

# Propylimidazole Functionalized Coumarin Derivative as Dual Responsive Fluorescent Chemoprobe for Picric Acid and Fe<sup>3+</sup> Recognition: DFT and Natural Spring Water Applications

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## Research Article

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# Abstract

A propylimidazole functionalized coumarin derivative (**IPC**) was fabricated for the first time and applied as a dual responsive fluorescent chemoprobe for sensitive and selective recognitions of picric acid (PA) and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . Strong fluorescence quenching phenomena of the **IPC** were observed in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) medium ( $\lambda_{\text{em}}=408$  nm) upon the additions of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  or PA. The fabricated dual responsive **IPC** offered good selectivity and sensitivity with the low limit of detection values (0.92  $\mu\text{M}$  for PA and 0.22  $\mu\text{M}$  for  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) lower than the acceptable amounts of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PA by the international official authorities. The interaction phenomena of **IPC** with PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  based on the findings of a range of experiments were considered and DFT computations were done to verify their recognition mechanisms. The sensing phenomena of **IPC** towards PA (1:1) and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  (3:1) were confirmed by the MALDI TOF-MS, FT-IR,  $^1\text{H}$ -NMR titration and Job's methods. Furthermore, the compound **IPC** was effectively applied as a fluorescent sensor for  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and PA detection in real natural spring water samples.

## 1. Introduction

Fluorescent sensor technology has attracted extensive interestedness of researchers for trace analyte detection in recent years due to their advantages; such as operational/instrumental simplicity, portability, cost efficiency, excellent sensitivity/selectivity, ease of visual detection and fast signal processing [1–3]. Fluorescent organic substances have been extensively utilized for the design of fluorescent sensors/probes to recognize a wide range of environmentally and biologically important analyte like heavy metal ions/cations, anions, thiols, amino acids and nitro aromatic compounds [4]. Out of different nitro aromatic compounds, picric acid (PA; 2,4,6-trinitrophenol, TNP) is commonly utilized in blasting, manufacturing and chemical industries due to its better-quality explosiveness [5–8]. PA is known as a more influential secondary explosive substance than its structural related compounds like *p*-dinitrobenzene (*p*-DNB), 2,4-dinitrotoluene (DNT) and trinitrotoluene (TNT) and is also defined as a threat to public security and human health. Due to its extremely explosive nature, it could easily be employed by terrorists for illegal activities [9]. Moreover, it could induce fatal diseases like anemia, cancer, faintness, acute scratchiness and allergic reactions of the skin, eye irritation and damage to the functions of kidney and liver and does not degrade easily in nature [1, 10, 11]. On the other hand, highly sensitive and selective recognitions of heavy metal ions in trace level with fluorescent organic compounds have been great interest because the fact that they have pivotal roles in various environmental and biological processes. For instance,  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  has vital roles in many living systems like electron transfer, oxygen uptake and transportation. Its superabundance (*hyperferremia*) in the body would injure bio-systems and induces various failures of limbs such as the heart, liver and kidney; as a result of producing reactive oxygen species. In the meantime, its absence (*hypoferremia*) could result into to a number of critical diseases such as diabetes, insomnia, anemia diseases, and it induces iron homeostasis that is an important matter for the progression of Parkinson's, Huntington's and Alzheimer's diseases [12–15]. Thus; there is a great need to develop new analytical methodologies for the selective and sensitive recognition of PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ .

To date, several analytical methods have been developed for the recognition of PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ , for instance, inductively coupled plasma–optical emission spectrometry (IPC–OES), ion chromatography (IC), atomic absorption spectroscopy (AAS), high–pressure liquid chromatography (HPLC), etc. These methods have some drawbacks, such as they have need of sophisticated instruments, specialized personnel, laborious sample pre–treatment procedures and usage of costly chemical reagents. To keep away from these drawbacks, fluorescent sensing systems have been recently developed due to their superior advantages mentioned above [7, 16–18]. However, the literatures based upon to fabricate dual responsive fluorescent chemoprobes for the recognition of both PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  with high selectivity and sensitivity, are still rare [10, 19–21]. Therefore, the need is great for more fluorescent chemoprobes able to detect the PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in real–time and reliably.

Herein, a new propylimidazole functionalized coumarin compound, N–(3–(1H–imidazol–1–yl)propyl)–2–oxo–2H–chromene–3–carboxamide (**IPC**) was prepared and utilized as a dual responsive fluorescent chemoprobe for the detection of PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . The optical properties and responses of **IPC** towards PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) media were determined. DFT computations were done to confirm the electronic and geometrical structural characteristics of **IPC** and its complexes. Moreover, **IPC** was used for the sensitive detection of PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  in real natural spring water samples.

## 2. Materials And Methods

### 2.1. Chemicals and instrumentations

All chemical reagents and solvents were bought from commercial suppliers (*Sigma Aldrich, Thermo Fisher Scientific and VWR International Chemicals*) and used directly. Merck Milli–Q®7003/05/10/15 water purification machine in our laboratory was used to obtain ultra high–quality water, 18.2  $\Omega$ .cm (Darmstadt, Germany). Nitro aromatic explosives [*4–Nitrobenzoyl chloride (NBC), 3,5–Dinitrobenzoic acid (DNBA), 4–Bromo–3–nitrobenzoic acid (BNBA), 2,4–Dinitrotoluene (DNT), 1–Chloro–2,4–dinitrobenzene (CDNB), 2,5–Dibromonitrobenzene (DBNB), Nitrobenzene (NB) and 2,4,6–trinitrophenol (PA, picric acid)*] and perchloride cation salts ( $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Ag}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) were used under this study.

$^1\text{H}$ –NMR spectra were gained on a Bruker–DPX 600 MHz (Massachusetts CA, USA) NMR spectrometers. Infrared spectra were recorded on a Spectrum–100 spectrometer with ATR accessory (Perkin Elmer Inc., MA, Wellesley, USA). Mass data were acquired on a Bruker Microflex™ LT MALDI TOF–MS system (Massachusetts, CA, USA). Fluorescence studies were recorded on an Agilent Technologies Cary Eclipse fluorescence spectrometry (Santa Clara, California, USA). pH measurements were performed by using a benchtop pH–meter (Apera Instruments, Columbus, USA).

