Supporting Information

Base-Mediated Carboxylation of Unprotected Indole Derivatives with Carbon Dioxide

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General Information: ¹H and ¹³C NMR spectra were recorded on a JEOL ECX-500 and a JEOL ECX-600 in CDCl₃. Chemical shifts were reported in parts per million (ppm) from tetramethylsilane using the solvent resonance as the internal standard. IR spectra were measured on a JASCO FT/IR-610 spectrometer. High-resolution mass spectrometry was carried out using a JEOL JMS-T100TD (DART). Preparative thin-layer chromatography (PTLC) was carried out using Wakogel B-5F from Wako Pure Chemical Industries, Ltd.

Reagents: Unless stated otherwise, commercial reagents were used as received. All organic solvents were purified by distillation under dry argon atmosphere. 7-Bromoindole, ¹ 1H-benzo[g]indole, and 4-benzyloxy-1H-indole² were prepared according to literature procedures.

Part I: Optimization of reaction conditions

Previous results using metal as catalyst

Table 1. Screening catalyst and base^a

entry	catalyst	base (equiv)	yield (%) ^b
1	Pd(OAc) ₂	Cs ₂ CO ₃ (2)	49
3	$Pd(OAc)_2$		
4	$Pd(OAc)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(1)$	16
5	$Pd(OAc)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	70
6	$Pd(OAc)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(4)$	75
7	$PdCl_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	48
8	$Pd(acac)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	52
9	Ni(OAc)•4H ₂ O	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	<5
10	$Cu(OAc)_2 \bullet H_2O$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	73
11	AgOAc	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	49
12	$Fe(OAc)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	51
13°	$Pd(OAc)_2$	$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	
14		$Cs_2CO_3(3)$	25
15		LiO'Bu (3)	38

^a All the reactions were carried under a balloon pressure of CO₂ in DMF at 100 °C for 24 h. ^b Yield based on **1a** and determined by ¹H NMR analysis using 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane as internal standard. ^c Under argon.

Comparison between entry 5 and entry 14, it is clear that Pd(OAc)₂ enhances the direct carboxylation reaction of indoles. However, due to cost and problems of removing trace amounts of palladium from the final product, it is beneficial to perform the reaction under transition metal-free conditions.

We also examined the effect of different solvents in order to improve the yield of the reaction (Table 2).

Table 2. Solvent Screening^a

entry ^a	solvent	yield (%) ^b
1	DMF	70
2	DMA	45
3	DMSO	34
4	NMP	20
5	toluene	trace
6	1,4-dioxane	trace
7	CPME	trace
8	PhCF ₃	trace

^a All reactions were carried with 0.4 mmol of indole **1a**, 3 equivalence of Cs₂CO₃ and 10 mol% Pd(OAc)₂ under a balloon pressure of CO₂ at 100 °C for 24 h. ^b Yield based on **1a** and determined by ¹H NMR analysis using 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane as internal standard

We could not improve the reaction by changing the solvent system. Most of CO₂ fixation reactions were carried in DMF.³

The problem of using 3 equivalence of base was the side reaction (decarboxylation) decreased the conversion of 3-indole carboxylic acid (Table 3).

Table 3. Conversion of Product verses Time^a

entry	time (h)	conv. (%) ^b
1	4	55
2	8	71
3	9	75
4	10	80
5	15	80 88 66
6	24	66

^a All reactions were carried with 0.4 mmol of indole **1a**, 3 equivalence of LiO'Bu and 10 mol% Pd(OAc)₂ under a balloon pressure of CO₂ at 100 °C. ^b Yield based on **1** and determined by ¹H NMR analysis using 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane as internal standard

Screening of the reaction **without metal**. Using less base in the reaction (entries 2, 3) gave poor conversion in the desired product after 24 h at 100°C. Low temperatures decrease of yields (entries 4,5). The more suitable solvent was the DMF that has been demonstrated in the previous results with metal.

Table 4. Screening of reaction without metal

entry ^a	base (X eq)	solvent	T (°C)	conv.(%)b
1	2	DMF	100	36
2	3	DMF	100	47
3	4	DMF	100	60
4	5	DMF	100	99
5	5	DMF	80	80
6	5	DMF	50	10
7	5	THF	60	20
7	5	$DMF/H_2O(1:1)$		

^a All reactions were carried with 0.4 mmol of indole **1a**, X equivalence of LiO^bBu under a balloon pressure of CO₂ at Y °C. ^b Yield based on **1** and determined by ^bH NMR analysis using 1,1,2,2-tetrachloroethane as internal standard

Importance to use excess of base to avoid the side reaction (decarboxylation)

Table 5. Conversion of product versus time

entry ^a	base (X eq)	time (h)	Conv. (%) ^b
1	3	5	40
2	5	5	50
3	3	10	30
4	5	10	80
5	3	24	47
6	5	24	99

^a All reactions were carried with 0.4 mmol of indole **1a**, X equivalence of LiO'Bu under a balloon pressure of CO₂ at Y °C. ^b Yield based on **1** and determined by ¹H NMR analysis using 1,1,2,2-

Study about mechanism

Procedure for the isolation of **methyl indole 1-carboxylate** intermediate in the hypothesized mechanism.

In a dried two-necked test tube was charged with LiO t Bu (160 mg, 2 mmol, 5 equiv) and indole (1a) (23.4 mg, 0.4 mmol, 1 equiv). The reaction vessel was evacuated under high vacuum and the atmosphere was replace with a balloon of CO_2 . Then DMF (2 mL) was added. The reaction was run at r.t for 15 hours, then

worked up with iodomethane (25μL, 1mmol, 1eq). The mixture was concentrated under reduce pressure. The residue was extracted with EtOAc and brine (3times). The combined organic phase were dry over MgSO4 and concentrated under reduce pressure and the residue was purified by preparative TLC (n-hexane:EtOAc = 7:3) affording the desired product **methyl indole 1-carboxylate** in 15 % yield. ¹H NMR (CD₃Cl, 600 MHz): δ 8.11 (d, 1H, J = 6 Hz), 7.53 (d, 1H, J = 3.4Hz), 7.50 (d, 1H, J = 7.5 Hz), 7.26 (t, 1H, J = 8.2 Hz), 7.17 (t, 1H, J = 8.2 Hz), 6.53 (d, 1H, J = 3.4 Hz), 3.97 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (CD₃Cl, 100 MHz): δ 151.1, 134.8, 130.2, 125.2, 124.0, 122.7, 120.6, 114.8, 107.9, 53.4. This is a known compound reported in the literature.⁴

Part II: Substrate scope for the direct carboxylation of indoles derivatives

General procedure for the direct carboxylation of indole

3-Indole carboxylic acid (2a)

In a dried two-necked test tube was charged with LiO'Bu (160 mg, 2 mmol, 5 equiv) and indole (1a) (23.4 mg, 0.4 mmol, 1 equiv). The reaction vessel was evacuated under high vacuum and the atmosphere was replace with a balloon of CO₂. Then DMF (2 mL) was added and the mixture was stirred for 24 h at 100 °C. Then the result mixture was cooled and carefully quenched a solution of HCl (2 N) and extracted with EtOAc (5x). The combined organic layers were washed with water (2x), brine (1x) and dry over MgSO₄. The dried organics were concentrated under reduce pressure and the residue was purified by

(5x). The combined organic layers were washed with water (2x), brine (1x) and dry over MgSO₄. The dried organics were concentrated under reduce pressure and the residue was purified by preparative TLC (hexane:acetone = 1:1) to afford the desired product **2a** in 95% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆, 400 MHz): δ 11.87 (bs, 1H), 11.7 (bs, 1H), 7.99-7.92 (m, 2H), 7.43-7.38 (m, 1H), 7.18-7.06 (m, 2H). ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆, 100 MHz): δ 165.9, 136.4, 132.2, 125.9, 122.0, 120.9, 120.5, 112.1, 107.3. This is a known compound reported in the literature.⁵

Methyl 5-methyl-3-indolecarboxylate (7a)

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The 3-indole carboxylate was generated following the above the general procedure. Isolation of the carboxylic acid was achieved by derivatization to the methyl ester. The crude mixture was diluted with MeOH and cooled to 0 °C. SOCl₂ (1.2 eq, 0.5mmol) was added and stirred for 3 hours at room temperature.

Then MeOH (1 mL) was added and the reaction mixture was heated to reflux for 6 hours. The resulting mixture was quenched with water and extracted with EtOAc (3x). The combined organic layers were dried over MgSO₄ and concentrated under reduce pressure. The resulting residue was purified by preparative TLC (hexane:EtOAc = 7:3) to afford the desired product 7a in 90% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR (CDCl₃, 400 MHz): δ 8.68 (bs, 1H), 7.98 (s, 1H), 7.77 (s, 1H), 7.20 (d, 1H, J

= 6.4 Hz), 6.99 (d, 1H, J = 8.2 Hz), 3.84 (s, 3H), 2.40 (s, 3H); 13 C NMR (CDCl₃, 100 MHz): δ 166.0, 134.3, 131.4, 131.1, 126.1, 124.7, 129.0, 111.1, 108.0, 51.0, 21.5. This is a known compound reported in the literature.

