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# The surface characterization and bioactivity of NANOZR *in vitro*

Jian-min HAN[1,3], Guang HONG[2], Hiroyuki MATSUI[3], Yoshinaka SHIMIZU[4], Gang ZHENG[1], Hong LIN[1] and Keiichi SASAKI[3]

[1] *Dental Materials Laboratory, National Engineering Laboratory for Digital and Material Technology of Stomatology, Peking University School and Hospital of Stomatology, Beijing, China*
[2] *Liaison Center for Innovative Dentistry, Graduate School of Dentistry, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan*
[3] *Division of Advanced Prosthetic Dentistry, Graduate School of Dentistry, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan*
[4] *Department of Oral Pathology, Graduate School of Dentistry, Tohoku University, Sendai, Japan*
*Corresponding author, Guang HONG; E-mail: hong@m.tohoku.ac.jp*

The purpose of this study was to evaluate the surface characterization and bioactivity of ceria-stabilized zirconia/alumina nanocomposite (NANOZR) in comparison to yttria-stabilized zirconia (3Y-TZP) and pure titanium (CpTi). Three-dimension surface morphology, surface wettability, bovine serum albumin adsorption rate, cell morphology, cell proliferation and ALP activity of three tested materials were measured. There were no significant differences in surface roughness, contact angle among the three materials. The ALP expression of NANOZR was higher than CpTi and 3Y-TZP at 14 and 21 days although bovine serum albumin adsorption rate, cell morphology; and cell proliferation was not different among the three materials. These results suggest that the three test materials basically had similar surface characterization and bioactivity. Within the limitations of this study, our results show that the three test materials were biologically similar bio-inert materials.

*Keywords*: NANOZR, Bioactivity, MC3T3, Surface characterization

## INTRODUCTION

Since Brånemark introduced the use of pure titanium for dental implantation 40 years ago[1], titanium oral implants have been shown to function well for many years[2]. In recent years, zirconia dental implants have been introduced into the market for the following reasons:

1) The dark color of a titanium implant can show through the pinkish hue of the cervical gingiva, especially in patients with a thin gingival biotype[3]. The titanium can also become exposed if the soft tissue recedes. Zirconia is more compatible with esthetic requirements than titanium[4].
2) Elevated titanium concentration in tissue have been reported in the vicinity of titanium oral implants[5] and in regional lymph nodes[6], which suggest that titanium may be a sensitinogen to some people[7]. A review by Tschernitschek *et al.*[8] concluded that products of titanium particle corrosion may provoke host reactions, and could be a potential health hazard. These findings prompt some patients to request treatment with completely metal-free dental reconstructions.
3) The zirconia has been used for manufacturing femoral heads for total hip replacements since the late 1980s[9]. It has high mechanical strength and excellent tissue compatibility. Now it is being successfully used for crown and bridge restorations and dental ceramic abutments. Zirconia is also being evaluated as an alternative base material for endosseous oral implants.

Most of the zirconia used in dentistry is in the form of 3 mol% yttria-stabilized tetragonal zirconia polycrystals (3Y-TZP). *In vitro* and *vivo* studies have demonstrated that 3Y-TZP dental implants are comparable to titanium implants in terms of cell attachment, cell proliferation and histological response[10-15]. The static fracture strength of a 3Y-TZP implant is between 725 N and 850 N, which is within the limits of clinical acceptability[16]. However, 3Y-TZP may undergo low-temperature degradation (LTD) in the oral environment, and result in drastic failure of the implant[17]. In addition, the fracture strength resistance of zirconia implants may be reduced by the mode of preparation and cyclic loading[18]. These shortcomings need to be addressed before zirconia dental implants can be developed as a clinically successful alternative to titanium implants.

A Ce-TZP-based nanostructured zirconia/alumina composite (NANOZR) was developed by Nawa *et al.* in 1998[19,20]. The composite is composed of 10 mol% cerium dioxide ($CeO_2$) stabilized TZP as a matrix and 30 vol% of $Al_2O_3$ as a second phase. NANOZR exhibits greater flexural strength and fracture toughness than 3Y-TZP, and is completely resistant to low-temperature aging degradation[11,21]. Its cyclic fatigue strength is more than twice that of 3Y-TZP[22], indicating its suitability for use in dental implants.

Dental implant materials require good mechanical properties and the ability to rapidly and firmly integrate

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with the bone to function successfully in the long term. The osseointegration properties of biomaterials can be assessed by examining the behavior of osteoblasts on the implant surface. And examining the surface morphology and chemical-physical characteristics of material can assess the biological response of the tested materials. The aim of this study was to compare the performance of NANOZR, conventional 3Y-TZP, and pure titanium (CpTi) by assessing the surface 3D morphology, surface composition, wettability of these materials and bovine serum albumin adsorption rate, osteoblast-like cell attachment and morphology, proliferation kinetic, and ALP activity on the materials. This study on the behavior of osteoblast-like cell on implant materials *in vitro* provides an insight into their behavior during the osseointegration process *in vivo*.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

*Specimen preparation*

Disks 15 mm in diameter and 1.5 mm thick of NANOZR (Panasonic Health Care Co, Japan), 3Y-TZP (GC Co, Japan), and CpTi (Nippon Steel Co, Japan) were used in this study. The materials information in details is show in Table 1. A smooth surface was achieved by polishing with aluminum oxide waterproof abrasive paper (200#, 400#, 600#). The specimens were cleaned by sonication (SK3200LHC, KUDOS, China) in absolute acetone for 20 min, followed by immersion in ethanol for 10 min and ultrapure water for 3 min. Between preparation and analyses the specimens were stored in an airtight container.

