

24 **demand, and safely dose, gaseous SO₂F₂. Due to the use of flow technology, many**
25 **lingering limitations of this transformation could be overcome, resulting in significantly**
26 **reduced reaction times, high reactivity and exceptional reaction scope. The effectiveness**
27 **of the process was demonstrated by the successful synthesis of a diverse set of**
28 **fluorosulfates and sulfamoyl fluorides, including those derived from biorelevant**
29 **compounds, peptides, and proteins.**

30

31 Click chemistry is a powerful and efficient method for rapidly connecting chemical fragments,
32 enabling the modification of biologically active molecules (1,2). Among the various types of
33 click chemistry, SuFEx (Sulfur(VI) Fluoride Exchange) reactions have emerged as a reliable
34 resource for drug discovery (3,4,5), chemical biology (6,7,8), polymer chemistry (9,10), and
35 surface modifications (11,12). In particular, the unique properties of the sulfur(VI)-fluorine
36 bond make SuFEx reactions highly versatile, allowing for the formation of covalent bonds
37 under mild conditions (13). The S(VI)-F bond is highly stable, allowing it to withstand harsh
38 conditions, yet readily cleavable in the presence of a suitable activator or reaction partner
39 (14,15). Consequently, the versatility and efficiency of SuFEx reactions make them a valuable
40 tool for researchers in a wide range of fields, including synthetic chemistry, drug discovery,
41 and materials science (16).

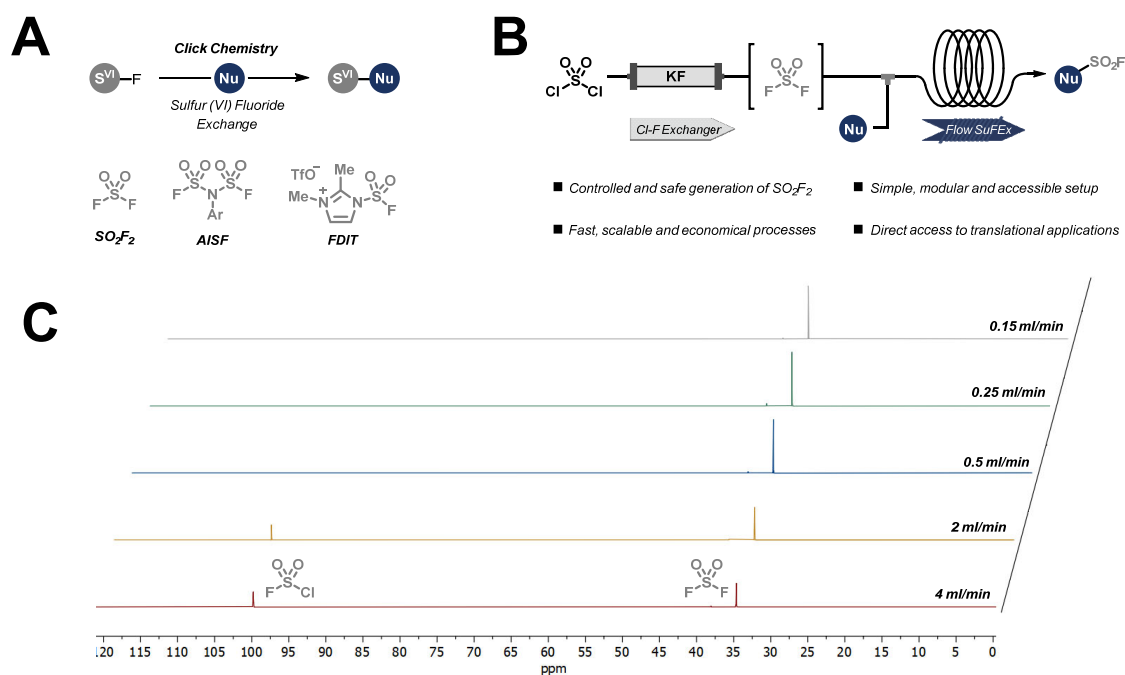
42 Among the various SuFEx hubs, the -SO₂F moiety has received significant attention due to its
43 unique biophysical properties (17) and its potential as a versatile connector between
44 nucleophilic entities (18). One method for installing this moiety is the use of gaseous sulfonyl
45 fluoride (SO₂F₂), which has been demonstrated for various organic molecules by the group of
46 Sharpless (13). However, despite its potential as an economic and traceless compound, its mild
47 toxicity and difficulty to handle have motivated researchers to seek for more practical
48 alternatives. While in-situ generation of SO₂F₂ from 1,1'-sulfonyldiimidazole (SDI, Figure 1A)
49 (19) or the use of solid reagents such as [4-(acetylamino)phenyl]imidodisulfonyl difluoride