5-Methoxy-1-H-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2c)

Following the above the general procedure with a slight modification of the purification method. After pouring into a cold solution of HCl (2N), the organic layer was extracted with EtOAc (5x). The combined organic layers were basified with an aqueous solution of NaOH (0.5 M). The aqueous layer was extracted with water and the combined aqueous layers were acidified with a solution of HCl (2N). The desired product **2c** was extracted with EtOAc (5x) and dried over MgSO₄ to afford the desired product **2c** in 92% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 10.86 (bs, 1H), 7.9 (d, 1H, J = 2.7 Hz), 7.63 (d, 1H, J = 3.6 Hz), 7.36 (d, 1H, J = 8.2 Hz), 6.82 (dd, 1H, J = 8.7 Hz, J = 2.7 Hz), 3.79 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 167.5, 156.5, 133.3, 132.5, 128.1, 113.6, 113.5, 108.0, 103.4, 55.7. This is a known compound reported in the literature.

5-Cyanoindole-3-carboxylic acid (2d)

Following the same procedure described for the **2c** afforded the desired product **2d** in 90% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR (DMSO-d₆, 400 MHz): δ 12.30 (bs, 1H), 12.29 (bs, 1H), 8.35 (s, 1H), 8.18 (s, 1H), 7.64 (d, 1H, J = 7.3 Hz), 7.54 (d, 1H, J = 7.7 Hz); ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆, 100 MHz): δ 165.3, 138.2, 134.6, 125.7, 125.6, 124.9, 120.0, 113.9, 108.0, 103.4. This is a known compound to those reported in the literature.⁸

5-Fluoroindole-3-carboxylic acid (2e)

Following the same procedure described for the **2c** afforded the desired product **2e** in 94% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 11.02 (bs, 1H), 8.12 (d, 1H, J = 3.6 Hz), 7.80 (dd, 1H, J = 10.5 Hz, J = 2.8 Hz), 7.51 (dd, 1H, J = 8.7 Hz), 7.01 (td, 1H, J = 9.6 Hz, J = 2.7 Hz); ¹³C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 166.7, 161.0, 158.6, 134.4 (J = 46.7 Hz), 128.1, 114.1 (J = 9.5 Hz), 111.5 (J = 25.6 Hz), 108.6, 106.6 (J = 24.7 Hz). This is a known compound available from Sigma-Aldrich.

5-Bromoindole-3-carboxylic acid (2f)

Following the same procedure described for the **2c** afforded the desired product **2f** in 96% yield as a brown solid. ^{1}H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 11.08 (bs, 1H), 8.31 (d, 1H, J = 2.3 Hz), 8.09 (d, 1H, J = 3.2 Hz), 7.48 (d, 1H, J = 7.3 Hz), 7.33 (d, 1H, J = 8.2 Hz, J = 1.3 Hz); ^{13}C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 166.1, 136.3, 134.2, 129.0, 126.2, 124.3, 115.3, 114.8, 108.2. This is a known compound reported in the literature 9

4-Methoxy-1H-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2g)

OMe CO₂H Following the same procedure described for the **2a**. The desired product was isolated by preparative TLC (DCM:MeOH = 9:1) to afford the desired product **2g** in 30% yield. ¹H NMR (CD₃CN, 400 MHz): δ 11.57 (bs, 1H), 10.08 (bs, 1H), 7.97 (d, 1H, J = 3.2 Hz), 7.22 (d, 2H, J = 3.6 Hz), 6.81 (d, 1H, J = 4.1 Hz), 4.08 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (CD₃CN, 100 MHz): δ 164.5, 151.7, 139.1, 134.6, 125.0, 114.4, 108.9, 108.1, 103.5, 57.3. This is a known compound reported in the literature. ¹⁰

4-(Benzyloxy)-1H-indole-3-carboxylate (2h)



Following the same procedure described for the 2a. The product was isolated by preparative TLC (DCM:MeOH = 9:1) to afford **2h** in 19% yield as white solid. ¹H NMR (DMSO- d_6 , 400 MHz): δ 11.89 (bs, 1H), 11.6 (bs, 1H), 7.94 (s, 1H), 7.63 (d, 2H, J = 6.8 Hz), 7.40-7.30 (m, 3H), 7.15-7.09 (m, 2H), 6.82 (1H, dd, J = 6.4 Hz, J = 6.4 Hz)2.3 Hz), 5.2 (s, 2H). ¹³C NMR (DMSO-d₆, 100 MHz): δ 164.3, 151.3, 138.5, 136.7, 132.7, 128.2, 127.6, 127.5 (2C), 123.2, 114.6, 107.8, 106.2, 103.6, 70.0 (2C). This is a known compound reported in the literature.¹¹

CO₂H

4-Hydroxy-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2i)

Following the same procedure described for the 2c affording the desired product 2i in 83% yield as a brown solid. ¹H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 12.10 (s, 1H), 11.4 (s, 1H), 7.45 (1H, d, J = 9.1 Hz), 7.28-7.27 (m, 1H), 6.91 (1H, d, J = 8.2 Hz), 6.56-6.54 (1H, m); ¹³C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 173.8, 159.3, 141.5, 125.4, 123.7, 118.3, 104.8, 102.3, 101.5. This is a known compound reported in the literature.¹² CO₂Me



Methyl benzo[g]indole-3-indolecarboxylate (7b)

Following the same procedure described for the 2b. The product was isolated by preparative TLC (hexane: EtOAc = 7:3) to afford 2i in 51% yield as a white solid. ¹H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 500 MHz): δ 11.8 (bs, 1H), 8.36 (d, 1H, J = 9.7 Hz), 8.25 (d, 1H, J = 9.2 Hz), 8.05 (d, 1H, J = 2.3 Hz), 7.97 (d, 1H, J = 8.05), 7.66 (d, 1H, J = 6.4 Hz) 7.56 (t, 1H, J = 6.9 Hz), 7.46 (t, 1H, J = 7.4 Hz), 3.90 (s, 3H). 13 C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 125 MHz): δ 165.7, 132.3, 131.5, 130.1, 129.4 (2C), 126.7, 125.2, 123.4, 123.0, 121.3, 121.1, 110.2, 51.1 This is a known compound reported in the literature.13



7-Bromo-1H-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2k)

Following the same procedure described for the 2c afforded the desired product 2k in 88% yield as a black solid (mp = 215-217 °C). ¹H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 11.07 (bs, 1H), 8.14 (d, 1H, J = 7.3 Hz), 8.07 (s, 1H), 7.43 (d, 1H, J = 7.3 Hz), 7.15 (t, 1H, J = 7.7Hz); 13 C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 165.8, 136.1, 133.5, 128.8, 126.0, 123.5, 121.4, 110.0, 105.4. IR (cm⁻¹): 3421 (O-H, strong broad), 1648 (C=O, strong stretch), 1444 (C=C, stretch band). HMRS calcd for C₉H₇BrNO₂ [(M+H)]: 239.96602, found: 239.96552.



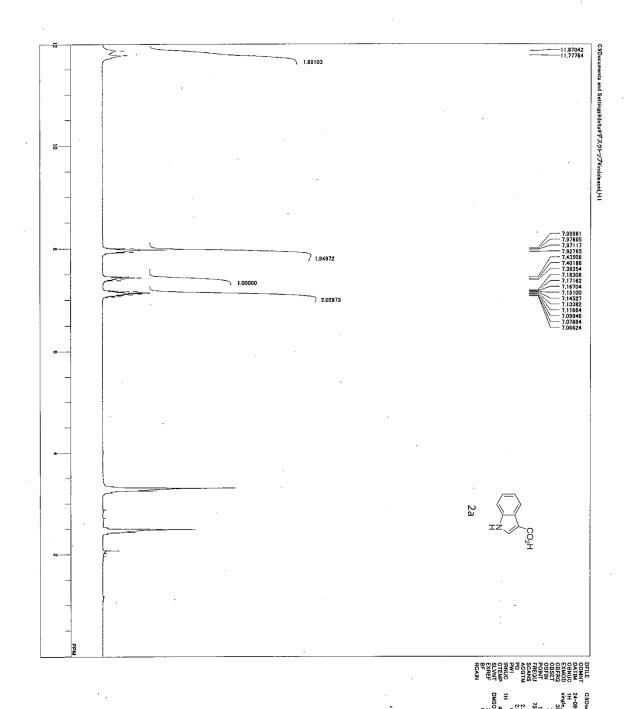
2-Methyl-1H-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2l)