*Analyses of surface characterization*

The surface topography of the specimens was examined with a microXAM-3D optical interferometer (KLA-Tencor Corp, Milpitas, CA) over an area of 0.6×0.8 $mm^2$ to measure the surface roughness (Ra). Three separate specimens were measured for each group, examining five representative sites on each specimen.

The specimens for SEM and EDX were gold-coated using Auto Fine Coaters (JFC-1600, JEOL Ltd., Tokyo, Japan) and observed with a Quanta 200 FEG scanning electron microscope (SEM; FEI, Eindhoven, Netherlands) associated with an energy dispersive x-ray analysis (EDX) to enable subtle comparison of the elemental composition. The surface morphology images were recorded at an accelerating voltage of 15 kV and 1,000× magnification. Three separate specimens in each group were examined. Five random regions were imaged for each specimen.

The wettability of the specimens was determined using a portable contact angle meter (PCA-1; Kyowa Interface Science Co, Japan). An auto pipetter and a goniometer were employed to ensure uniformity of the distilled water droplet volume (2 μL). Images were analyzed with FAMAS software (Kyowa Interface Science Co, Japan). All measurement was performed at room temperature with humidity of 50%. Two measurements were made on each of five separate specimens per substrate.

*Analyses of bioactivities*

In this study, MC3T3-E1 cells, osteoblast-like cell were used for evaluated the cell attachment, morphology, proliferation kinetic and ALP activity on the specimens. And the bovine serum albumin was used for evaluated the protein adsorption on the specimens.

The tested method of protein adsorption was referred to Hori[23] *et al.* The 300 μL standard protein solution of bovine serum albumin (Wako Pure Chemical Industries Ltd., Japan) that prepared to 1 mg/mL (protein/ion-removed water) was pipetted onto surface of each sample. After incubated in sterile humidified condition at 37°C for 1 h, the surface was rinsed twice with water to remove the non-adherent protein. The removed and initial solution were mixed, 10 μL mixture was added to 200 μL Protein Assay Bradford Reagent (Wako Pure Chemical Industries Ltd., Japan) and waiting 5 min at room temperature. 150 μL reaction solution was transferred to 96 well plates. The amount of protein was quantified by a micro-plate reader (Bio-Rad Laboratories, Inc.) at 595 nm. The protein before and after adsorption was quantified by standard response curve produced by a consistent standard solution. The rate of protein adsorption was calculated as the

Table 1 Material used in this study

| Code | Product name | Composition | Hardness (Vickers) | Flexural strength (MPa) | Fracture toughness (MPa/mm) | Manufacturer |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| NANOZR | P-NanoZR | 70 vol%10 mol $CeO_2$-$ZrO_2$ 30 vol%$Al_2O_3$ | 1161 | 1500 | 18 | Panasonic Health Care Co., Tokyo, Japan |
| 3Y-TZP | Aadva Zr | 3 mol $Y_2O_3$-$ZrO_2$ | 1250 | 1200 | 9.5 | GC Co., Tokyo, Japan |
| CpTi | JIS H4600 TP270C Titanium Sheet | 100% Ti | — | — | — | Nippon Steel Co., Tokyo, Japan |

Note: The above details of tested materials were provided by manufacturers.

percentage of protein adsorption on sample surface relative to the total amount of proteins initially applied.

For cell attachment and morphology, a 1.0 mL suspension with cell density of $1\times10^4$ cells/mL (MC3T3-E1: ATCC CRL-2594) was added to each well of a 24-well plate. The culture plate was transported gently to a 37 °C $CO_2$ incubator. After culturing for 4 h, 1 day, 3 days and 7 days, the specimens were taken out, rinsed twice with phosphate-buffered saline solution (PBS, pH 7.2) to remove unattached cells, then fixed with 2.5% glutaraldehyde solution (G6257, Sigma, St. Louis, MO) for 30 min. The fixed cells were dehydrated progressively in a graded series of ethanols (50%, 75%, 90%, 99%) for 15 min. The specimens were sputter-coated with gold, and the cell morphology was observed by SEM.

For cell skeleton and nucleus observation, the attached cells were permeabilized with 0.2 % (v/v) Triton-X100 (Amresco, USA) for 4 min at room temperature followed by three rinses with PBS. Cells were then stained with rhodamine phalloidin (Cytoskeleton Inc., USA) at room temperature for 30 min, followed by three rinses with PBS, finally stained with DAPI-Fluoromount-G (Southern Biotech Co., USA). The cytoskeletal actin and cell nucleus were observed with laser scanning confocal microscopy (LSM 780, Zeiss Co., Germany). Three separate samples were examined for each group.