50 (AISF) (20) or 1-(fluorosulfonyl)-2,3-dimethyl-1*H*-imidazol-3-ium trifluoromethanesulfonate
51 (FDIT) (21) have been explored, these alternatives still require the use of SO₂F₂ in their
52 preparation and produce unnecessary by-products. Hence, it is clear that these methods go
53 against the principles of click chemistry and represent a challenge to date (2). Addressing these
54 challenges by developing a new strategy for producing and dosing SO₂F₂ in a safe and
55 controlled manner from simple chemicals would represent a significant advance in the field of
56 SuFEx chemistry. Furthermore, such a process would significantly reduce the number of
57 synthetic steps needed for SuFEx handle installation and therefore streamline the overall
58 process.

59 In order to address the challenges associated with using sulfuryl fluoride (SO₂F₂) as a reagent,
60 we considered using cheap commodity chemicals such as sulfuryl chloride (SO₂Cl₂) and
61 potassium fluoride (KF) to generate SO₂F₂ in-situ. This approach was motivated by the greater
62 thermodynamic stability of the S(VI)–F bond (~90 kcal/mol) compared to the S(VI)–Cl bond
63 (~46 kcal/mol), which suggests that this exchange should be achievable (22,13). Our initial
64 batch experiments using SO₂Cl₂ and KF in CH₃CN confirmed the feasibility of this approach,
65 demonstrating successful conversion of first SO₂Cl₂ to SO₂FCl and later to SO₂F₂ was achieved
66 within two hours (see Supplementary Materials).

67 Due to the slow kinetics observed in batch reactions and the mixture of SO₂FCl and SO₂F₂
68 obtained, we turned to flow technology as a tool for more effectively generating and controlling
69 the delivery of this reactive gas (23,24). Hereto, we designed a modular system (Figure 1B)
70 using microfluidic technology to greatly enhance the safety and scalability of the overall
71 process (25). Our modular system consists of two interconnected flow reactors. The first reactor
72 is a packed-bed reactor filled with KF that generates SO₂F₂ on demand via chlorine-fluorine
73 exchange. The second reactor is where the generated gaseous SO₂F₂ is mixed with the
74 nucleophilic partner, ultimately yielding the desired SuFEx product. Since the first reactor

75 generates SO_2F_2 on demand, the reagent remains contained and is subsequently mixed with the
 76 nucleophilic partner in the second reactor. By immediately reacting away the toxic SO_2F_2 in
 77 the SuFEx module, our modular system effectively eliminates the safety and practical concerns
 78 associated with the handling of this reagent, while generating only the required quantities. In
 79 addition, we anticipated that our use of flow technology would also reduce the time required
 80 for halogen substitution reactions, thanks to enhanced liquid-to-solid contact in the first Cl-F
 81 exchange module and excellent gas-to-liquid mass transfer in the SuFEx module (26). Our
 82 experiments confirmed the effectiveness of our modular system: when we directed a solution
 83 of sulfonyl chloride over the packed-bed reactor filled with a mixture of KF and glass beads
 84 (Figure 1C, see Supplementary Materials for further details), we observed a rapid and selective
 85 formation of SO_2F_2 . We found that varying the flow rate was crucial for the selectivity of the
 86 transformation, and that 0.5 mL/min was the optimal flow rate in terms of conversion,
 87 selectivity, and time (7 min reaction time), effectively avoiding the presence of undesired
 88 SO_2FCl . Under optimized conditions, the packed-bed reactor was able to produce ~ 18 mmol
 89 of SO_2F_2 starting from a ~ 80 mmol KF bed (see Supplementary Materials for further details).



