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# Ultrafine Pt nanoparticles supported on a dendrimer containing thiol groups: an efficient catalyst for the synthesis of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles from benzyl alcohol derivatives in water†

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A novel and unique platform was prepared based on a dendrimer containing thiol groups supported on nanosilica (nSTDP), and ultrafine platinum nanoparticles were synthesized and immobilized on the thiol decorated branches of nSTDP. The new catalyst, (Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP), was characterized by different techniques such as FE-SEM, TEM, ICP, XPS and DR UV-vis. This heterogeneous catalyst presented an outstanding performance for the synthesis of benzimidazole and benzothiazole derivatives through a reaction between benzyl alcohol derivatives and 2-aminothiophenol or 1,2-phenylenediamine. No requirement for the pre-reduction of catalysts and using water as a green solvent make it an individual catalyst for these reactions. Furthermore, the catalyst can be easily recovered and reused five consecutive times in the production of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles without significant leaching of Pt and loss of its activity which illustrated the chemical stability of the catalyst during the reaction.

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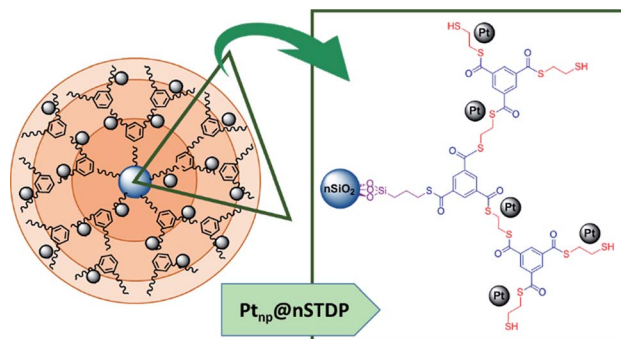
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## Introduction

Noble metals have attracted more attention in catalytic systems<sup>1</sup> and Pt-based catalysts like Pt nanoparticles are one of the most useful and valuable catalysts in chemical reactions.<sup>2,3</sup> Due to the high cost and scarcity of platinum metal, its immobilizing with preservation of the activity and homogeneous size distribution of nanoparticles is one of the main topics in environmental, economic and safety issues. Different supports such as polymers,<sup>4</sup> metal-organic frameworks,<sup>5</sup> metal oxides<sup>6</sup> and dendrimers<sup>7</sup> have been used for immobilizing the Pt nanoparticles. But synthesis of structures with a proper surface which minimize the size of particles (less than 5 nm) and maximize the efficiency of catalyst by increasing the surface active sites, is still a challenge.<sup>8-10</sup> Consequently, for the employment of all of the advantages of Pt-nanoparticles, it is important to find a support that can produce very small nanoparticles and prevents their agglomeration. Dendrimer-encapsulated nanoparticles (DES) could be considered as excellent candidates for hosting nanoparticles because of: (a) hyperbranched structure which leads to adsorption of the substrates for performing of reaction

efficiently in catalytic systems, (b) control the size of nanoparticles and production of homogeneous nano-metals with narrow size distribution, and (c) tunability of branches for specific interaction with nano-metals and avoiding the agglomeration of them after synthesis.<sup>11,12</sup>

Chandler and co-workers synthesized polyamidoamine (PAMAM) dendrimers for encapsulation of Pt nanoparticles and used it as a precursor for the production of nanoparticle catalysts.<sup>13</sup> Crooks *et al.* have immobilized dendrimer-encapsulated Pt nanoparticles on glassy carbon electrodes and used it for the

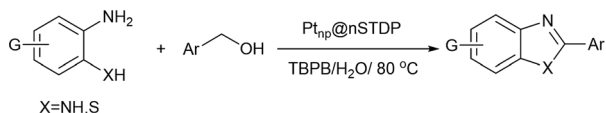


**Scheme 1** The structure of immobilized Pt-nano particles on sulfur decorated dendrimer.

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Scheme 2 Synthesis of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles from alcohols catalyzed by  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$ .

$\text{O}_2$  reduction reaction (ORR).<sup>14</sup> Based on the reports on the design of dendrimers with different functional groups such as nitrogen,<sup>15</sup> oxygen<sup>16</sup> and sulfur<sup>17</sup> and the good interaction between platinum and sulfur,<sup>18,19</sup> the first step of this study is decoration of a dendrimer with sulfur functional group for stabilizing of Pt-nanoparticles. The selection of appropriate central core was the next step in the architecture of the dendrimer structure due to the difficulty of dendrimers separation and the importance of recovery and reusability of DES.<sup>20</sup> Regarding the ability to be functionalized and benefits of nano-size structures, nano-silica sounds a very intelligently choice for central core of designed dendrimer (Scheme 1).

