

BI-LAYER BIOMIMETIC PROTEIN COATINGS ON HF-TREATED
COMMERCIAL PURE MAGNESIUM FOR POTENTIAL BONE IMPLANT
APPLICATIONS

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to

My AMAZING:

ABAH; Mat Noor,

UMMI; Che Norma

My AWESOME:

four SISTERS and three BROTHERS

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In the name of Allah, The Most Gracious and The Most Merciful.

Salawat and Salam to prophet Nabi Muhammad S.A.W.

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ABSTRACT

Magnesium-based biomaterials have a great potential as biodegradable bone repair implants due to its mechanical properties which similar to natural bone, osteoconductive and osteogenic potential that promote the formation of new bones. The degradation of magnesium (Mg) has become the most crucial characteristic with regards to its success as bone implants. Additionally, good cellular response and attachment are desirable to allow the implant to be fully integrated with the human biological system. However, rapid degradation of Mg in the physiological environment hinders its clinical application. In order to improve Mg, as an ideal bone implant, a biocompatible protective surface coating that can reduce the biodegradation rate with better cell/surface interactions on pure Mg was developed. The present study aimed to develop bi-layer coatings to functionalise pure Mg surface, composed of non-toxic elements that decelerated the degradation rate in physiological solution while enhancing the cellular response of osteoblast cells (hFOB) on the treated surface of pure Mg. The hydrofluoride (HF) conversion surface treatment was applied as the first coating layer and acted as a protective film to decelerate the fast degradation rate. Then, biomimetic protein coatings from fetal bovine serum (FBS) and/or collagen type I were applied as the second coating layer to enhance cell/surface interactions of the implants. The *in-vitro* assessment was used to investigate the biodegradation performances of the developed bi-layered coatings. The treated surface and bi-layer coating were then subjected to FESEM, SEM, EDS measurement, XRD, ATR-FTIR, contact angle and protein release for surface characterisation analyses. The degradation rate was examined through *in-vitro* semi-static immersion, TAFEL extrapolation and EIS test in DMEM + 10% FBS solution. The bioactivity, biocompatibility and osteogenic differentiation measurements also have been conducted. Protein adsorption was detected with a complex chemical composition through the presence of amide, PO_4^{3-} and CO_3^{2-} groups incorporated fluoride ions on the treated surface. After 21 days immersion, both biomimetic protein coatings showed higher corrosion rate compared with the pure Mg but lower corrosion rate than the surface treated Mg. For long-term evaluation by the EIS test, the biomimetic collagen/apatite coating demonstrated a better protective corrosion product layer in the electrochemical corrosion by gradually increasing the charge transfer resistance value until 21 days immersion through a self-healing process. For the cytotoxicity test, after 28 days immersion, the collagen/apatite surface coated showed higher cell viability with 74.1% better cell adhesion and proliferation as well as forming 3D hFOB cells cellular network. Besides, both protein coatings can accelerate the osteogenic differentiation of hFOB cells. Collagen/apatite coating induced the highest ALP activity and gradually increased the Ca and collagen accumulation production in ECM. The 3D porous scaffold was also well accepted by hFOB cells for attachment, spreading, migrations and cell ingrowth. This research study concludes that the biomimetic collagen type I coating could be used to control implant degradation rate for long-term and enhance cell/surface interactions.