Following the same procedure described for the 2c afforded the desired product 21 in 80% yield as a white solid. H NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 10.7 (bs, 1H), 8.08-8.06 (m, 1H), 7.36-7.34 (m, 1H), 7.12-7.10 (m, 2H), 2.73 (s, 3H); ¹³C NMR $((CD_3)_2CO, 100 \text{ MHz}): \delta 168.2, 145.6, 136.2, 129.0, 122.5, 121.9 (2C), 111.6, 104.4, 14.0.$ This is a known compound reported in the literature.¹⁴

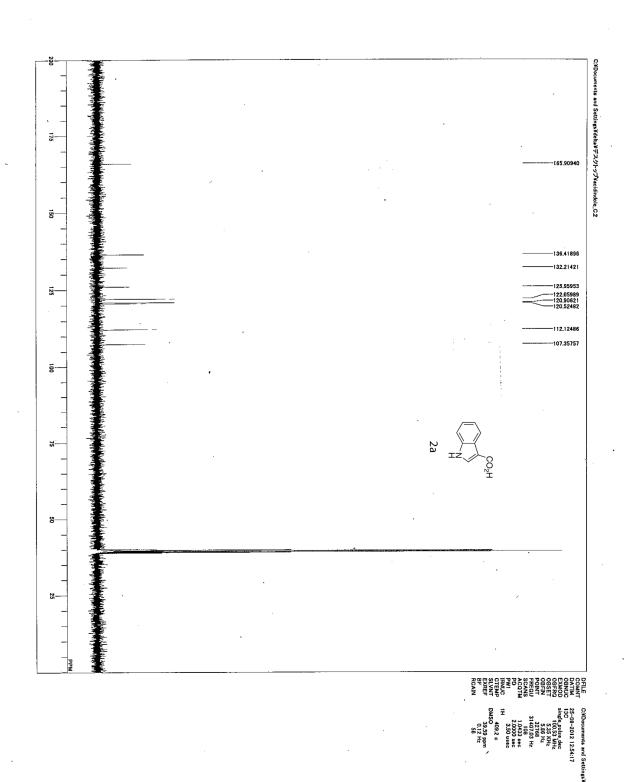
2-Phenyl-indole-3-carboxylic acid (2m)

Following the same procedure described for the 2c afforded the desired product 2m CO₂H in 31% yield as a yellow solid. ¹H NMR ((CD₂)₂CO, 400 MHz): δ 10.9 (bs, 1H), 8.22- 8.21 (1H, m), 7.74- 7.72 (2H, m), 7.47-7.39 (4H, m), 7.20-7.16 (2H, m). ¹³C NMR ((CD₃)₂CO, 100 MHz): δ 167.2, 145.8, 136.7, 133.3, 130.7, 129.6, 129.1, 128.7, 125.9, 123.5, 122.8, 122.3, 104.4, 99.5. This is a known compound reported in the literature. 15

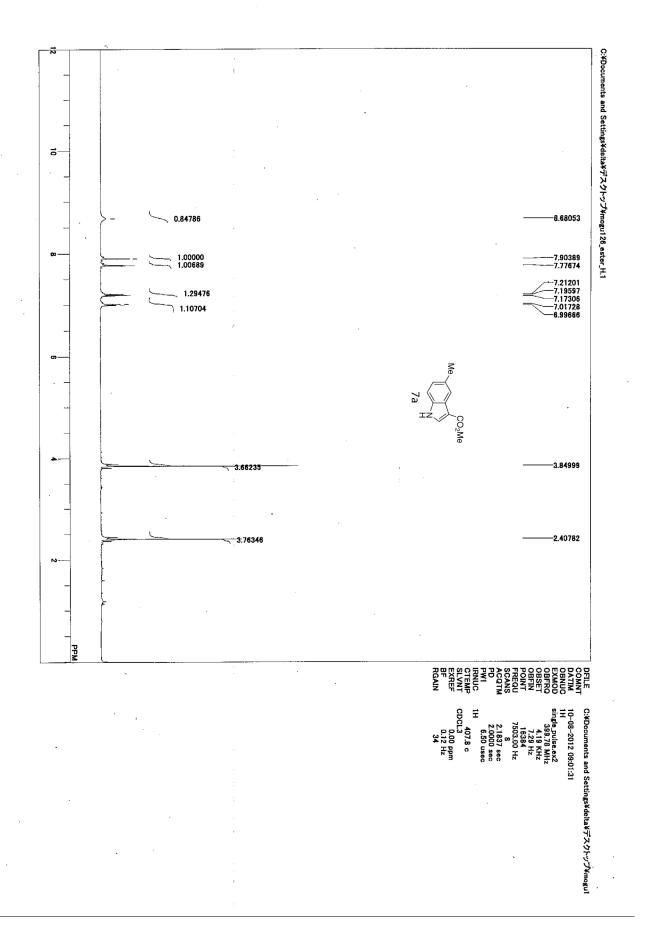
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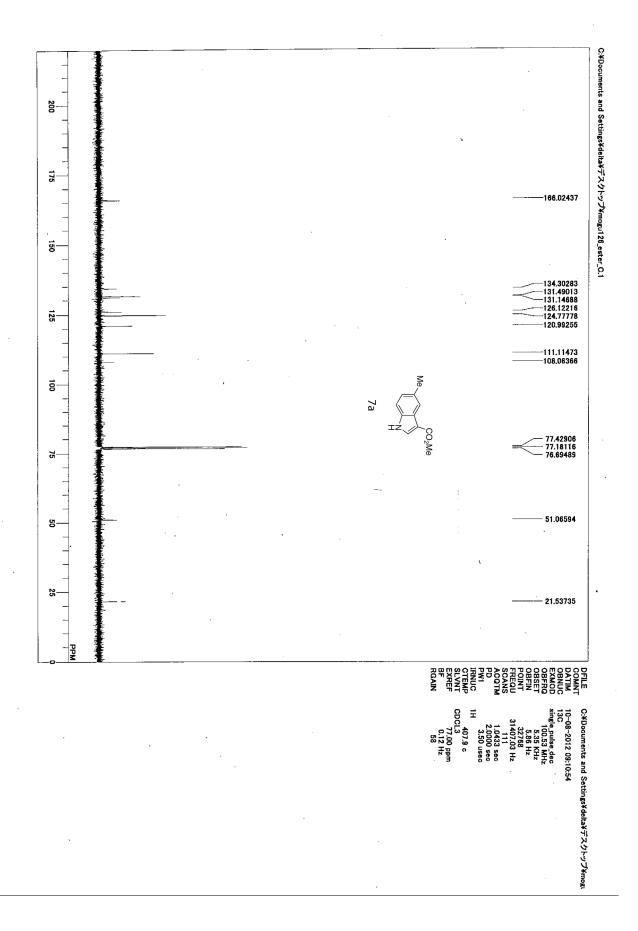


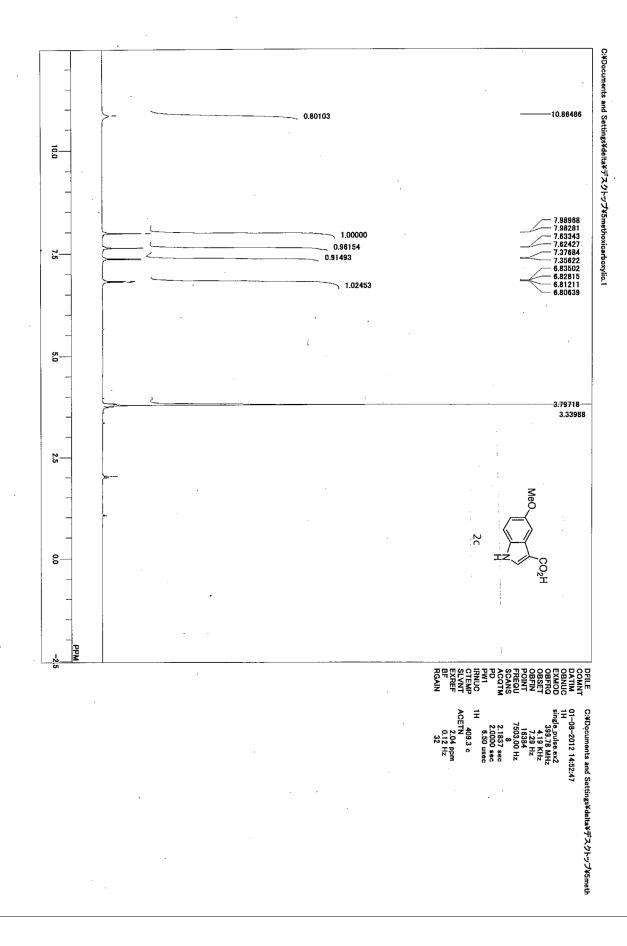
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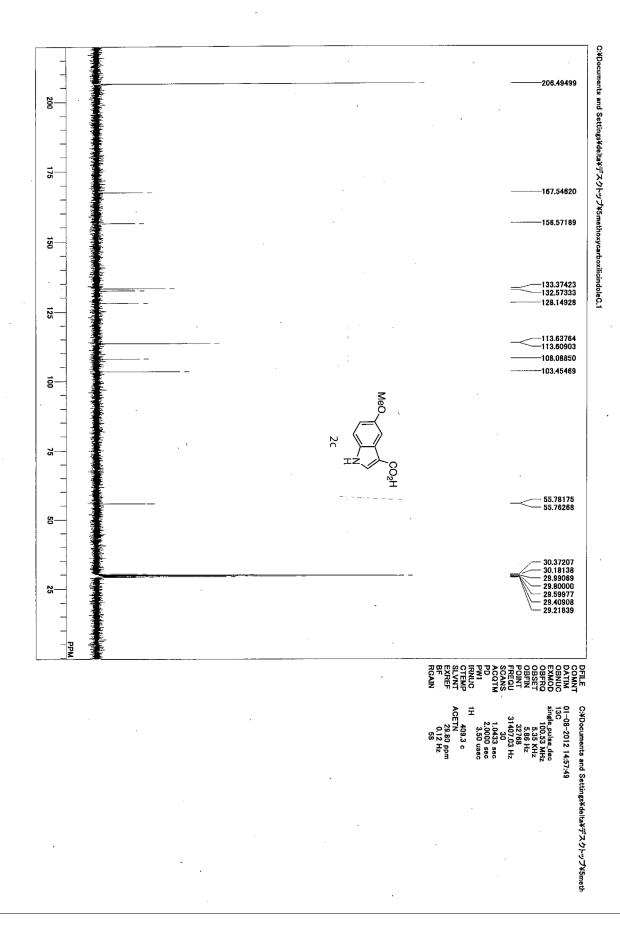


