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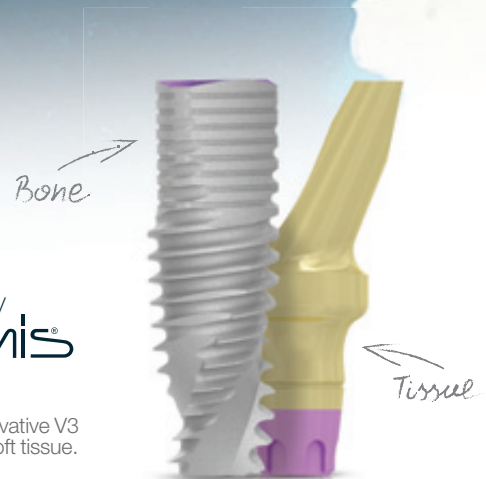
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Journal of

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For dentists, daily clinical work is as easy as driving a car. Their own experience provides them with the necessary confidence and skill. However, the situation changes with the introduction of a new method or product. In order to gain the requisite skill for performing a new technique, it may be enough to participate in practical courses. Using a new biomaterial for regeneration or sinus floor elevation may instead require small changes in technique. However, this may represent a substantial change in biology because biomaterials do not have the same response during healing and do not achieve the same results.

When we have doubts about the quality of a new technique or a new material, we often ask for the opinion of experts and we trust their advice. It would, however, be better to be already well prepared so that we may gain greater value from consultations with experts about the issue of interest.

Only through continued updating is it possible to gain the knowledge to help us make independent choices regarding materials and methods to be used in our daily practice and, indeed, the *Journal of Oral Science & Rehabilitation* was born out of a desire to update clinicians regarding new techniques and materials.

As said above, it is easy to drive a car. However, it may be useful to know how the car functions and how to fix it when it does not work properly.

Dr. Daniele Botticelli
Co-editor

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The *Journal of Oral Science & Rehabilitation* publishes original and high-quality research and clinical papers in the fields of periodontology, implant dentistry, prosthodontics and maxillofacial surgery. Priority is given to papers focusing on clinical techniques and with a direct impact on clinical decision-making and outcomes in the above-mentioned fields. Furthermore, book reviews, summaries and abstracts of scientific meetings are published in the journal.

Papers submitted to the *Journal of Oral Science & Rehabilitation* are subject to rigorous double-blind peer review. Papers are initially screened for relevance to the scope of the journal, as well as for scientific content and quality. Once accepted, the manuscript is sent to the relevant associate editors and reviewers of the journal for peer review. It is then returned to the author for revision and thereafter submitted for copy editing. The decision of the editor-in-chief is made after the review process and is considered final.

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The role of melatonin in periodontal and periimplant bone homeostasis and regeneration

Abstract

Background

Melatonin, a hormone produced primarily in the pineal gland, possesses a series of biological properties that appear to have an influence on bone homeostasis. Currently, little is known about how melatonin influences bone metabolism in periodontology and implantology.

Objectives

The objectives of this study are (1) to review the properties of melatonin in regulating bone homeostasis; (2) to discuss its direct and indirect effects on bone; and (3) to propose mechanisms for the use of melatonin as an agent to promote alveolar bone regeneration.

Conclusion

Melatonin positive regulation of bone formation and homeostasis, in combination with the inhibitory effects on bone resorption, highlights the potential use of melatonin as a marker of periodontal and periimplant bone-related diseases. *In vitro* and animal studies show promising results on the use of melatonin as a regenerative agent, although no clinical studies have yet been performed.

Keywords

Melatonin, osteoblasts, osteoclasts, periodontal disease, dental implant, free radicals.

