Temperature-dependence of the structure of 2-(2'-hydroxyphenyl)benzimidazole studied by neutrons

Takashi Ohhara\textsuperscript{1}, Ryoji Kiyanagi\textsuperscript{1}, Akiko Nakao\textsuperscript{2}, Koji Munakata\textsuperscript{2}, Taketo Moyoshi\textsuperscript{2}, Takayasu Hanashima\textsuperscript{2}, Takaaki Hosoya\textsuperscript{3}
\textsuperscript{1}J-PARC Center, Japan Atomic Energy Agency, Tokai, Japan, \textsuperscript{2}Neutron Science and Technology Center, Comprehensive Research Organization for Science and Society, Tokai, Japan, \textsuperscript{3}Department of Quantum Beam Science, Graduate School of Science and Engineering, Ibaraki University, Hitachi, Japan
E-mail: takashi.ohhara@j-parc.jp

2-(2'-hydroxyphenyl)benzimidazole (1) has an intramolecular O-H…N hydrogen bond and shows excited-state intramolecular proton transfer, from the enol form to the keto form, by UV and visible light irradiation. So, 1 and its derivatives have been studied as a candidate of new photo-functional material such as a fluorescent probe and a laser-device. In 2012, Konoshima and co-workers showed that fluorescence excitation spectra of the α-form crystal of 1 showed a strong temperature dependence and suggested that the enol and keto form are in near thermal equilibrium and potential barrier between the enol and keto form should be very low \cite{1}.

In this research, we carried out single crystal neutron diffraction measurements of an α-form 1 crystal at room temperature and 4 K to observe the temperature dependent enol-keto equilibrium by diffraction technique. A 4.0 x 2.0 x 0.2 mm triangle shape crystal, prepared by slow evaporation from ethanol-water mixed solvent, was fixed on a aluminum rod, mounted on a closed-cycle pulse-tube cryostat with a 2-axes goniometer and set on SENJU, a time-of-flight Laue type single crystal neutron diffractometer at J-PARC \cite{2}. Diffraction images were measured with 14 orientations at 4K and 15 orientations at room temperature, respectively. Neutron exposure time for one orientation was 3 hours. Finally, intensities of 17486 reflections with 0.4 Å d-minimum at 4 K and 7803 reflections with 0.6 Å d-minimum at room temperature were collected.

Structure refinements were carried out by using JANA2006 and SHELXL-2014. In both temperatures, positional and anisotropic displacement parameters of all hydrogen and non-hydrogen atoms were refined without structural restraint. Results of the refinements showed that the keto form of 1 was not observed even at room temperature. On the other hand, O-H distance of the intramolecular O-H…N hydrogen bond were slightly elongated. This temperature dependent elongation of the O-H bond can be an origin of the temperature dependence of fluorescence excitation spectra of 1.


\textbf{Keywords: } single crystal neutron diffraction, SENJU, hydrogen migration