The quantity of attached cells was determined using the MTT (3-(4,5-dimethylthiazol-2-yi)-2,5-dipenyltetrazoliumbromic) method. A 1.0 mL suspension with cell density of $1\times10^4$ cells/mL was added to each well. After culturing for 1 day, 3 days, 7 days and 14 days, the specimens were rinsed twice with PBS (pH 7.2) to remove unattached cells, and 300 μL of MTT solution was added to each well. The plates were further incubated for 2 h at 37°C. The MTT solution was decanted and 300 μL of isopropanol was added to each well. After 30 min, 100 μL of the solution from each well was transferred to a 96-well plate and the optical density was measured using an enzyme labeling instrument (Model 680, BIO-RAD Laboratories Inc., Tokyo, Japan) at an excitation wavelength of 570 nm with 650 nm as the reference wavelength. Five separate specimens from each group were examined.

For the determination of ALP activity, a 1.0 mL suspension with cell density of $4\times10^4$ cells/mL was added to each well and pre-cultured for 3 days to achieve 100% cell conjugation. The cell culture medium was then replaced by differentiation medium (MK430, TaKaRa Biotechnology, Shiga, Japan), and further incubated. After culturing for 1 day, 3 days, 7 days, 14 days and 21 days, the specimens were rinsed twice with PBS (pH 7.2), and 200 μL ALP subscript buffer (pNPP, Sigma) and 2 μL 10%Triton X-100 were added to each well. The 24-well plate was placed in the $CO_2$ incubator for 15 min, followed by the addition of 150 μL/well of 2 mol/L NaOH to stop the reaction. Then 90 μL of the fluid from each well was transferred to a 96-well plate for optical density measurement using an enzyme labeling instrument (Model 680, BIO-RAD Laboratories Inc., Tokyo, Japan) at 450 nm wavelength.

*Statistic analysis*

All data were analyzed independently by one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) combined with a Student-Newman-Keuls (SNK) multiple comparison test at a 5% level of significance.

## RESULTS

*Surface characteristics of the specimens*

Figure 1 shows the 3D topography of the three

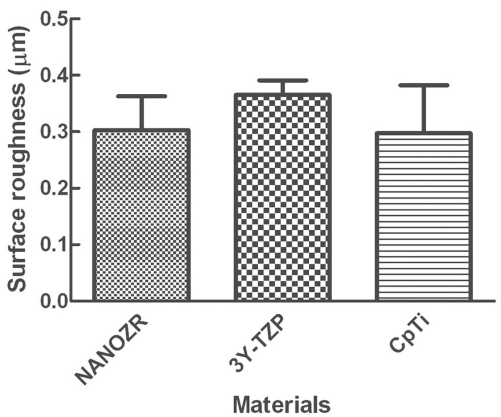


Fig. 2 Surface roughness of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi after polishing with 600# abrasive paper. There was no significant difference among the three materials ($p>0.05$).

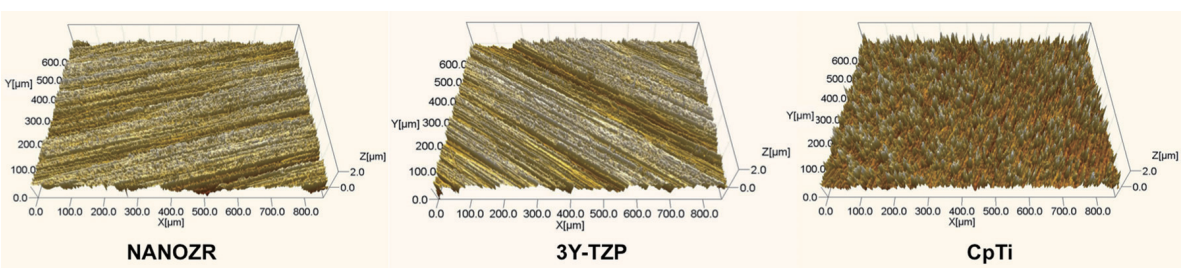


Fig. 1 3D surface topography of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi (0.6 mm×0.8 mm) after polishing with 600# abrasive paper.

substrates surfaces as determined by a microXAM-3D optical interferometer. The titanium surface appears sharper than the zirconia surface. The surface roughness of the three substrates is around 0.3 μm (Fig. 2), with no significant difference among them.

The SEM graphic of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP, and CpTi reveals similar surface scratching after polishing with 600# abrasive paper at 1,000× magnification (Fig. 3). The composition of the three materials is listed in Fig. 4. CpTi is composed of titanium and oxygen, NANOZR is composed of zirconium, aluminum, oxygen, and cerium, while 3Y-TZP is composed of zirconium, oxygen, and ytterbium. All three materials also contain carbon.

Figure 5 shows that the surface contact angle against distilled water of the three substrates after cleaning with absolute acetone and ethanol is approximately 60°, with no significant difference among them.

