Supporting Information

Amphiphilic Oligoamides as Versatile, Acid-Responsive

Gelators

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Scheme S1 Synthetic route to compound 5a-d

Compounds **1a**, **1b**, **4a** and **4b** were prepared according to the previously reported method.^{S1-S7}

General procedure for the synthesis of compounds 2a-2d. A solution of appropriate acid chloride (15.0 mmol) in CH₂Cl₂ (50 mL) was added to a solution of amine 1a or 1b (15.0 mmol) and triethylamine (15.0 mmol) in CH₂Cl₂ (100 mL) over a period of 30 minutes at 0 °C. After addition, the ice-water bath was removed, and the reaction mixture was allowed to warm to room temperature. After 4 hrs, the solvent was washed with 1 M HCl, saturated aqueous NaHCO₃ and NaCl solution in sequence, dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and then concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified by column chromatography (petroleum ether / acetone = 4 / 1).

Compound 2a. White solid (5.1 g, 82%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3423, 3354, 3308, 2956, 2894, 2875, 1759, 1687, 1636, 1551, 1499, 1370, 1319, 1251, 1207, 1099. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 8.75 (t, *J* = 5.0 Hz, 1H), 815 (dd, *J* = 9.0, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (d, *J* = 2.8 Hz, 1H), 6.93 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.26-4.23 (m, 4H), 3.93 (m, 2H), 3.76 (s, 3H), 3.70 (m, 2H), 3.65-3.62 (m, 4H), 3.51 (m, 2H), 3.35 (s, 3H), 2.16 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 170.49, 168.95, 165.30, 153.33, 132.72, 125.51, 123.27, 121.20,

113.76, 71.92, 70.69, 70.63, 70.59, 69.21, 68.77, 59.02, 52.24, 41.89, 24.27. ESI-MS: m/z calcd for C₁₉H₂₈N₂O₈: 412.18; found: 413.34 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 2b. White solid (6.1 g, 87%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3378, 3323, 2956, 2931, 2874, 1741, 1682, 1635, 1543, 1498, 1277, 1245, 1215, 1109. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.76 (s, 1H), 8.21 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.80 (s, 1H), 7.54 (s, 1H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.28-4.24 (m, 4H), 3.94 (m, 2H), 3.76 (s, 3H), 3.71 (m, 2H), 3.65-3.60 (m, 4H), 3.52 (m, 2H), 3.35 (s, 3H), 2.35 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 1.71 (m, 2H), 1.36-1.32 (m, 4H), 0.90 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 171.95, 170.44, 165.22, 153.21, 132.76, 125.40, 123.20, 121.18, 113.69, 71.89, 70.66, 70.60, 70.57, 69.19, 68.76, 58.98, 52.19, 41.85, 37.36, 31.48, 25.36, 22.51, 13.97. ESI-MS: *m*/*z* calcd for C₂₃H₃₆N₂O₈: 468.25; found: 469.43 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 2c. White solid (6.4 g, 81%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3449, 3326, 2921, 2870, 2851, 1750, 1692, 1539, 1501, 1361, 1305, 1218, 1125. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.73 (s, 1H), 8.19 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 1H), 7.78 (s, 1H), 7.28 (s, 1H), 6.93 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 1H), 4.27 (m, 4H), 3.94 (m, 2H), 3.78 (s, 3H), 3.73-3.51 (m, 8H), 3.36 (s, 3H), 2.34 (m, 2H), 1.69 (m, 4H), 0.88 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 169.11, 167.50, 162.31, 150.24, 129.88, 122.46, 120.29, 118.20, 110.72, 68.94, 67.69, 67.64, 67.58, 66.24, 65.80, 56.01, 49.22, 38.91, 34.42, 28.94, 26.55, 26.42, 26.36, 22.74, 19.72, 11.17. ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for C₂₇H₄₄N₂O₈: 524.31; found: 525.52 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 2d. White solid (4.8 g, 71%). ¹H NMR (400MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.69 (s, 1H), 8.19 (dd, *J* = 9.0, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (d, *J* = 2.6 Hz, 1H), 7.28 (s, 1H), 6.96 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.27 (d, *J* = 4.8 Hz, 2H), 4.13 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 3.79 (s, 3H), 2.35 (t, *J* = 7.5 Hz, 2H), 2.04-1.84 (m, 2H), 1.78-1.69 (m, 2H), 1.50-1.27 (m, 14H), 0.90 (m, 6H).

