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Electronic Supplementary Information

for the manuscript entitled

Lanthanide-based metallogels with tunable luminescence: Nanomolar detection of a nerve agent simulant and anticounterfeiting applications

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Experimental section

Materials and methods

All chemicals and reagents were procured from commercial sources and were used without further purification. The solvents were purified utilizing the standard literature methods.¹ The precursor L' was synthesized according to our earlier report.²

Syntheses

Synthesis of L'' and L1

H₂L^{p-COOEt}-O-(CH₂)₁₇CH₃ (L''). L' (1.00 g, 2.09 mmol) and 1-bromooctadecane (0.83 g, 2.51 mmol) were dissolved in 20 mL DMF followed by the addition of solid K₂CO₃ (0.57 g, 4.18 mmol). The reaction mixture was stirred for 6 h at 60 °C. The unreacted K₂CO₃ was filtered off from the reaction mixture, and the solvent was removed under the reduced pressure. The product was isolated after washing with diethyl ether. Yield: 1.33 g (88 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 8.04 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 4H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 8.9 Hz, 4H), 7.82 (s, 2H), 4.30 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 4H), 4.25 (t, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 2H), 1.84 – 1.70 (m, 2H), 1.47 – 1.39 (m, 2H), 1.32 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H), 1.28 – 1.12 (m, 28H), 0.81 (t, *J* = 6.9 Hz, 3H). FTIR spectrum (Zn–Se, selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3364 (N–H), 2916 (C–H), 1705 (COOCH₂CH₃), 1588 (C=O). Elemental analysis for C₄₃H₅₉N₃O₇: C, 70.75; H, 8.15; N, 5.76. Found: C, 70.82; H, 8.20; N, 5.82.

H₂**L**^{p-COOH}-**O**-(**CH**₂)₁₇**CH**₃ (**L1**). The ligand **L1** was obtained after the base-assisted hydrolysis of **L**". **L**" (0.5 g, 0.68 mmol) was dissolved in a mixture of THF-H₂O (3:1, v/v) and treated with 5 equiv. of NaOH (0.13 g, 3.4 mmol). This reaction mixture was stirred for 12 h at room temperature. To this reaction mixture, an aqueous solution of 4N HCl was added until pH reached 3.0-4.0. The resulting solution was vacuum evaporated to remove THF, which led to the precipitation of a product that was isolated, washed with water, and air-dried. Yield: 0.36 g (80 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.15 (s, 2H), 8.04 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 7.98 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 7.80 (s, 2H), 4.20 (t, *J* = 5.7 Hz, 2H), 1.80 – 1.64 (m, 2H), 1.46 – 1.31 (m, 2H), 1.32 – 1.11 (m, 28H), 0.78 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR spectrum (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 167.97, 167.43, 162.20, 151.10, 142.46, 130.75, 126.91, 120.52, 111.99, 69.26, 31.76, 29.51, 29.46, 29.38, 29.19, 29.09, 25.70, 22.55, 14.37. FTIR spectrum (Zn–Se, selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3269 (N–H), 2913 (C–H), 1685 (COOH), 1587 (C=O). Elemental analysis for C₃₉H₅₁N₃O₇: C, 69.52; H, 7.63; N, 6.24. Found: C, 69.70; H, 7.69; N, 6.26.

Synthesis of L'" and L2

H₂L^{p-COOEt}-O-(CH₂)₄-CH₃ (L'''). L''' was synthesized using a similar procedure as mentioned for L'', however, using the following reagents: L' (1.00 g, 2.09 mmol), pentyl bromide (0.37 g, 2.51 mmol), and K₂CO₃ (0.57g, 4.18 mmol). Yield: 1.00 g (88 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.34 (s, 2H), 8.06 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 7.97 (d, *J* = 8.5 Hz, 4H), 7.78 (s, 2H), 4.28 (q, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 4H), 4.21 (t, *J* = 5.8 Hz, 2H), 1.83 – 1.67 (m, 2H), 1.47 – 1.32 (m, 4H), 1.30 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H), 0.87 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 3H). FTIR spectrum (selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3244 (N–H), 2918 (C–H), 1710 (COOCH₂CH₃), 1585 (C=O). Elemental analysis calculated for C₃₀H₃₃N₃O₇: C, 65.80; H, 6.07; N, 7.67. Found: C, 65.85; H, 6.12; N, 7.65.