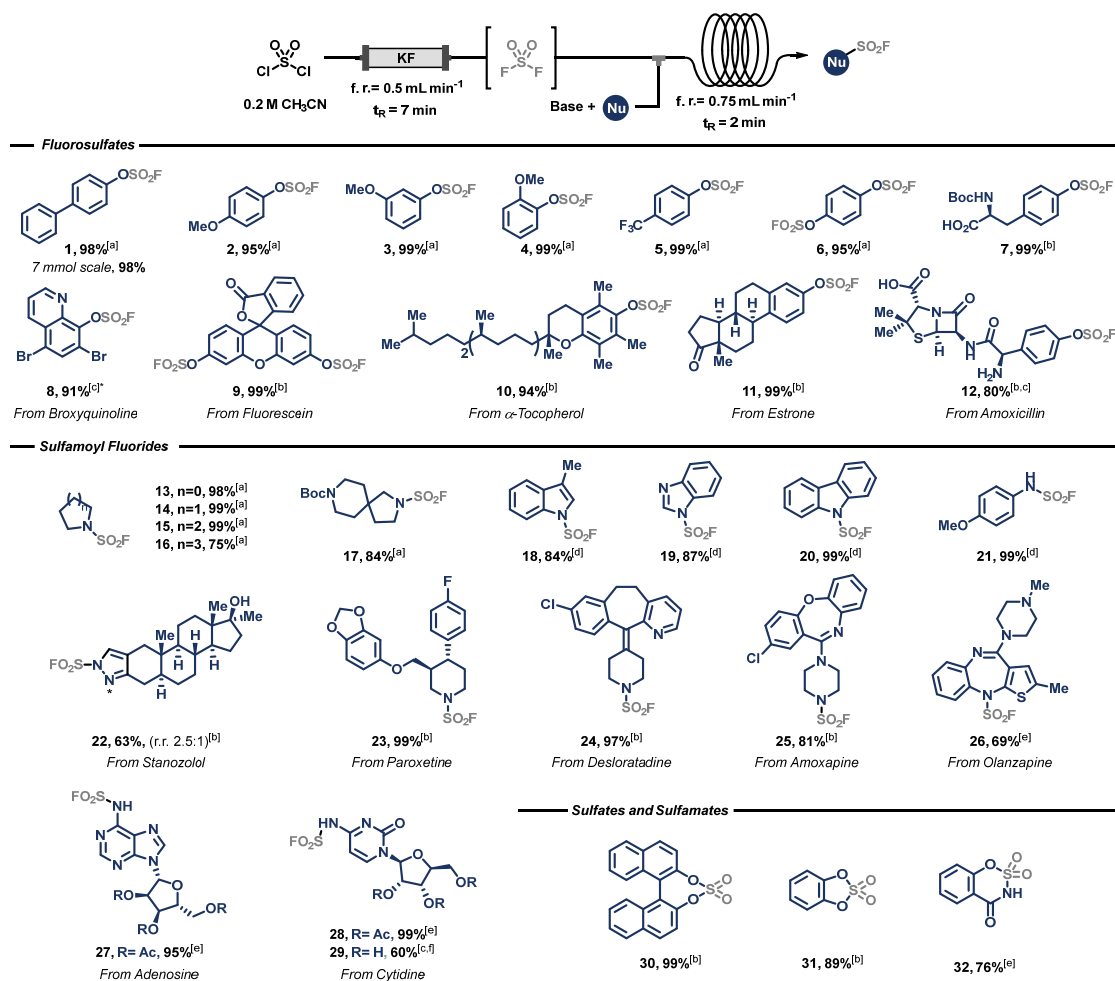
91 **Figure 1. Sulfur (VI) fluoride exchange (SuFEx) click chemistry.** (A) While stable under various conditions
92 (hydrolysis, reduction/oxidation), S(VI) fluorides are susceptible for nucleophilic attack enabling efficient click-
93 type reactions. However, the synthesis of S(VI) fluorides can be cumbersome requiring challenging reagents, such
94 as gaseous SO₂F₂ or atom-inefficient solid reagents. (B) In flow-generated gaseous SO₂F₂ enables a practical, fast
95 and selective preparation of S(VI) fluoride reagents. (C) Flow experiments showing the feasibility of the outlined
96 strategy to produce the coveted SO₂F₂ in high selectivity (results obtained by ¹⁹F-NMR).