To confirm the catalytic activity of immobilized Pt-nanoparticles on designed dendrimer, the synthesis of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles was investigated (Scheme 2). Benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles specially 2-substituted ones, are a valuable class of heterocycles that have many applications in biological activities including antitumor, anti-cancer, and antibacterial,<sup>21</sup> agricultural chemicals,<sup>22</sup> and organic functional materials.<sup>23</sup> Shiraishi and co-workers reported an efficient dehydrogenative coupling reaction for the synthesis of benzimidazole compounds from primary alcohols.<sup>24</sup> Shimizu *et al.* reported a new Pt based catalyst for synthesis of 2-substituted benzothiazoles and benzimidazoles from 2-aminothiophenol and 1,2-phenylenediamine with

alcohols or aldehydes under acceptor- and additive-free conditions.<sup>25</sup> But some problems such as pre-reduction of catalyst, using an organic solvent or low yield of the product after recovery of catalyst should be considered.

On the other hands, utilizing water as a green solvent is the most substantial issue in these reactions.

In this project, a sulfur decorated dendrimer based on nano silica was designed, synthesized and applied as a convenient support for the immobilization of Pt-nanoparticles. The activity of the obtained catalyst ( $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$ ) was checked for the synthesis of benzimidazoles or benzothiazoles with benzyl alcohol derivatives in water under mild conditions.

## Results and discussion

### Characterization

As illustrated in Scheme 3, the synthesis of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  is started with functionalization of nano-silica and continued by

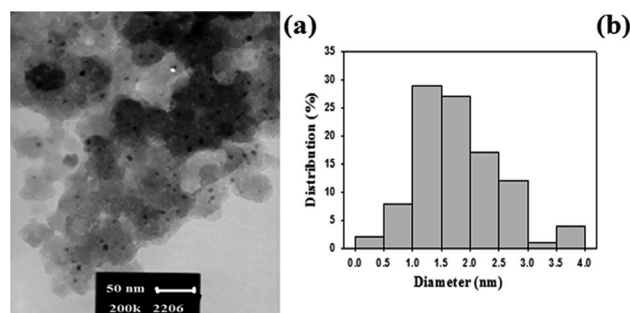
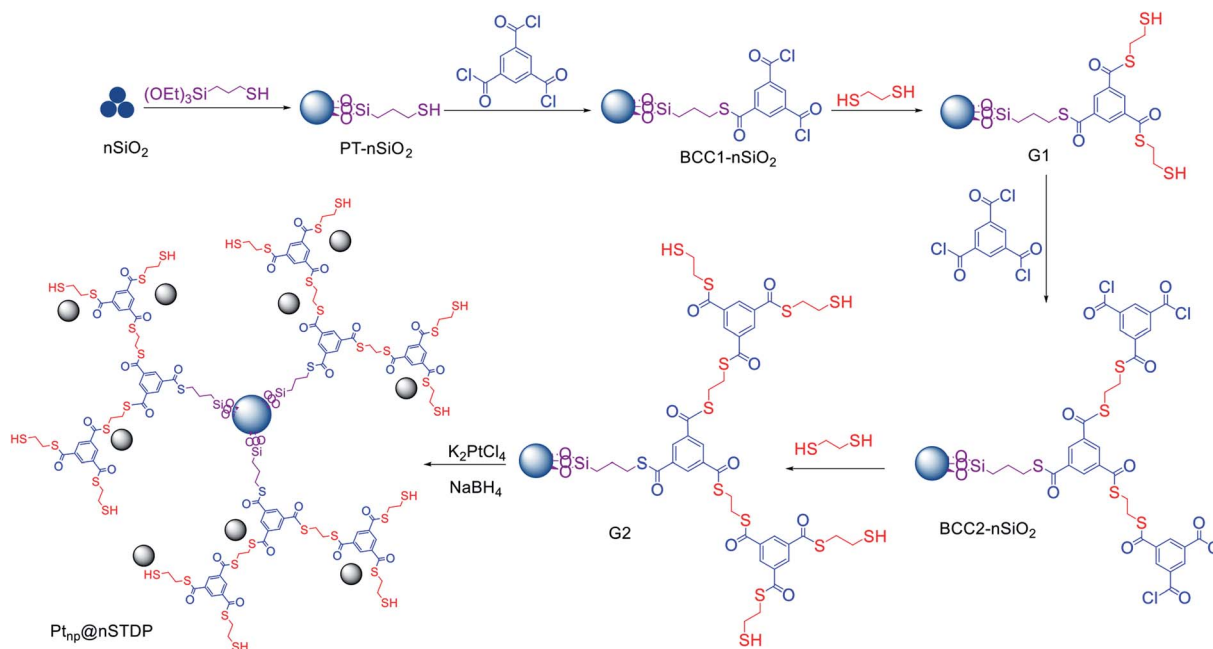
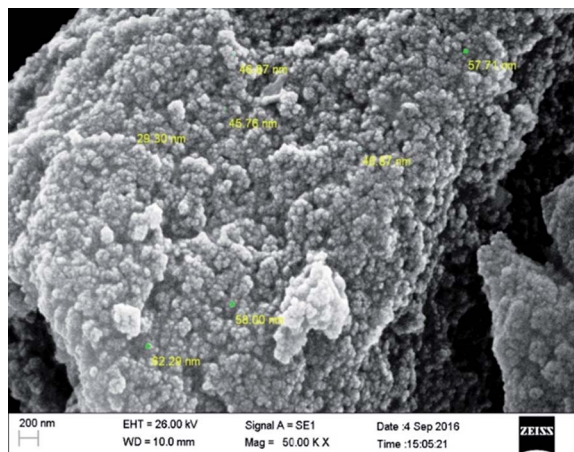