ABSTRAK

Biobahan berasaskan magnesium berpotensi tinggi sebagai implan pembaikan tulang terurai kerana sifat mekanikalnya yang sama dengan tulang semula jadi, potensi konduktif osteo dan genik osteo yang mendorong pembentukan tulang baru. Penguraian magnesium (Mg) telah menjadi ciri paling penting dalam kejayaannya sebagai implan tulang. Tambahan, tindak balas dan pelekatan selular yang baik diperlukan untuk implan bergabung sepenuhnya dengan sistem biologi manusia. Namun, penguraian pantas Mg dalam persekitaran fisiologi menghalang aplikasi klinikal. Justeru bagi menambah baik Mg sebagai implan tulang yang ideal, lapisan permukaan pelindung bioserasi yang dapat mengurangkan kadar penguraian dibangunkan beserta interaksi sel/permukaan yang lebih baik berbanding Mg tulen. Kajian ini bertujuan untuk membangunkan salutan dua lapisan pada permukaan Mg tulen, mengandungi unsur-unsur tidak toksik, yang melambatkan kadar penguraian dalam larutan fisiologi di samping meningkatkan tindak balas sel-sel osteoblas (hFOB) di atas permukaan Mg tulen terawat. Rawatan permukaan penukaran florik hidro (HF) digunakan sebagai lapisan pertama dan bertindak sebagai filem pelindung untuk melambatkan kadar penguraian. Kemudian, lapisan protein biomimetik dari *fetal bovine serum* (FBS) dan/atau kolagen jenis I digunakan sebagai lapisan kedua untuk meningkatkan interaksi sel/permukaan implan. Penilaian *in-vitro* telah digunakan untuk menyiasat prestasi penguraian salutan dua lapisan yang dibangunkan. Permukaan terawat dan salutan dua lapisan kemudiannya dihantar ke FESEM, SEM, pengukuran EDS, XRD, ATR-FTIR, sudut sentuh dan pelepasan protein untuk analisis permukaan pencirian. Kadar penguraian dikenal pasti melalui kaedah rendaman semi-statik *in-vitro*, ekstrapolasi TAFEL dan ujian EIS dalam larutan DMEM + 10% FBS. Pengukuran bioaktiviti, bioserasi dan pengukuran pembezaan genik osteo juga telah dijalankan. Kehadiran protein dikesan dengan komposisi kimia yang kompleks, melalui kehadiran kumpulan amida, PO_4^{3-} dan CO_3^{2-} gabungan ion fluorida pada permukaan yang dirawat. Selepas rendaman 21 hari, kedua-dua lapisan protein biomimetik menunjukkan kadar karatan tinggi berbanding dengan Mg tulen, tetapi kadar karatan lebih rendah daripada permukaan Mg yang dirawat. Bagi penilaian jangka panjang melalui ujian EIS, lapisan kolagen biomimetik/apatit menghasilkan lapisan produk karatan pelindung yang lebih baik dalam elektrokimia karatan dengan peningkatan nilai rintangan pemindahan caj secara beransur sehingga 21 hari rendaman melalui proses penyembuhan diri. Untuk ujian toksik sel, setelah 28 hari rendaman, salutan permukaan kolagen/apatit menunjukkan daya maju sel yang tinggi dengan 74.1% lekatan dan percambahan sel yang lebih baik serta membentuk rangkaian 3D sel hFOB. Selain itu, kedua-dua lapisan protein dapat mempercepatkan pembezaan genik osteo sel hFOB. Salutan kolagen/apatit mendorong nilai aktiviti ALP yang tertinggi dan meningkatkan pengeluaran terkumpul Ca dan kolagen di ECM. Perancah berliang 3D juga diterima dengan baik oleh sel-sel hFOB untuk pelekatan, penyebaran, migrasi dan pertumbuhan sel. Kajian penyelidikan ini menyimpulkan bahawa lapisan kolagen biomimetik jenis I dapat digunakan untuk mengawal kadar penguraian implan pada jangka masa panjang dan meningkatkan interaksi sel/permukaan.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ALP	-	Alkaline phosphatase
ANOVA	-	One way analysis of variance
ARS	-	Alizarin red S
ASTM	-	American Society for Testing and Materials
ATR	-	Attenuated total reflectance
BSA	-	Bovine serum albumin
C	-	Carbon
Ca	-	Calcium
CaCO ₃	-	Calcium carbonate
Cl	-	Chloride
CO ₂	-	Carbon dioxide
CO ₃ ²⁻	-	Carbonate
-COOH	-	Carboxyl group
C=O	-	Carbonyl group
CH ₂	-	Methylene group
Col-I	-	Collagen type I
DMEM	-	Dulbecco's modified eagle's medium
DMSO	-	Dimethylsulfoxide
ECM	-	Extracellular matrix
EDS	-	Energy dispersive spectroscopy
F	-	Fluorine ions
FBS	-	Fetal bovine serum
FESEM	-	Field emission scanning electron microscope