*Bioactivities of cells on the specimens*

Figure 6 shows the three tested materials has similar albumin protein adsorption amount, there has no

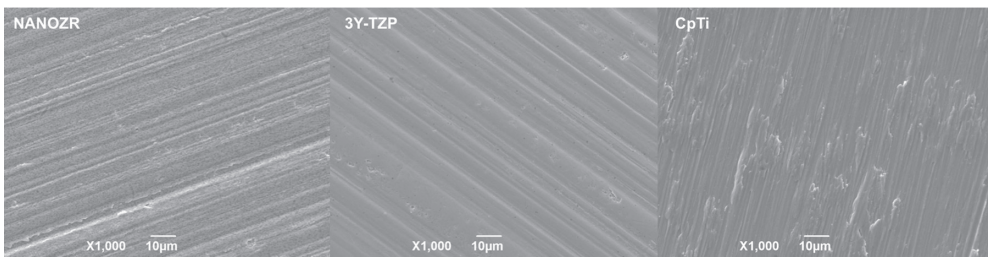


Fig. 3 SEM micrographs of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi.

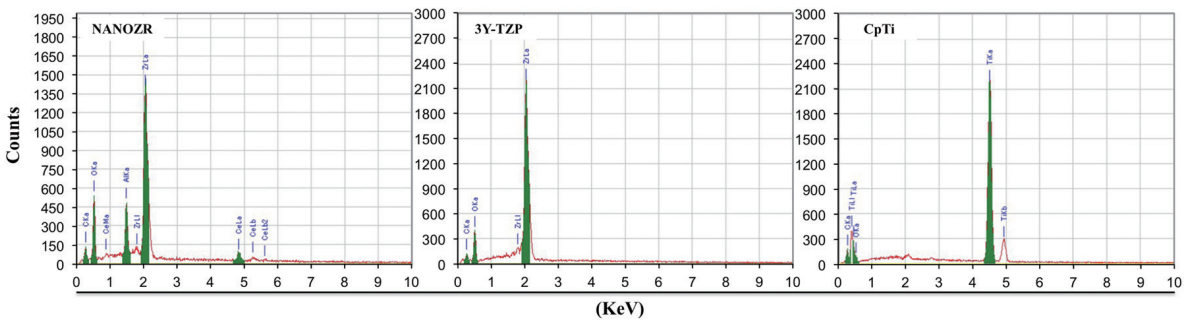


Fig. 4 Surface composition of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi.

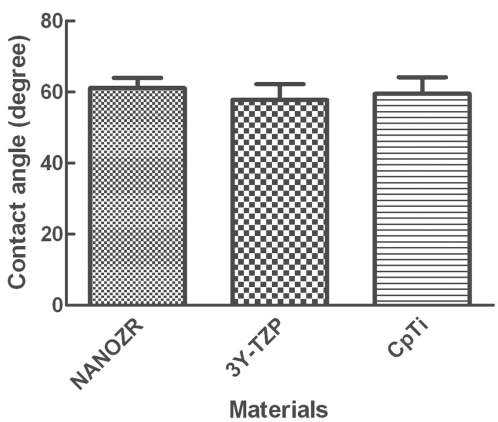


Fig. 5 Contact angle against distilled water of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi.
There was no significant difference among the three materials ($p>0.05$).

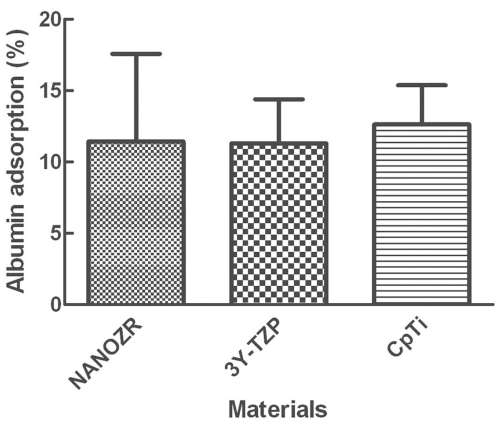


Fig. 6 Bovine serum albumin adsorption rates of NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi after 1 h incubation.
There was no significant difference among the three materials ($p>0.05$).