H₂**L**^{p-COOH}-**O**-(**CH**₂)₄-**CH**₃ (**L**₂). Ligand **L**₂ was synthesized using a procedure similar to that mentioned for **L**₁; however, using **L**^{'''}. Yield: 0.36 g (82 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 12.86 (s, 2H), 11.20 (s, 2H), 8.09 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 4H), 8.03 (d, J = 7.9 Hz, 4H), 7.85 (s, 2H), 4.26 (t, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 1.85 – 1.70 (m, 2H), 1.54 – 1.30 (m, 4H), 0.92 (t, J = 5.8 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR spectrum (100 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 167.98, 167.42, 162.31, 151.11, 142.53, 130.80, 126.68, 120.57, 112.02, 69.29, 28.38, 27.93, 22.31, 14.35. FTIR spectrum (selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3266 (N–H), 2961 (C–H), 1682 (COOH), 1592 (C=O). Elemental analysis calculated for C₂₆H₂₅N₃O₇: C, 63.54; H, 5.13; N, 8.55. Found: C, 63.62; H, 5.15; N, 8.58.

Synthesis of L'''' and L3

H₂L^{p-COOEt}-O-(CH₂)₉-CH₃ (L''''). L'''' was synthesized using a similar procedure as mentioned for L''; however, using the following reagents: L' (1.00 g, 2.09 mmol), decyl bromide (0.55 g, 2.51 mmol) and K₂CO₃ (0.57g, 4.18 mmol). Yield: 1.18 g (92 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 11.33 (s, 2H), 8.07 (d, *J* = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 8.00 (d, *J* = 8.7 Hz, 4H), 7.77 (s, 2H), 4.27 (q, *J* = 7.2 Hz, 4H), 4.18 (t, *J* = 6.6 Hz, 2H), 1.77 – 1.65 (m, 2H), 1.42 – 1.34 (m, 2H), 1.24 – 1.12 (m, 12H), 1.29 (t, *J* = 7.0 Hz, 6H), 0.80 (t, *J* = 5.6 Hz, 3H). FTIR spectrum (selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3259 (N–H), 2916 (C–H), 1705 (COOCH₂CH₃), 1585 (C=O). Elemental analysis calculated for C₃₅H₄₃N₃O₇: C, 68.05; H, 7.02; N, 6.80. Found: C, 67.96; H, 6.95; N, 6.87.

H₂L^{p-COOH}-O-(CH₂)₉-CH₃ (L3). Ligand L3 was synthesized using a procedure similar to that mentioned for L1; however, using L''''. Yield: 0.38 g (85 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 12.86 (s, 2H), 11.19 (s, 2H), 8.09 (d, J = 7.6 Hz, 4H), 8.03 (d, J = 8.0 Hz, 4H), 7.82 (s, 2H), 4.23 (t, J = 6.4 Hz, 2H), 1.81 – 1.69 (m, 2H), 1.46 – 1.35 (m, 2H), 1.35 – 1.16 (m, 12H), 0.85 (t, J = 5.7 Hz, 3H). ¹³C NMR spectrum (100 MHz, DMSO- d_6) δ 167.96, 167.42,

162.21, 151.05, 142.48, 130.78, 126.80, 120.61, 111.99, 69.28, 31.77, 29.45, 29.42, 29.18, 28.66, 25.74, 22.57, 14.41. FTIR spectrum (selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3244 (N–H), 2931 (C–H), 1682 (COOH), 1585 (C=O). Elemental analysis calculated for C₃₁H₃₅N₃O₇: C, 66.30; H, 6.28; N, 7.48. Found: C, 66.42; H, 6.19; N, 7.49.

Synthesis of L'''' and L4

H₂L^{p-COOEt}-O-(CH₂)₂₁CH₃ (L''''). L'''' was synthesized using a similar procedure as mentioned for L''; however, using the following reagents: L' (1.00 g, 2.09 mmol), 1-bromodocosane (0.97 g, 2.51 mmol) and K₂CO₃ (0.57 g, 4.18 mmol). Yield: 1.39 g (85 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 8.04 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 7.97 (d, *J* = 8.8 Hz, 4H), 7.81 (s, 2H), 4.29 (q, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 4H), 4.24 (t, *J* = 6.5 Hz, 2H), 1.79 – 1.73 (m, 2H), 1.45 – 1.36 (m, 2H), 1.33 (t, *J* = 7.1 Hz, 6H), 1.24 – 1.14 (m, 36H), 0.82 (t, *J* = 5.7 Hz, 3H). FTIR spectrum (Zn–Se, selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3355 (N–H), 2920 (C–H), 1710 (COOCH₂CH₃), 1587 (C=O). Elemental analysis for C₄₇H₆₇N₃O₇: C, 71.82; H, 8.59; N, 5.35. Found: C, 71.85; H, 8.53; N, 5.39.