97

98 Having obtained promising results from our SO₂F₂ generator, we proceeded to integrate it with
99 the SuFEx module to enable the reaction with nucleophilic partners. By introducing the
100 appropriate nucleophiles with an excess of a base, we were able to obtain a diverse range of
101 SuFExed products with excellent isolated yields in just two minutes of residence time (Figure
102 2). This short residence time can be attributed to the intimate contact between gas and liquid
103 phase in flow (i.e., enhanced gas-liquid mass transfer) (27,28), which should allow for the
104 generation of large libraries of SuFExed compounds with minimal effort and time. Notably, a
105 variety of phenols could be cleanly converted to their corresponding fluorosulfates regardless
106 of the position or electronic nature of the substituents (Figure 2, compounds **1-6**). While using
107 large quantities of gaseous SO₂F₂ in batch reactions can be challenging, our flow protocol
108 overcomes this issue, allowing for a gram-scale synthesis of fluorosulfate **1** by simply
109 increasing the amount of starting materials pumped through the reactor assembly (29).
110 Importantly, no reoptimization of reaction conditions was required, and no loss of chemical
111 efficiency was observed during the scaled-up experiment.

112 We further found that our flow protocol was not limited to the synthesis of simple phenol-based
113 fluorosulfates. In fact, we observed that a wide variety of natural products, drugs, and
114 fluorescent tracers could be successfully reacted using this approach. For instance, *N*-Boc-
115 protected tyrosine, broxyquinoline, fluorescein, α -tocopherol, estrone, and unprotected
116 amoxicillin were all cleanly converted in just 2 minutes of reaction time (Figure 2, compounds

117 **7-12**), demonstrating the excellent functional group tolerance of our method. Similarly, the
118 challenging class of nitrogen-based nucleophiles could also be subjected to our protocol
119 delivering the corresponding sulfamoyl fluorides in excellent isolated yields. For example, 4-
120 to 7-membered ring secondary amines (Figure 2, compounds **13-17**), heterocyclic derivatives
121 (Figure 2, compounds **18-20**), and an aniline compound (Figure 2, compound **21**) were
122 effectively reacted with SO₂F₂. Our flow protocol was also effective in synthesizing analogs of
123 several pharmaceutically relevant molecules, such as stanozolol, paroxetine, desloratadine,
124 amoxapine, and olanzapine, which rapidly yielded the desired SuFExed products (Figure 2,
125 compounds **22-26**). Additionally, nucleosides such as adenosine and cytidine derivatives
126 (Figure 2, compounds **27-29**) could be used as competent reaction partners. Finally, we were
127 able to use bidentate nucleophiles, such as BINOL, catechol, and salicylamide (Figure 2,
128 compounds **30-32**), to produce the corresponding sulfates and sulfamates.



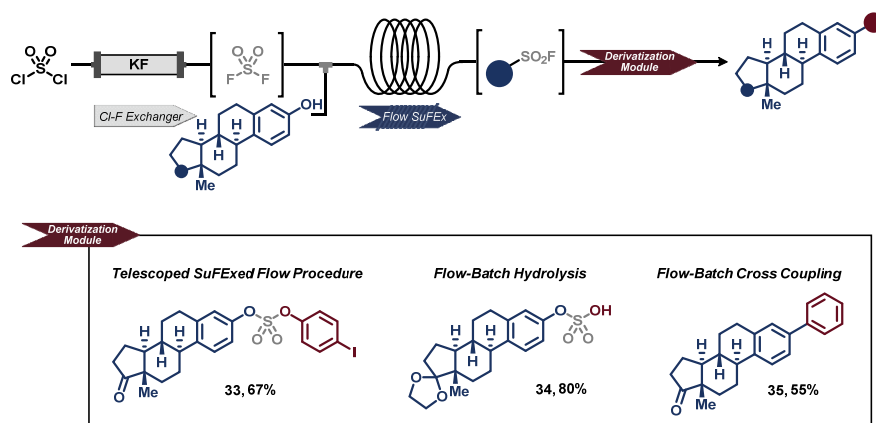
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130 **Figure 2. Rapid SuFEx ligation of small molecules in flow, yielding fluorosulfates, sulfamoyl fluorides and**
 131 **sulfates and sulfamates.** All yields are those of isolated compounds. Standard conditions for the SO₂F₂
 132 generation: SO₂Cl₂ (2 equiv, 0.2 M in CH₃CN) passed through a 3.8 mL cartridge filled with a 1:1 mixture of KF
 133 and glass beads. Standard conditions for the second step: ^[a] Nucleophile (1 equiv, 0.2 M in CH₃CN), Et₃N (2.5
 134 equiv). ^[b] Nucleophile (1 equiv, 0.2 M in DMF), Et₃N (2.5 equiv). ^[c] The compound has been isolated after an
 135 acetylation step. ^[d] Nucleophile (1 equiv, 0.2 M in CH₃CN), DBU (4.0 equiv). ^[e] Nucleophile (1 equiv, 0.2 M in
 136 DMF), DBU (4.0 equiv). ^[f] Nucleophile (1 equiv, 0.1 M in DMSO), K₂CO₃ (4.0 equiv). *5 equiv of DBU were
 137 used. DBU: 2,3,4,6,7,8,9,10-Octahydropyrimido[1,2-a]azepine. DMF: *N,N*-Dimethylformamide. DMSO:
 138 dimethylsulfoxide.

