

Article

# New 8-Hydroxybriaranes from the Gorgonian Coral *Junceella fragilis* (Ellisellidae)

You-Ying Chen <sup>1,2</sup>, Lee-Shing Fang <sup>3,4</sup>, Yu-Hsin Chen <sup>2</sup>, Bo-Rong Peng <sup>2,5,6</sup>, Tung-Pin Su <sup>2,7</sup>, Thanh-Hao Huynh <sup>2,7</sup>, Feng-Yu Lin <sup>2,8</sup>, Chiung-Chin Hu <sup>2</sup>, Nai-Cheng Lin <sup>2</sup>, Zhi-Hong Wen <sup>1</sup> , Jih-Jung Chen <sup>9</sup> , Chieh-Yu Lee <sup>2,7,\*</sup>, Jin-Wei Wang <sup>10,\*</sup> and Ping-Jyun Sung <sup>1,2,7,11,12,\*</sup> 

- <sup>1</sup> Department of Marine Biotechnology and Resources, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung 804, Taiwan; zoeblack0108@gmail.com (Y.-Y.C.); wzh@mail.nsysu.edu.tw (Z.-H.W.)
- <sup>2</sup> National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium, Pingtung 944, Taiwan; kb5634@yahoo.com.tw (Y.-H.C.); pengpojung@gmail.com (B.-R.P.); g3xz84120@yahoo.com.tw (T.-P.S.); haohuynh0108@gmail.com (T.-H.H.); fengyu30658252@gmail.com (F.-Y.L.); smallsmallhu@gmail.com (C.-C.H.); lnc7222@gmail.com (N.-C.L.)
- <sup>3</sup> Center for Environmental Toxin and Emerging-Contaminant Research, Cheng Shiu University, Kaohsiung 833, Taiwan; lsfang@csu.edu.tw
- <sup>4</sup> Super Micro Mass Research and Technology Center, Cheng Shiu University, Kaohsiung 833, Taiwan
- <sup>5</sup> Doctoral Degree Program in Marine Biotechnology, National Sun Yat-sen University, Kaohsiung 804, Taiwan
- <sup>6</sup> Doctoral Degree Program in Marine Biotechnology, Academia Sinica, Taipei 115, Taiwan
- <sup>7</sup> Graduate Institute of Marine Biology, National Dong Hwa University, Pingtung 944, Taiwan
- <sup>8</sup> Department of Applied Chemistry, National Pingtung University, Pingtung 900, Taiwan
- <sup>9</sup> Faculty of Pharmacy, School of Pharmaceutical Sciences, National Yang-Ming University, Taipei 112, Taiwan; chenjj@ym.edu.tw
- <sup>10</sup> Department of Orthopaedics, Kaohsiung Armed Forces General Hospital, Kaohsiung 802, Taiwan
- <sup>11</sup> Chinese Medicine Research and Development Center, China Medical University Hospital, Taichung 404, Taiwan
- <sup>12</sup> Graduate Institute of Natural Products, Kaohsiung Medical University, Kaohsiung 807, Taiwan
- \* Correspondence: 610663007@gms.ndhu.edu.tw (C.-Y.L.); xenoprophet@gmail.com (J.-W.W.); pjsung@nmmba.gov.tw (P.-J.S.); Tel.: +886-8-882-5037 (P.-J.S.); Fax: +886-8-882-5087 (P.-J.S.)

Received: 20 August 2019; Accepted: 10 September 2019; Published: 14 September 2019