General procedure for the synthesis of compounds 3a-3d. Compound 2a-2d (10.0 mmol) was dissolved in MeOH (100 mL), to which the solution of KOH (20.0 mmol, 2 M) was added. The mixture was heated to reflux for 4 hrs. Then, MeOH was removed in vacuo. The aqueous layer was acidified with concentrated HCl until pH = 1, which was extracted with dichloromethane (50 mL \times 3). The orginc phase was

dried over anhydrous sodium sulfate, filtered and the solvent was removed under reduced pressure. The residue was purified by column chromatography (CH_2Cl_2 / $CH_3OH = 30 / 1$).

Compound 3a. White solid (3.8 g, 96%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3466, 3370, 2931, 2890, 1733, 1647, 1555, 1499, 1252, 1216, 1198, 1102. ¹H NMR(400 MHz, DMSO-*d6*): δ 9.96 (s, 1H), 8.61 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 8.02 (s, 1H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.14 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.24 (m, 2H), 4.01 (m, 2H), 3.82 (m, 2H), 3.60 (m, 2H), 3.53-3.48 (m, 4H), 3.41 (m, 2H), 3.22 (s, 3H), 2.02 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d6*): δ 171.18, 168.06, 164.28, 152.37, 133.13, 123.61, 121.75, 121.50, 114.38, 71.25, 69.86, 69.80, 69.57, 68.82, 68.57, 58.04, 41.44, 23.81. ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for C₁₈H₂₅N₂O₈: 398.17; found: 399.32 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 3b. White solid (4.4 g, 96%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3490, 3389, 3305, 2955, 2933, 2870, 2619, 2503, 1727, 1681, 1551, 1498, 1450, 1286. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 8.83 (s, 1H), 8.19 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.52 (s, 1H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.29 (m, 4H), 3.92 (m, 2H), 3.72-3.61 (m, 8H), 3.37 (s, 3H), 2.36 (t, *J* = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 1.72 (m, 2H), 1.35 (m, 4H), 0.90 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 172.50, 171.36, 165.62, 153.40, 132.64, 125.60, 123.28, 120.75, 113.63, 71.90, 70.73, 70.65, 70.36, 69.28, 68.84, 58.90, 42.46, 37.38, 31.53, 25.43, 22.52, 14.02. ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for C₂₂H₃₄N₂O₈: 454.23; found: 455.41 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 3c. White solid (3.2 g, 63%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3504, 3389, 3309, 2926, 2855, 1730, 1645, 1546, 1497, 1258, 1214, 1105. ¹H NMR(400 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.85 (s, 1H),8.18 (s, 1H), 8.02 (s, 1H), 7.81 (s, 1H), 7.55 (s, 1H), 4.27 (m, 4H), 3.91 (m, 2H), 3.71-3.61 (m, 8H), 3.41 (s, 3H), 2.36 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 1H), 1.70 (m, 2H), 1.26 (m, 12H), 0.88 (t, *J* = 6.1 Hz, 1H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 172.29, 170.97, 165.14, 152.93, 132.23, 125.18, 122.89, 120.17, 113.08, 71.43, 70.23, 70.15, 69.92, 68.78, 68.32, 58.42, 41.95, 36.91, 31.50, 29.12, 29.00, 28.94, 25.37, 22.28, 13.74. ESI-MS: *m/z* calcd for C₂₆H₄₂N₂O₈: 510.29; found: 511.32 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 3d. White solid (3.3 g, 75%). ¹H NMR (400MHz, CDCl₃) δ 8.78 (t, J = 4.7 Hz, 1H), 8.16 (dd, J = 9.0, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 7.97 (s, 1H), 7.83 (d, J = 2.7 Hz, 1H), 6.92

(d, J = 9.1 Hz, 1H), 4.27 (d, J = 4.8 Hz, 2H), 4.09 (t, J = 6.7 Hz, 2H), 2.36 (t, J = 7.6 Hz, 2H), 1.96 – 1.82 (m, 2H), 1.78 – 1.63 (m, 2H), 1.47 – 1.22 (m, 14H), 0.87 (q, J = 6.9 Hz, 6H).

General procedure for the synthesis of compounds 5a-5d. The appropriate acid 3a-3d (10.0 mmol), 1-ethyl-3-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-carbodiimide (EDCl, 12.0 mmol) and N-hydroxybenzotriazole (HOBt, 12.0 mmol) were dissolved in dry CH₂Cl₂ (50 mL). After stirring at room temperature for 30 minutes, the solution was added dropwise over a period of 10 minutes to the solution of 3,5-diaminobenzoate (**4a** or **4b**, 10.0 mmol) in CH₂Cl₂ (100 mL). Stirring was continued for 20 hrs. Then, the solvent was extracted with water (50 mL × 3), saturated brine (50 mL × 1). The organic layer was dried over anhydrous Na₂SO₄ and concentrated in vacuo. The residue was purified by column chromatography (CH₂Cl₂ / CH₃OH = 15 / 1).

