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TITLE

UNDERSTANDING CALCIUM METABOLISM IN OSTEOARTHRITIS OF KNEE PATIENTS: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW ARTICLE

AUTHORS

1. **Dr BRUNGI MAHESH DNB ORTHO,** ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ORTHOPEDICS, FATHIMA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, KADAPA. 9544372134, princemahesh554@gmail.com

2. **Dr PRATHAP BINGI MD GENERAL MEDICINE,** ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF GENERAL MEDICINE, GMC GGH KADAPA. 8801680429, prathapbingi@gmail.com

Corresponding author:

Dr BRUNGI MAHESH DNB ORTHO, ASSISTANT PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF ORTHOPEDICS, FATHIMA INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, KADAPA. 9544372134, princemahesh554@gmail.com

Abstract:

Osteoarthritis (OA) of the knee is a prevalent musculoskeletal disorder characterized by progressive degeneration of articular cartilage, subchondral bone changes, and inflammation. While numerous factors contribute to its pathogenesis, emerging evidence suggests a potential role of calcium metabolism dysregulation in the development and progression of OA. This review aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the current understanding of calcium metabolism in knee OA patients, including its implications, mechanisms, and therapeutic opportunities.

Key words : Osteoarthritis, Calcium Metabolism, degeneration

Introduction:

Osteoarthritis (OA) is the most common form of arthritis, affecting millions of people worldwide and representing a significant burden on healthcare systems. Among the various joints affected, OA of the knee is particularly prevalent, with a substantial impact on mobility, quality of life, and socioeconomic factors [1]. While mechanical factors have long been considered central to OA pathogenesis, emerging evidence highlights the intricate interplay between mechanical stress, inflammatory mediators, and metabolic disturbances, including calcium dysregulation [2]. The knee joint's complex structure, composed of articular cartilage, subchondral bone, synovium, and ligaments, undergoes dynamic changes influenced by genetic predisposition, aging, obesity, and systemic factors like calcium metabolism [3].

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Calcium Metabolism in Osteoarthritis:

1. Calcium Signaling and Cartilage Homeostasis: Chondrocytes, the resident cells of articular cartilage, maintain tissue homeostasis through intricate signaling pathways involving calcium ions [4]. Calcium signaling regulates key cellular processes such as gene expression, cytoskeletal organization, and matrix turnover. Dysregulation of calcium channels, pumps, and transporters disrupts chondrocyte function, impairing extracellular matrix synthesis and promoting cartilage degradation [5]. For example, transient receptor potential (TRP) channels, voltage-gated calcium channels (VGCCs), and store-operated calcium entry (SOCE) mechanisms influence chondrocyte phenotype and responsiveness to mechanical stimuli, contributing to OA pathogenesis [6].

2. Subchondral Bone Remodeling and Calcium Dynamics: The subchondral bone, underlying the articular cartilage, undergoes constant remodeling orchestrated by osteoblasts and osteoclasts [7]. Calcium plays a pivotal role in regulating bone turnover, mineralization, and microarchitecture. In OA, altered calcium dynamics within the subchondral bone contribute to pathological changes such as increased bone density, osteophyte formation, and subchondral bone cysts [8]. Calcium deposition and hydroxyapatite crystal formation further exacerbate tissue damage and joint degeneration. Moreover, interactions between subchondral bone and cartilage through channels like the osteochondral unit highlight the importance of understanding calcium metabolism in both compartments for effective OA management [9].

3. Inflammation and Calcium-Associated Pathways: Inflammation is a hallmark feature of OA, characterized by the release of pro-inflammatory cytokines, chemokines, and catabolic enzymes [10]. Calcium signaling intersects with inflammatory pathways at multiple levels, influencing immune cell activation, cytokine production, and matrix metalloproteinase (MMP) expression [11]. Intracellular calcium oscillations regulate NF-κB (nuclear factor kappa-light-chain-enhancer of activated B cells) signaling, a central mediator of inflammatory responses in OA [12]. Additionally, calcium-dependent protein kinases, such as calmodulin-dependent protein kinase II (CaMKII), modulate the activity of transcription factors involved in inflammation and tissue remodeling [13].

4. Calcium Supplementation and Disease Modulation: While the role of calcium supplementation in OA remains controversial, several studies have explored its potential effects on cartilage and bone health [14]. Calcium, in combination with vitamin D, is essential for maintaining bone mineral density and preventing osteoporosis, a common comorbidity in OA patients [15]. However, clinical trials investigating the direct impact of calcium supplementation on OA progression have yielded conflicting results [16]. Some studies suggest a potential protective effect of calcium on cartilage integrity and symptomatic relief in OA, particularly in individuals with suboptimal calcium intake or vitamin D deficiency [17]. Nevertheless, the optimal dosage, formulation, and long-term effects of calcium supplementation in OA require further investigation through well-designed randomized controlled trials [18].

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Therapeutic Implications and Future Directions:

Understanding the intricate interplay between calcium metabolism and OA pathophysiology offers promising avenues for therapeutic intervention. Targeting calcium-associated pathways, such as TRP channels, VGCCs, and calcium-dependent enzymes, may provide novel pharmacological targets for disease-modifying treatments in OA [19]. Additionally, personalized approaches based on genetic polymorphisms, biomarkers of calcium metabolism, and patient-specific risk factors could optimize treatment strategies and improve clinical outcomes [20]. Integrating preclinical research, clinical trials, and translational studies will be crucial for advancing our understanding of calcium dysregulation in OA and translating these insights into effective therapeutic interventions [21].

Conclusion:

In conclusion, calcium metabolism plays a multifaceted role in the pathogenesis of knee osteoarthritis, influencing cartilage homeostasis, subchondral bone remodeling, inflammatory processes, and therapeutic responses. Further elucidating the molecular mechanisms underlying calcium dysregulation and its interactions with other pathological factors holds promise for developing precision medicine approaches and targeted therapies in OA management. Collaborative efforts across disciplines, including basic science, clinical research, and epidemiology, are essential for addressing the complex nature of calcium metabolism in OA and improving outcomes for affected individuals [22].

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