### 2.2. Synthesis protocol of IPC

Briefly, the compound **A** was synthesized according to the previous literature [22]. Then, the compound **A** (107 mg, 0.517 mmol) was added to a solution of 1-(3-aminopropyl)imidazole (64.61 mg, 0.517 mmol) in acetonitrile (MeCN, 10.0 mL). The reaction mixture was stirred at rt for 2h, and then the precipitated was occurred. The obtained product was filtered by washing several times with MeCN (**Scheme S1**). Yield: 30 %; FT-IR (ATR\*solid) ( $\nu, \text{cm}^{-1}$ ): 3139, 3026, 2981 and 1724;  $^1\text{H NMR}$  (DMSO- $d_6$ , 600 MHz):  $\delta(\text{ppm})$  8.73 (s, 1H), 8.66 (s, 1H), 8.58 (s, 2H), 7.90 (d, 1H), 7.71 (t, 2H), 7.58 (s, 1H), 7.47 (s, 1H), 4.17 (t, 2H), 2.74 (t, 2H), 2.02 (m, 2H); Calculated MALDI TOF-MS:  $\text{C}_{16}\text{H}_{15}\text{N}_3\text{O}_3$ : 297.11, Found MALDI TOF-MS: 298.526.

## 2.3. Fluorescence studies of IPC

For the fluorescence sensing studies,  $1 \times 10^{-2}$  M stock solution of the chemoprobe **IPC** was prepared and then it was diluted to 50  $\mu\text{M}$  in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) media. The stock solutions of nitro aromatic explosives (*NBC*, *DNBA*, *BNBA*, *DNT*, *CDNB*, *DBNB*, *NB* and *PA*) and metal ions ( $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Ag}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) were prepared as  $1 \times 10^{-2}$  M. The spectra of *PA* and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  were gathered from the emission region of 340–800 nm ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}} = 330 \text{ nm}$ ,  $\lambda_{\text{em}} = 408 \text{ nm}$ , slit widths 10.0 and 20.0 nm). Titration plots were constructed by plotting the emission intensities at 408 nm. For the selectivity studies, the same equivalents of 7 kinds of nitro aromatic explosives (50.0 eqv.) and 8 kinds of metal ions (50.0 eqv.) were employed into the chemoprobe **IPC** solution. All the fluorescence measurements were performed at least three times.

## 2.4. Computational studies

The molecular structures and HOMO/LUMO levels of the **IPC** and its complexes (**IPC-PA** and **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>**) were gained with the gas phase, by using DFT computations through the employ of Gaussian-09 [*B3LYP/LANL2DZ* (for *PA* and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) and *6-31G* (*d,p*) (for *C*, *H*, *N*, *O*)] and GaussView-5.0.8 software packages (Gaussian, Inc., Wallingford CT, UK).

## 2.5. Natural spring water analysis

Natural spring water samples were collected from local water resources in Konya City. The samples were analyzed without sample pre-treatment; just they were centrifugated at 10.000 rpm for 3 min. For the quantification analyses, the standard addition method was applied with two different-concentrations (0.10 and 0.20  $\mu\text{mol.L}^{-1}$ ) of *PA* and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . 3 mL of the **IPC** sensing solution was transferred into quartz-cuvette, and then 15.0  $\mu\text{L}$  sample was added twice into this solution. All the fluorescence measurements were performed at least three times and the statistical calculations were done.

# 3. Results And Discussion

## 3.1. Fabrication and characterization of IPC

**IPC** was obtained as a white solid and well characterized using FT-IR,  $^1\text{H-NMR}$  and MALDI TOF-MS techniques (**Fig S1-S3**).  $^1\text{H NMR}$  spectrum shows  $\alpha$ -hydrogen of coumarine and aliphatic peaks of

propylimidazole groups clearly. In addition, 298.526 (m/z) was observed at corresponding to **IPC** (chemical formula: C<sub>16</sub>H<sub>15</sub>N<sub>3</sub>O<sub>3</sub>) in the mass spectrum.

## 3.2. Fluorescence sensing studies of IPC

The effect of different solvents on the emission intensity of **IPC** was studied. For this purpose, the emission intensities were obtained upon excitation at 330 nm for the chemoprobe **IPC** prepared in acetonitrile (ACN), methanol (MeOH), ethanol (EtOH), dimethylformamide (DMF), water (H<sub>2</sub>O), and dimethylsulfoxide (DMSO) (**Fig S4**). The maximum fluorescence of **IPC** was achieved at 408 nm as it was prepared in ACN. The influence of water percentage used in ACN on the fluorescence response was also studied for the **IPC**, **IPC-PA** and **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>**. The differentiations of emission intensities between the chemoprobe **IPC** and its complexes were the most appropriate when the both volume ratio of ACN/H<sub>2</sub>O was 95/5. Thus, the solvent media of H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN (5/95, v/v) was employed for the further fluorescence measurements under this study.