Fig. 1 (a) TEM image of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  and (b) particle size distribution histogram of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$ .



Scheme 3 Synthesis route of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$ .

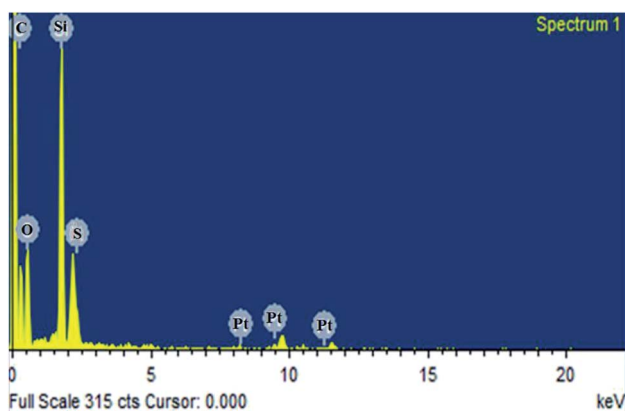
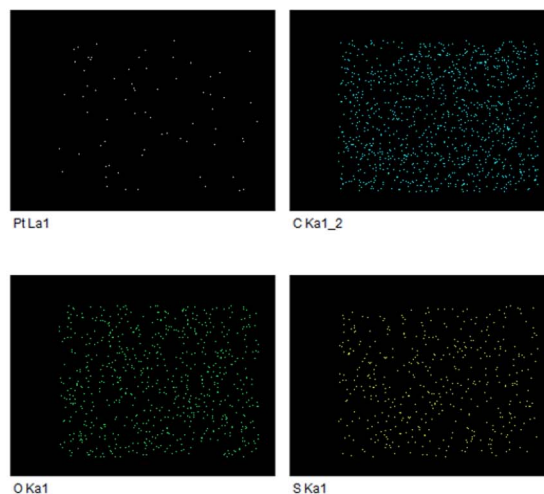
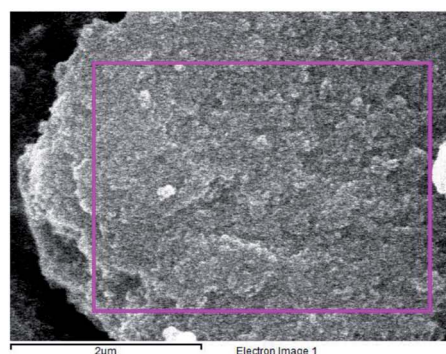


Fig. 2 FE-SEM images of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP.

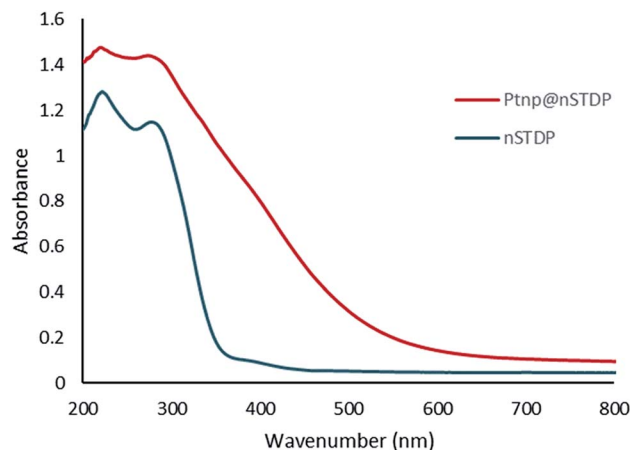
growing the thiol dendrimer (divergent growth strategy). Then, the Pt nanoparticles were trapped by the thiol groups of dendrimer *via* reduction of K<sub>2</sub>PtCl<sub>4</sub> with NaBH<sub>4</sub> to obtain the Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP.