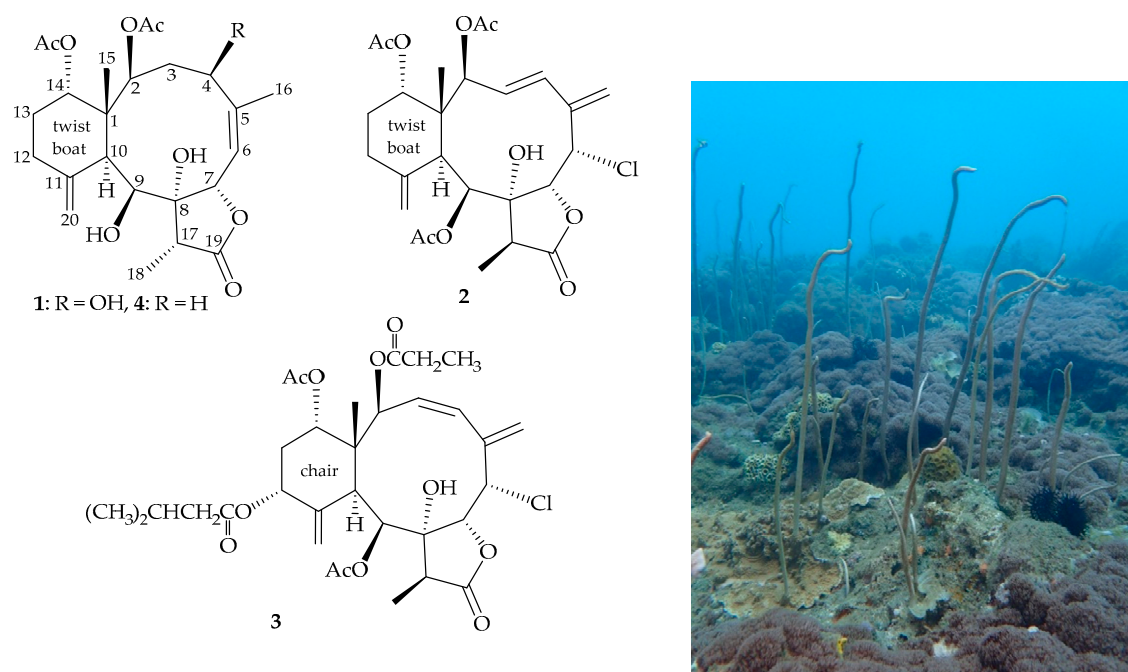


**Abstract:** Three new 8-hydroxybriaranes—fragilides R–T (1–3) were obtained from a sea whip gorgonian coral *Junceella fragilis*. The structures of briaranes 1–3 were elucidated by using spectroscopic methods, including 1D (<sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR), 2D (COSY, HSQC, HMBC, and NOESY experiments) NMR studies, and (+)-HRESIMS. Fragilides S and T (2 and 3) are the only briaranes known to possess 8 $\alpha$ -hydroxy and 17 $\beta$ -methyl groups, respectively. Briarane 2 exerted an inhibition effect on iNOS release from RAW264.7; a macrophage cell line that originated from a mouse monocyte macrophage, stimulated with lipopolysaccharides.

**Keywords:** *Junceella fragilis*; fragilide; briarane; anti-inflammatory; iNOS

## 1. Introduction

Gorgonian corals belonging to the genus *Junceella* (family Ellisellidae) [1–3] have been found to produce marine origin briarane-type diterpenoids in abundance [4]. Our recent research into the chemical constituents and properties of a gorgonian coral, *Junceella fragilis* (Ridley 1884) (Figure 1), which was distributed extensively in the waters of Orchid Island (= Lanyu Island), intersection of Kuroshio current and South China Sea surface current, has resulted in the isolation of three new 8-hydroxybriaranes—fragilides R–T (1–3) (Figure 1). A pro-inflammatory suppression assay was employed to assess the activity of these isolates against the release of inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) from macrophage cells.



*Junceella fragilis*

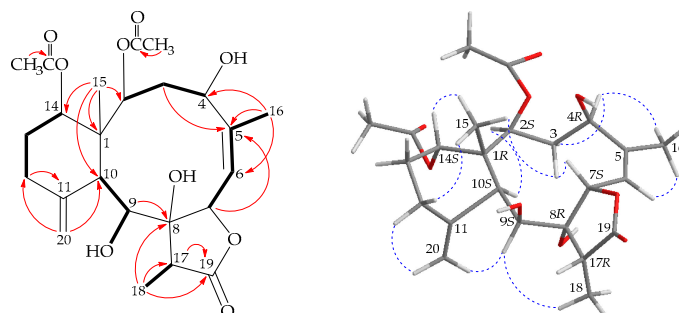
**Figure 1.** Structures of fragilides R–T (1–3), 9-*O*-deacetylumbraculolide A (4), and a picture of the gorgonian coral *Junceella fragilis*.

## 2. Results and Discussion

Fragilide R (1) was isolated as an amorphous powder and displayed a pseudomolecular ion at  $m/z$  489.20971 in the (+)-HRESIMS, which indicated its molecular formula was  $C_{24}H_{34}O_9$  (calcd. for  $C_{24}H_{34}O_9 + Na$ , 489.20950) ( $\Omega = 8$ ). Both the  $^1H$  and  $^{13}C$  NMR data (Tables 1 and 2) indicated two acetates ( $\delta_H$  1.99, 1.94, each  $3H \times s$ ;  $\delta_C$  21.3, 21.0,  $2 \times CH_3$ ;  $\delta_C$  170.8, 170.8,  $2 \times C$ ). Besides the above ester carbonyls, the carbon signal at  $\delta_C$  176.7 (C) was assigned to a  $\gamma$ -lactone ring along with an oxymethine ( $\delta_H$  5.97, 1H, d,  $J = 10.2$  Hz;  $\delta_C$  76.4, CH-7). The spectroscopic data, including 1D and 2D NMR experiments (Figure 2), were similar to those of a known metabolite, 9-*O*-deacetyl-umbraculolide A (4) [5] (Figure 1), except that the hydroxy group at C-4 in 1 was replaced by a proton in 4. It is interesting to note that an allylic coupling was observed between H-6 and H<sub>3</sub>-16 ( $J = 1.2$  Hz) in the COSY spectrum (Figure 2). In the NOESY spectrum (Figure 2), one of the C-3 methylene protons ( $\delta_H$  2.96) exhibited a correlation to H-7 and not with H-2, suggesting the  $\beta$ -orientation of this proton. A correlation from H-4 to H-3 $\alpha$  ( $\delta_H$  1.91) as well as the coupling constants between H-4 and H-3 $\alpha/\beta$  ( $J = 5.4, 12.6$  Hz), suggested that H-4 was  $\alpha$ -oriented according to modeling study. Based on the above findings, the structure, including the relative configuration of stereogenic centers of 1 were assigned as  $1R^*, 2S^*, 4R^*, 7S^*, 8R^*, 9S^*, 10S^*, 14S^*$ , and  $17R^*$ , as those of 4 by correlations observed in a NOESY experiment.

One of the C-20 methylene protons ( $\delta_H$  4.88) showed an NOE correlation to H-9, demonstrating that this olefin proton was H-20b, and the other was assigned as H-20a ( $\delta_H$  4.97). The proton chemical shifts of the briarane derivatives containing an 11-methylidene group were summarized, and the difference between these two olefin protons (H-20a/b) was smaller than 0.2 ppm, whereas the methylidene-containing six-membered rings exhibited a twisted boat conformation [6]. Owing to the chemical shifts of C-20 methylene protons ( $\delta_H$  4.97 and 4.88), the conformation of six-membered ring in 1 was concluded to be twisted boat. In a previous study, the absolute configuration of a known chlorinated briarane, junceellin, was established by a single-crystal X-ray diffraction analysis [7].