Compound 5a. White solid (3.7 g, 54%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3420, 3375, 3347, 3278, 3246, 3163, 3109, 2928, 2887, 1698, 1636, 1538, 1243, 1220, 1109. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, CDCl₃): δ 10.00 (s, 1H), 9.96 (s, 1H), 8.70 (t, *J* = 5.3 Hz, 1H), 8.05 (d, *J* = 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.8 Hz, 1H), 7.35 (s, 1H), 7.17 (s, 1H), 7.15 (s, 1H), 6.92 (s, 1H), 5.44 (s, 2H), 4.33 (m, 2H), 4.27 (m, 2H), 4.15 (m, 2H), 3.87 (m, 2H), 3.72 (m, 2H), 3.61-3.35 (m, 16H), 3.21 (s, 3H), 3.18 (s, 3H), 2.02 (s, 3H). ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d6*): δ 168.03, 167.33, 166.13, 164.26, 152.42, 149.43, 139.65, 133.08, 130.51, 123.55, 121.77, 121.59, 114.29, 109.78, 108.74, 107.80, 71.24, 71.19, 69.89, 69.86, 69.76, 69.62, 69.50, 68.87, 68.62, 68.44, 63.82, 58.00, 57.97, 43.50, 23.80. ESI-MS: *m*/*z* calcd for C₃₂H₄₆N₂O₈: 678.31; found: 679.60 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 5b. White solid (4.2 g, 57%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3456, 3369, 3310, 3278, 3249, 3162, 3110, 2951, 2927, 2871, 1700, 1690, 1636, 1560, 1539, 1497, 1244, 1223, 1107, 1053. ¹H NMR (400 MHz, DMSO-*d6*) δ 9.75 (s, 1H), 9.21 (s, 1H), 8.79 (s, 1H), 8.24 (d, *J* = 6.7 Hz, 1H), 7.84 (s, 3H), 7.78 (s, 1H), 7.39 (s, 1H), 7.02 (s, 1H), 6.85 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.48-4.45 (m, 4H), 4.22 (m, 2H), 4.02 (m, 2H), 3.82-3.47 (m, 18H), 3.34 (s, 3H), 3.29 (s, 3H), 2.42 (t, *J* = 3.5 Hz, 2H), 1.71 (m, 2H), 1.32 (m, 4H), 0.89 (t, *J* = 6.8 Hz, 3H); ¹³C NMR (100 MHz, DMSO-*d6*) δ 172.18, 167.01, 166.89,

164.72, 153.40, 147.75, 139.74, 132.52, 130.68, 125.22, 122.66, 120.34, 112.88, 111.06, 110.54, 110.33, 71.89, 71.82, 70.73, 70.58, 70.44, 70.38, 69.22, 69.08, 68.90, 64.55, 58.97, 58.87, 45.32, 37.15, 31.54, 25.24, 22.53, 13.98. ESI-MS: m/z calcd for C₃₆H₅₄N₄O₁₂: 734.37; found: 735.88 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 5c. White solid (4.2 g, 53%). IR (KBr, cm⁻¹): 3429, 3364, 3323, 3280, 3251, 3114, 2927, 2857, 1701, 1636, 1539, 1244, 1225, 1112, 1055. ¹H NMR(400MHz, CDCl₃) δ 9.59 (s, 1H), 9.18 (s, 1H), 8.44 (s, 1H), 8.25 (d, *J* = 8.2 Hz, 1H), 7.90 (s, 1H), 7.78 (s, 1H), 7.40 (s, 1H), 7.09 (s, 1H), 6.94 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 4.43 (m, 4H), 4.27 (m, 2H), 4.00 (m, 2H), 3.99-3.49 (m, 18H), 3.36 (s, 3H), 3.33 (s, 3H), 2.40 (m, 2H), 1.70(m, 2H), 1.25 (m, 12H), 0.89 (t, *J* = 5.9 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR(100 MHz, CDCl₃) δ 171.99, 166.78, 166.60, 164.33, 153.18, 147.70, 139.58, 132.34, 130.42, 124.90, 122.43, 120.08, 110.80, 110.24, 109.96, 71.71, 71.63, 70.53, 70.39, 70.36, 70.15, 69.01, 68.86, 68.66, 64.37, 58.72, 58.62, 45.11, 36.97, 31.71, 29.44, 29.36, 29.29, 29.17, 25.38, 22.47, 13.93. ESI-MS: *m*/*z* calcd for C₄₀H₆₂N₄O₁₂: 790.44; found:791.46 [M + H]⁺.