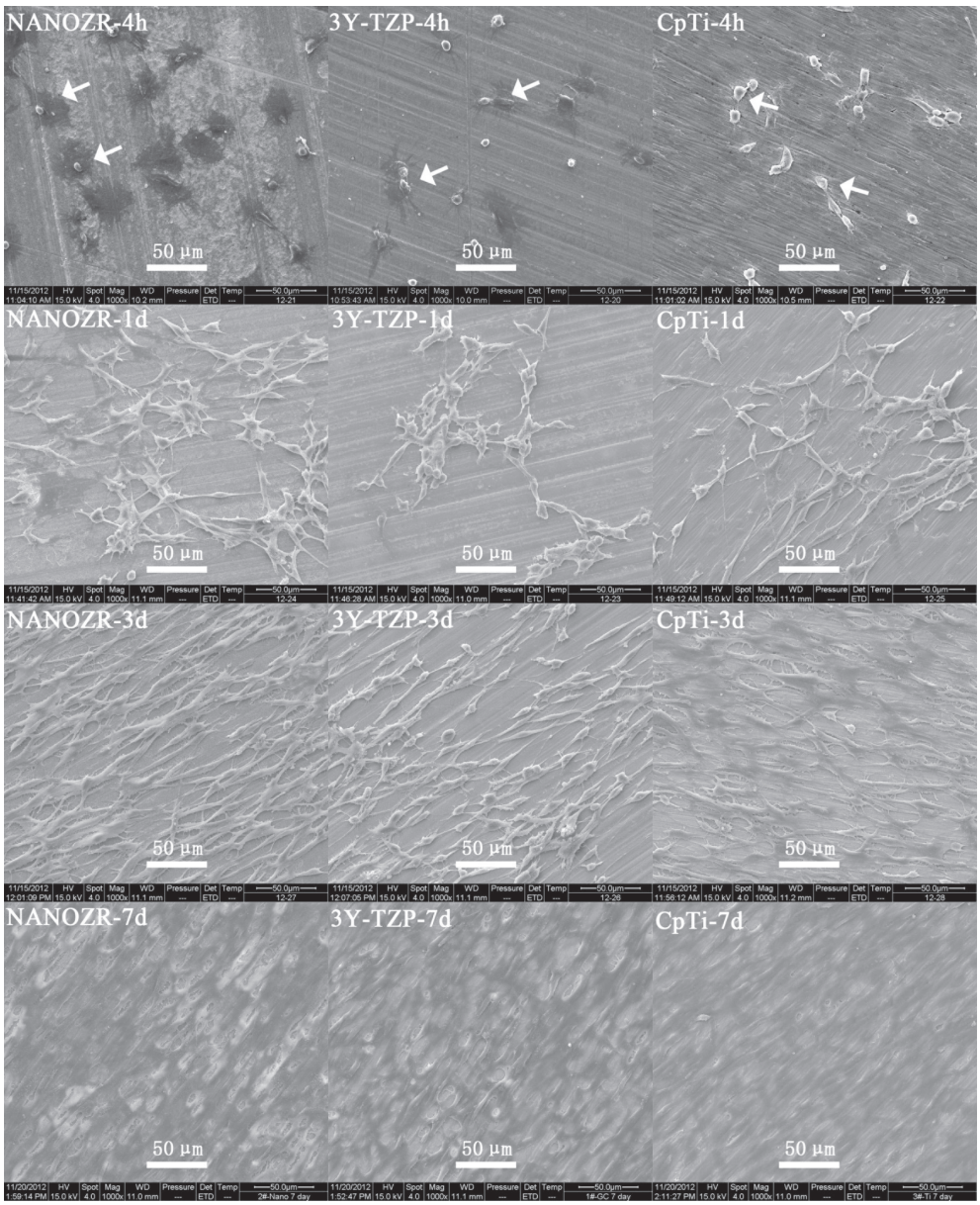


Fig. 7 SEM observation of MC3T3-E1 cells on NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi at 4 h, 1 day, 3 days and 7 days. Original magnification 1000×.

significant difference among them.

Figure 7 shows the general shape and growth pattern of MC3T3-E1 cells cultured on the three tested substrate materials. The seeding cells adhere properly to the tested materials. After 4 h of incubation, the cells became flattened and did not spread completely on the surface, although the NANOZR and 3Y-TZP spread better than the CpTi. After 24 h of incubation, the cells attached and spread well over the surface of all the materials. The cell morphology flattened to a spindle shape, and the cells on the surface of each substrate were connected with each other. After 3 days of incubation, all the substrates showed greater density of osteoblasts with numerous cell-cell contacts, and with spindle cells along the scratches on the substrate surface. After 7 days of incubation, the cells were 100% confluent, and completely covered the surface of the materials. There were no significant differences in the cell morphology of the three materials.

Figure 8 shows the actin cytoskeleton of MC3T3-E1 for various periods' incubation on three materials. There is similar fluorescence intensity of cells on three tested materials. After 1 h incubation, the cell exhibited round, and had no obvious stress fibers and their actin fluorescence intensity was lower. After 4 h incubation, the cells trend to spindle or polygonal morphology, and