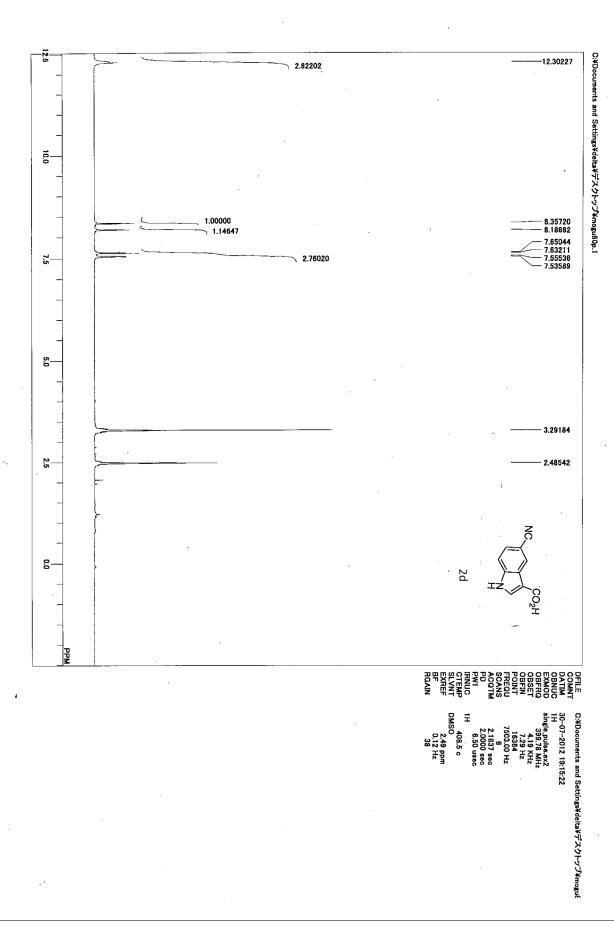
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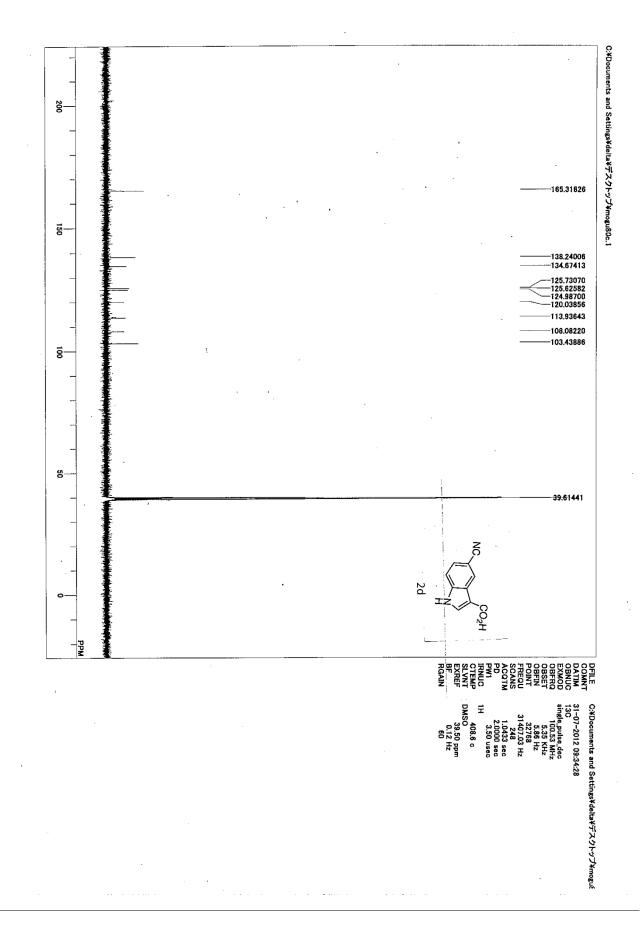