To reveal the sensing ability of chemoprobe **IPC**, its response towards a pool of analyte including different nitro aromatic explosives (*NBC*, *DNBA*, *BNBA*, *DNT*, *CDNB*, *DBNB*, *NB* and *PA*) and metal ions (*K<sup>+</sup>*, *Ag<sup>+</sup>*, *Cu<sup>2+</sup>*, *Cd<sup>2+</sup>*, *Zn<sup>2+</sup>*, *Fe<sup>2+</sup>*, *Hg<sup>2+</sup>*, *Al<sup>3+</sup>* and *Fe<sup>3+</sup>*) was determined in H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN (5/95, v/v) media (Figs. 1 and 2), with the help of fluorescence experiments. As seen from these figures, the chemoprobe **IPC** demonstrated high emission intensity at 408 nm upon excited at 330 nm. The chemoprobe **IPC** depicted dramatic "turn off" response towards both PA explosive (Fig. 1a) and Fe<sup>3+</sup> (Fig. 2a) over other studied analytes, within 30 seconds. Subsequently, emission titration studies of **IPC** were performed with the increasing concentrations of PA (0–20.0 equiv.) (Fig. 1b) and Fe<sup>3+</sup> (0–20.0 equiv.) (Fig. 2b). Upon the adding of PA into a solution of chemoprobe **IPC** (50 μM), the emission intensity progressively quenched due to the π–π stacking and deprotonation phenomena [23] and it arrived a minimum intensity level after the adding of 20.0 equiv. of PA. On the contrary, after the addition of different amounts of Fe<sup>3+</sup>, the emission intensity of **IPC** quenched because of the paramagnetic quenching affect with the transferring of energy and/or electron, which is known as "ligand–metal charge transfer mechanism (LMCT)". The fluorescence intensity was reach a stable value after the concentration of Fe<sup>3+</sup> reached 20.0 equiv. (Fig. 2b) [15, 24, 25].

From the findings of fluorescence titration studies, the detection limits (LOD) of chemoprobe **IPC** for PA and Fe<sup>3+</sup> were computed by fluorescence alterations on the basis of  $3\sigma/k$  equation; where " $\sigma$ " is deviation of the blank emission intensity and " $k$ " is slope of linear calibration graph. They were found to be 0.92 μM for PA and 0.22 μM for Fe<sup>3+</sup>, which is less than the daily uptake level of iron ion (2 mg.L<sup>-1</sup>) suggested by the WHO [15]. These titration data were also employed to compute the association constants ( $\log K$ ) of **IPC-PA** and **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>** complexes, and they were found to be  $6.72 \times 10^2 \text{ M}^{-1}$  for PA and  $3.62 \text{ M}^{-1/3}$  for Fe<sup>3+</sup> on the basis of Benesi–Hildebrand equation (Fig. 3) [26–28]. Thus, these findings recommended that the chemoprobe **IPC** has a great potential of recognition quantitatively unidentified concentrations of PA or Fe<sup>3+</sup> and could be utilized for the sensitive recognition of PA and Fe<sup>3+</sup> in H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN (5/95, v/v) media. The

sensing properties of the chemoprobe **IPC** are also comparable to those of some dual-responsive fluorescent probes for PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ , which reveals that our chemoprobe system has significant improvements (Table 1).

To use the chemoprobe **IPC** as a selective fluorescent sensor for PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ , the impacts of competing nitro aromatic explosives (*NBC*, *DNBA*, *BNBA*, *DNT*, *CDNB*, *DBNB*, *NB* and *PA*) and metal ions ( $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Ag}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) have been also studied. As seen from Fig. 4a, the emission quenching was observed for the mixtures of PA with other nitro aromatic explosives was similar to that stimulated by PA alone; therefore, the presence of competing explosives could not make interference on the recognition of PA. Likewise,  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  sensing system in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) media was not influenced by a pool of metal ions (Fig. 4b). The competition studies showed that fluorescence response of the chemoprobe **IPC** toward PA or  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  was not interfered by the studied competing analytes; therefore, **IPC** could be used as a "turn-off" fluorescent chemoprobe for the recognitions of both PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ .

The response time is another critical parameter for a new designed chemoprobe in real applications. As seen from **Fig S5**, the fluorescence quenching for PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  was occurred only within just 30 seconds, and at their fluorescence intensities were reached to equilibrium at same response time. Thus, a response time was decided on 30 seconds for the following experiments and the chemoprobe **IPC** depicted an excellent response time towards PA and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  respecting the formerly developed a lot of fluorogenic dual chemoprobes [10, 19–21].

### 3.3. Binding mechanisms of IPC towards PA and $\text{Fe}^{3+}$

To understand the binding stoichiometry of the complexes between **IPC** and PA/ $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ , the MALDI TOF-MS, FT-IR and Job's plot methods were applied. The stoichiometric ratios of chemoprobe **IPC** toward  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  were found to be 3:1. To determine the binding stoichiometry of **IPC**- $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  complex, Job's plot study was performed (**Fig S6**). The fluorescence intensities at 408 nm are graphed against the molar fractions of the chemoprobe **IPC**. The maximum spot was monitored at mole fraction of 0.75 for  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and this result have showed that it was 3:1 stoichiometry of the binding mode of **IPC**- $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ . In addition, it is clearly observed that the N-H peak of the chemosensor **IPC**, which was present at 3259 nm, disappeared in the infrared spectrum of the complex. The C=O peak of the chemosensor **IPC** was shifted from 1722 nm to 1709 nm (**Fig S7**). Also, The MALDI TOF-MS data also confirms the 3:1 of binding stoichiometry between the chemoprobe **IPC** and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ , because the peaks at  $m/z = 298.526$  and  $m/z = 944.219$  correspond to the [chemoprobe **IPC** +  $\text{H}^+$ ] and [chemoprobe **IPC** +  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  +  $\text{H}^+$ ], respectively (**Fig S8**). The stoichiometric ratios of chemoprobe **IPC** towards PA were found to be 1:1 (**Fig S6**). To understand the binding stoichiometry of **IPC**- $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  complex, Job's plot study was performed. The maximum spot was monitored at mole fraction of 0.5 for PA and this result have showed that it was 1:1 stoichiometry of the binding mode of **IPC**-PA. Also,  $^1\text{H}$ -NMR measurements were performed to obtain an insight into the interaction mechanism between **IPC** and PA. As depicted in **Fig S9**, the slight peak was shifted up-field in

the presence of PA. Therefore, the formation of  $\pi$ - $\pi$  stacking and the intermolecular H-bonds between **IPC** and PA caused the quenching of fluorescence intensity [5, 23].