139

140 Next, we capitalized on the modular nature of our setup and developed a multistep process that
 141 orchestrates several reactions in a sequential fashion (Figure 3). For instance, we streamlined

142 a three-module flow setup to synthesize sulfate derivative **33** (67%) uninterrupted. After
 143 generating sulfuryl fluoride in the packed-bed reactor and trapping it with estrone in the SuFEx
 144 capillary reactor, the resulting fluorosulfate was reacted with (4-iodophenoxy)trimethylsilane
 145 in a second SuFEx capillary. Our flow approach carefully balances the stoichiometry of the
 146 gaseous reagent, preventing any remaining SO₂F₂ from unproductively consuming the silyl
 147 ether in the second SuFEx step (13). Furthermore, after a solvent switch, the reaction crude can
 148 also immediately be used to carry out a base-promoted hydrolysis of ethylenacetal-protected
 149 estrone to obtain bisulfate derivative **34** (80% yield) or a palladium-catalyzed Suzuki-Miyaura-
 150 type cross coupling to yield product **35** in 55% yield.



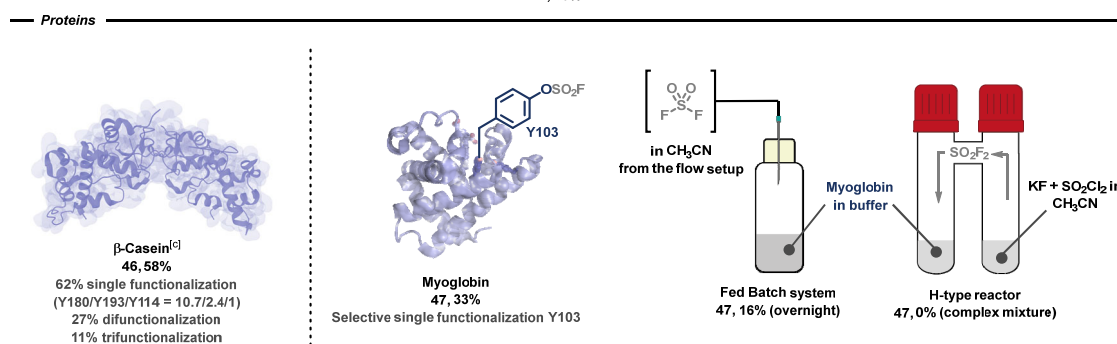
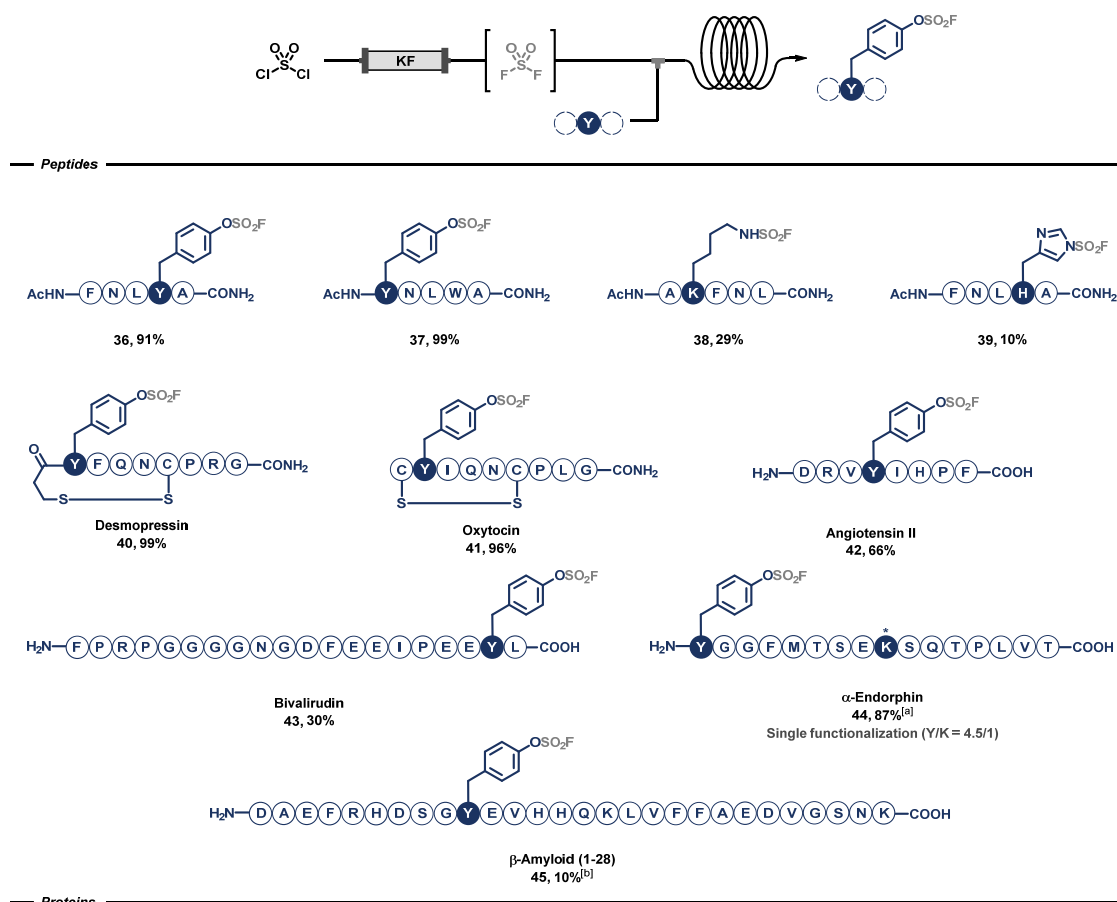
151
 152 **Figure 3. A three-step protocol that combines the SO₂F₂ generator module, the SuFEx module, and the**
 153 **derivatization module, allowing for seamless SuFEx click chemistry, fluorosulfate hydrolysis, and late-stage**
 154 **cross-coupling chemistry.** All yields are those of isolated compounds. Full description of the experimental details
 155 can be found in the Supplementary Materials.