The step by step synthesis of the Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP was monitored by FT-IR spectroscopy. The FTIR spectra for PT-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, BCC1-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, G1, BCC2-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, and G2 are illustrated in Fig. S1.† The bands at 500, 850, 1150 and 3000–3700 cm<sup>-1</sup> are attributed to Si–O asymmetric bending, Si–O symmetric stretching, Si–O–Si asymmetric stretching and O–H stretching in nano-silica or adsorbed water, respectively, which confirmed the presence of nano-silica in all structures. The C–H bending band at 1400 and C–H stretching bands at 2800–3000 cm<sup>-1</sup> display the growth of dendrimer branches in the structures. The characteristic bands at 1700 and 1750 cm<sup>-1</sup> correspond to carbonyl groups.

The amount of platinum nanoparticles supported on the dendritic polymer was measured by ICP which showed a value of about 0.06 mmol per gram of the heterogeneous catalyst. One of the main targets of this research is achieving of Pt nanoparticle with size less than 5 nm. Based on TEM images (Fig. 1), we successfully synthesized very small Pt nanoparticle with an excellent size distribution around 1–2 nm.

Fig. 3 SEM-EDX spectrum of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP.Fig. 4 Elemental mapping (S, C, O and Pt) of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP.

By considering the 1.5 nm for average diameter of nanoparticles and density of platinum (21.45 g cm<sup>-3</sup>), we can use  $N_{Pt} = d(\pi/6)D^3$  equation for calculation of the number of Pt nanoparticles in one cluster.<sup>26–28</sup> Where  $d$  is the density of Pt nanoparticles and  $D$  is the average diameter of nanoparticles. Based on this formula, the number of Pt atoms in the one cluster was calculated as 117 atoms and considering the result of ICP

Fig. 5 Diffuse reflectance UV-vis spectrum of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP and nSTDP.

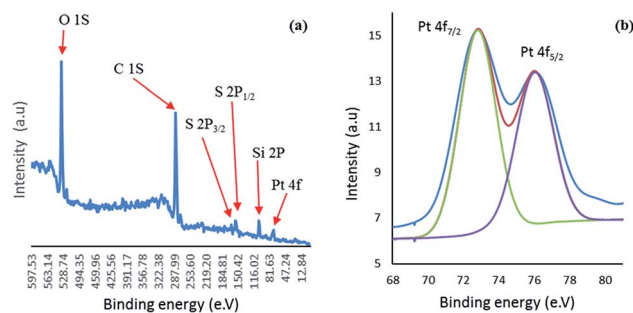


Fig. 6 The XPS spectra of catalyst: (a) the elemental survey scan, (b) Pt  $4f_{7/2}$  and Pt  $4f_{5/2}$  binding energies.

analysis (0.06 mmol Pt per g), there are  $31 \times 10^{16}$  Pt atom in one gram of catalyst.

The overall morphology of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP nano-catalyst was evaluated by field emission scanning electron microscopy (FE-SEM) (Fig. 2). As can be seen the catalyst particles are spherical with an average size of about 50 nm. The presence of Si, S, and Pt in the texture of the Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP was proved using the energy dispersive X-ray (EDX) results, collected from SEM analysis (Fig. 3). Also, elemental mapping of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP displays the uniform dispersion of Pt nanoparticles in the nSTDP (Fig. 4).

The UV-vis spectrum provided informative evidence for immobilization of the Pt nanoparticles on thiol dendrimer. The

absorption spectrum of thiol dendrimer shows peaks at about 225 and 285 nm (Fig. 5). The UV-vis spectrum of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP illustrated two peaks, which attributed to thiol dendrimer and two absorption peaks at 216 and 264 nm which are assigned to Pt nanoparticles,<sup>29</sup> are vanished the beneath of dendrimer absorption.

The X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) was carried out for investigation of the detailed elemental composition and chemical state of the Pt nanoparticles (Fig. 6). The XPS survey spectrum shows the peaks attributed to C 1s, Si 2p, O 1s, S 2p and Pt 4f in the nano catalyst which is in accordance with EDX results. The doublet peak at 76.0 and 72.8 eV with  $\Delta = 3.2$  corresponds to Pt  $4f_{7/2}$  and  $4f_{5/2}$ , respectively and proved the reduction of Pt(II) to metallic Pt in the dendrimer branches. Furthermore, the binding energy for Pt shifted to higher value compared with Pt bulk while it is lower than the binding energy for Pt(II).<sup>30,31</sup> This shift in binding energy has been corresponded to two factors: particle size and ligand effect.<sup>32</sup> Regarding to this shift in ultrafine Pt nanoparticle<sup>33,34</sup> and the ligand effect in same-size Pt nanoparticles,<sup>31</sup> this shift can be attributed to effect of ligand and interaction between Pt on the surface of nanoparticles and sulfurs in the dendrimer structure.<sup>35–37</sup>