### 3.4. Theoretical computations

Theoretical computations of the chemoprobe **IPC** and its complexes have been done to obtain their HOMO-LUMO energy levels. The orbital energies were computed using Gaussian-09 [*B3LYP/6-31G(d,p)* (for **IPC** and **IPC-PA**) and *LANL2DZ* (for **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>**)] and GaussView-5.0.8 software packages. To confirm the suggested interaction pathway of the chemoprobe **IPC** toward PA, DFT calculation was performed based on the reported study [5]. The optimal structure of **IPC-PA** displayed intermolecular hydrogen bonding between **IPC** and PA due to  $\pi$ - $\pi$  interactions (Fig. 5). As depicted in Fig. 5, the computed energy gaps between HOMO and LUMO orbitals of **IPC**, **IPC-PA** and **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>** were found as 3.32, 2.19 and 0.7 eV, respectively, showing good interactions. Therefore, these findings revealed that the interaction of **IPC** towards PA and **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** stabilizes the systems as evident from the lower HOMO-LUMO energy gaps of the complexes compared to **IPC** (Fig. 5).

### 3.4. Natural spring water application

In the last part of study, the applicability of the developed fluorescence chemoprobe system for the recognition of PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** in natural spring water samples was tested. For real water sample measurements, the samples were spiked with known concentrations (0.10 and 0.20 mol.L<sup>-1</sup>) of PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>**, according to the standard addition method. After the adding of PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** into the solution of chemoprobe **IPC**, their fluorescence intensities were recorded. The findings were given in Table 2, and the recovery values of PA and **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** were between 93.01 and 112.54% with the lower relative standard deviation (RSD) values. Thus, these findings revealed that the chemoprobe **IPC** system could specifically and accurately labor to recognize PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** in natural spring waters.

## 4. Conclusion

In summarize, a new of dual-responsive fluorescence chemoprobe (**IPC**) based on propylimidazole functionalized coumarin structure for the recognition of PA and **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** has been successfully developed. The **IPC** revealed "on-off" fluorescence responses towards PA and **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** at 408 nm within only 30 seconds in H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN (5/95, v/v) media. The LOD values for PA and **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** were found to be 0.92  $\mu$ M and 0.22  $\mu$ M, respectively, which are satisfactorily low to permit the recognition of these analytes in realistic applications. The stoichiometry of the complexes [**IPC-PA** (1:1) and **IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup>** (3:1)] was identified by MALDI TOF-MS, FT-IR, <sup>1</sup>H-NMR titration and Job's plot experiments. The binding mechanism of **IPC** toward PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** was also supported by DFT computation study. Furthermore, the chemoprobe **IPC** was employed for the detecting PA or **Fe<sup>3+</sup>** in natural spring waters with good recovery values. Therefore, these promising findings will make a great contribution to researchers studying nitro aromatic explosives and metal ions in different systems.

## Declarations

**Author's Contributions.** All authors contributed in the planning, editing and writing of the manuscript.

**Conflicts of interest.** We declare that we have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

**Ethical Approval.** All procedures performed in studies involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards.

**Informed Consent.** Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

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**Data Availability.** The data sets generated during the current study are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

**Consent to participate.** Not applicable.

**Consent for publication.** Not applicable.

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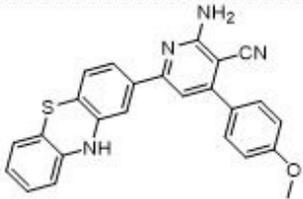
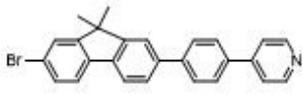
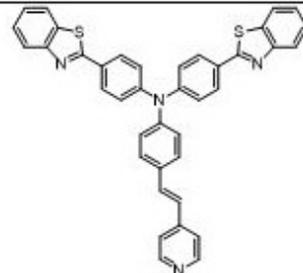
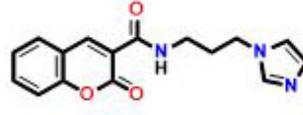
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## Tables

**Table 1.** Comparison of the chemoprobe **IPC** with some reported studies towards PA and Fe<sup>3+</sup>

| chemoprobe   | recognition process | solvent system                        | LOD (M)  | binding constant (M <sup>-x</sup> )   | application | ref.       |
|--|---------------------|---------------------------------------|--|---|-------------|------------|
|  | turn-off            | DMSO                                  | 0.098 × 10 <sup>-6</sup><br>(for PA)<br>4.90 × 10 <sup>-6</sup><br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> ) | 9.73 × 10 <sup>4</sup><br>(for PA)<br>3.49 × 10 <sup>3</sup><br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> ) | yes         | [20]       |
|  | turn-off            | H <sub>2</sub> O/EtOH<br>(25/75, v/v) | 6.90 × 10 <sup>-7</sup><br>(for PA)<br>3.60 × 10 <sup>-7</sup><br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> )  | 4.65 × 10 <sup>5</sup><br>(for PA)<br>1.42 × 10 <sup>5</sup><br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> ) | yes         | [19]       |
|  | turn-off            | H <sub>2</sub> O/MeOH<br>(20/80, v/v) | 1.01 × 10 <sup>-4</sup><br>(for PA)<br>colorimetric<br>for Fe <sup>3+</sup>                | –   | no          | [10]       |
|  | turn-off            | H <sub>2</sub> O/ACN<br>(5/95, v/v)   | 0.92 × 10 <sup>-6</sup><br>(for PA)<br>0.22 × 10 <sup>-6</sup><br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> )  | 6.72 × 10 <sup>2</sup><br>(for PA)<br>3.62<br>(for Fe <sup>3+</sup> )                   | yes         | this study |

