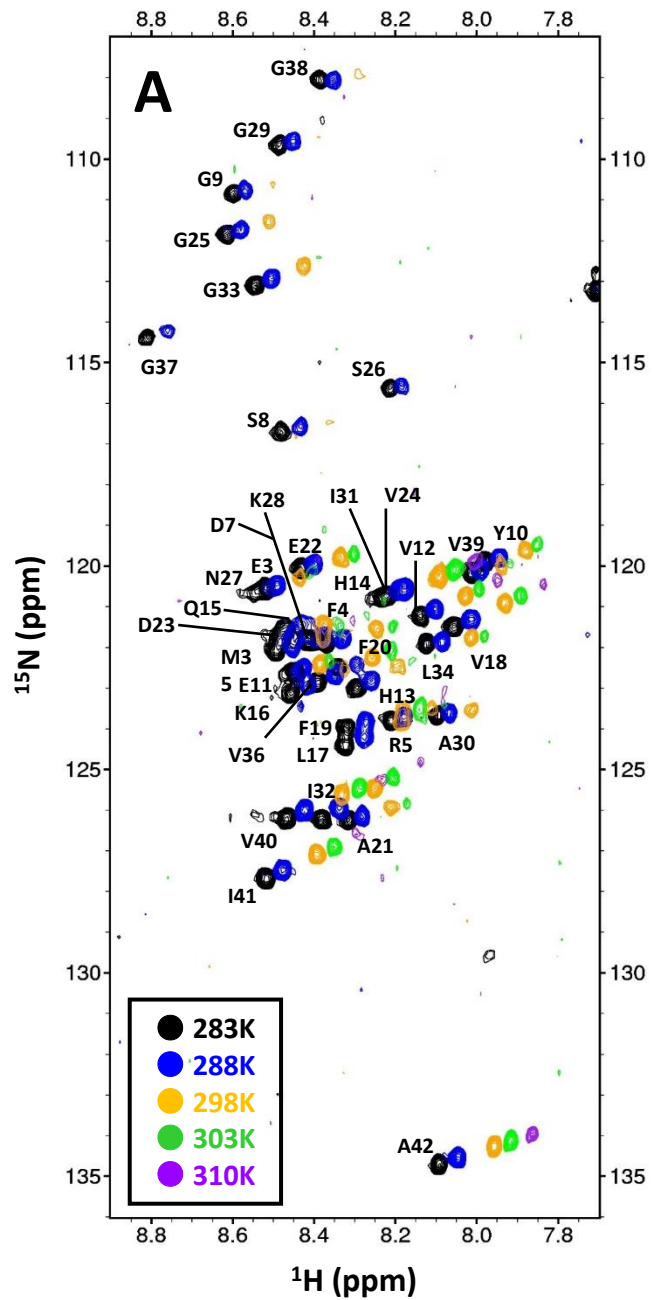


Figure 4(A)