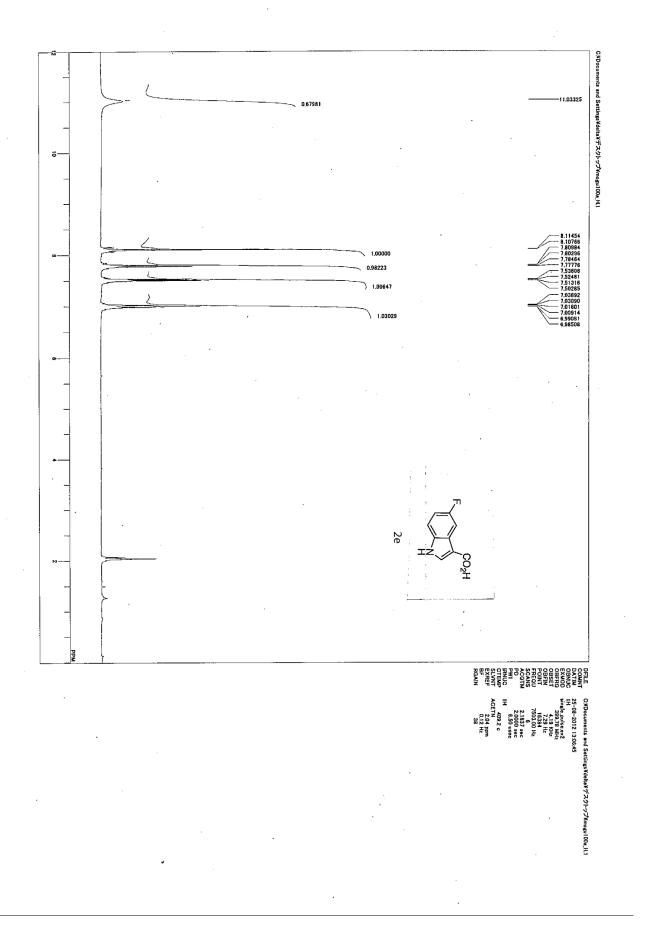


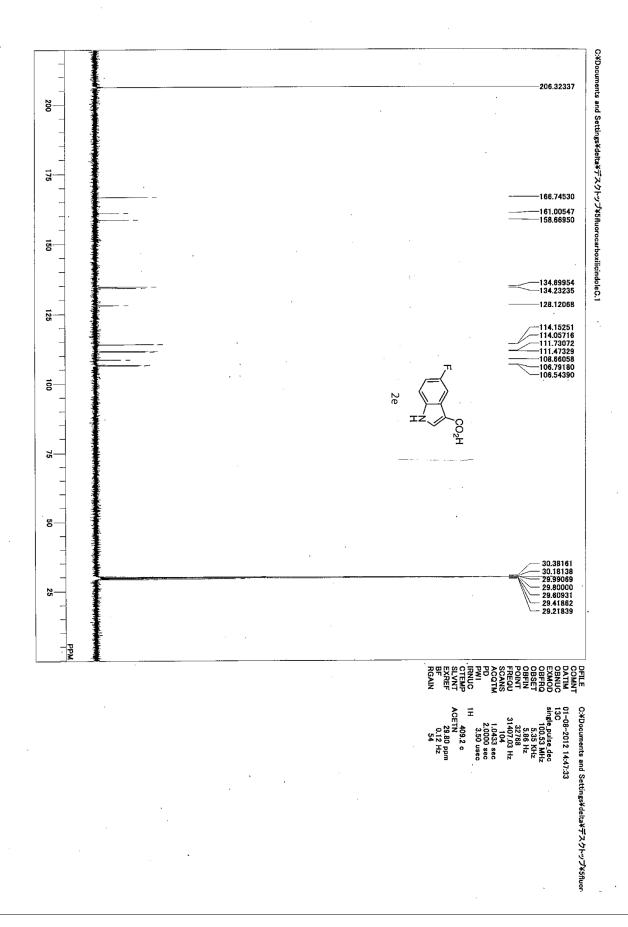


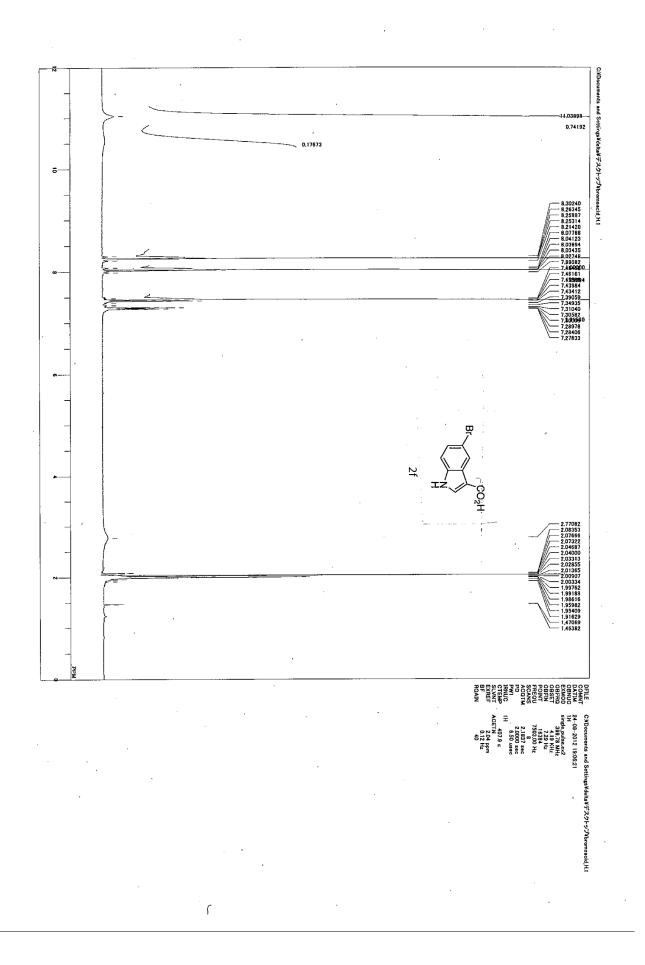


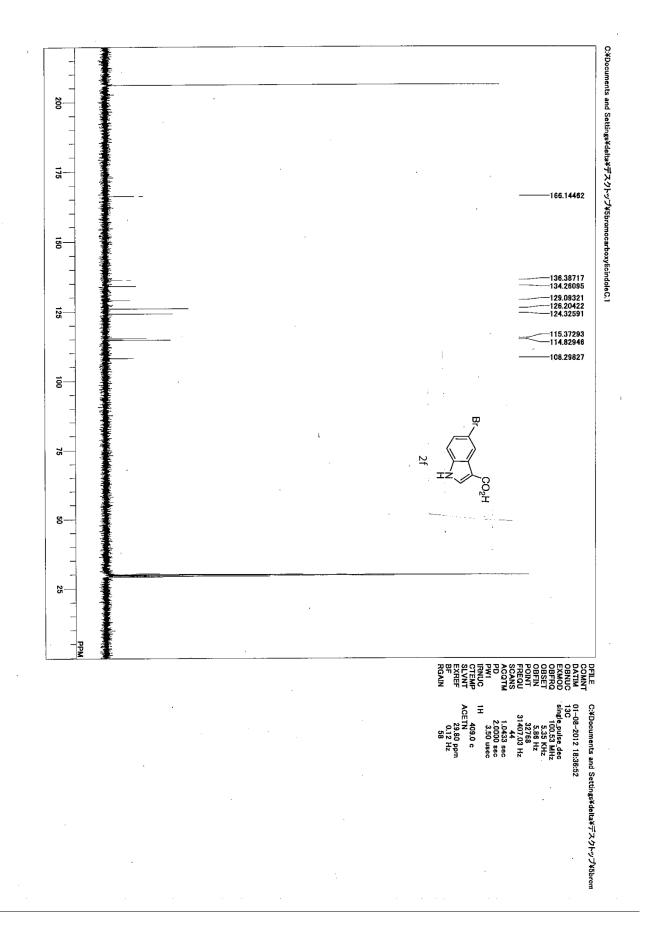


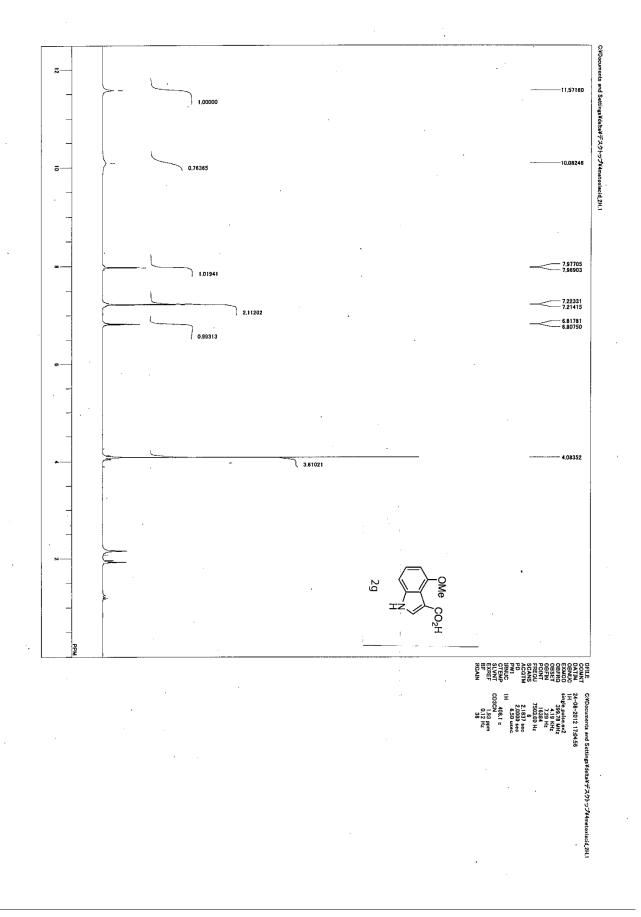