As briaranes 1–3 were isolated along with junceellin from the same organism [7], it is reasonable on biogenetic grounds to assume that 1–3 have the same absolute configuration as that of junceellin. Therefore, the configuration of the stereogenic centers of 1 were elucidated as 1*R*,2*S*,4*R*,7*S*,8*R*,9*S*,10*S*,14*S*, and 17*R* (Figure 2), and this compound was found to be the 4β-hydroxy derivative of 4 (Supplementary Materials, Figures S1–S9).



**Figure 2.** The COSY (—) correlations, selective HMBC (↷), and selective protons with key NOESY correlations (⋯) of 1.

Fragilide S (2) had a molecular formula  $C_{26}H_{33}ClO_9$  as deduced by (+)-ESIMS, which showed a pair of peaks at  $m/z$  547/549  $[M + Na]^+:[M + 2 + Na]^+$  (3:1), suggesting a chlorine atom, and further confirmed by (+)-HRESIMS at  $m/z$  547.17055 (calcd. for  $C_{26}H_{33}^{35}ClO_9 + Na$ , 547.17053). The IR spectrum indicated the presence of hydroxy ( $3447\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ),  $\gamma$ -lactone ( $1785\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ), and ester carbonyl ( $1733\text{ cm}^{-1}$ ) groups. The  $^{13}C$  NMR data (Table 2), showed the presence of a disubstituted olefin ( $\delta_C$  135.4, CH-4; 129.7, CH-3) and two methyldene groups ( $\delta_C$  142.6, C-5; 118.8, CH<sub>2</sub>-16; 149.3, C-11; 111.4, CH<sub>2</sub>-20). Moreover, four carbonyl resonances at  $\delta_C$  174.1, 170.4, 170.1, and 169.2 in the  $^{13}C$  spectrum confirmed the presence of a  $\gamma$ -lactone and three other ester groups. In the  $^1H$  NMR spectrum (Table 1), three acetate methyls ( $\delta_H$  2.09, 2.04, 2.01, each 3H  $\times$  s) were observed. Moreover, a methyl singlet, a methyl doublet, two aliphatic methines, two pair of aliphatic methylenes, four oxymethines, a chlorinated methine, and a hydroxy proton were observed (Table 1).

**Table 1.**  $^1H$  NMR data for briaranes 1–3.

Position	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>a</sup>
2	4.83 d (7.2) <sup>c</sup>	5.47 d (9.5)	6.33 d (10.8)
3 $\alpha/\beta$	1.91 ddd (15.6, 7.2, 5.4); 2.96 dd (15.6, 12.6)	5.67 dd (16.0, 9.5)	5.78 dd (12.0, 10.8)
4	4.18 dd (12.6, 5.4)	6.72 d (16.0)	5.96 d (12.0)
6	5.64 d (10.2, 1.2)	5.20 s	5.12 br s
7	5.97 d (10.2)	4.97 br s	4.88 d (4.2)
9	4.22 dd (5.4, 3.6)	5.53 s	5.59 s
10	3.20 d (3.6)	3.47 s	4.08 s
12 $\alpha/\beta$	2.22 m	2.24 m; 2.38 m	5.37 dd (5.4, 3.0)
13 $\alpha/\beta$	1.96 m; 1.81 m	1.84 m; 1.74 m	2.06 m
14	4.74 dd (4.2, 1.8)	4.84 dd (2.5, 2.0)	4.94 dd (4.2, 3.0)
15	1.25 s	1.18 s	1.16 s
16a/b	2.09 d (1.2)	5.49 s; 5.32 s	5.66 s; 5.48 s
17	3.11 q (7.2)	2.93 q (7.5)	2.90 q (7.2)
18	1.14 d (7.2)	1.18 d (7.5)	1.22 d (7.2)
20a/b	4.97 s; 4.88 s	4.93 s; 4.76 s	5.33 s; 4.72 s
OH-8	-	3.11 s	2.70 s
OH-9	2.09 d (5.4)	-	-
Acetoxy groups	1.94 s 1.99 s	2.01 s 2.04 s 2.09 s	2.00 s 2.16 s
Propionoxy group	-	-	1.08 t (7.2) 2.26 m
Isovaleroxy group	-	-	0.96 d (6.6) 0.98 d (6.6) 2.10 m 2.15 m

<sup>a</sup> Spectra measured at 600 MHz in  $CDCl_3$ . <sup>b</sup> Spectra measured at 500 MHz in  $CDCl_3$ . <sup>c</sup>  $J$  values (in Hz) in parentheses.