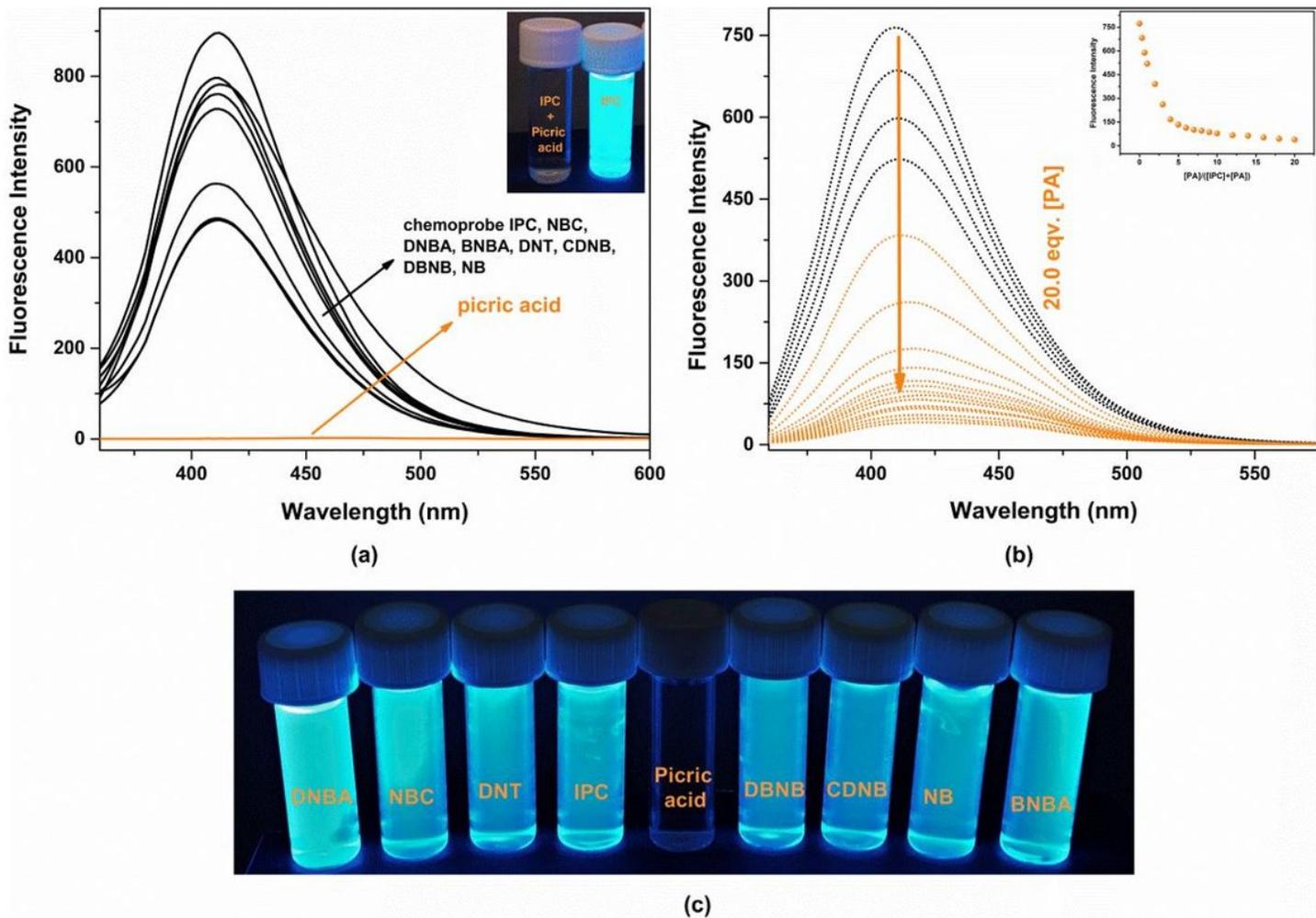
**Table 2.** Fluorescence detection of PA and Fe<sup>3+</sup> in natural spring waters by IPC

|                         | PA spiked ( $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ )               | PA determined ( $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ )               | recovery (%) | RSD (%) (n=3) |
|-------------------------|--|--|--------------|---------------|
| ultra pure water        | 0.00   | 0.0153 $\pm$ 0.0003                                    |              | 1.64          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1191 $\pm$ 0.0032                                    | 103.79       | 2.70          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.2133 $\pm$ 0.0036                                    | 99.02        | 1.69          |
| natural spring water -1 | 0.00   | 0.0331 $\pm$ 0.0010                                    |              | 3.02          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1262 $\pm$ 0.0025                                    | 93.01        | 1.99          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.2510 $\pm$ 0.0068                                    | 108.91       | 2.71          |
| natural spring water -2 | 0.00   | 0.0047 $\pm$ 0.0001                                    |              | 2.12          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1038 $\pm$ 0.0025                                    | 99.13        | 2.42          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.2141 $\pm$ 0.0072                                    | 104.71       | 3.37          |
|                         | Fe <sup>3+</sup> spiked ( $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ ) | Fe <sup>3+</sup> determined ( $\mu\text{mol L}^{-1}$ ) | recovery (%) | RSD (%) (n=3) |
| ultra pure water        | 0.00   | 0.0005 $\pm$ 0.00001                                   |              | 2.12          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1075 $\pm$ 0.0012                                    | 107.02       | 1.12          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.1974 $\pm$ 0.0051                                    | 98.47        | 2.60          |
| natural spring water -1 | 0.00   | 0.0120 $\pm$ 0.0003                                    |              | 2.21          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1245 $\pm$ 0.0030                                    | 112.54       | 2.41          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.2088 $\pm$ 0.0042                                    | 98.39        | 1.99          |
| natural spring water -2 | 0.00   | 0.0160 $\pm$ 0.0003                                    |              | 1.65          |
|                         | 0.10   | 0.1184 $\pm$ 0.0042                                    | 102.35       | 3.52          |
|                         | 0.20   | 0.2355 $\pm$ 0.0050                                    | 109.73       | 2.14          |