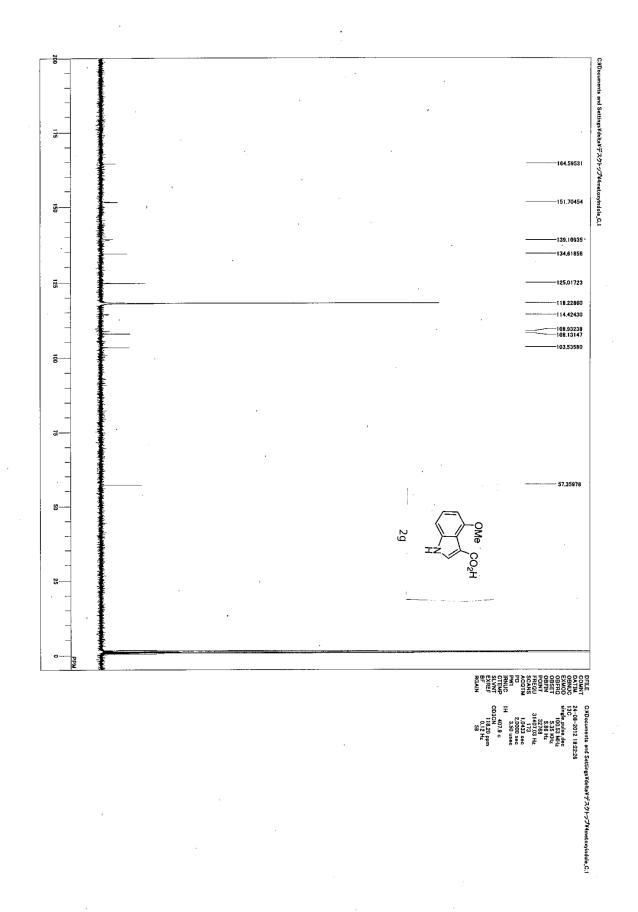


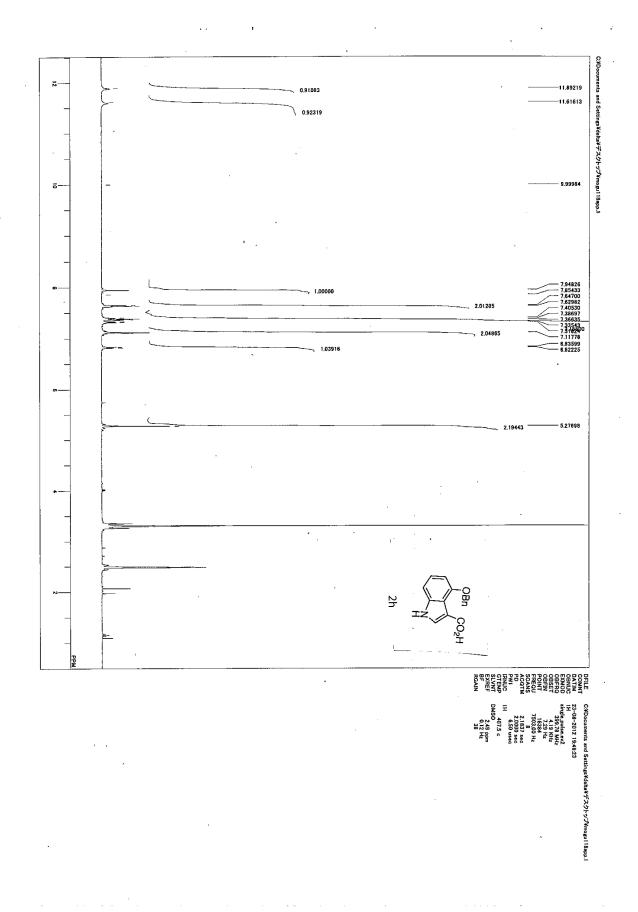


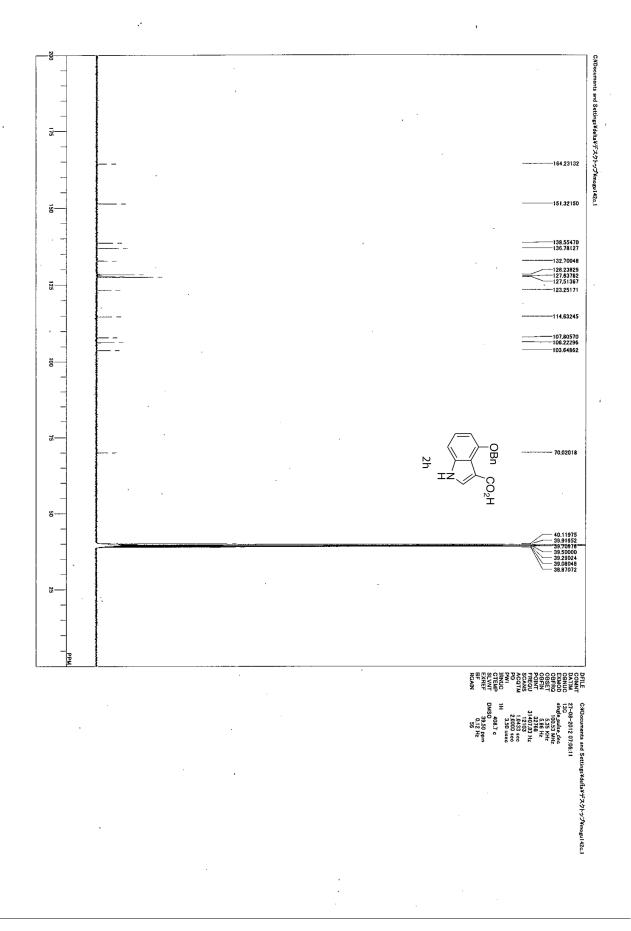


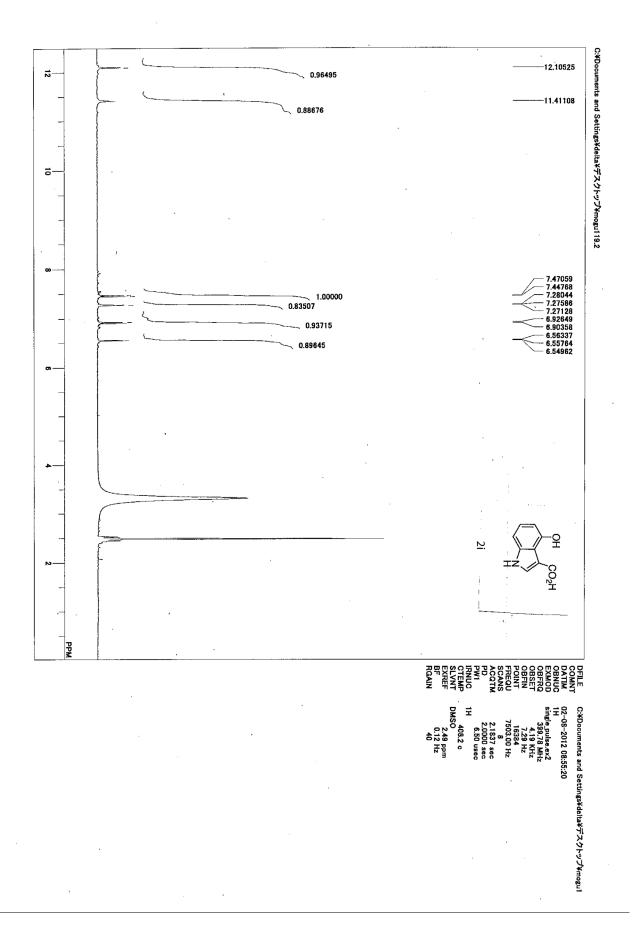


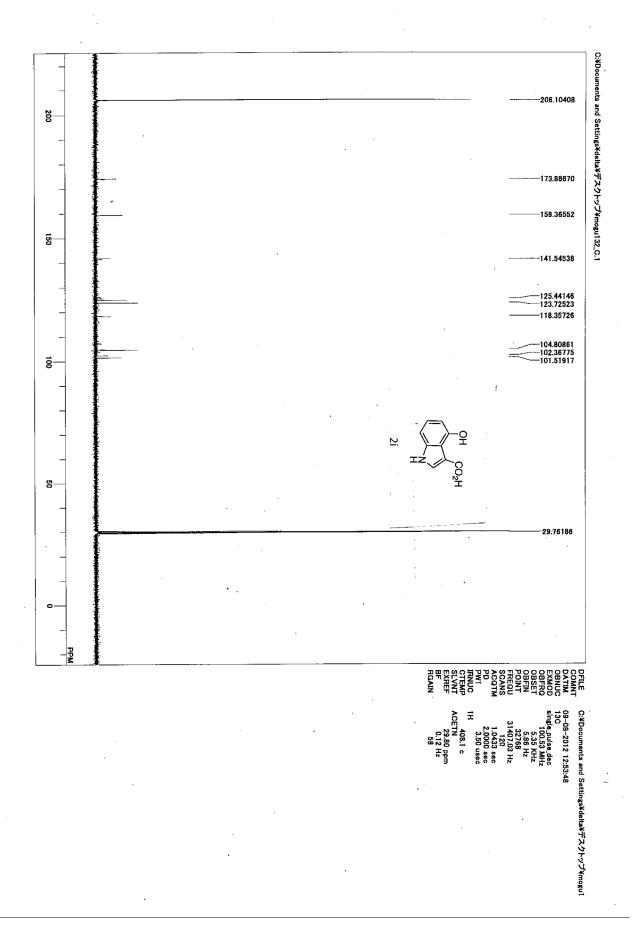


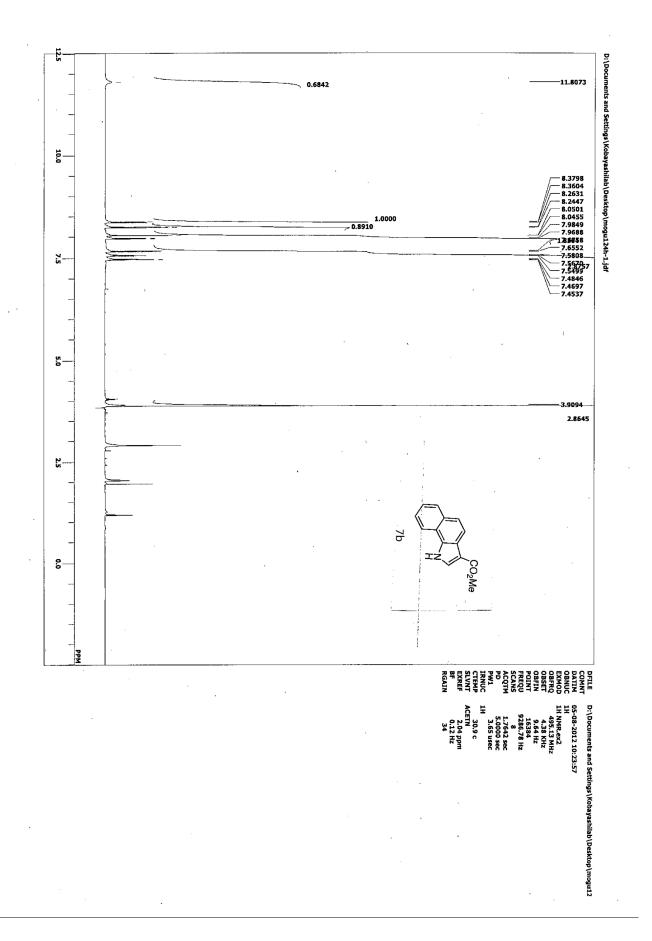