Thermal gravimeter analysis (TGA) curves for PT-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, BCC1-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, G1, BCC2-nSiO<sub>2</sub> and G2 (nSTDP) were displayed in Fig. S2.† The PT-nSiO<sub>2</sub>, BCC1-nSiO<sub>2</sub> and G1 decomposed between 350–450 °C and BCC2-nSiO<sub>2</sub> showed two distinguished steps related to the decomposition of different functional

Table 1 Optimization of the conditions for synthesis of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles

Entry	Catalyst (mg, mmol Pt)	Ion liquid (1 mmol)	Solvent (2 mL)	T (°C)	Time (min)	Yield (%) (X = NH)	Yield (%) (X = S)
1	—	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	—	—
2	nSiO <sub>2</sub> (30)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	3	4
3	nSTDP (30)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	5	5
4	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSiO <sub>2</sub> (30)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	75	65
5	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	97	93
6	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	30	70	73
7	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	120	97	94
8	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	—	80	90	—	—
9	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	DMF	120	90	75	75
10	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	CH <sub>3</sub> CN	70	90	30	35
11	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (10, 0.0006)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	78	78
12	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (50, 0.003)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	97	95
13	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (100, 0.006)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	97	97
14	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	60	90	70	70
15	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	90	90	97	97
16	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBPB	H <sub>2</sub> O	100	90	97	96
17	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	—	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	8	8
18	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	TBAB	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	77	80
19	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	[BMIM]Br	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	60	65
20	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	[BMIM]Cl	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	45	45
21	Pt <sub>np</sub> @nSTDP (30, 0.0018)	[BMIM]NO <sub>3</sub>	H <sub>2</sub> O	80	90	42	40



Table 2 Synthesis of benzimidazoles catalyzed by Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP

Entry	G	Alcohol	Product	Time (min)	Yield (%)	TOF (h <sup>-1</sup> )
1	H			95	94	329.8
2	H			90	97	359.2
3	H			120	97	269.4
4	4-Me			180	89	164.8
5	H			100	96	300.6
6	4-Cl			190	90	145.1
7	4-Me			200	84	127.2
8	H			170	90	160.7
9	H			210	89	127.1
10	4-Me			210	90	128.5
11	H			95	91	303.3



Table 3 Synthesis of benzothiazoles catalyzed by Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP

1 mmol + 1 mmol  $\xrightarrow[\text{TBPB/H}_2\text{O/ 80 }^\circ\text{C}]{\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@\text{nSTDP}(0.0018\text{mmol})}$  Product

Entry	Alcohol	Product	Time (min)	Yield (%)	TOF (h <sup>-1</sup> )
1			95	94	329.8
2			90	97	359.2
3			120	97	269.4
4			125	91	227.5
5			95	94	313.3
6			120	96	240.0
7			190	83	133.8
8			150	90	180
9			120	92	230
10			100	90	281.2

groups. The decomposition of G2 started before 300 °C is probably due to the presence of different organic moieties in the structure which is not distinct because of variety of functional groups. The weight of residue was decreased as expected with the growth of dendrimer on the nano silica step by step.

#### Catalytic activity of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP

After the Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP catalyst was characterized by different technical analyses, its ability was explored in the synthesis of

benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles from different benzyl alcohols. In this regard, the reaction between 1,2-phenylenediamine (1 mmol) and 4-chlorobenzylalcohol (1 mmol) was chosen as a model reaction. The effect of different reaction parameters such as type of solvent, temperature, amount of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP catalyst and the influence of ionic liquids was investigated on the reaction yield (Table 1). For the investigation of the efficiency of the catalyst some model reactions were designed and performed in the absence of catalyst and in the



presence of  $n\text{SiO}_2$ ,  $n\text{STDP}$ ,  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{SiO}_2$ , and  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  (Table 1, entries 2–5). The results showed that  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  was the most effective catalyst for this reaction. The yield in the absence of catalyst and in the presence of  $n\text{SiO}_2$  and thiol containing dendritic polymer cannot catalyze the reaction.

On the other hand, the  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{SiO}_2$  and  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  promoted the reaction yield, and  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  showed higher activity. This is due to the well dispersion and small size of Pt nanoparticles on the  $n\text{STDP}$  which provides more active sites for catalyzing the reaction. Investigation on reaction time showed that the best time for gaining the high yield of benzimidazole is 90 min (Table 1, entries 5–7).