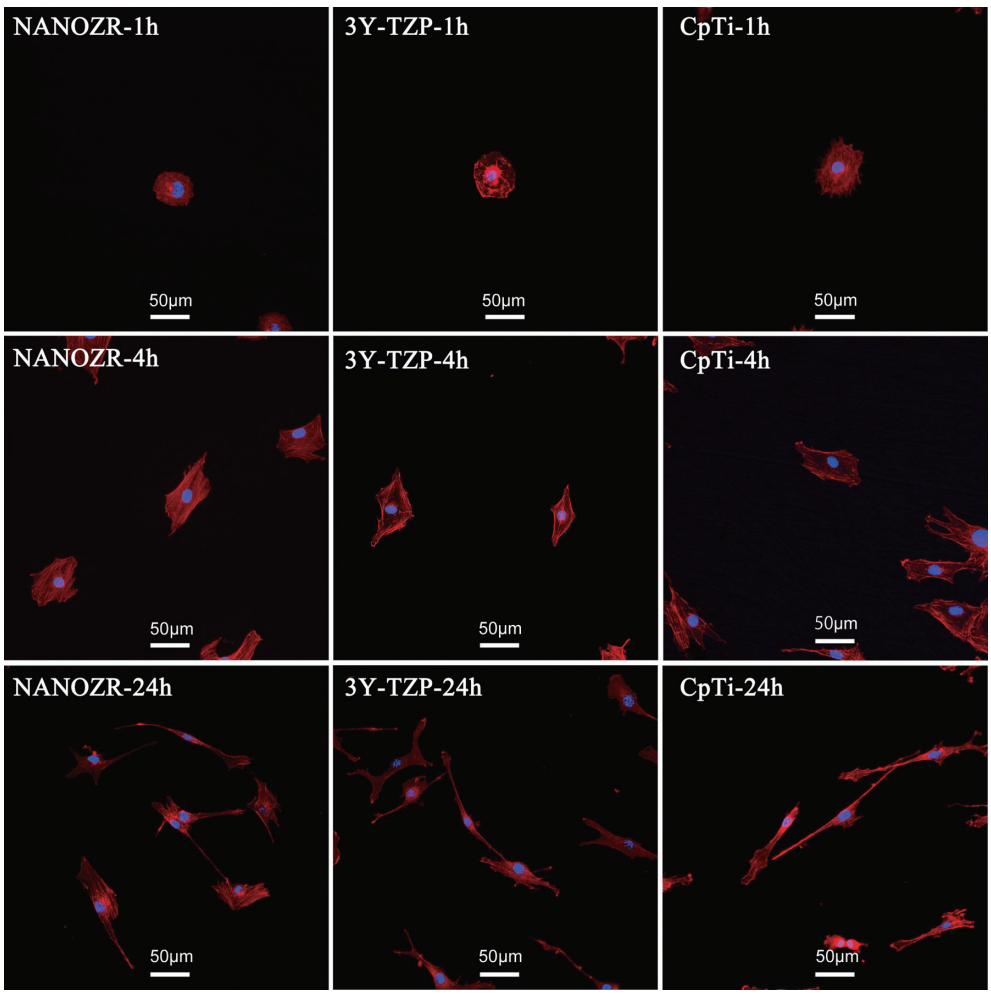


Fig. 8 Observation of actin cytoskeleton and cell nucleus of MC3T3-E1 on NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi after 1 h, 4 h and 24 h incubation.

highly organized actin stress fibers were observed after 4 h incubation, which indicating the strong cell adhesion. After 24 h incubation, the cells on three tested materials show similar cytoskeleton.

Figure 9 shows the proliferation kinetic of MC3T3-E1 from 1 day to 14 days. We observed an exponential increase in cell numbers on all surfaces over the observation period. The number of cells attached to the three different surfaces within 1 day was almost identical, and the cell growth rate on the surface of the three materials was similar. The cells had a similar attachment and proliferation kinetic on the three substrate surfaces.

Figure 10 shows the ALP expression of the three substrates. ALP expression significantly increased 7 days after the differentiation culture, and increased during the 21-days test period. ALP expression was highest in NANOZR, followed by CpTi, while 3Y-TZP showed the lowest ALP expression. Before 7 days, there was no significant difference in ALP expression among the three substrates. At 14 days, the ALP expression of NANOZR and CpTi was significant higher than 3Y-TZP, while there was no significant difference between NANOZR and CpTi. At 21 days, there were significant differences among the three materials.

## DISCUSSION

Zirconia has been used to manufacture femoral heads for total hip replacements since the late 1980s. Recently, zirconia has been broadly investigated *in vitro* and *in vivo* as dental implant. According to the authors, nearly almost of the studies showed that zirconia has high biocompatibility, all implants were osseointegrated without signs of inflammation or mobility. The biological response of zirconia showed at least equivalent or slightly better than pure titanium.

It is well known that surface composition, crystal size and surface morphology are major variables determining the cell response to the presence of an implant[24]. The surface morphology, especially the surface nano-morphology, can enhance cell bioactivity[25].

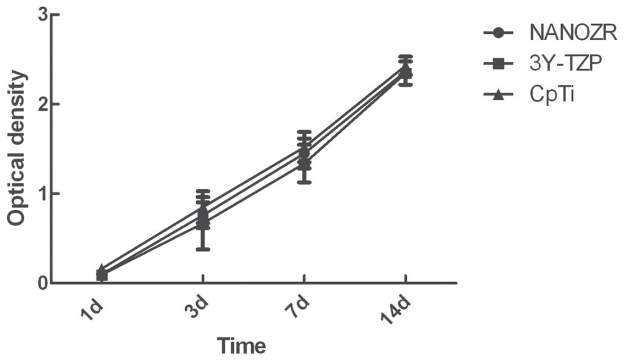


Fig. 9 Cell proliferation kinetic of MC3T3-E1 cells on NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi at 1 day, 3 days, 7 days and 14 days.
There was no significant difference among the NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi within tested period ($p$>0.05).