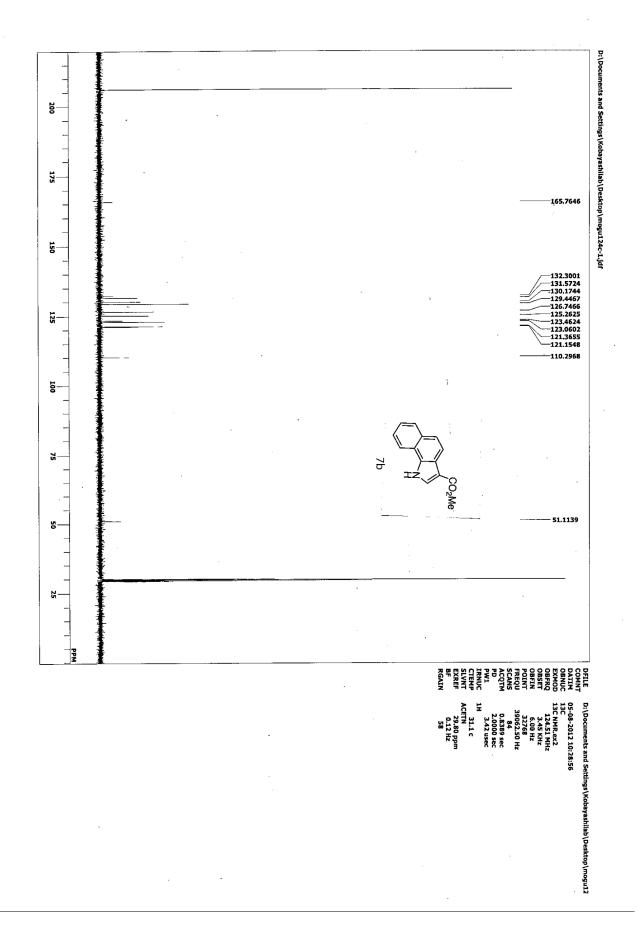


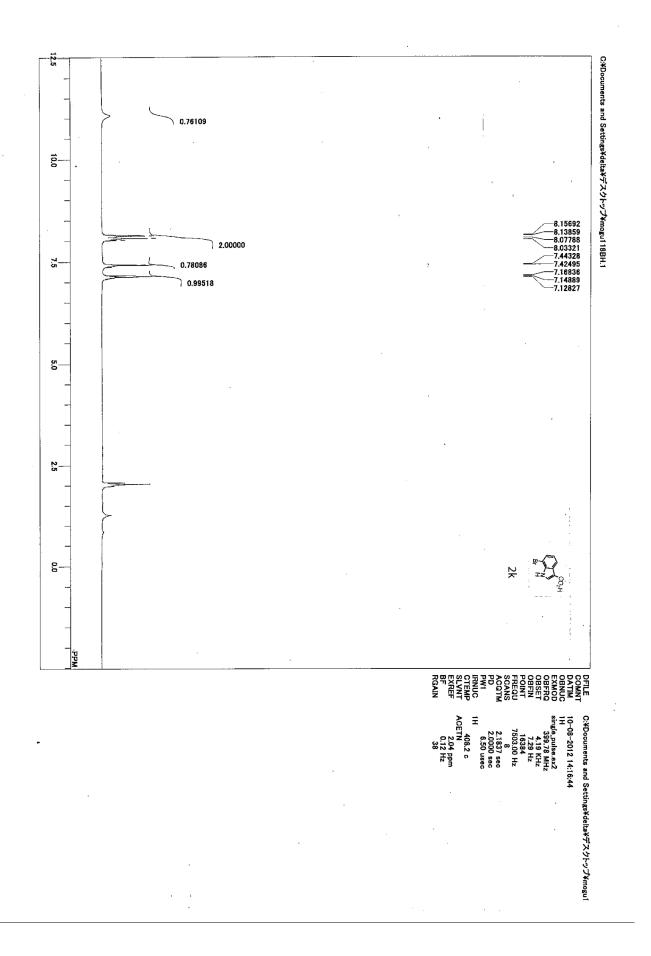


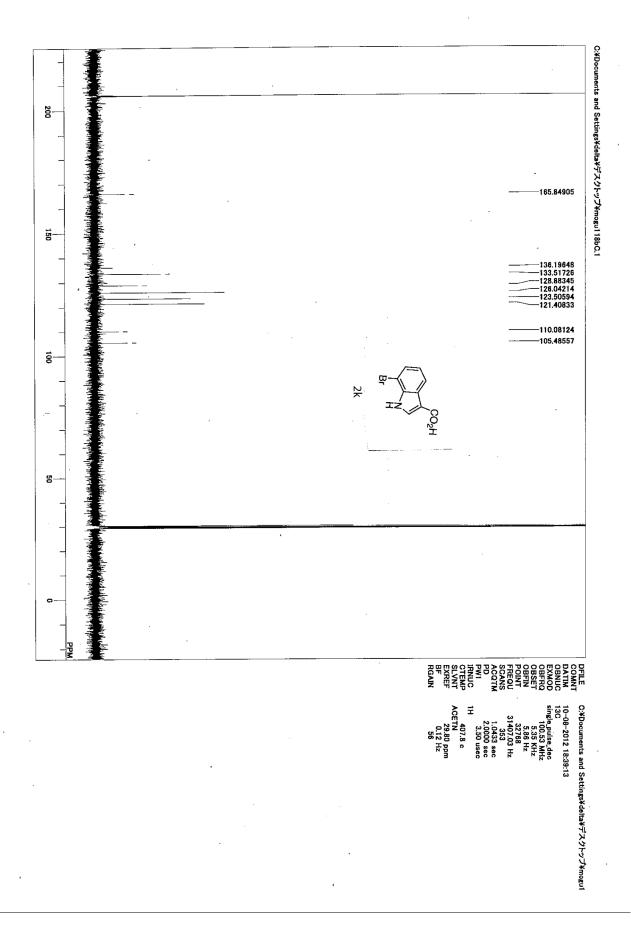


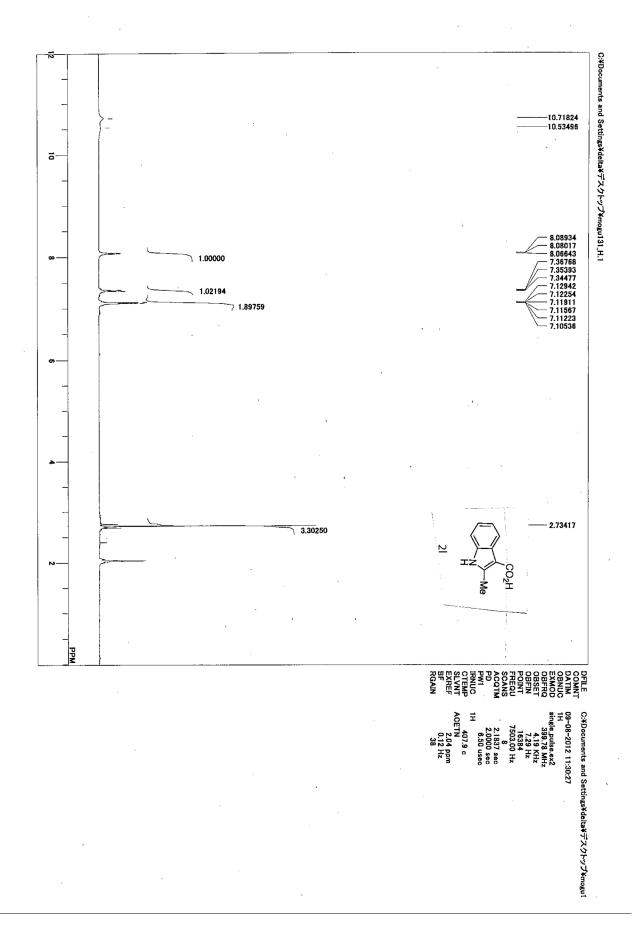


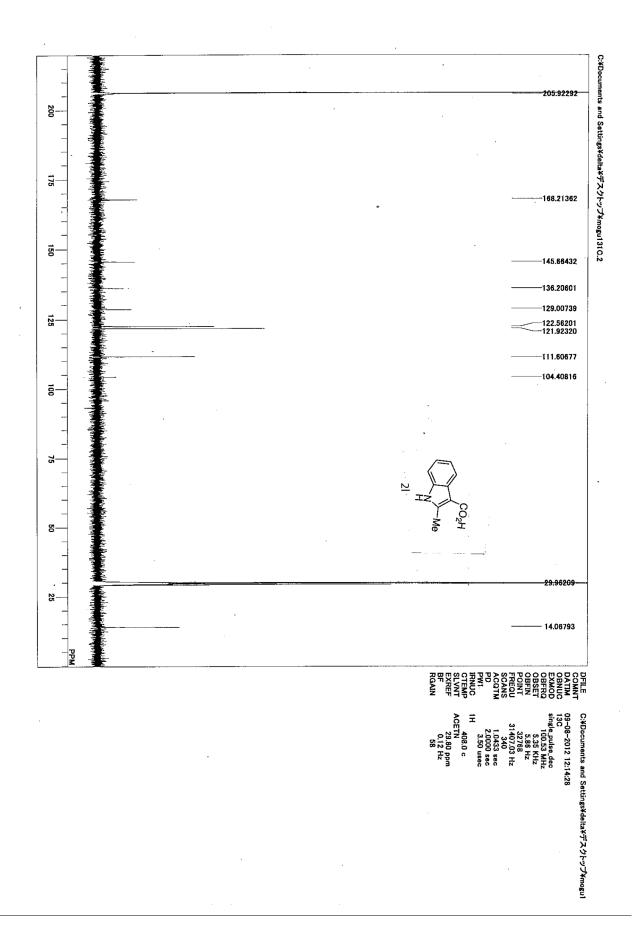