FTIR	-	Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy
HA	-	Hydroxyapatite
HBSS	-	Hank's balanced salt solution
HF	-	Hydrofluoride
HF	-	High frequency
MF	-	Middle frequency
LF	-	Low frequency
hFOB	-	Human foetal osteoblast cells
H ₂ O	-	Water
Mg	-	Magnesium
MgF ₂	-	Magnesium fluoride
Mg(OH) ₂	-	Magnesium hydroxide
MgCO ₃	-	Magnesium carbonate
MSCs	-	Mesenchymal stem cell
MTT	-	3-(4,5-Dimethylthiazol-2-yl)-2,5 diphenyl tetrazolium bromide
N	-	Nitrogen
Na	-	Sodium
NaHCO ₃	-	sodium bicarbonate
NaCl	-	Sodium chloride
N-H	-	Amide group
OD	-	Optical density
O ²⁻	-	Oxygen
OCP	-	Open circuit potential
OH	-	Hydroxide
P	-	Phosphate
PBS	-	Phosphate buffered saline

PO_4^{3-}	-	Phosphate
pH	-	Potential of hydrogen
R_s	-	Solution resistance
SBF	-	Simulated body fluid
SD	-	Standard deviation
SEM	-	Scanning electron microscopy
Ti	-	Titanium
TiO_2	-	Titania
UV	-	Ultraviolet-visible spectroscopy
XPS	-	X-ray photoelectron spectroscopy
XRD	-	The X-ray diffraction

LIST OF SYMBOLS

%	-	Percentage
At%	-	Atomic percentage
°	-	Degree
°C	-	Degree celcius
θ	-	Theta
Ω	-	Ohms
cm ²	-	Centimetre per square
g	-	Gram
g/L	-	Gram per litre
mg	-	Milligram
Hz	-	Hertz
kHz	-	Kilo hertz
μm	-	Micrometer
$\mu\text{g/ml}$	-	Microgram per millilitre
h	-	Hour
mmpy	-	Millimetre per year
mM/L	-	miliMolar per litre
mm	-	Millimetre
nm	-	Nanometre
rpm	-	Rotation per minute
V	-	Volt

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Magnesium (Mg) and its alloys are known as a suitable biodegradation implants in orthopaedic applications due to their degradation ability and similarity to human bone. Mg and its alloys present several advantages as compared with other metals such as titanium and stainless steel. The elastic modulus and density of Mg is as similar to the natural bone. Hence, the stress shielding effect could possibly be minimised. In addition, Mg is also an essential co-factor for about 700-800 enzyme systems that associated with the most important metabolic process in the human body [183]. The present of Mg^{2+} in the biological system could stimulate the new bone formation [9-11] by improving the osseointegration process. It also has a higher bone implant strength as compared to permanent Ti alloys implant [10, 117]. The most important is the release product from the degradation process would be converted into a soluble product. It is considered as a non-toxic oxide and could be safely excreted by kidneys [12, 13]. Hence, a subsequent surgery is not required to remove the Mg implant once the complete bone healing process was achieved at the surgery site.

Regardless of all advantages possessed by Mg and its alloys, the main drawback is a fast corrosion degradation of physiological environments [179, 182], which inhibited Mg from being as an ideal biodegradation implants and become feasible in the future. Fast degradation in human body will lead to a low mechanical strength of the implants at a rate that is faster than new bone formation and growth,

which might require a higher load strength [18, 161]. The largest achievement for Mg implants is the bioabsorbable Mg stents [2]. Mg is highly reactive under physiological environment. The corrosion reaction is mostly attributed from the composition of the exposure environment [186, 187], the impurity elements produced from the fabrication process [5, 6] and alloying composition [7, 8].