**Table 2.**  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR data for briaranes 1–3.

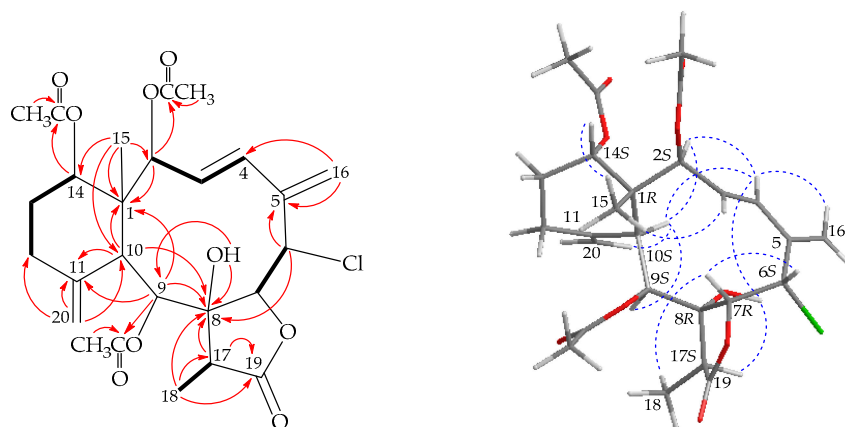
Position	1 <sup>a</sup>	2 <sup>b</sup>	3 <sup>a</sup>
1	48.2, C <sup>c</sup>	47.5, C	47.7, C
2	73.3, CH	76.9, CH	70.4, CH
3	39.7, CH <sub>2</sub>	129.7, CH	130.4, CH
4	71.4, CH	135.4, CH	128.7, CH
5	146.9, C	142.6, C <sup>d</sup>	137.5, C
6	123.1, CH	66.0, CH <sup>d</sup>	64.5, CH
7	76.4, CH	79.5, CH	76.9, CH
8	83.4, C	81.8, C	80.3, C
9	74.1, CH	76.3, CH	74.8, CH
10	43.0, CH	41.8, CH	37.0, CH
11	152.3, C	149.3, C	146.3, C
12	29.0, CH <sub>2</sub>	29.1, CH <sub>2</sub>	74.3, CH
13	27.8, CH <sub>2</sub>	26.0, CH <sub>2</sub>	31.4, CH <sub>2</sub>
14	74.2, CH	74.4, CH	73.0, CH
15	15.6, CH <sub>3</sub>	16.4, CH <sub>3</sub>	14.7, CH <sub>3</sub>
16	26.2, CH <sub>3</sub>	118.8, CH <sub>2</sub> <sup>d</sup>	116.4, CH <sub>2</sub>
17	43.8, CH	49.3, CH	50.7, CH
18	6.6, CH <sub>3</sub>	9.1, CH <sub>3</sub>	8.7, CH <sub>3</sub>
19	176.7, C	174.1, C <sup>d</sup>	173.9, C
20	111.3, CH <sub>2</sub>	111.4, CH <sub>2</sub>	115.2, CH <sub>2</sub>
Acetoxy groups	21.0, CH <sub>3</sub>	21.2, CH <sub>3</sub>	20.7, CH <sub>3</sub>
	170.8, C	170.4, C	169.7, C
	21.3, CH <sub>3</sub>	21.2, CH <sub>3</sub>	21.3, CH <sub>3</sub>
	170.8, C	170.1, C	169.6, C
		21.2, CH <sub>3</sub>	
		169.2, C	
Propionoxy group	-	-	8.8, CH <sub>3</sub>
			27.8, CH <sub>2</sub>
			172.0, C
Isovaleroxy group	-	-	22.6, CH <sub>3</sub>
			22.8, CH <sub>3</sub>
			25.0, CH
			43.5, CH <sub>2</sub>
			172.6, C

<sup>a</sup> Spectra measured at 150 MHz in CDCl<sub>3</sub>. <sup>b</sup> Spectra measured at 125 MHz in CDCl<sub>3</sub>. <sup>c</sup> Multiplicity deduced by DEPT and HSQC spectra. <sup>d</sup> Chemical shifts were assigned by HSQC or HMBC experiments.

Analyses of 2D NMR data established a tricyclic nucleus. This assignment was evident from the spin systems from H-2 to H-3, H-3 to H-4, H-6 to H-7, H-9 to H-10, H<sub>2</sub>-12 to H<sub>2</sub>-13, H<sub>2</sub>-13 to H-14, and H-17 to H<sub>3</sub>-18 (Figure 3), while the HMBC between protons and quaternary carbons such as H-2, H-9, H-10, H<sub>3</sub>-15/C-1; H-6, H-16a/C-5; H-6, H-9, H-10, H-17, H<sub>3</sub>-18, OH-8/C-8; H-9, H-10, H-20b/C-11; and H-17, H<sub>3</sub>-18/C-19, revealed the carbon skeleton (Figure 3). The methylenedioxy groups at C-5 and C-11 were confirmed by the HMBC between H<sub>2</sub>-16 to C-4 and C-5, H<sub>2</sub>-20 to C-10, C-11, and C-12, respectively. The C-15 methyl group at C-1 was confirmed by the HMBC between H<sub>3</sub>-15 to C-1, C-2, C-10, and C-14. HMBC spectrum also revealed that the carbon signal at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  170.4, 170.1, and 169.2 correlated with the signals of the methyl protons at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  2.04, 2.01, and 2.09, respectively, and were assigned as the carbon atom of acetate carbonyl groups. The acetates at C-2, C-9, and C-14 were confirmed from the connectivity between H-2 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.47), H-9 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.53), and H-14 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.84) to the carbonyl carbons of the acetate groups at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  170.1, 169.2, and 170.4, respectively. The hydroxy group at C-8 was deduced from the HMBC of a hydroxy proton ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  3.11) to C-8 and C-9.