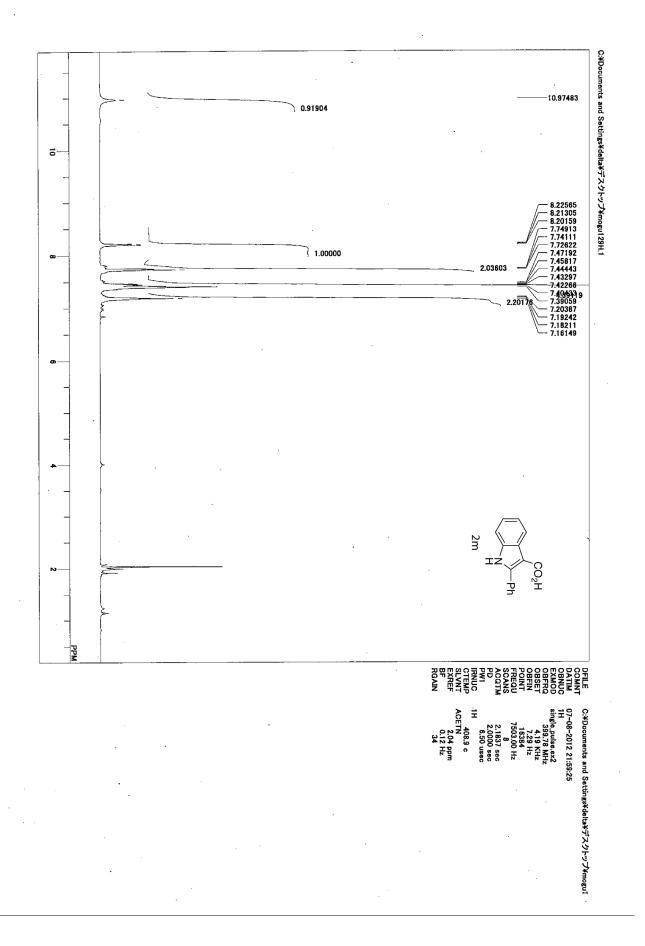


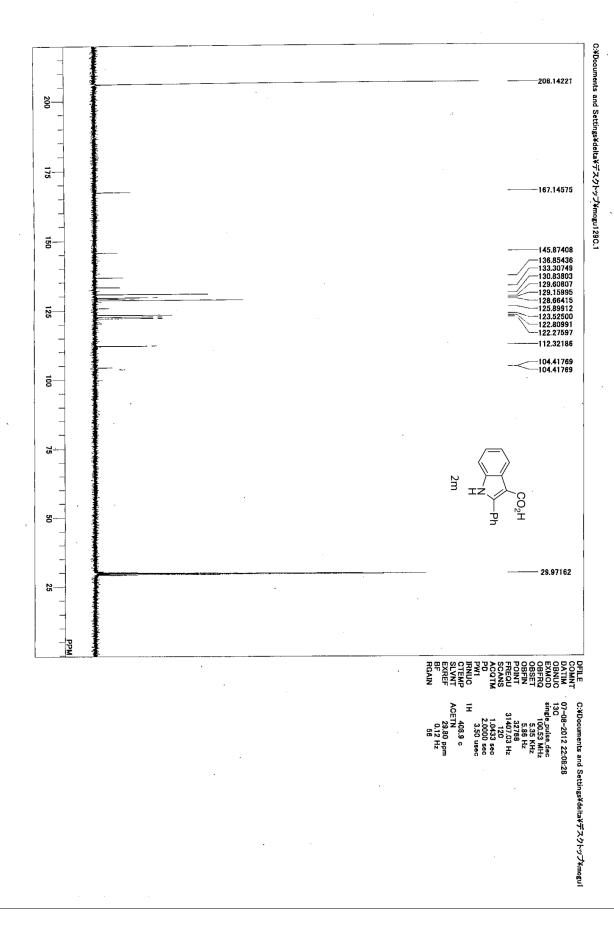


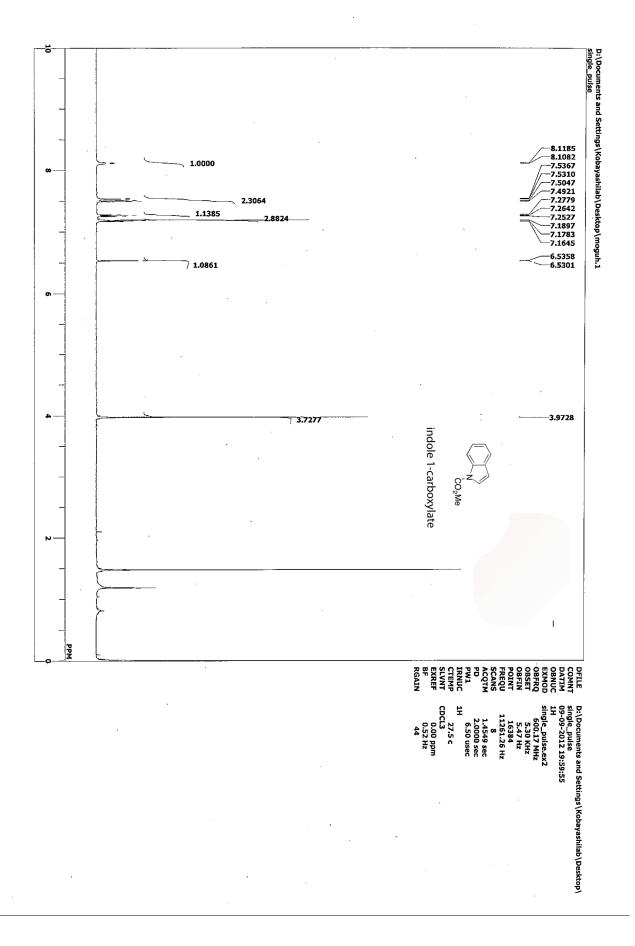


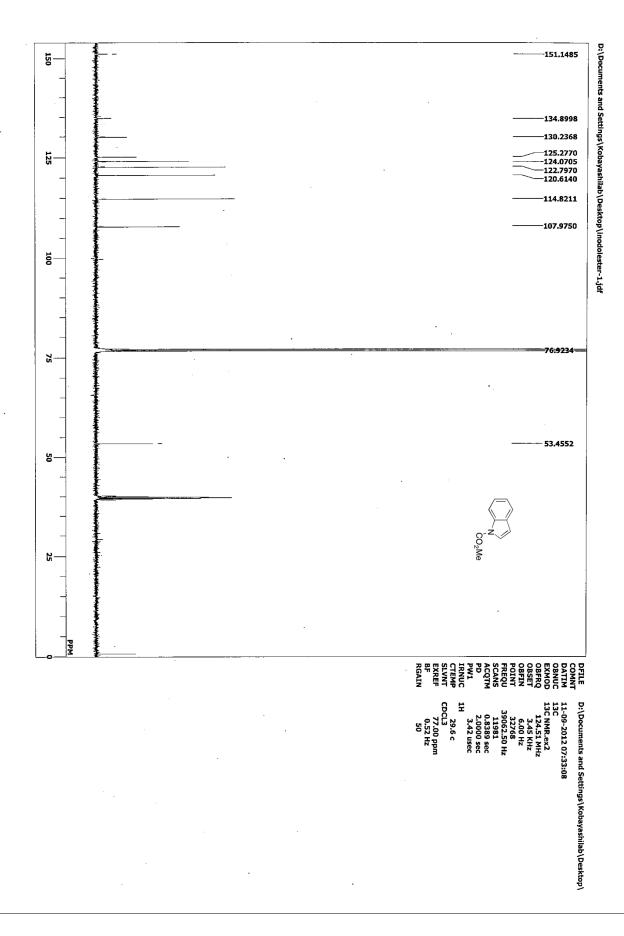












Part IV: References

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