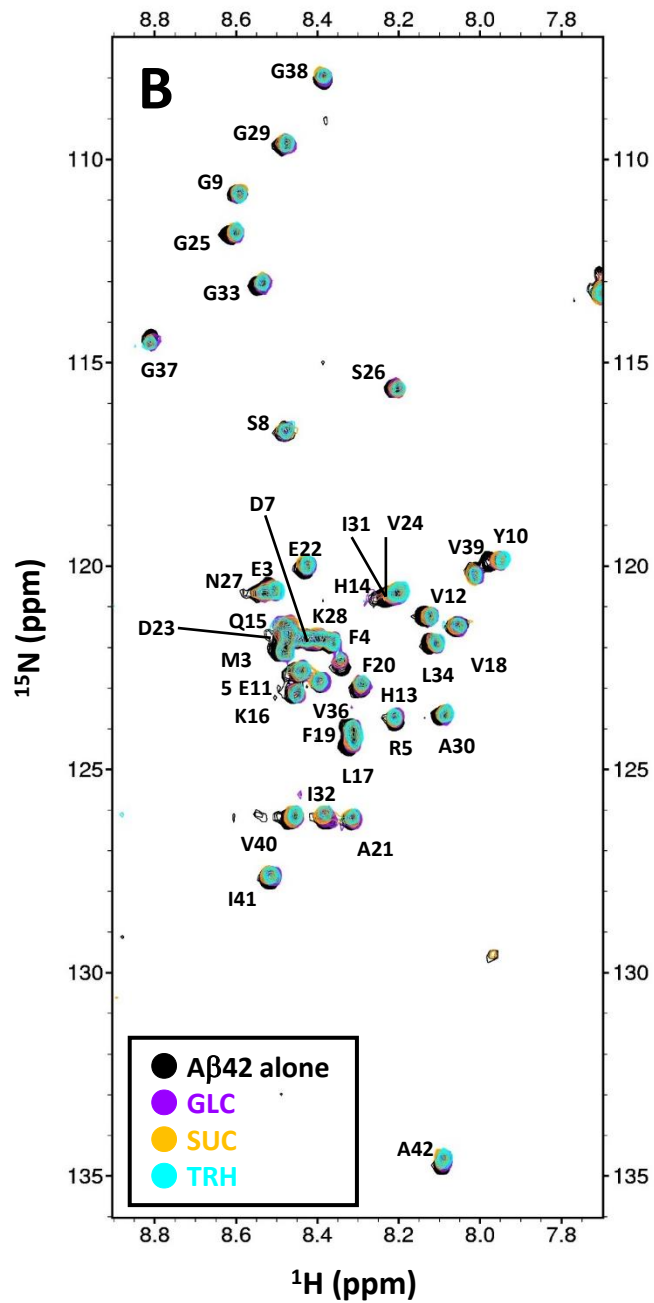


Figure 4(B)

