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CORROSION, MATERIALS AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

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ZAŠTITE MATERIJALA I ŽIVOTNE SREDINE*

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The optimization of hydrothermally obtained hydroxyapatite deposition process on titanium by novel *in-situ* process

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Abstract

Titanium and its alloys are widely used in medical devices, orthopedic implants, dental implants, and device components of aerospace industries. It is attractive for having superior room and elevated temperature mechanical properties, corrosion resistance, fatigue resistance and low weight. However, titanium and its alloys are not fully applicable replacement in biomedical application. Suitable surface modification of titanium is needed in order to obtain Ti with improved properties. This paper deals with the optimization of the *in-situ* anodizing/anaphoretic electrodeposition process of hydrothermally synthesized hydroxyapatite (HAp) on Ti substrate for subsequent obtaining of HAp/TiO₂ composite coatings without multi-stage pre-treatment and post-treatment of titanium and oxidized titanium surface. Coatings were prepared at constant voltage of 60 V and deposition time of 1 min. The morphology of coatings was investigated using optical microscope and field emission scanning electron microscope. Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy measurements were also performed. The coating with optimal properties was obtained by deposition from suspension containing 1.0 M NaOH.

Keywords: titanium anodization; *in-situ* anaphoretic deposition; hydroxyapatite coating; titanium oxide;

Introduction

Titanium (Ti) and its alloys are one of the leading group of metallic materials used in the biomedical industry, and they are widely used for dental and orthopedic implants. The reason for the increasing use of Ti-based materials in the biomedical field is due to their mechanical properties, good biocompatibility, non-toxicity, high corrosion resistance and low Young's modulus [1,2]. However, the main disadvantages of these materials as implants are their low bioactivity (weak bone-Ti integration) and potential bacterial infections in patients after implantation. Therefore, various methods of modifying the Ti surface have been developed. One of the most commonly used methods is the application of calcium phosphate based coatings, namely hydroxyapatite (Ca₁₀(PO₄)₆(OH)₂, HAp), on the Ti surface [3].

HAp is a calcium phosphate mineral. It has important role in biomedical practice due to its chemical and mechanical similarities to the mineral component of hard tissues in the human body (bones and cartlages). In addition, HAp owns good bioactivity, biodegradability and osteoconductivity. Owing to these properties and similarity with the chemical composition of human bone, it is often used in prosthetic applications [4].

However, HAp has poor mechanical properties; therefore, HAp is deposited on Ti-based implants to achieve both bioactivity and mechanical resistance. Various methods are used to deposit HAp on a Ti-based substrate, such as electrophoretic deposition, plasma spraying, and the sol-gel process [5].

Electrophoretic deposition (EPD) is a widely used technique for the deposition of various biomaterials. The EPD process takes place in two phases. In the first phase, positive or negative charges are generated on the suspended particles; the suspension is stabilized; the second phase involves the deposition of the charged species on the surface of the oppositely charged electrodes. Electrophoretic deposition can be cathodic and anodic [6].

The goal of this study was optimization of novel *in-situ* anodizing/anaphoretic electrodeposition process of hydrothermally obtained HAp on the Ti substrate in order to obtain HAp/TiO₂ composite coatings [7].

Materials and methods

HAp powder was synthesized by the modified hydrothermal method described in the literature [8-9] as follows: the initial solution was obtained by dissolving the appropriate amount of Ca(NO₃)₂·4H₂O, Na₂H₂EDTA·2H₂O, NaH₂PO₄·2H₂O and urea in 1.5 dm³ of deionized water. All chemicals were *p.a.* grade from Acros Organics. The Ca/P ratio value for starting solution was 1.67 (stoichiometric ratio of HAp). After dissolving all the chemicals, the flask with the solution was transferred to an autoclave and thermally treated at 160 °C under 8 bar for 3 h. After cooling, the obtained precipitate was collected by vacuum filtration, washed with deionized water, and dried at 105 °C.