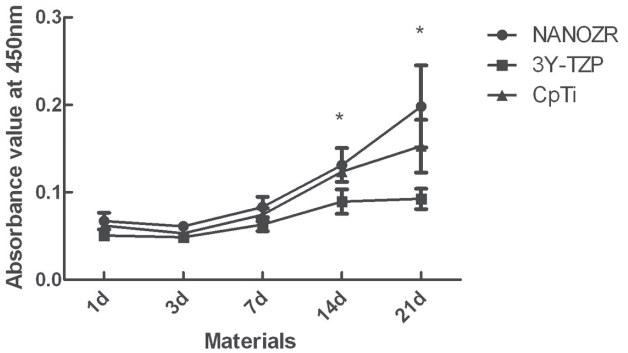


Fig. 10 ALP expression of MC3T3-E1 cells on NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi at 1 day, 3 days, 7 days, 14 days and 21 days.
*: $p$<0.05, ANOVA.

A granular surface can enhance the initial cell attachment, proliferation rate and expression of ALP[12,13]. The three materials examined in this study exhibit similar surface roughness and morphology, so the aim of this study become to compare the effect of the composition of the material substrates on the cellular response.

*In vitro* cell culture models for osteoblast behavior in response to implant materials, primary osteoblasts derived from rat calvaria or osteogenic osteosarcoma cell lines from animal and human bone are usually used, although occasionally primary human osteoblasts are also used. MG63 osteoblast-like cells derived from human osteosarcomas have frequently been used to evaluate the interaction of bone cells with implant biomaterials. However, it is not always possible to extrapolate the effects of osteosarcoma cell cultures to human bone cell cultures because they are tumor cell lines[26]. Moreover, Shapira *et al.*[27] compared the biological behavior of MG63 and Saos-2 cells on titanium surfaces, demonstrating that MG63 cells have non-differentiated properties (a high proliferative rate and low ALP activity), and are thus more closely related to pre-osteoblasts with an immature phenotype. A primary human cell culture system does not always exhibit reproducible results, owing to variations in phenotypic expression of cells from each isolate and the loss of the osteoblastic phenotype with time in culture. Non-transformed cells from the MC3T3-E1 osteogenic cell line derived from newborn mouse calvaria[28] exhibited high ALP activity in the resting state and the capacity to differentiate into osteoblasts. Furthermore, these cells grew to form multiple cell layers[28]. Therefore, we selected the MC3T3-E1 cell line to examine NANOZR bioactivity response in this study.

Surface wettability is one of the main factors reflecting the extent of cell adhesion onto the surface[29]. Many *in vitro* studies have investigated the relationship between the hydrophilicity of a material surface and cell adhesion. High surface wettability, which means a low contact angle, is generally reported to promote greater cell adhesion than a high contact angle[29-32]. The surface contact angles of the three tested substrates were not significantly different, which partly explains why the cell adhesion and proliferation dynamic of the three substrates were similar.

When material contact with medium containing serum, serum proteins can be immediately adsorpted onto the material surface prior to cell arrives. Therefore, the adsorbed proteins play a mediator role in interactions between cells and tested materials[33,34]. The ability of the implant surface to adsorb proteins determines its aptitude to support cell adhesion and spreading[35]. The albumin is the most abundant in serum proteins, so we selected the albumin to examine the protein adsorption properties of materials in this study. The three tested materials show the similar protein adsorption ability. The protein adsorption is correlated to the surface composition, surface wettability, surface charge and surface topography[33]. From the results of this study, similar surface wettability and surface topography may partly explain similar albumin adsorption percentage among the three tested materials. However, in addition to the albumin, the bone derived cells attachment was mostly dependent upon the adsorption of vitronectin and fibronectin content[36,37]. Therefore, the adsorptions of vitronectin and fibronectin to material need to investigate in the further.

The visualization of cytoskeleton staining within 24 h showed the initial contact of MC3T3-E1 with tested materials surface. There was no difference in cell morphology and adhesion among the NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi within 24 h observation period. For all the tested materials, the osteoblast started to spread and developed focal adhesion contacts within 4 h. The shape of most cells from round at initial contact within 1 h to polygonal and spindle within 24 h contact, while actin cytoskeleton trend to well organized. The fluorescent

intensity and actin filaments expression is similar. This result is in concord with Yamashita *et al.*[12] reports, who demonstrated that the actin filaments distribution was similar on both zirconia and titanium. However, Hempel *et al.*[38] showed SAOS-2 cells on zirconia surface revealed a faster spreading and higher number of adherent cells compared with titanium after 24 h incubation.

In this study, cell proliferation and cell morphology observed by SEM demonstrated appropriate adhesion and spreading of the cells on NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi. SEM observation revealed the close contact between the cell layers and the three materials, confirming firm adhesion and anchorage of the cells. Such adhesive properties are important for cell proliferation and differentiation into bone forming cell. Cell proliferation and viability was determined using the MTT method, which relies on the mitochondrial activity of vital cells and represents a parameter for their metabolic activity. Cells seeded onto the three materials showed similar vitality and proliferation.