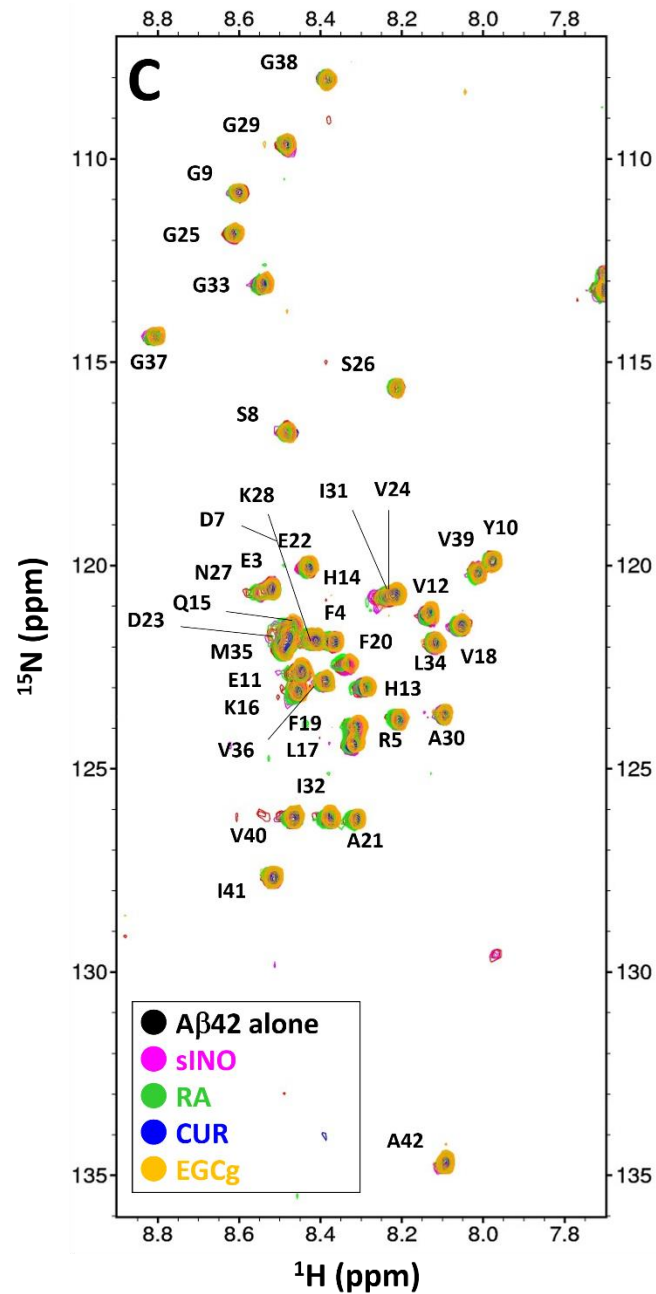


Figure 4(C)