H₂L^{p-COOH}-O-(CH₂)₂₁CH₃ (L4). Ligand L4 was synthesized using a procedure similar to that mentioned for L1; however, using L''''. Yield: 0.37 g (80 %). ¹H NMR spectrum (400 MHz, DMSO-*d*₆) δ 10.97 (s, 2H), 8.00 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 7.92 (d, J = 8.6 Hz, 4H), 7.82 (s, 2H), 4.26 (t, J = 5.7 Hz, 2H), 1.88 – 1.68 (m, 2H), 1.52 – 1.38 (m, 2H), 1.24 – 1.15 (m, 36H), 0.83 (t, J = 6.8 Hz, 3H). FTIR spectrum (Zn–Se, selected peaks, v/cm⁻¹): 3268 (N–H), 2918 (C–H), 1688 (COOH), 1582 (C=O). Elemental analysis for C₄₃H₅₉N₃O₇: C, 70.75; H, 8.15; N, 5.76. Found: C, 70.72; H, 8.12; N, 5.80.

Physical measurements

The FTIR spectra were recorded using an Agilent Cary 630 spectrometer with a diamond ATR. NMR spectral measurements were done with a Jeol 400 MHz spectrometer. Elemental analysis was performed using an Elementar Analysen Systeme GmbH Vario EL-III instrument. Powder X-ray diffraction (PXRD) patterns were obtained with a Rigaku Table-Top XRD or a Bruker AXS D8 Discover instrument (Cu K α radiation, $\lambda = 1.54184$ Å). The samples were ground and subjected to a range of $\theta = 5-60^{\circ}$ at a slow scan rate at room temperature. Fluorescence spectral studies were performed with a Cary Eclipse fluorescence spectrometer. The solid-state photoluminescence studies and lifetime measurements were performed using a Quanta master up-conversion and down-conversion fluorimeter (QM-8450-11) equipped with a 450W Xe source lamp and a 980 nm laser. FESEM, EDAX, and elemental dot mapping analyses were

carried out with a Zeiss GeminiSEM 500 instrument. The rheological measurements were carried out with an Anton Paar Rheometer (MCR-302) equipped with stainless steel parallel plates (20 mm diameter).

X-ray diffraction studies

Single crystal X-ray diffraction data for L1 and L3 were collected on a Rigaku Oxford XtaLAB Synergy-DW diffractometer equipped with a graphite monochromatic MoK α radiation ($\lambda = 0.71073 \text{ Å}$).³ SMART⁴ was used for collecting frames of data, indexing reflections and determining the lattice parameters; SAINT⁴ for integration of the intensity of reflections and scaling; and SADABS⁵ for absorption correction. The frames were collected at 293(2) K. The structures were solved by the direct methods using SIR-97⁶ and refined by the full-matrix leastsquares refinement techniques on F^2 using SHELXL-97⁷ incorporated in the Olex2 crystallographic package.⁸ All calculations and structure refinements were performed using the Olex2 program. The hydrogen atoms were fixed at the calculated positions using the isotropic thermal parameters, whereas non-hydrogen atoms were refined anisotropically. Both L1 and L3 always produced poorly diffracting thin crystals, most probably due to the disordered attached alkyl chains. Although a few efforts resulted in data collection and structure solutions, poor data convergence only allowed partial structure solutions.

Crystal data for L1: cell = triclinic, space group = *P*-1, *a* = 6.0822(6), *b* = 14.6083(13), *c* = 27.503(2), $\alpha = 75.093(8)^{\circ}$, $\beta = 86.011(7)^{\circ}$, $\gamma = 80.145(8)^{\circ}$, V = 2325.7(4), Z = 2.

Crystal data for L3: cell = triclinic, space group = *P*-1, *a* = 7.4183(6), *b* = 14.6850(5), *c* = 15.6692(5), $\alpha = 90.631(3)^{\circ}$, $\beta = 96.020(5)^{\circ}$, $\gamma = 102.567(6)^{\circ}$, V = 1655.88(16), Z = 2.

