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Facile synthesis of novel hybrid POSS biomolecules via “Click” reactions†

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A novel alkyne-terminated cubic-octameric POSS was synthesised in high yield (82–90%). The X-ray crystal structure revealed intra- and intermolecular hydrogen bonding between the amide groups of the arms. Hybrid biomaterials were synthesised in nearly quantitative yields via a click reaction with (i) azido-N-Fmoc-norleucine and (ii) 3’-azido-3’-deoxythymidine. The preparation of octa(3-azidopropyl)polyhedral oligomeric silsesquioxane POSS-(N$_3$)$_8$ requires a multi-step synthesis and suffers from a poor overall yield of 30–32%.‡

The synthesis and click reaction of mono alkyne-heptaisobutyl POSS were first reported by Müller et al.‡ and Wu et al.‡ Müller et al.‡ and Wu et al.‡ have used aminopropylheptaisobutyl polyhedral oligomeric silsesquioxane (POSS) to produce mono-alkyne-POSS in three steps and the click coupling occurred between the azido-terminated polystyrenes and alkyne-POSS to afford mono-, di-, and pentafunctional POSS-containing hybrid polystyrenes as star-shaped telechelic POSS-containing hybrid polymers. Wu et al.‡ have prepared alkyn-functionalized-POSS in three steps from allyl-heptaisobutyl substituted-POSS and the product was linked to an azido-functionalized elastomer of poly(styrene-b-(ethylene-co-butylene)-b-styrene) (SEB–CH$_2$N$_3$)$_8$ via a click coupling reaction to form a novel hybrid copolymer. These approaches focused mostly on the preparation of a hybrid copolymer based on mono-alkyne-heptaisobutyl and azido polystyrene. However, the preparation of octa-alkyne-terminated POSS and their click coupling reactions with azido-biomolecules to produce hybrid biomaterials has not been investigated yet. We believe that this approach will open a wide range of biomedical applications that were not accessible in the past.

Herein we report a novel synthetic approach to hybrid biomaterials based on octa-alkyne-terminated POSS and their reaction with (i) azido-N-Fmoc-L-norleucine and (ii) 3’-azido-3’-deoxythymidine, using the CuAAC reaction. Our approach
presents a particularly versatile route which provides a facile and convenient way to functionalise a cubic silsesquioxane core with biomolecules that are more readily available as their azido derivative than their alkyne derivative.

Compound 2 was prepared in one step from commercially available materials; octa(3-aminopropyl)octasilsesquioxane (1) and 5-hexynoic acid (Scheme 1), in 82–90% yield. Product 2 was isolated and purified by column chromatography, followed by characterisation using standard techniques (see ESI†). The crystal structure determined by X-ray crystallography (Fig. 2) suggests that intra- and inter-molecular hydrogen bonding between the arms were a fundamental driving force for the formation of a well-defined crystal structure.‡

The length of intramolecular nitrogen–hydrogen (N⋯H) bonds varies between 2.09(3) and 2.12(3) Å, whereas for an intermolecular bond the distance is 1.87(3) Å.

The completion of the cycloaddition reaction was confirmed by MALDI-TOF and the reaction progress was monitored by observing the disappearance of the azide asymmetric stretch at 2093 cm⁻¹ and the triple bond C≡C asymmetric stretch of T8-[propylhex-5-ynamide]₈ (2) at 2100 cm⁻¹ by FT-IR spectroscopy together with monitoring the disappearance in the ¹³C-NMR spectrum of the two peaks (89.20 and 76.56 ppm) representing the triple bond of 2.

Compounds 3 and 4 have been analysed and characterised using NMR (¹H, ¹³C and ²⁹Si) spectroscopy, infrared and MALDI-TOF mass spectrometry in positive ion mode with a DHB matrix.

Trastoy et al. have reported an efficient preparation of highly functionalised cubic-octameric POSS frameworks by click chemistry and the highest yield (96%) was obtained with the CuSO₄•H₂O/sodium ascorbate precatalyst system using a biphasic organic solvent/water mixture at room temperature for 24 hours. We have used these reaction conditions for the functionalisation of the octa-alkyne-terminated POSS with azido-N-Fmoc-norleucine and 3₀-azido-3₀-deoxythymidine (Scheme 2).

The MALDI-TOF MS of compound 3 revealed that the octa-alkyne-terminated POSS has been fully functionalised with azido-N-Fmoc-norleucine for 3 and 3₀-azido-3₀-deoxythymidine for 4. The molecular ion peak of 3 observed at found 4787 Da is attributed to [M + H]⁺ and 4 observed at 3835.3 Da is attributed to [M + Cu]⁺.

† Crystal data of compound: C₇₂H₁₁₂N₈O₂₀Si₈ (M = 1634.41 g mol⁻¹): triclinic, space group P1 (no. 2), a = 9.620(3) Å, b = 14.125(3) Å, c = 17.656(6) Å, α = 71.392(2)°, β = 74.675(3)°, γ = 70.560(2)°, V = 2110.47(12) Å³, Z = 1, T = 100.15 K, μ(Mo Kα) = 0.198 mm⁻¹, Dcalc = 1.286 g cm⁻³, 28 211 reflections measured (6.088 ≤ 2θ ≤ 50.054°), 7434 unique (Rint = 0.0375, Rsigma = 0.0368) which were used in all calculations. The final R₁ was 0.0459 (I > 2σ(I)) and wR₂ was 0.1280 (all data).
Conclusions

In this study we have described a novel, efficient method for the synthesis of 3D radially symmetrical biomolecule-POSS hybrids. We have developed a one-step synthesis of 2 from commercially available octakis(3-aminopropyl)octa-silsesquioxane (1) with high yield (82–90%). The X-ray crystal structure shows that compound 2 exhibits plane-to-plane stacking with an intra- and inter-molecular hydrogen bond network. The octa-alkyne-terminated POSS was efficiently and regioselectively octa-functionalised with two azido-R species (where R are Fmoc-Leu and thymidine) by copper(I)-catalysed 1,3-dipolar azide cycloaddition (CuAAC) under biphasic conditions. This led to new hybrid biofunctional nanocages 3 and 4 in high yield. This new strategy of functionalisation of terminated alkyne-POSS via CuAAC opens many possibilities for the efficient and controlled assembly of new hybrid biomaterials with a high degree of symmetry and with carefully tailored functional properties.

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Notes and references