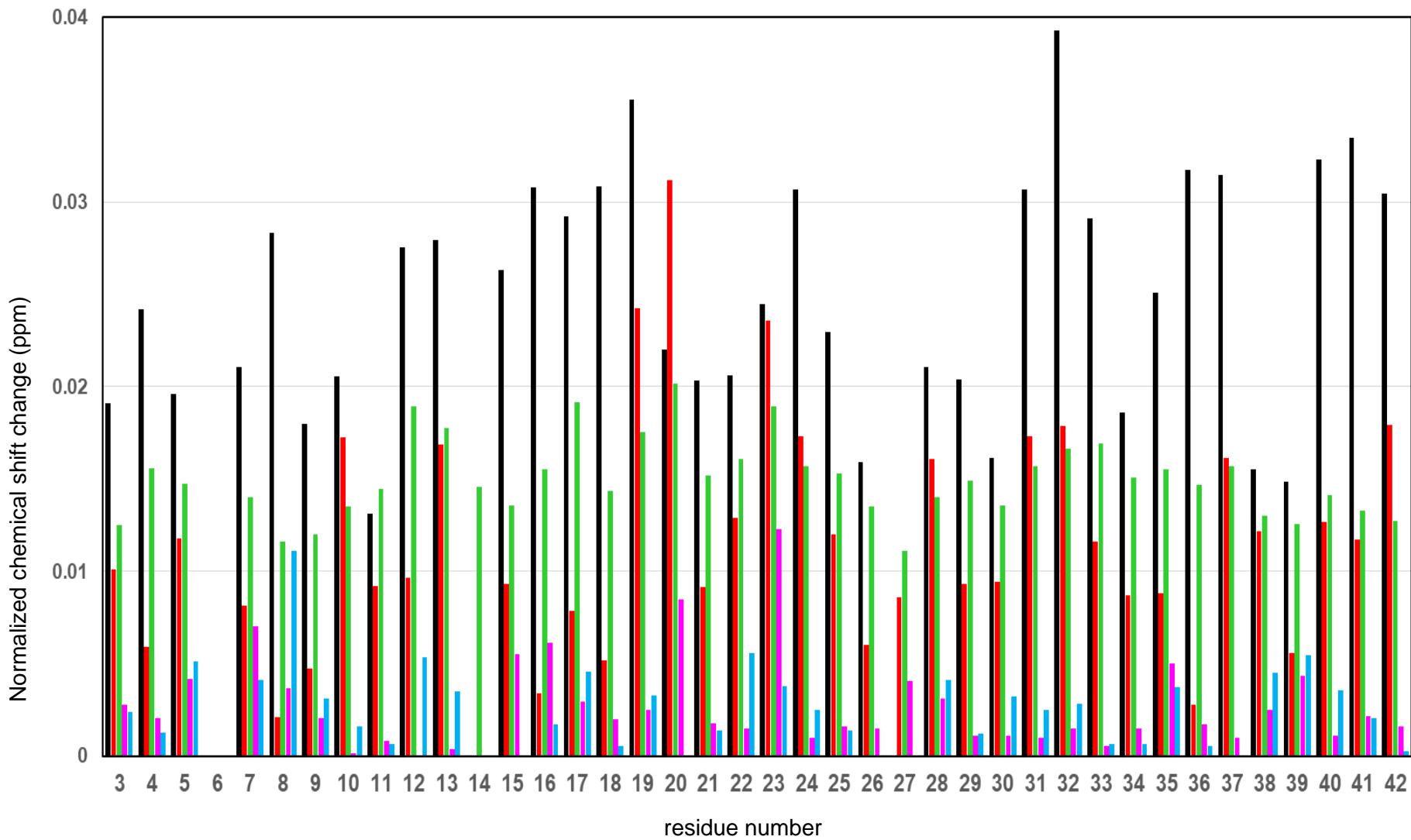


Figure 5

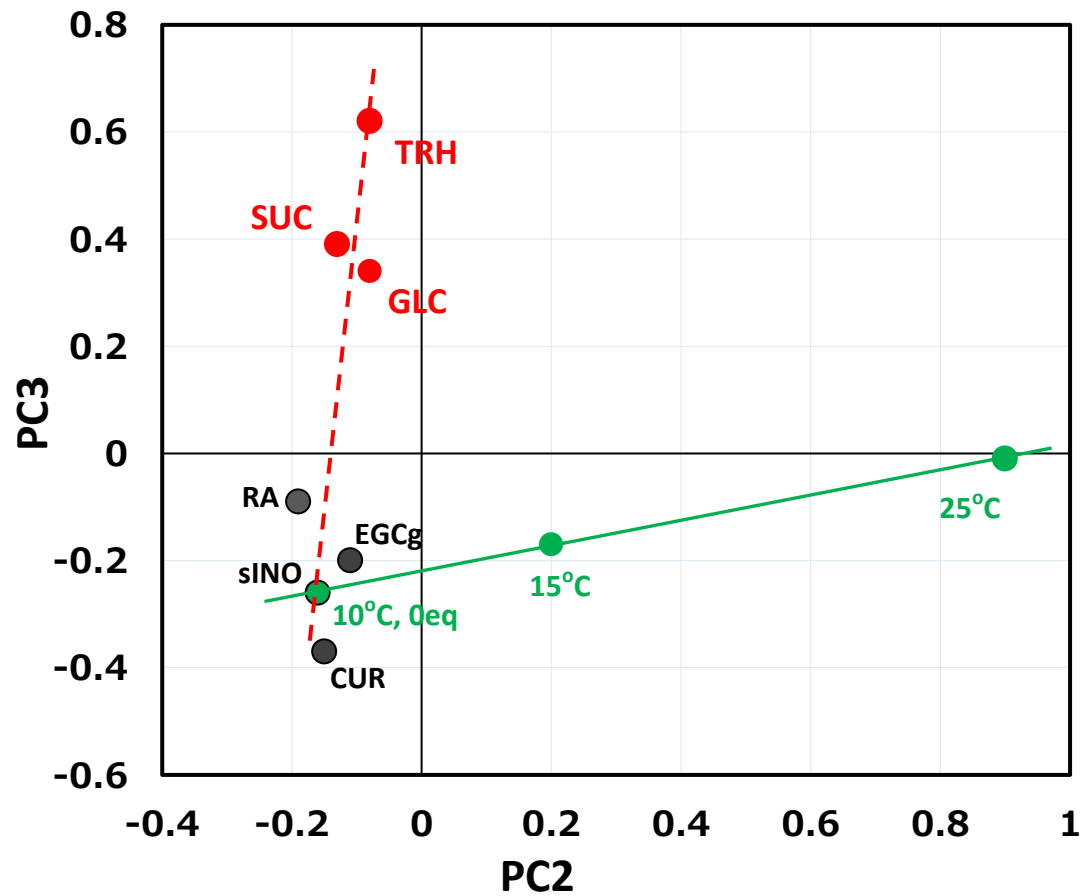


Figure 6