In the NOESY spectrum of **2** (Figure 3), one of the C-16 methylene protons ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.49) showed a correlation to H-4, demonstrating that this olefinic proton was H-16a and the other was assigned as H-16b ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.32). Moreover, one of the C-20 methylene protons ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.76) correlated to H-10, indicating that this proton was H-20b and the other was assigned as H-20a. According to a summary for the chemical shifts of 11-methylenedioxy groups, the configuration of six-membered ring was in a twisted boat conformation [6]. The *E*-geometry of C-3/4 double bond was determined by a large proton coupling constant ( $J = 16.0$  Hz) between H-3 and H-4. Correlations between H-10 with H-2 and H-9, while no correlation was seen with Me-15, suggested that H-2, H-9, and H-10 were all in  $\alpha$ -oriented. Meanwhile, a correlation of Me-15 with H-14 indicated that H-14 was  $\beta$ -oriented. Furthermore, OH-8 showed correlations with H-4 and H-17, indicating that the hydroxy group at C-8 and proton at C-17 were

$\alpha$ -oriented. In addition, H-7 exhibited correlations with H-6 and H<sub>3</sub>-18 but not with OH-8, suggesting that H-7 was  $\beta$ -oriented. Based on above findings, the configuration of stereogenic carbons was determined as 1*R*,2*S*,6*S*,7*R*,8*R*,9*S*,10*S*,14*S* and 17*S* (see Figures S10–S18 in the Supplementary Materials).



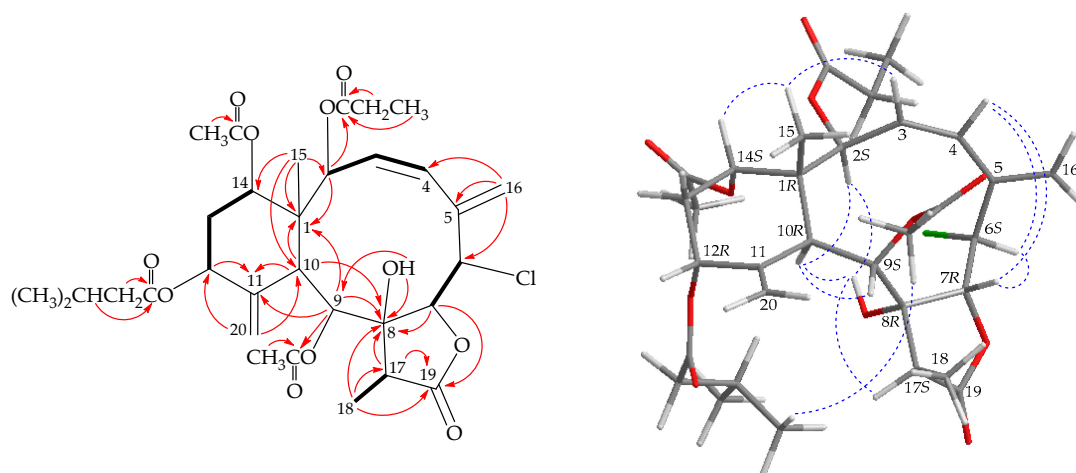
**Figure 3.** The COSY (—) correlations, selective HMBC (↷), and selective protons with key NOESY correlations (⋯) of **2**.

Compound **3** (fragilide T) has a molecular formula C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>43</sub>ClO<sub>11</sub> according to its (+)-HRESIMS at *m/z* 661.23866 (calcd. for C<sub>32</sub>H<sub>43</sub><sup>35</sup>ClO<sub>11</sub> + Na, 661.23861). Both the <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C NMR (Tables 1 and 2) indicated two acetates ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  2.16, 2.00, each 3H  $\times$  s;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  21.3, 20.7, 2  $\times$  acetate methyls; 169.7, 169.6, 2  $\times$  acetate carbonyls), a propionate ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.08, 3H, t,  $J = 7.2$  Hz; 2.26, 2H, m;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  8.8, CH<sub>3</sub>; 27.8, CH<sub>2</sub>; 172.0, propionate carbonyl), and an isovalerate ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  0.96, 0.98, each 3H, d,  $J = 6.6$  Hz; 2.10, 1H, m; 2.15, 2H, m;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  22.6, 22.8, 2  $\times$  CH<sub>3</sub>; 25.0, CH; 43.5, CH<sub>2</sub>; 172.6, isovalerate carbonyl). Besides the above ester carbonyls, the carbon signal at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  173.9 was assigned to a  $\gamma$ -lactone ring along with an oxymethine ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.88, 1H, d,  $J = 4.2$  Hz;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  76.9, CH-7). Two pairs of proton signals at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.66 and 5.48, and 5.33 and 4.72, correlating to the methylenes signals at  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  116.4 and 115.2 respectively, were ascribed to two methylenes groups. The tertiary methyl singlet at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.16 (3H, s) was assigned to H<sub>3</sub>-15 while the secondary methyl doublet at  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  1.22 (3H, d,  $J = 7.2$  Hz) was assigned to H<sub>3</sub>-18. In the HMBC spectrum (Figure 4), the propionoxy group at C-2 was confirmed by the connectivity between H-2 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  6.33) with the carbonyl carbon ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  172.0) of propionoxy group. The HMBC also revealed that an acetoxy group at C-9 (Figure 4) and the remaining isovaleroxy and acetoxy groups should be positioned at C-12 or C-14, oxygen-bearing methines, by analysis of characteristic NMR signals ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.37, 1H, dd,  $J = 5.4, 3.0$  Hz;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  74.3, CH-12;  $\delta_{\text{H}}$  4.94, 1H, dd,  $J = 4.2, 3.0$  Hz;  $\delta_{\text{C}}$  73.0, CH-14). However, due to no HMBC detected between H-12 and H-14 and ester carbonyl, the positions of the isovalerate and remaining acetoxy group cannot be determined by HMBC.