For evaluation of the effect of solvent on the conversion, the reaction was carried out under solvent-free conditions and no product was produced. DMF, chloroform and water as solvent displayed similar yields for DMF and water, and regarding the green chemistry aspects, water was selected as the best solvent.

Furthermore, the amount of catalyst was studied, and 30 mg was chosen as the desired amount. The model reaction was carried out at 60, 80, 90 and 100 °C and the same results were achieved at 80, 90 and 100 °C. As expected, the reaction in the absence of ionic liquid was less effective and for more investigation, different ionic liquids were tested in the model reaction and TBPB was selected as phase transfer catalyst (Table 1, entries 17–21). Due to the bigger size of cation, TBPB is more useful than ammonium and imadazolium-based ionic liquids.

The optimization of the parameters continued with reaction of 2-aminothiophenol (1 mmol) with 4-chlorobenzylalcohol (1 mmol) as a model reaction for the optimization of the reaction conditions in the synthesis of benzothiazoles. The data, which are summarized in Table 1, showed similar results obtained in the synthesis of benzimidazoles. Finally, 30 mg of catalyst (containing 0.0018 mmol  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}$ ) in  $\text{H}_2\text{O}$  and 1 mg TBPB at 80 °C

(Table 1, entry 5) was used as the best conditions for synthesis of different benzothiazoles.

After determination of ideal reaction conditions, various aromatic benzylalcohols were reacted efficiently with 1,2-phenylenediamine in the presence of catalytic amounts of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  at 80 °C to afford the conforming benzimidazoles in high yields (89–97%) (Table 2). Furthermore, this catalytic system was used for the reaction of different benzylalcohols with 2-aminothiophenol for the synthesis of benzothiazoles. Based on the results in Table 3, the high yield of benzothiazoles (more than 90%) was obtained for all of the substrates. Two sets of reactions illustrated very excellent performance in the water for both electron-donating and electron-withdrawing alcohols.

Based on the literature,<sup>25</sup> the plausible mechanism is presented in Fig. 7. In the first step, Pt is converted to  $\text{PtH}_2$  and catalyzes dehydrogenation of benzyl alcohol to give the corresponding benzaldehyde. *o*-Phenylenediamine (or 2-aminothiophenol) and benzaldehyde produce the C through intermediate A and B. In this step, water accelerates the conversion to C through 5-*exo*-tet cyclization *via* a tetrahedral intermediate (Baldwins rules).<sup>38,39</sup> In the last step, the

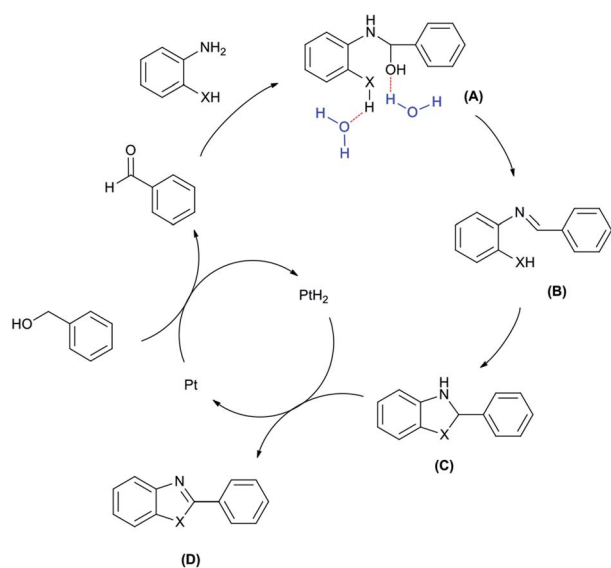


Fig. 7 Purposed mechanism for synthesis of benzimidazole and benzothiazole in the presence of Pt nanoparticle as catalyst ( $X = \text{NH}$ , S).