## Scheme

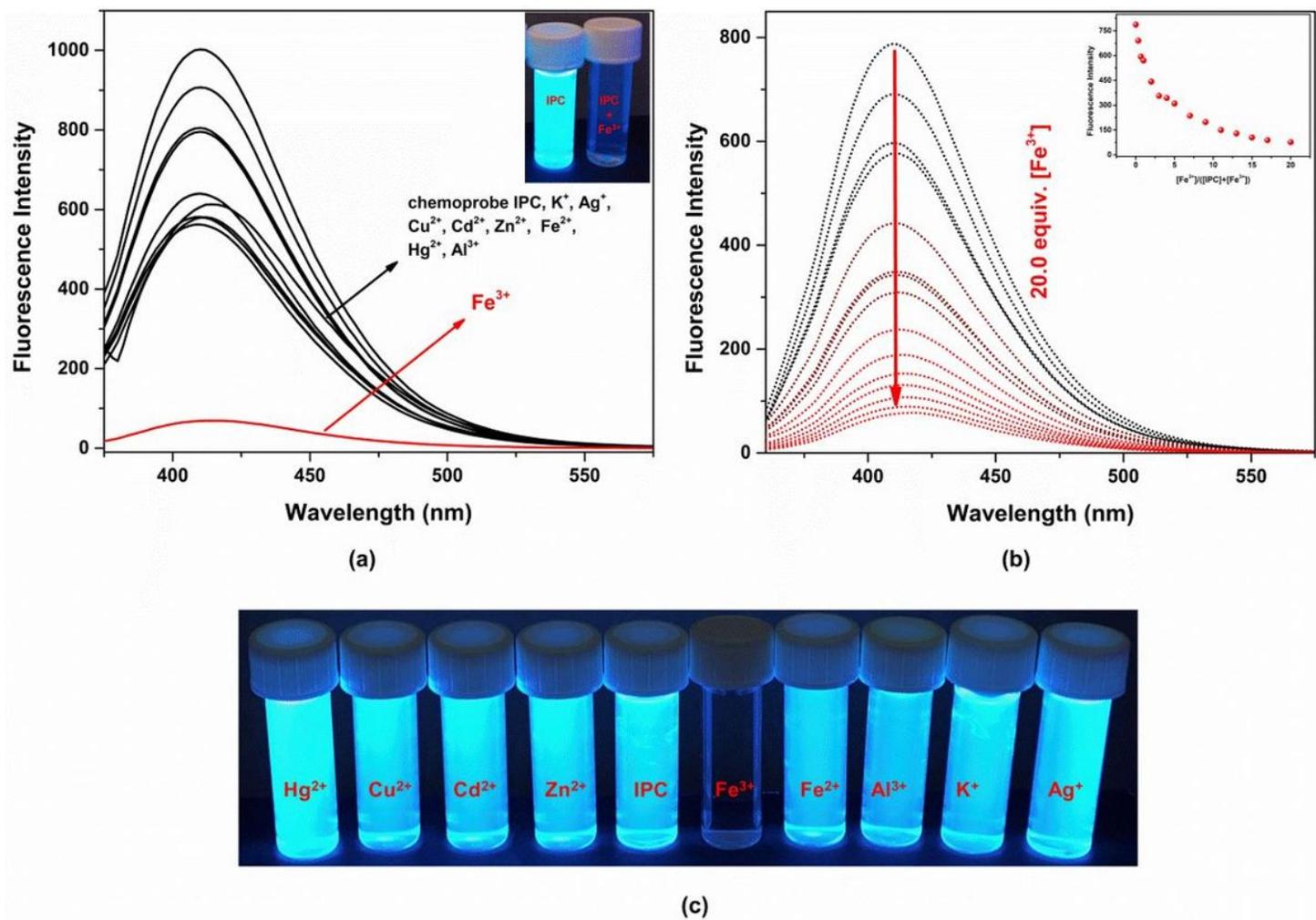
Please see the Supplementary Files for the Scheme 1 and 2.

## Figures



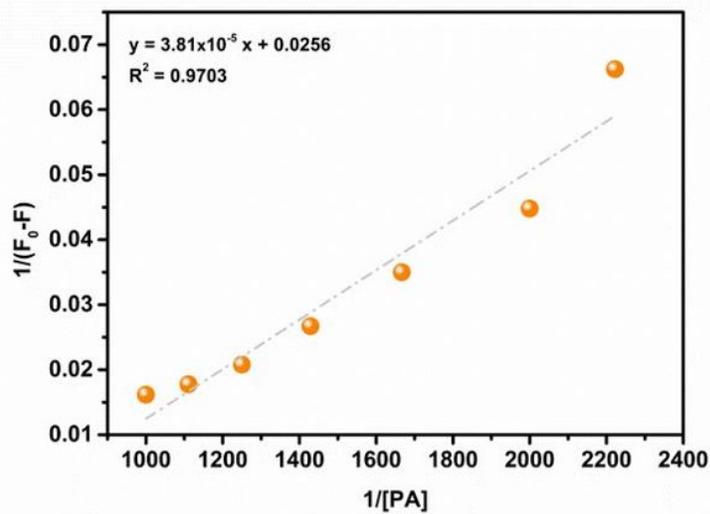
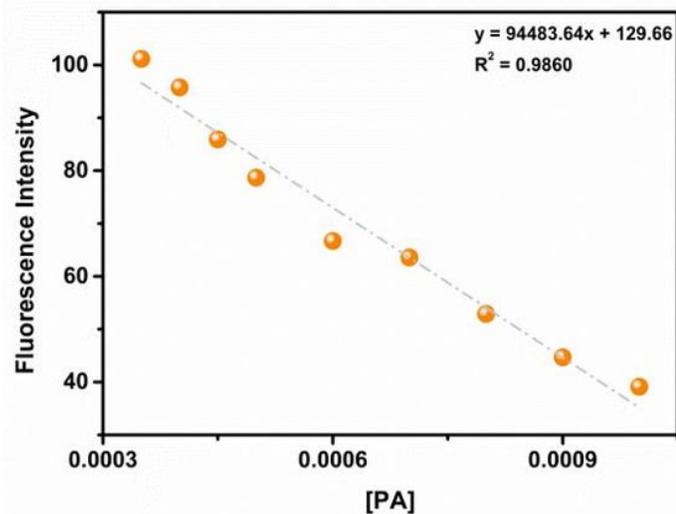
**Figure 1**