Based on previous studies, while the difference between the two olefin protons (H-20a/b) was bigger than 0.3 ppm, the six-membered rings showed a chair conformation [6]. Owing to the chemical shifts of the C-20 methylene protons ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.33 and 4.72 ppm), the configuration of the methylenes-containing six-membered ring was concluded to exist in a chair conformation. In the NOESY experiment (Figure 4), H-10 correlated to H-2, H-9, and OH-8, but not to H<sub>3</sub>-15, indicating that these protons are located on the same face and can be assigned as  $\alpha$ -protons, as C-15 methyl group is a  $\beta$ -substituent at C-1. H-14 was found to exhibit a correlation with H<sub>3</sub>-15, showing that this proton is positioned on the equatorial direction and has a  $\beta$ -orientation at C-14. The *cis* geometry of the C-3/4 double bond was indicated by a 12.0 Hz coupling constant between H-3 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.78) and H-4 ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.96). Moreover, a correlation between H-3 and H<sub>3</sub>-15, and there are correlations which were observed among H-4, H-6, and H-7, further supported the *Z*-form of C-3/4 double bond and indicated that H-6 and H-7 were on the  $\beta$  face. A correlation between OH-8 and H-17 showed that Me-18 at C-17 was  $\beta$ -oriented. The C-12 oxymethine proton ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  5.37) was found to couple C-13 methylene protons with coupling constants



$J = 5.4, 3.0$  Hz, showing that this proton should be positioned on the equatorial direction and has a  $\beta$ -orientation. Fortunately, a correlation between the methyl protons of acetoxy group at C-9 and methyl protons of isovaleroxy group, indicated that the isovaleroxy group should be located at C-12 by modeling analysis. Thus, based on the above findings, the stereogenic centers were assigned as 1*R*,2*S*,6*S*,7*R*,8*R*,9*S*,10*R*,12*R*,14*S*, and 17*S* (see Figures S19–S27 in the Supplementary Materials).



**Figure 4.** The COSY (—) correlations, selective HMBC (↷), and selective protons with key NOESY correlations (⋯) of **3**.

Using an *in vitro* pro-inflammatory suppression assay, the effects of briaranes **1–3** on the release of inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) and cyclooxygenase-2 (COX-2) protein from lipopolysaccharides (LPS)-stimulated RAW264.7 macrophage cells were assessed. The results of pro-inflammatory suppression assay showed that briarane **2** at 10  $\mu$ M suppressed the release of iNOS to  $61.21 \pm 9.61\%$  as compared with results of the cells stimulated with LPS only (Table 3).

**Table 3.** Effects of briaranes **1–3** on LPS-induced pro-inflammatory iNOS and COX-2 protein expression in macrophages.

Compound	iNOS	COX-2	$\beta$ -Actin	<i>n</i>
	Expression (% of LPS)			
Negative Control	$1.80 \pm 0.21$	$1.04 \pm 0.35$	$110.02 \pm 5.23$	2
LPS	$100.01 \pm 5.06$	$100.06 \pm 0.43$	$100.07 \pm 8.4$	4
<b>1</b>	$104.11 \pm 16.63$	$100.51 \pm 6.11$	$105.70 \pm 7.05$	4
<b>2</b>	$61.21 \pm 9.61$	$100.01 \pm 5.11$	$99.29 \pm 11.29$	3
<b>3</b>	$100.91 \pm 24.08$	$96.36 \pm 21.31$	$115.29 \pm 3.4$	4
Dexamethasone	$5.54 \pm 1.72$	$8.15 \pm 5.13$	$105.21 \pm 15.57$	4

Data were normalized to those of cells treated with LPS alone, and cells treated with dexamethasone were used as a positive control. Data are expressed as the mean  $\pm$  SEM ( $n = 2–4$ ).

### 3. Materials and Methods

#### 3.1. General Experimental Procedures

NMR spectra were recorded on a 600 MHz Jeol NMR (model ECZ600R, Tokyo, Japan) or on 500 MHz Varian NMR (model Unity Inova-500, Palo Alto, CA, USA) spectrometers using the residual  $\text{CHCl}_3$  signal ( $\delta_{\text{H}}$  7.26 ppm) and  $\text{CDCl}_3$  ( $\delta_{\text{C}}$  77.1 ppm) as internal references for  $^1\text{H}$  and  $^{13}\text{C}$  NMR, respectively. ESIMS and HRESIMS were obtained from the Bruker mass spectrometer with 7 Tesla magnets (model: Solarix FTMS system, Bremen, Germany). Column chromatography, high-performance liquid chromatography (HPLC), IR spectra, and optical rotation were performed according to our earlier research [7].

### 3.2. Animal Material

Specimens of *J. fragilis* used for this study were collected in June 2017 by self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) divers off the coast of Orchid Island, Taiwan. The samples were stored in a  $-20\text{ }^{\circ}\text{C}$  freezer until extraction. A voucher specimen was deposited in the NMMBA (voucher no.: NMMBA-TW-GC-2017-08). Identification of the species of this organism was performed by comparison as described in previous studies [1–3].