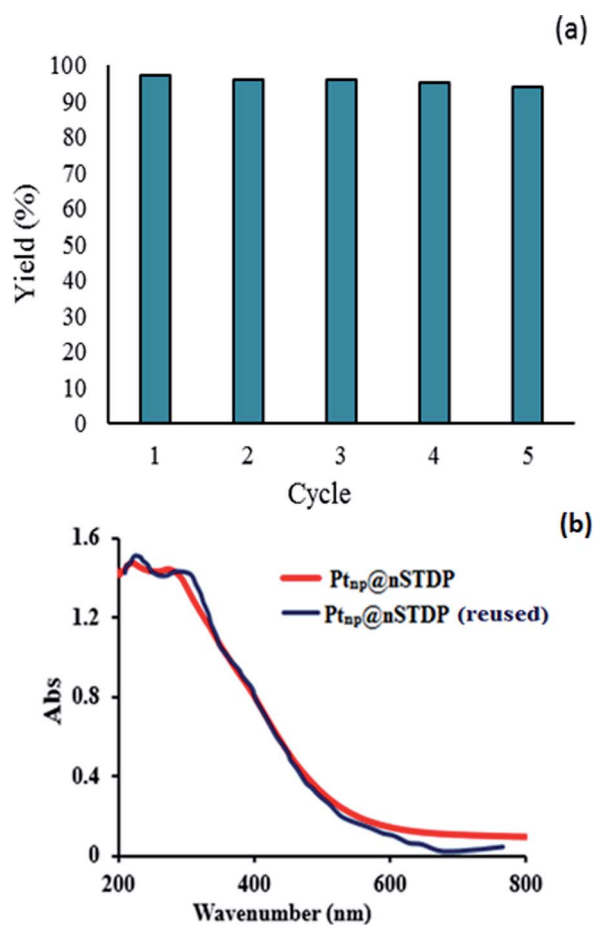


Fig. 8 (a) The recycling of  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  in the synthesis of benzimidazoles between benzylalcohols and phenylenediamine under optimized conditions. (b) UV-vis spectra for fresh  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$  and reused  $\text{Pt}_{\text{np}}@n\text{STDP}$ .



benzimidazole (or benzothiazole) is produced by dehydrogenation of PtH<sub>2</sub> and regeneration of Pt.

### Catalyst recycling and reuse

Since the catalyst recycling is the most important issue for a heterogeneous catalyst from economic, environmental and industrial points of view, we investigated the recycling of the catalyst for the synthesis of benzimidazoles by the reaction between 4-chlorobenzyl alcohol with 1,2-phenylenediamine under the optimized conditions.

After completion of each reaction the catalyst was washed with ethyl acetate and was separated by centrifugation; dried in a vacuum oven at 80 °C and then reused. As shown in Fig. 8, DR UV-vis spectrum of the catalyst after five catalytic cycles showed no significant change compared to UV-vis spectrum of the fresh catalyst. The amount of Pt<sub>np</sub>nSTDP catalyst leached was measured by ICP. The result showed that the amount of platinum in the recovered Pt<sub>np</sub>nSTDP catalyst after the five cycles was 0.0564 mmol g<sup>-1</sup> to produce benzimidazole (about 9% of the initial Pt is leached).

The role of alkanethiols in the stabilization of Pt nanoparticles was investigated after first prepared gold alkanethiolated nanoparticles<sup>40</sup> and proved in previous literatures.<sup>41–43</sup> The Pt nanoparticles have also stabilized through encapsulation in dendrimers by protecting them from agglomeration.<sup>13,44,45</sup> The combination of these factors has been seen in Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP and makes the Pt nanoparticles very stable during reaction *via* encapsulation it in dendrimer and interaction between nanoparticles and thiol groups.

For comparison of catalytic performance of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP, the catalytic activity of similar systems containing Pt

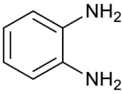
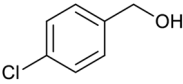
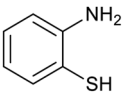
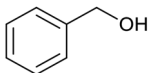
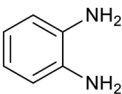
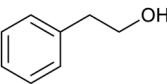
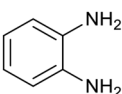
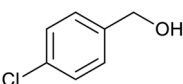
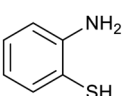
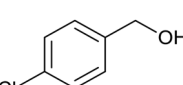
nanoparticles have been presented in Table 4. Pt nanoparticle on the TiO<sub>2</sub> was used for the synthesis of benzimidazole that after 24 h, the yield was 60% and under photoirradiation conditions after 12 h, 82% of benzimidazole was produced (Table 4, entries 1 and 3). In this work, Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP can produce 97% of the corresponding benzimidazole after 90 min in H<sub>2</sub>O which is an excellent result compared to the previous catalysts. Furthermore, the comparison of this catalyst and Pt/Al<sub>2</sub>O<sub>3</sub> (Table 4, entry 2) shows a very individual performance of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP for the synthesis of benzothiazole. Very ultrafine Pt nanoparticles and high stability of catalyst during the reaction are two important factors for this excellent operation.