Compound 5d. White solid (3.4 g, 50%). ¹H NMR (400MHz, DMSO-*d6*) δ 10.03 (s, 1H), 9.89 (s, 1H), 8.67 (t, *J* = 4.9 Hz, 1H), 8.07 (d, *J* = 2.7 Hz, 1H), 7.81 (dd, *J* = 8.9, 2.7 Hz, 1H), 7.42 (s, 1H), 7.13 (d, *J* = 9.0 Hz, 1H), 7.09 (s, 1H), 6.91 (s, 1H), 5.43 (s, 2H), 4.20-4.12 (m, 6H), 2.27 (t, *J* = 7.4 Hz, 2H), 1.85 (m, 2H), 1.71-1.53 (m, 4H), 1.47-1.12 (m, 24H), 0.89-0.74 (m, 9H).

Notes and references

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2. Gelation Tests and Additional Gel Images



Fig. S1 Images of G2 at a concentration of 10 mg mL⁻¹ under different conditions (a) neutral water; (b) acidulated by HCl (1 M, 5 μ L); (c) added 5 μ L Et₃N into the acidified solution



Fig. S2 Images of G2 at a concentration of 10 mg mL⁻¹ in water under different pH (the value of pH is 1 to 7 in turn from left to right)

3. UV-Vis and Fluorescence Spectroscopy



Fig. S3 G2 at a concentration of 0.1 mM and in the gel state (15 mg mL⁻¹) in benzene at room temperature (a) Absorption spectra (1 mm path length) (b) Fluorescence emission spectra ($\lambda ex = 207$

307 nm).



Fig. S4 The fluorescence emission spectra change of G2 in H₂O (10 mg mL⁻¹) at different temperature ($\lambda ex = 307$ nm).

4. 1D and 2D NMR Spectroscopy



Fig. S5 Variable temperature ¹H NMR spectra of compound G2 (20 mM, C₆D₆)



Fig. S6 Solvent-dependent ¹H NMR spectra of compound G2 (20 mM, 25°C, C₆D₆-DMSO-*d*₆)



Fig. S7 Partial Spectra of NEOSY (G2, 20 mM in C_6D_6)

5. Loading and releasing experiments



Fig. S8 The pictures of the hydrogels with different compounds, (a) G2 + zinc acetate, (b) G2 + streptomycin sulphate, (c) G2 + chloramphenicol, (d) G2 + tetracycline, (e) G2 + benzyl penicillin, (f) G2 + methylene blue. The hydrogel are formed in the condition of G2 (5.0 mg) in the aqueous solutions of different drugs (1.0 mM, 500 μL), respectively.



Fig. S9 Absorption spectra of MB releasing from the hydrogel G2 in different conditions, (a) pure water , (b) water containing 1‰ glacial acetic acid

6. IR, HRMS, ¹H NMR and ¹³C NMR Spectra of G1-G6



Fig. S10 IR Spectra of Compound G1



Fig. S11 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound **G1** (4 mM, DMSO-*d*₆)



Fig. S12 ¹³C NMR Spectra of Compound G1 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S13 HRMS Spectra of Compound G1



Fig. S14 IR Spectra of Compound G2



Fig. S15 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound G2 (4 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S16 ¹³C NMR Spectra of Compound G2 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S17 HRMS Spectra of Compound G2



Fig. S18 IR Spectra of Compound G3



Fig. S19 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound G3 (4 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S20 ¹³C NMR Spectra of Compound G3 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S21 HRMS Spectra of Compound G3



Fig. S22 IR Spectra of Compound G4



Fig. S23 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound **G4** (4 mM, DMSO-*d*₆)



Fig. S24 13 C NMR Spectra of Compound G4 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S25 HRMS Spectra of Compound G4



Fig. S26 IR Spectra of Compound G5



Fig. S27 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound **G5** (4 mM, DMSO-*d*₆)



Fig. S28 13 C NMR Spectra of Compound G5 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S29 HRMS Spectra of Compound G5



Fig. S30 IR Spectra of Compound G6



Fig. S31 ¹H NMR Spectra of Compound G6 (4 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S32 ¹³C NMR Spectra of Compound G6 (20 mM, DMSO- d_6)



Fig. S33 HRMS Spectra of Compound G6