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Introduction

Numerous systemic hormonal changes are known to be associated with aging.¹ Some conditions linked to circadian rhythms and age may alter bone metabolism, resulting in changes in immune activity or bone-associated pathologies,² such as periodontal disease. These disorders may be associated with alterations in normal levels of melatonin.^{3,4}

Melatonin (*N*-acetyl-5-methoxytryptamine), a hormone that is endogenously synthesized, primarily in the pineal gland, is a molecule with intense antioxidant activity⁵ and a wide range of biological actions, notably in the control of metabolism and bone development.⁶ Melatonin is currently used in therapies as a coadjuvant in cancer therapy,⁷ for anti-aging,⁸ as an immunostimulatory agent⁹ or as a sleep regulator,¹⁰ as well as to increase bone density in menopausal patients¹¹ (**Fig. 1**). It is reported that salivary melatonin is released by the acinar cells of the major salivary glands and the gingival crevicular fluid. It follows a circadian rhythm, with the highest values at night. Moreover, in the oral cavity, melatonin can act both by receptor-mediated and by receptor-independent pathways.¹² Therefore, through complex molecular pathways that have gained special interest for the research community in periodontology, it may play a role in alveolar periodontal and periimplant bone maintenance and regeneration.

Melatonin is an amphiphilic molecule that is able to cross most biological barriers. It can exert its effect by binding to G-protein-coupled membrane receptors (MT₁ and MT₂) or by penetrating the cell through a specific family of transmembrane channels,¹³ subsequently initiating a nuclear or cytoplasmic molecular cascade. When it reaches the nuclei, melatonin binds to a subfamily of nuclear receptors key in regulating bone metabolism, the RZR (retinoid Z receptor)/ROR (retinoid orphan receptor) receptor.¹⁴ It then regulates a number of cellular events, such as promotion of mitosis, induction of DNA repair,¹⁵ or cell differentiation and proliferation.¹⁶

Interestingly, it is known that melatonin can be synthesized in the bone marrow, where its concentration is around 100-fold higher than in serum.¹⁷ Furthermore, melatonin in the bone marrow protects its cells against cytotoxic agents *in vivo*.¹⁸ However, the specific biochemical mechanisms that regulate this modulation, specifically in alveolar bone in humans, are current-

ly not fully understood.¹¹ Hence, it is the purpose of this review to describe the properties of melatonin in regulating bone homeostasis, directly and indirectly, as well as to analyze different therapeutic strategies for the use of melatonin as an agent to promote periodontal and periimplant bone maintenance and regeneration (**Fig. 2**).

Direct effects on bone

I. Melatonin and bone formation

The major organic component of bone extracellular matrix is Type I collagen, which supports the expression of bone cell phenotypes and enhances mineralization. Melatonin has been shown to regulate the synthesis of Type I collagen as a preliminary step to the expression of other bone-related proteins, such as bone sialoprotein, alkaline phosphatase and osteocalcin, during osteoblastic maturation.¹⁶

Bone sialoprotein (BSP) is referred to as a marker of the late stage of osteoblastic differentiation. BSP is expressed during osteoblastic cell differentiation in the extracellular matrix, where it is essential for osteoblast attachment and bone mineralization. Within this context, it has been reported that MC3T3 pre-osteoblast cells matured in 12 days in the presence of melatonin compared with 21 days without melatonin. Gene expression of BSP and related proteins of osteoblastic differentiation (e.g., osteocalcin, alkaline phosphatase) is also accelerated and increased in melatonin-treated compared with nontreated cells.¹⁹ Furthermore, by inhibiting the interaction of BSP with osteoblastic cell lines, the activity of alkaline phosphatase, osteocalcin synthesis and cellular response to parathyroid hormone (PTH) are also inhibited²⁰ and, subsequently, osteoblast differentiation is impaired.²¹ Thus, these findings suggest that melatonin may have an effect in regulating osteoblast proliferation and differentiation. These effects could lead to beneficial effects in the treatment of pathological processes associated with bone resorption or destruction by mediating not only in the expression of BSP but of other bone glycoproteins as well, resulting in enhanced bone apposition.

II. Melatonin and bone resorption

Melatonin also exerts an important direct biological action on the osteoclast, another key cell in