## Experimental

### Methods

Melting points were determined using a Stuart Scientific SMP2 apparatus. <sup>1</sup>H and <sup>13</sup>C (400 and 100 MHz) spectra were recorded in CDCl<sub>3</sub> solvent on a Bruker-Avance 400 spectrometer. Elemental analyses were done on a LECO, CHNS-932 analyzer. Thermogravimetric analyses (TGA) were carried out on a Mettler TG50 instrument under air flow at a uniform heating rate of 5 °C min<sup>-1</sup> in the range of 30–600 °C. The UV-vis diffuse reflectance spectra of the samples were recorded by a JASCO V-670 spectrophotometer. The X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy (XPS) measurements were performed using a GammaData-Scientia ESCA200 hemispherical analyzer equipped with an Al (K = 1486.6 eV) X-ray source. The Pt content of the catalyst was measured by an inductively coupled plasma optical emission spectrometry (ICP-OES), using a Jarrell-Ash 1100 ICP analyzer. Scanning electron microscopy measurements were performed

Table 4 Comparison of catalytic performance of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP with similar systems

Entry	Catalyst	Sub.	Sub.	Time	Yield (%)
1 (ref. 24)	Pt@TiO <sub>2</sub>			12 h	82 <sup>a</sup>
2 (ref. 25)	Pt/Al <sub>2</sub> O <sub>3</sub>			24 h	55 <sup>b</sup>
3 (ref. 25)	Pt/TiO <sub>2</sub>			24 h	60 <sup>c</sup>
4	Pt <sub>np</sub> nSTDP (this work)			1.5 h	97 <sup>d</sup>
5	Pt <sub>np</sub> nSTDP (this work)			1.5 h	94 <sup>d</sup>

<sup>a</sup> Reaction conditions: catalyst (5 mg), alcohol (750 μmol), MeCN (5 mL), under N<sub>2</sub> (1 atm), λ > 300 nm. <sup>b</sup> Reaction conditions: catalyst (1 mol%), mesitylene (1.2 mL), reflux, under N<sub>2</sub>. <sup>c</sup> Reaction conditions: catalyst (1 mol%), mesitylene (1.2 mL) reflux, under N<sub>2</sub>. <sup>d</sup> Reaction conditions: catalyst (30 mg, containing 0.0018 mmol Pt<sub>np</sub>), alcohol (1 mmol) and 1 mmol TBPB in H<sub>2</sub>O at 80 °C.





on a Hitachi S-4700 field emission-scanning electron microscope (FE-SEM). Transmission electron microscopy (TEM) was carried out on a Philips CM10 analyzer operating at 100 kV.

### Preparation of Pt nanoparticles immobilized on nano-silica thiolated dendritic polymer (Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP)

The nano-silica thiolated dendritic polymer, nSTDP, was prepared according to our previously reported work (see ESI†).<sup>46</sup>

K<sub>2</sub>PtCl<sub>4</sub> (0.01 g) was added to a mixture of nSTDP (G2) (0.1 g) in H<sub>2</sub>O (10 mL) and stirred at room temperature for 12 h. A solution of NaBH<sub>4</sub> (0.5 g in 20 mL cold deionized water) was added to this mixture and stirred at room temperature for 12 h. At the end of the reaction, the solid material was filtered, washed sequentially with H<sub>2</sub>O (25 mL) and then dried in a vacuum oven at 80 °C to obtain the Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP catalyst as a yellow solid.

### General procedure for synthesis of benzimidazoles or benzothiazoles in the presence of Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP catalyst

In a round-bottomed flask equipped with a condenser and a magnetic stirrer, a mixture of alcohol (1 mmol), 1,2-phenylenediamine or 2-aminothiophenol (1 mmol), Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP (30 mg, containing 0.0018 mmol Pt<sub>np</sub>) and (1 mmol) tetra-*n*-butylphosphonium bromide (TBPB, 1 mg) in H<sub>2</sub>O (2 mL) was stirred at 80 °C. The progress of the reaction was monitored by TLC (eluent: petroleum ether/EtOAc, 2 : 1 for benzimidazoles and petroleum ether/EtOAc, 5 : 1 for benzothiazoles). The catalyst was separated by filtration and washed with EtOAc (10 mL). The filtrate was evaporated, and the crude product was purified by recrystallization from EtOAc or EtOH to afford the pure benzimidazole. The benzothiazoles was obtained by recrystallization from *n*-hexane/EtOAc (10 : 1).

## Conclusions

In conclusion, we synthesized a dendritic polymer, based on nano silica, containing thiol groups for immobilization of Pt nanoparticles with 1–2 nm size on the branches of dendrimer (Pt<sub>np</sub>@nSTDP). This material was used as a unique heterogeneous catalyst for synthesis of benzimidazoles and benzothiazoles from benzyl alcohol derivatives in the water as a green solvent and high yields were obtained for a variety of substrates. Furthermore, with easy separation, the catalyst was reused five times at two reactions without loss of activity which confirms the stability of catalyst during the reaction.

## Conflicts of interest

There are no conflicts to declare.

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