156
 157 Our flow approach has demonstrated excellent functional group tolerance and selectivity in
 158 producing SuFExed products from various small molecules. This is due to the favorable
 159 reaction conditions, including high mass transfer and excellent dosing of gaseous reagents,
 160 provided by the flow protocol that allows for reduced reaction times of just two minutes,
 161 thereby avoiding the formation of deleterious byproducts. We next sought to explore the
 162 potential of our microfluidic strategy for the late-stage modification of unprotected peptides

163 (30). Our aim was to directly install the sulfur-centered electrophilic handle within the peptide
164 core, allowing for later SuFEx-enabled derivatization opportunities (31). Based on our previous
165 experience with small molecules, we anticipated that the reaction would be kinetically favored
166 for tyrosine residues, which should enable site-selective modification within the complex
167 peptidic framework. After a minimal re-optimization of the reaction conditions (see
168 Supplementary Materials), we investigated the reactivity of different nucleophilic amino acid
169 residues within different pentapeptides. We found that tyrosine-containing peptides were
170 successfully converted in a site-selective fashion in just two minutes (Figure 4, compounds **36**
171 and **37**). Our evaluation also showed limited modification at lysine and histidine (Figure 4,
172 compounds **38** and **39**), while other nucleophilic residues, such as tryptophan and cysteine,
173 were not reactive under our reaction conditions (see Supplementary Materials). Encouraged by
174 these results, we subjected various complex and therapeutically valuable peptides to our flow
175 protocol. Cyclic peptides (Figure 4, compounds **40** and **41**) and therapeutic drugs such as
176 Angiotensin II and Bivalirudin (Figure 4, compounds **42** and **43**) were selectively modified at
177 the tyrosine residue in good to excellent results. Even natural peptides, such as α -Endorphin
178 and β -Amyloid (1-28), were effectively converted into the corresponding fluorosulfates with
179 good to excellent conversions (Figure 4, compounds **44** and **45**).