### 3.3. Extraction and Isolation

Sliced bodies (wet weight = 423 g) of the coral specimen were prepared and extracted with a 1:1 mixture of methanol (MeOH) and dichloromethane ( $\text{CH}_2\text{Cl}_2$ ) to give 5.53 g of crude extract, which was partitioned between ethyl acetate (EtOAc) and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$ . The EtOAc extract (2.50 g) was then applied to a silica gel column and eluted with gradients of *n*-hexane/acetone (stepwise from 50:1 to 1:2; volume ratio) to furnish 8 fractions (fractions: A–H). Fraction F was purified by normal-phase HPLC (NP-HPLC) using a mixture of *n*-hexane and EtOAc (3.5:1 of volume ratio) as solvent to obtain 14 subfractions (fractions: F1–F14). Fraction F10 was repurified by reverse-phase HPLC (RP-HPLC) using a mixture of MeOH and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (with volume:volume = 80:20; at a flow rate = 4.0 mL/min) to yield **2** (0.2 mg) and **3** (0.5 mg). Fraction G was separated by NP-HPLC using a mixture of *n*-hexane/EtOAc (1:1; volume ratio) to yield 9 fractions (fractions: G1–G9). Fraction G2 was purified by RP-HPLC using a mixture of MeOH and  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  (with volume:volume = 65:35; at a flow rate = 4.0 mL/min) to afford **1** (0.2 mg).

Fragilide R (**1**): Amorphous powder;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{28} -288$  (*c* 0.07,  $\text{CHCl}_3$ ); IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3391, 1779, 1736  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  (600 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) and  $^{13}\text{C}$  (150 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; ESIMS: *m/z* 489  $[\text{M} + \text{Na}]^+$ ; HRESIMS: *m/z* 489.20971 (calcd. for  $\text{C}_{24}\text{H}_{34}\text{O}_9 + \text{Na}$ , 489.20950).

Fragilide S (**2**): Amorphous powder;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{28} +45$  (*c* 0.16,  $\text{CHCl}_3$ ); IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  3447, 1785, 1733  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  (500 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) and  $^{13}\text{C}$  (125 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; ESIMS: *m/z* 547  $[\text{M} + \text{Na}]^+$ , 549  $[\text{M} + 2 + \text{Na}]^+$ ; HRESIMS: *m/z* 547.17055 (calcd. for  $\text{C}_{26}\text{H}_{33}^{35}\text{ClO}_9 + \text{Na}$ , 547.17053).

Fragilide T (**3**): Amorphous powder;  $[\alpha]_{\text{D}}^{20} -168$  (*c* 0.17,  $\text{CHCl}_3$ ); IR (ATR)  $\nu_{\text{max}}$  1788, 1737  $\text{cm}^{-1}$ ;  $^1\text{H}$  (600 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ), and  $^{13}\text{C}$  (150 MHz,  $\text{CDCl}_3$ ) NMR data, see Tables 1 and 2; ESIMS: *m/z* 661  $[\text{M} + \text{Na}]^+$ , 663  $[\text{M} + 2 + \text{Na}]^+$ ; HRESIMS: *m/z* 661.23866 (calcd. for  $\text{C}_{32}\text{H}_{43}^{35}\text{ClO}_{11} + \text{Na}$ , 661.23861).

### 3.4. In Vitro Anti-inflammatory Assay

The pro-inflammatory suppression assay was employed to assess the activities of the isolated compounds **1–3** against the release of iNOS and COX-2 from macrophage cells as the literature reported [8–11].

## 4. Conclusions

*J. fragilis* has been demonstrated to have a wide structural diversity of briarane-type diterpenoids that possess various pharmacological properties, particularly in anti-inflammatory activity [12,13]. In our continued study of *J. fragilis*, three previously unreported fragilides R–T (**1–3**) were isolated. In the previous studies [14], all the Me-18 attached at C-17 was *cis* to the hydroxy group at C-8, and most of these two groups were  $\alpha$ -oriented in briarane derivatives, respectively. Fragilides S and T (**2** and **3**) were proved to be the only two briaranes known to possess hydroxy group at C-8 $\alpha$  and methyl group at C-17 $\beta$ , respectively. In the present study, the anti-inflammatory activity of **1–3** was assessed using inhibition of pro-inflammatory iNOS and COX-2 release from macrophages. The results indicated that fragilide S (**2**) showed the most potent suppressive effect on iNOS release.

**Supplementary Materials:** The Supplementary Materials are available online at <http://www.mdpi.com/1660-3397/17/9/534/s1>. Figure S1: ESIMS spectrum of compound 1, Figure S2: HRESIMS spectrum of compound 1, Figure S3: IR spectrum of compound 1, Figure S4: <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum (600 MHz) of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S5: <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (150 MHz) of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S6: HSQC spectrum of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S7: <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>1</sup>H COSY spectrum of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S8: HMBC spectrum of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S9: NOESY spectrum of compound 1 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S10: ESIMS spectrum of compound 2, Figure S11: HRESIMS spectrum of compound 2, Figure S12: IR spectrum of compound 2, Figure S13: <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum (600 MHz) of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S14: <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (150 MHz) of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S15: HSQC spectrum of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S16: <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>1</sup>H COSY spectrum of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S17: HMBC spectrum of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S18: NOESY spectrum of compound 2 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S19: ESIMS spectrum of compound 3, Figure S20: HRESIMS spectrum of compound 3, Figure S21: IR spectrum of compound 3, Figure S22: <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum (600 MHz) of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S23: <sup>13</sup>C NMR spectrum (150 MHz) of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S24: HSQC spectrum of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S25: <sup>1</sup>H-<sup>1</sup>H COSY spectrum of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S26: MBC spectrum of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>, Figure S27: NOESY spectrum of compound 3 in CDCl<sub>3</sub>.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, L.-S.F. and Z.-H.W.; investigation, Y.-Y.C., Y.-H.C., B.-R.P., T.-P.S., T.-H.H.; N.-C.L., and J.-J.C.; data curation, F.-Y.L.; writing-original draft preparation, C.-Y.L.; writing-review and editing, J.-W.W. and P.-J.S.; project administration, C.-C.H.