Emission responses of IPC (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ) (a) with different nitro aromatic explosives (NBC, DNBA, BNBA, DNT, CDNB, DBNB, NB and PA) and the inset shows the pictorial images of the color for IPC in the deficiency and absence of PA and (b) with increasing amounts of PA [0.00–20.0 eqv.] in H<sub>2</sub>O/ACN (5/95, v/v) media ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}}$ =330 nm,  $\lambda_{\text{em}}$ =408 nm) and (c) an illustration and photograph of fluorescence responses

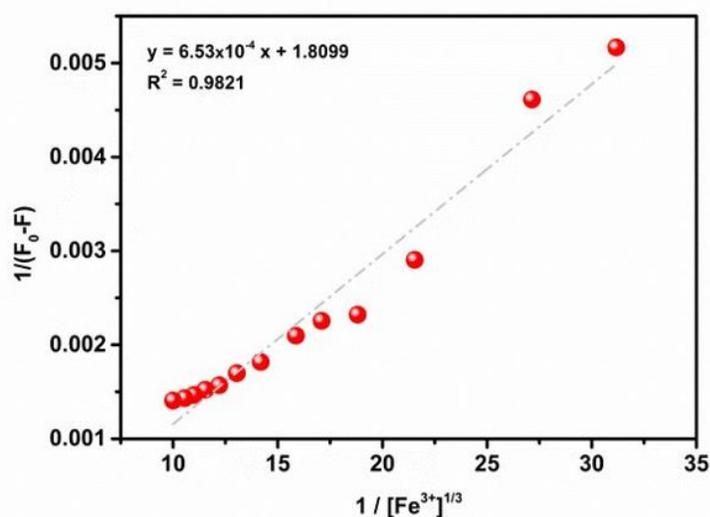
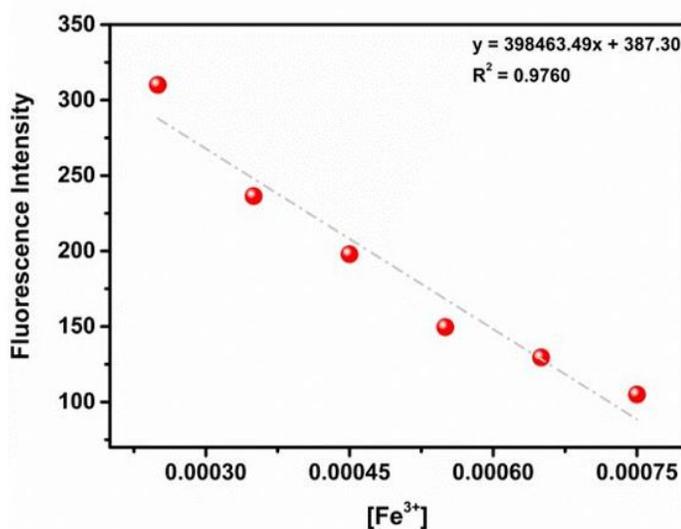


**Figure 2**

Emission responses of IPC (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ) (a) with different metal ions ( $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Ag}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) and the inset shows the pictorial images of the color for IPC in the deficiency and absence of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  and (b) with increasing amounts of  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$  [0.00–20.0 eqv.] in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) media ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}}=330 \text{ nm}$ ,  $\lambda_{\text{em}}=408 \text{ nm}$ ) and (c) an illustration and photograph of fluorescence responses



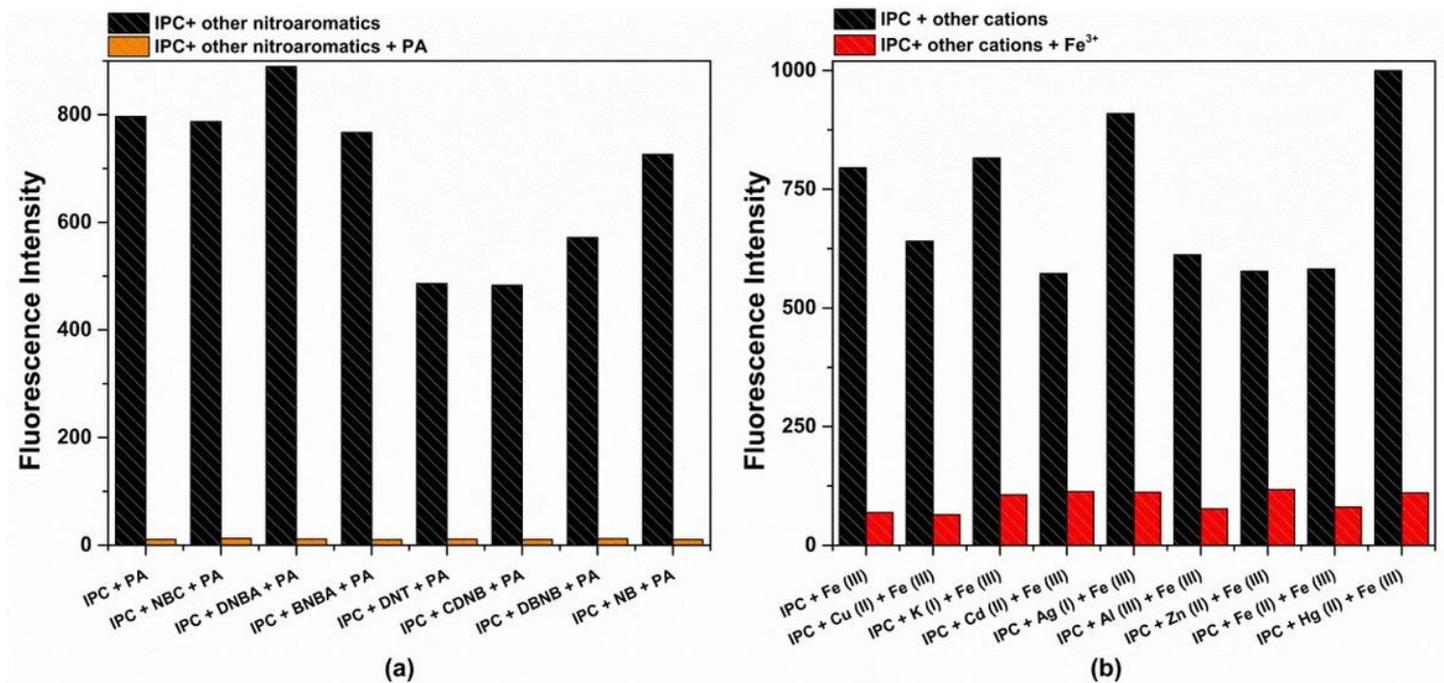
(a)