Surface modification and coating methods on Mg are efficient to reduce the fast degradation rate and increase the biocompatibility of the surface. The degradation rate must be in a slower mode to give a sufficient time to the body to deal with the degradation product, as well as allow the regeneration process for the new bone tissue formation around the Mg implant. Wang et al. [14] classified these two coating methods as chemical and physical surface modifications which are also known as physico-chemical method. The initial layer produced from the surface chemical modification is purposely to enhance the adhesion of second layer coating and become as a protective layer from the corrosive environment [15]. The outer coating layer produced from the physical coating could potentially increase the bioactivity and biocompatibility of the coated implant surface.

Surface modification from chemical reaction would form a new phase layer that covers the entire outer surface of Mg implant. This dense and compact layer become as a protective layer for Mg, hence, reduce the degradation rate. This type of method is capable to coat complex shape with ordered or non-ordered structure. The new phase of coating layer is not in passive conditions, and by time, it will gradually dissolve. The release ions from the treated surface are non-toxic to the surrounding tissue around the implantation site. Fluoride conversion coating would form MgF_2 phase on the pure Mg surface. MgF_2 has higher chemical stability and more stable in water compared to MgO , $Mg(OH)_2$ and $MgCl_2$ [124, 202], high adhesive strength and forming in a good compactness [181]. Therefore, MgF_2 coating layer possesses a high corrosion resistance in physiological environment [116].

The second coating layer is formed to enhance the bioactivity and biocompatibility of the surface using organics agent in the coating solution. Biomimetic protein coating can stimulate the osteoconduction and osseointegration of the Mg implants surface. Collagen type I (Col-I) and fetal bovine serum (FBS) are two types of protein that have been used for biomimetic coating. They are used to develop protein coating layer on the MgF₂ layer. Both proteins are biodegradable and biocompatible to the surrounding tissue and can be used in soft and hard tissue for regeneration process. It was reported that the adsorption of protein (FBS) on the pure Mg surface could effectively increase the corrosion resistance [162]. Previous findings also reported that collagen-based materials could be beneficial in multiple functions such as to produce porous matrices [156], hydrogels [194], scaffolds [154] and surface coatings [157, 158, 185].

Therefore, pure Mg was used in this study for the chemical surface modification by applying the fluoride conversion coating to develop MgF₂ layer. Subsequently, biomimetic protein coating was performed as the second coating layer using collagen type I and fetal bovine serum as the protein agent in the medium cell coating solution. The study was aimed to develop a functionalize biocompatible protective bi-layer coating that can possibly reduce the degradation rate of Mg in the early stages of bone healing. Hence, it would simultaneously enhance the cell/surface interaction to produce better osteoconductive and osseointegration.

1.2 Problem Statement

Magnesium has a limitation as a Mg-based biomaterial implant in orthopaedic application. After implantation, Mg surface reacts with the surrounding tissue and degrade rapidly *in vivo* effect from low corrosion resistance. Large volume of hydrogen evolution produces on the implant surface and accumulates around the implantation site [46, 47]. This leads to lower the mechanical integrity of the implant

and may delay the healing process of the fracture bone [52, 60]. Many researches examine the degradation of Mg in SBF, mSBF, HBSS and now interest on using cell culture medium such as EMEM and DMEM as the immersion solution. To mimic the *in vivo* environment, a lot of factors have to be considered not only the immersion itself.

A few studies regarding the collagen type I coating [157, 185] or MgF₂ coating on pure Mg [116, 127]. Nevertheless, all the studies only focus on single coating, individually. The study on the protein coating with MgF₂ as the inner layer has not performed yet. Furthermore, no details study related with the osseointegration and promotes the cellular response to the Mg surface together with the acceptable analysis in *in-vitro* degradation using TAFEL and EIS analysis.