Both alumina and zirconia are chemically stable and bio-inert materials with similar bioactivity. In the present study, since NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi have similar cell adhesion and proliferation properties, the incorporated alumina and zirconia particles did not enhance the bioactivity response of MC3T3-E1 cells to the substrate. These findings are consistent with most of the published results. Bächle *et al.*[39] compared 3Y-TZP and CpTi using CAL72 osteoblast-like cells, and found that cell morphology and surface area covered by the cells were not affected by the type of substrate. Ko *et al.*[40] showed that zirconia/alumina has a higher proliferation rate than CpTi, and similar cell attachment and morphology. However, Depprich *et al.*[41] compared the acid etched zirconia surface to the titanium surface in relation to cell adhesion, proliferation, and the synthesis of bone-associated proteins. The cell adhesion and proliferation rate was significantly higher on the zirconia surface than on the titanium surface, but there was no difference in the synthesis of bone-specific proteins. Pandey *et al.*[42] reported that the stabilizer of zirconia maybe an influencing factor for its biocompatibility. The ceria stabilized zirconia probably reduce the biological activity compared to yttria stabilized zirconia. However, in this study, the ceria stabilized zirconia/alumina composite (NANOZR) showed similar biological activity with yttria stabilized zirconia (3Y-TZP). Carinci *et al.*[10] reported that alumina is able to affect the expression of some genes and proteinases. And Ko *et al.*[40] reported that alumina has a higher proliferation rate than CpTi. Based on these reports, we suggest that the alumina, which NANOZR contained, might be the reason for this similar tendency in biological activity between NANOZR and 3Y-TZP.

In addition, NANOZR has a unique characteristic structure, that is several 10–100 nm sized $Al_2O_3$ particles are trapped within the $ZrO_2$ grains and several 10 nm sized $ZrO_2$ particles are trapped within the $Al_2O_3$ grains[21]. Webster *et al.*[43,44] and Wang *et al.*[25] reported that nano-sized grains can enhance protein interactions, osteoblast adhesion and proliferation. The biological activity of the microsurface can also be enhanced by nano-scale topography[13]. However, neither entrapped nano grain $ZrO_2$ nor $Al_2O_3$ had a significant effect on the surface energy and cell response. This may be attribute to the slight content of nanograins in NANOZR.

Bone ALP is a biochemical marker of the osteoblast phenotype in the stage of early differentiation, and hence also of bone formation and general osteoblast activity. This protein is also involved in the bone mineralization process[45]. In the present study, there was an obvious tendency towards an increased expression of ALP with the increasing culture time for the tested substrate. NANOZR recorded the highest ALP activity, possibly due to its chemical composition and topography. Boyan *et al.*[46] demonstrated that rough surface may enhance osteoblasts differentiation, and fine-tuning of the biomaterial surface topography may also possible control intracellular signaling events[47]. Oum'hamed *et al.*[48] and Carinci *et al.*[10] showed in their studies that zirconia, alumina, and titanium are able to upregulate or downregulate the expression of some genes and proteinases. We presume that the higher ALP expression of NANOZR maybe ascribes to its unique intergranular-type nanostructure, and ceria and alumina in NANOZR may also affect the osteoblast differentiation. This study tested only ALP activity, so further study is needed to clarify the effect of NANOZR on other bone-related proteins.

However, the results of cell culture studies are strongly dependent on the experimental conditions, and comparison between different studies is compromised. It is difficult to deduce the *in vivo* reaction of zirconia materials from present results. Further study is clearly needed to investigate the bioactivity of zirconia materials by different levels.

For a successful dental implant material, in addition to its superior biocompatibility and mechanical properties, the material should maintain stable and reliable performance under function environment. Despite the mechanical strength of NANOZR and 3Y-TZP maybe enough for mastication force, the wear and low temperature aging of zirconia ceramic *in vivo* may induce the grain-pull out, increase surface flaw, and may decrease the properties of zirconia[21,49]. Some studies demonstrated that wear has a strong effect on aging of zirconia materials[50,51]. The hydrothermal aging may increase the roughness of zirconia, which in turn might increase the wear rate of counterpart. Moreover, the friction during function increases the aging rate of ziconia[51]. There is little information about wear of NANOZR, while NANOZR has superior resistance to low temperature aging than yttria stabilized zirconia (3Y-TZP) *in vitro*[21]. However, the intrinsic brittleness and high elastic modulus of zirconia ceramic may still restrict its wide use in implant dentistry. No-defect manufacturing process and bioactivity surface modifications is needed for future's zirconia implant.

In general, three test materials (NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi) basically had similar surface roughness,

contact angle and cell viability. ALP activities of MC3T3-E1 cells on NANOZR exceeded a little higher than CpTi and 3Y-TZP. Within the limitations of this study, our results show that three test materials (NANOZR, 3Y-TZP and CpTi) were biologically similar bio-inert materials.

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