(b)

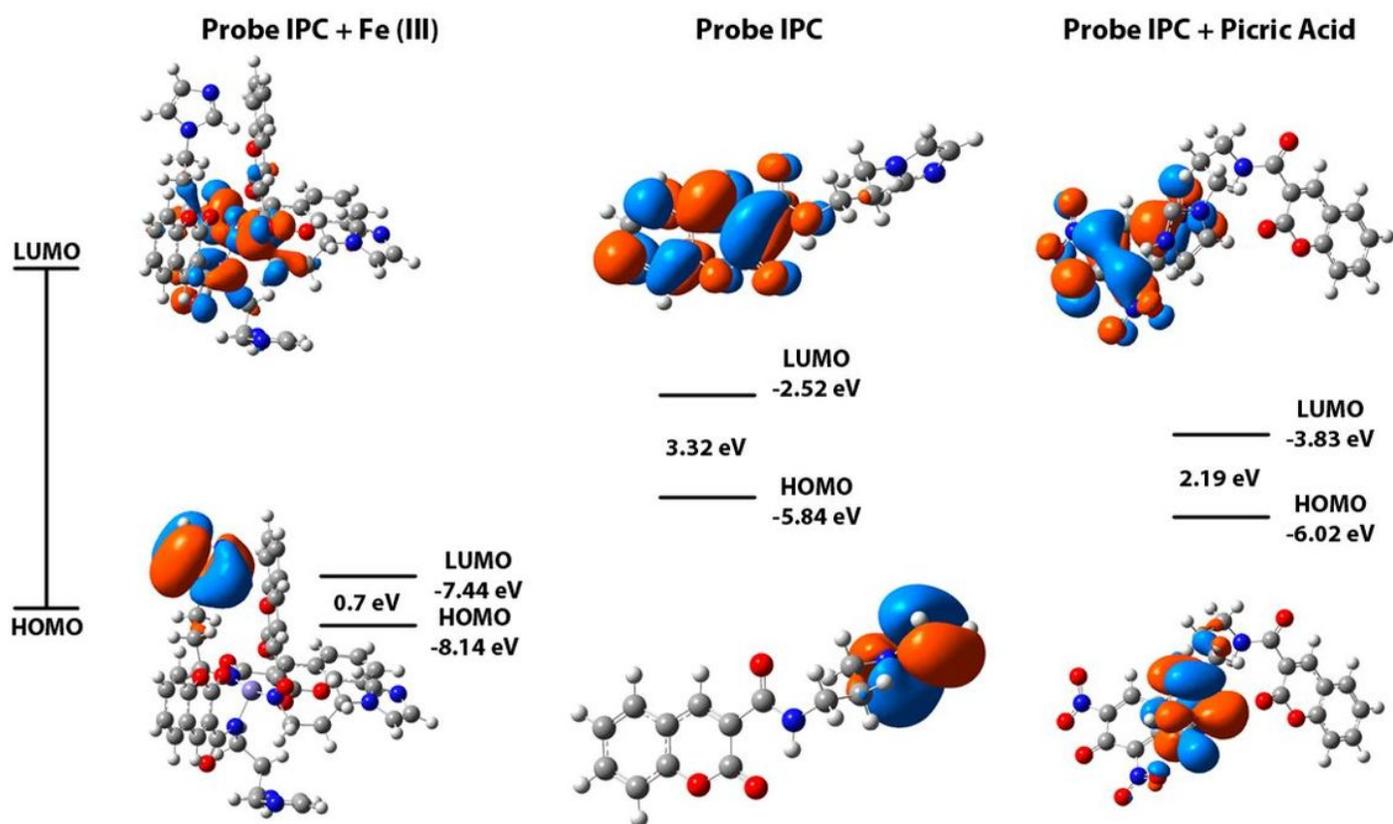
Figure 3

Plots of the fluorescence intensity of chemoprobe IPC versus (a) PA and (b)  $Fe^{3+}$  concentrations and Benesi-Hildebrand of the chemoprobe IPC towards PA and  $Fe^{3+}$  in  $H_2O/ACN$  (5/95, v/v) media ( $\lambda_{ex}=330$  nm,  $\lambda_{em}=408$  nm)



**Figure 4**

Relative emission intensity alterations (selectivity studies) of IPC (50  $\mu\text{M}$ ) in the presence of higher concentrations of common interfering (a) nitro aromatic explosives (NBC, DNBA, BNBA, DNT, CDNB, DBNB, NB and PA) and (b) metal ions ( $\text{K}^+$ ,  $\text{Ag}^+$ ,  $\text{Cu}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Cd}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Zn}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Fe}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Hg}^{2+}$ ,  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  and  $\text{Fe}^{3+}$ ) in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}/\text{ACN}$  (5/95, v/v) media ( $\lambda_{\text{ex}}=330$  nm,  $\lambda_{\text{em}}=408$  nm)



**Figure 5**

The findings of IPC, IPC-PA and IPC-Fe<sup>3+</sup> by DFT/B3LYP/LANL2DZ

## Supplementary Files

This is a list of supplementary files associated with this preprint. Click to download.

- [scheme1.jpg](#)
- [scheme2.jpg](#)