**Funding:** This research was supported by grants from the National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium, the National Dong Hwa University, and the Ministry of Science and Technology, Taiwan (Grant Nos: MOST 104-2320-B-291-001-MY3 and 107-2320-B-291-001-MY3) awarded to Ping-Jyun Sung.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

## References

1. Bayer, F.M. Key to the genera of octocorallia exclusive of Pennatulacea (Coelenterata: Anthozoa), with diagnoses of new taxa. *Proc. Biol. Soc. Wash.* **1981**, *94*, 902–947.
2. Bayer, F.M.; Grasshoff, M. The genus group taxa of the family Ellisellidae, with clarification of the genera established by J.E. Gray (Cnidaria: Octocorallia). *Senckenb. Biol.* **1994**, *74*, 21–45.
3. Chen, C.C.; Chang, K.H. Gorgonacea (Coelenterata: Anthozoa: Octocorallia) of Southern Taiwan. *Bull. Inst. Zool. Acad. Sin.* **1991**, *30*, 149–181.
4. Chung, H.M.; Wang, Y.C.; Tseng, C.C.; Chen, N.F.; Wen, Z.H.; Fang, L.S.; Hwang, T.L.; Wu, Y.C.; Sung, P.J. Natural product chemistry of gorgonian corals of genus *Junceella*—Part III. *Mar. Drugs* **2018**, *16*, 339. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
5. Sung, P.J.; Fan, T.Y. 9-O-Deacetylumbraculolide A, a new diterpenoid from the gorgonian *Junceella fragilis*. *Heterocycles* **2003**, *60*, 1199–1202. [[CrossRef](#)]
6. Sung, P.J.; Wang, S.H.; Chiang, M.Y.; Su, Y.D.; Chang, Y.C.; Hu, W.P.; Tai, C.Y.; Liu, C.Y. Discovery of new chlorinated briaranes from *Junceella fragilis*. *Bull. Chem. Soc. Jpn.* **2009**, *82*, 1426–1432. [[CrossRef](#)]
7. Lin, C.C.; Chen, W.F.; Lee, G.H.; Wen, Z.H.; Fang, L.S.; Kuo, Y.H.; Lee, C.Y.; Sung, P.J. Fragilides M–O, new triacetoxylbriaranes from the gorgonian coral *Junceella fragilis* (Ellisellidae). *Heterocycles* **2019**, *98*, 984–993.
8. Jean, Y.H.; Chen, W.F.; Sung, C.S.; Duh, C.Y.; Huang, S.Y.; Lin, C.S.; Tai, M.H.; Tzeng, S.F.; Wen, Z.H. Capnellene, a natural marine compound derived from soft coral, attenuates chronic constriction injury-induced neuropathic in rats. *Br. J. Pharmacol.* **2009**, *158*, 713–725. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
9. Jean, Y.H.; Chen, W.F.; Duh, C.Y.; Huang, S.Y.; Hsu, C.H.; Lin, C.S.; Sung, C.S.; Chen, I.M.; Wen, Z.H. Inducible nitric oxide synthase and cyclooxygenase-2 participate in anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects of the natural marine compound lemnalol from Formosan soft coral *Lemnalia cervicorni*. *Eur. J. Pharmacol.* **2008**, *578*, 323–331. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
10. Chen, L.C.; Lin, Y.Y.; Jean, Y.H.; Lu, Y.; Chen, W.F.; Yang, S.N.; Wang, H.M.D.; Jang, I.Y.; Chen, I.M.; Su, J.H.; et al. Anti-inflammatory and analgesic effects of the marine-derived compound comaparvin isolated from the crinoid *Comanthus bennetti*. *Molecules* **2014**, *19*, 14667–14686. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
11. Oliveira, T.; Figueiredo, C.A.; Brito, C.; Stavroullakis, A.; Prakki, A.; da Silva Velozo, E.; Nogueira-Filho, G. Effect of *Allium cepa* L. on lipopolysaccharide-stimulated osteoclast precursor cell viability, count, and morphology using 4',6-diamidino-2-phenylindole-staining. *Int. J. Cell Biol.* **2014**, 535789. [[CrossRef](#)]



12. Cheng, W.; Li, X.; Yin, F.; van Ofwegen, L.; Lin, W. Halogenated briarane diterpenes with acetyl migration from the gorgonian coral *Junceella fragilis*. *Chem. Biodiver.* **2017**, *14*, e1700053. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
13. Cheng, W.; Ji, M.; Li, X.; Ren, J.; Yin, F.; van Ofwegen, L.; Yu, S.; Chen, X.; Lin, W. Fragilolides A–Q, norditerpenoid and briarane diterpenoids from the gorgonian coral *Junceella fragilis*. *Tetrahedron* **2017**, *73*, 2518–2528. [[CrossRef](#)]
14. Su, Y.D.; Su, J.H.; Hwang, T.L.; Wen, Z.H.; Sheu, J.H.; Wu, Y.C.; Sung, P.J. Briarane diterpenoids isolated from octocorals between 2014 and 2016. *Mar. Drugs* **2017**, *15*, 44. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]



© 2019 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).