1.3 Research Objectives

This thesis presents a study on *in-vitro* assessment of biomimetic protein coatings on treated surface of pure Mg with the following objectives:

- i. To synthesis the bi-layer functionalise coating on pure Mg.
- ii. To evaluate the biomimetic protein coatings and treated surface of pure Mg in terms of its surface morphology, chemical composition, crystalline structure, chemical functionality, wettability and protein release.
- iii. To analyse the effects of bi-layer coatings and treated surface on *in-vitro* degradation of magnesium.
- iv. To evaluate the bioactivity, biocompatibility and osteogenic differentiation of the bi-layer coatings and treated surface.

1.4 Scopes of Research

The scopes of the study are as follows:

1. Hydrofluoric acid with concentration of 49% was used for surface modification of pure Mg.
2. Biomimetic coating was applied as coating technique for two types of protein solution; in which collagen type I and fetal bovine serum were dissolved in cell culture medium to produce outer coating layer on the treated surface.
3. The pure Mg, treated surface and bi-layer protein coatings were subjected to microstructural characterization using field emission scanning microscope (FESEM), scanning emission scanning microscope (SEM), energy dispersive spectroscopy (EDS) measurement, X-Ray diffraction (XRD), fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (ATR-FTIR), contact angle measurement and protein release using Bradford Assay.
4. The *in-vitro* degradation behaviour of all samples was examined through semi-static immersion test, potentiodynamic polarisation (TAFEL) and electrochemical impedance spectroscopy (EIS) using cell culture medium (DMEM + FBS) as immersion solution.
5. Application of indirect MTT assay using different concentration of extract solution at various immersion days in DMEM + FBS solution, cell adhesion and proliferation, and cell morphology for the purpose of biocompatibility analysis using human fetal osteoblast (hFOB) cells.
6. Osteogenic differentiation analysis on each surface was performed through filamentous actin (F-actin) staining, alkaline phosphatase (ALP) activity, Alizarin Red S for ECM mineralization and collagen secretion using Picro Sirius Red staining.
7. Application of biomimetic protein coating on the ordered structure porous Mg scaffold and analysis of the cell morphology behaviour between 2D and 3D structure.

1.5 Significance of Research

This study was focused in the bone implant applications. It includes a specific study area on the development of a better biodegradation resistance, bioactive and biocompatibility coating. It is expected that the incorporation of fluorine ions in the protein matrices and apatite deposition will improve the functionality and slow down the degradation rate of the surface coating. This alternative could possibly reduce the corrosion cost due to the damage of equipment and/or loss of product efficiency. The removal of damage tissue is necessary to avoid the possibility of long-term complications along the implantation process.

1.6 Thesis Structure and Organization

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter one covers the overview of the research background, problem statement, objectives and scopes of research, as well as the significance of the research study.

Chapter two discuss about the literature review that emphasizes on bone and bone morphology. The introduction of biomaterials and biocompatibility in clinical applications with the emphasis on Mg as a biomaterial were reviewed. The possibility of troubleshooting that might occur related to the function of Mg as a biomaterial was also discussed, as well as the various types of surface modification and coating techniques on Mg to improve the materials performance as an implant. Moreover, the influence of surface modification of Mg on host respond and the reaction of osteoblast cells attached on the Mg implant surface were also discussed. The *in-vitro* corrosion

measurement of Mg was critically discussed, with a slight additional introduction on the introduction of porous scaffold on bone tissue engineering.

Chapter three presents about the materials and methodology used in the experiments. The flow of the study started with the synthesis of bi-layer protein coating. Then, the characterisation, *in-vitro* degradation test, biocompatibility and osteogenic differentiation until application of 2D biomimetic coating technique on ordered porous structure of Mg scaffold were the following steps.

Chapter four explains the details of results and discussion on the performance of bi-layer protein coatings on pure Mg surface in *in-vitro* degradation behaviour, bioactivity, biocompatibility and osteogenic differentiation. Furthermore, the application of biomimetic protein coating protocol on 2D surface to the ordered porous structure was also investigated through cell morphology behaviour.

Chapter five is the summary and conclusion of the findings from this study, as well as the suggestions for the future research.

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