Fluorescence spectral measurements

For sensing studies, 1 mg samples of L1-Eu and L1-Tb xerogels were dispersed in 4 mL of EtOH, followed by 30 min of sonication. All stock solutions of analytes (2.5 mM) adenosine triphosphate (ATP), adenosine diphosphate (ADP), adenosine monophosphate (AMP), Na₃PO₄, Na₂HPO₄, NaH₂PO₄, H₃PO₄, and mustard gas simulants, dimethyl methylphosphate (DMMP), diethyl chlorophosphate (DCP), diethyl cyanophosphate (DECP), CH₃COCl, and SOCl₂ were prepared in EtOH. All fluorescence spectral experiments were performed with a 1.0 cm path length cuvette at 25 ± 1 °C in EtOH.

Determination of Stern-Volmer (K_{SV}) and binding (K_b) constants

Stern-Volmer constants (K_{SV}) were calculated using the Stern-Volmer equation (1), where I_0 and I are the emission intensities of L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogels in the absence and presence of DMMP used as a quencher (Q), respectively.^{9,10} The binding constants (K_b) were computed using the Benesi-Hildebrand equation (2),¹¹ where I is the emission intensity of L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogels in the presence of [DMMP] at 618 and 546 nm, respectively; I_0 is the intensity of L1-Eu or L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogels in the absence of [DMMP]; and I_{min} is the minimum fluorescence intensity in the presence of [DMMP]. K_b was obtained by a ratio of intercept and slope in 1/(I- I_0) vs. 1/[DMMP] plot.

$$I_0/I = 1 + K_{\rm SV}[\rm DMMP] \tag{1}$$

$$1/(I-I_0) = 1/\{K_b(I_0-I_{\min})[DMMP]\} + 1/(I_0-I_{\min})$$
(2)

Determination of detection limit

The detection limits were calculated using the equation (3), where k is the slope of a plot of fluorescence intensity of L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogels vs DMMP concentration and σ is the standard deviation of ten blank fluorescence measurements of L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogels.¹²

Detection limit =
$$3\sigma/k$$
 (3)

Inclusion studies

A 30 mg sample of L1-Eu or L1-Tb xerogel was suspended in MeCN and impregnated with 5 equiv. of DMMP for 12 h at 25 °C. The impregnated sample was filtered, washed thrice with fresh MeCN, and dried under vacuum. This sample was used for the characterization.

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Figure S1. FTIR spectrum of L''.



Figure S2. ¹H NMR spectrum of L'' in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peaks.



Figure S3. FTIR spectrum of ligand L1.



Figure S4. ¹H NMR spectrum of ligand L1 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peaks.



Figure S5. ¹³C NMR spectrum of ligand L1 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent peak.



Figure S6. Crystal structure of ligand L1 showing the packing of different molecules of L1 and lattice DMSO molecules (ball and stick mode where C and O atoms are shown in gold and red, respectively) when viewed along *a*-axis.



Figure S7. ¹H NMR spectral titration of ligand L1 after the successive addition of up to three equiv. of the Eu^{3+} salt. Spectra were recorded in DMSO-*d*₆ solvent.



Figure S8. FTIR spectra of ligand L1 (black trace), L1-Eu (red trace), and L1-Tb (blue trace).



Figure S9. X-ray powder diffraction patterns for xerogels L1-Eu (red trace) and L1-Tb (green trace).



Figure S10. EDAX spectra for (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb.



Figure S11. Rheological measurements for L1-Eu and L1-Tb gels. Dynamic stress sweep at constant frequency for (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb. Dynamic strain sweep at constant frequency for (c) L1-Eu and (d) L1-Tb. Dynamic frequency sweep at constant strain and secondary axis showing the complex viscosity for (e) L1-Eu and (f) L1-Tb.



Figure S12. Excitation and emission spectra of L1.



Figure S13. Excitation spectra for (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb.



Figure S14. Lifetime decay profiles for L1-Eu (red squares) and L1-Tb (green triangles).



Figure S15. A schematic illustration of the "antenna effect" shown by the Ln-metallogels.



Figure S16. Lifetime decay profile for L1-Eu/Tb.



Figure S17. FTIR spectrum of L1-Eu/Tb.



Figure S18. (a) FESEM image of L1-Eu/Tb, (b-f) elemental mapping analysis of L1-Eu/Tb, and (g) EDAX spectrum of L1-Eu/Tb.



Figure S19. Rheological measurements for L1-Eu/Tb. (a) Dynamic stress sweep at constant frequency for L1-Eu/Tb, (b) dynamic strain sweep at constant frequency for L1-Eu/Tb, and (c) dynamic frequency sweep at constant strain and secondary axis showing the complex viscosity for L1-Eu/Tb.