180 As the ultimate test for our SuFEx ligation protocol, we focused on the direct modification of
181 proteins in flow. By minimizing lysine competition (see Supplementary Information), we
182 managed to exclusively install the electrophilic SO₂F handle on tyrosine residues in just 1.5
183 minutes. To the best of our knowledge, this is one of the fastest methods for direct protein
184 modifications reported to date (32). For instance, we merged a solution of β -Casein with the
185 SO₂F₂-containing stream and observed predominantly single, chemoselective functionalization
186 at different tyrosine residues with a Y180/Y193/Y114 = 10.7/2.4/1 regioselectivity ratio
187 (Figure 4, compound **46**). Notably, Myoglobin was obtained as a single Y103-modified adduct

188 (Figure 4, compound 47), without observing denaturation or loss of the heme group,
 189 demonstrating the mild nature of the protocol. Remarkably, when we attempted to perform the
 190 same experiments in fed-batch mode, only a 16% conversion was obtained, while using a batch
 191 H-type reactor only yielded a complex mixture of products (Figure 4, bottom right). These
 192 results demonstrate that the enhanced mass transfer and confined access to the gaseous and
 193 hydrophobic SO₂F₂ observed in capillary flow reactors are critical to enable efficient SuFEx
 194 hub installation into complex macromolecular systems.



197 **Figure 4. Application of the flow SuFEx ligation protocol to the direct modification of peptides and proteins.**
198 Conversions reported as ratios of areas under the peak of product and starting compound obtained by LC/MS
199 analysis. Peptides: Standard conditions for the SO₂F₂ generation: SO₂Cl₂ (40 equiv, 0.2 M in CH₃CN) passed
200 through a 3.8 mL cartridge filled with a 1:1 mixture of KF and glass beads at f.r. 0.5 mL/min. Peptide (1 equiv,
201 10 mM in CH₃CN:H₂O 1:1), Et₃N (6 equiv), f.r. 0.25 mL/min, res. time 2 min at room temperature. ^[a] α-Endorphin
202 (6 mM), SO₂F₂ (67 equiv). ^[b] β-Amyloid (3 mM), SO₂F₂ (133 equiv). ^[c] A picture of a general protein was chosen
203 to represent β-Casein as no crystal structure is reported. Proteins: Standard conditions for the SO₂F₂ generation:
204 SO₂Cl₂ (0.1 M in CH₃CN) passed through a 3.8 mL cartridge filled with a 1:1 mixture of KF and glass beads at
205 f.r. 0.1 mL/min. β-Casein (1 equiv, 5 mM in Tris buffer pH = 7.7), TMG (10 equiv), f.r. 0.9 mL/min, res. time 1.5
206 min at room temperature, SO₂F₂ (2.2 equiv). Myoglobin (1 equiv, 1 mM in 10 mM acetate buffer pH = 5), TMG
207 (1 equiv), f.r. 0.9 mL/min, res. time 1.5 min at room temperature SO₂F₂ (11 equiv). TMG: 1,1,3,3-
208 Tetramethylguanidine.

209
210 **Conclusion.** The practical flow protocol presented in this study enables the safe and efficient
211 generation of the coveted gaseous SO₂F₂ reagent, as well as high reaction rates of the
212 subsequent SuFEx ligation, with wide applicability to various substrates, including
213 therapeutically relevant small molecules, peptides, and proteins. Based on these findings, we
214 believe that this protocol opens up new opportunities in the field of SuFEx click chemistry. In
215 particular, the use of this flow process makes sulfonyl fluoride a viable reagent for installing
216 the -SO₂F handle on a variety of phenol and amino functionalities.

217
218 **Acknowledgements.** We acknowledge financial support from the European Union H2020
219 research and innovation program for an ERC CoG grant for T.N. (FlowHAT, No. 101044355)
220 and a Marie S. Curie Grant fellowship for D. M. (ELECTROORGANO, No. 101022144). The
221 Spanish Government-MCIN, the national agency of investigation-
222 AEI/10.13039/501100011033, and the European Regional Development Fund-ERDF for
223 project PID2020-120584RB-I00 to O.B., and FPU Fellowship (FPU19/01969 and
224 EST22/00303) to M.B.

225

226 **Competing interests.** No competing interests need to be declared.

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