Figure S20. FTIR spectrum of L'".



Figure S21. ¹H NMR spectrum of L''' in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peaks.



Figure S22. FTIR spectrum of ligand L2.



Figure S23. ¹H NMR spectrum of ligand L2 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peaks.



Figure S24. ¹³C NMR spectrum of ligand L2 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent peak.



Figure S25. FTIR spectrum of L''''.



Figure S26. ¹H NMR spectrum of L''' in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peak.



Figure S27. FTIR spectrum of ligand L3.



Figure S28. ¹H NMR spectrum of ligand L3 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peak.



Figure S29. ¹³C NMR spectrum of ligand L3 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent peak.



Figure S30. Gelation ability of L1, L2 and L3 (15 mM) upon addition of a $Ln(OTf)_3$ salt (Ln = Eu(III), Tb(III)).



Figure S31. Crystal structure of ligand L3, in a view along *a*-axis, showing the packing of different molecules. The lattice DMSO molecule (ball and stick mode where C and O atoms are shown in gold and red, respectively) was found H-bonded within the pincer cavity.



Figure S32. ¹H NMR spectral titration of ligand L3 after the successive addition of up to three equiv. of the Eu³⁺ salt. Spectra were recorded in DMSO- d_6 solvent.



Figure S33. FTIR spectrum of L''''.



Figure S34. ¹H NMR spectrum of L'''' in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peak.



Figure S35. FTIR spectrum of ligand L4.



Figure S36. ¹H NMR spectrum of ligand L4 in DMSO- d_6 solvent where * represents the residual solvent and/or adventitious water peak.



Figure S37. FTIR spectrum of L4-Eu.



Figure S38. FTIR spectrum of L4-Tb.



Figure S39. FESEM images of (a) L4-Eu, and (b) L4-Tb. Elemental mapping analysis of (c-f) L4-Eu, and (g-j) L4-Tb. EDAX spectra for (k) L4-Eu and (l) L4-Tb.



Figure S40. Rheological measurements for L4-Eu and L4-Tb. Dynamic stress sweep at constant frequency for (a) L4-Eu and (b) L4-Tb. Dynamic strain sweep at constant frequency for (c) L4-Eu and (d) L4-Tb. Dynamic frequency sweep at constant strain and secondary axis showing the complex viscosity for (e) L4-Eu and (f) L4-Tb.



Figure S41. Emission spectra of (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb recorded in different solvents.



Figure S42. Bar diagram showing relative quenching in the emission intensity of L1-Eu (red pillars) and L1-Tb (green pillars) in the presence of assorted analytes (50 μ M).



Figure S43. Determination of detection limits for DMMP by (a) **L1-Eu** and (b) **L1-Tb** from the emission spectral titrations.



Figure S44. Determination of binding constants by Benesi-Hildebrand plots for the detection of DMMP by (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb from the emission spectral titrations.



Figure S45. Change in the emission spectra of (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb as a function of time in the presence of DMMP (50 μ M). Both insets, respectively, show the response time of (a) L1-Eu and (b) L1-Tb for the detection of DMMP.



Figure S46. (a) Selectivity of L1-Eu towards DMMP in the presence of other analytes: L1-Eu + analytes (red pillars) and L1-Eu + analytes + DMMP (green pillars). (b) Selectivity of L1-Tb toward DMMP in the presence of other analytes: L1-Tb + analytes (yellow pillars) and L1-Tb + analytes + DMMP (blue pillars) (1: ATP, 2: ADP, 3: AMP, 4: Na₃PO₄, 5: Na₂HPO₄, 6: NaH₂PO₄, 7: H₃PO₄, 8: MG-Simulant, 9: DCP, 10: DECP, 11: CH₃COCl, 12: SOCl₂). All studies were performed in EtOH.



Figure S47. A bar graph displaying the reusability of L1-Eu (red bar) and L1-Tb (green bar) for the sensing of DMMP for five consecutive cycles.



Figure S48. FTIR spectra of L1-Eu (black trace) and DMMP@L1-Eu (red trace).



Figure S49. FTIR spectra of L1-Tb (black trace) and DMMP@L1-Tb (red trace).



Figure S50. Lifetime profile of L1-Eu in the absence and presence of DMMP in EtOH ($\lambda_{ex} = 300 \text{ nm}$).