The deposition of the coatings HAp/TiO₂ was performed by a new *in-situ* method of anodizing/anaphoretic electrodeposition developed by Pantović Pavlović et al. [7]. For deposition of coatings, the starting HAp suspension was prepared by dissolving 1.0 g of hydrothermally obtained HAp powder in 50 vol.% of absolute ethanol and 50 vol.% of 0.1 M NaOH (total volume = 100 mL). NaOH was further added in the suspension to obtain 0.1, 0.5, 1.0 and 1.2 M NaOH suspensions of HAp in ethanol. The suspensions were prepared by adding an appropriate amount of dry NaOH. Ti plates (20 mm × 10 mm × 0.89 mm, Alfa Aesar, 99.7% purity, grade 2 Ti) were used as substrates for the deposition of HAp/TiO₂ coatings. First, Ti plates are prepared by grinding with silicon carbide sandpaper (SiC) of grades from 600 to 3000. After that, the substrates were mechanically polished with micropolish alumina pastes of 0.3 and 0.05 μm, respectively. The anode was a Ti plate prepared as described, while a pair of stainless-steel plates 1Cr18Ni9Ti were used as the cathode. The anodization was performed under 60 V because the roughest substrate was obtained [10]. The CPX400DP potentiostat/galvanostat from Aim and Thurlby Thandar Instruments was used as the power source. All suspensions were stirred for 2 hours before and during the electrodeposition process using a magnetic stirrer. The deposition time for all HAp/TiO₂ coatings was 1 min in a potentiostatic regime.

Optical images of the synthesized HAp/TiO₂ coatings were recorded by Olympus CX41 optical microscope. A field-emission scanning electron microscope (FE-SEM) Tescan Mira 3 XMU FEG-SEM was used to analyze the morphology of the obtained coatings. Fourier transform infrared spectroscopy (FTIR) was carried out using a Michelson MB Series Bomen FTIR spectroscope (Hartmann Braun) to detect the bond types in the material.

Results and discussion

Figure 1 shows optical images of HAp/TiO₂ coatings on Ti substrate obtained at different NaOH concentrations in suspensions. At the lowest NaOH concentrations, the anodization of substrate surface was occurred, which could be seen as the yellow color of the substrate. This can be explained by the insufficient concentration of OH⁻ ions that would surround the HAp particles. The OH⁻ ion was insufficient to maintain stable suspension and as a consequence, all the applied voltage was spent on surface anodization process. At the surface of the coating obtained from a suspension containing 0.5 M NaOH, the beginning of the formation of the HAp layer is visible in addition to the yellow color of the substrate and anodized layer.

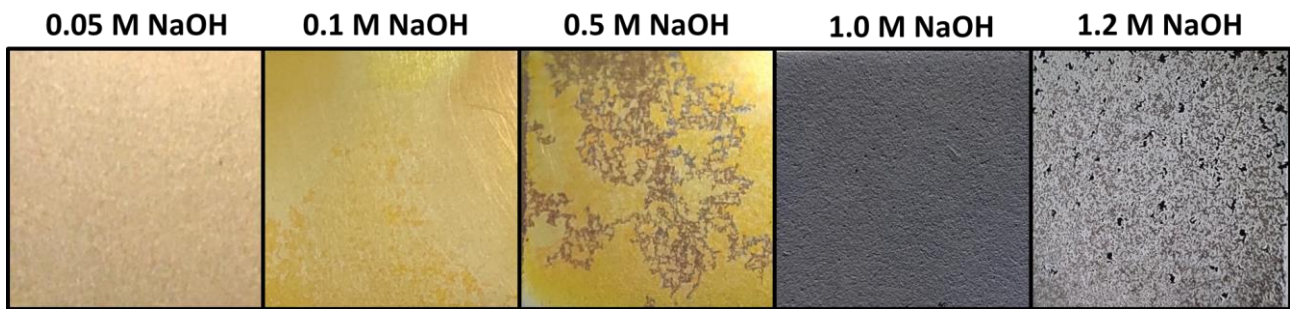


Figure 1. Optical images of HAp/TiO₂ coatings on Ti substrate produced from suspensions of hydrothermally obtained HAp powder + NaOH

As it can be seen from Figure 1, the best results were obtained with NaOH concentration of 1.0 M, where the resulting coating is uniform, firm and it covers the whole surface. On the other hand, for 1.2 M NaOH, formation of holes in the coating is visible due to the evolution of gas, which leads to a conclusion that the process is too tempestuous for the given experimental set-up.

Figure 2 shows FE-SEM images of HAp/TiO₂ composite coatings obtained from suspensions containing 1.0 M NaOH and 1.2 M NaOH. As it can be seen from Figure 2, a coating consisting of relatively uniform spherical agglomerates, having several microns in the size, but considerably more uniform coating was obtained from the 1.0 M NaOH suspension. Bright spots are visible in the Figure 2 showing HAp powder obtained from the 1.2 M NaOH suspension, which indicates that the holes were formed in the coating due to the release of gas.

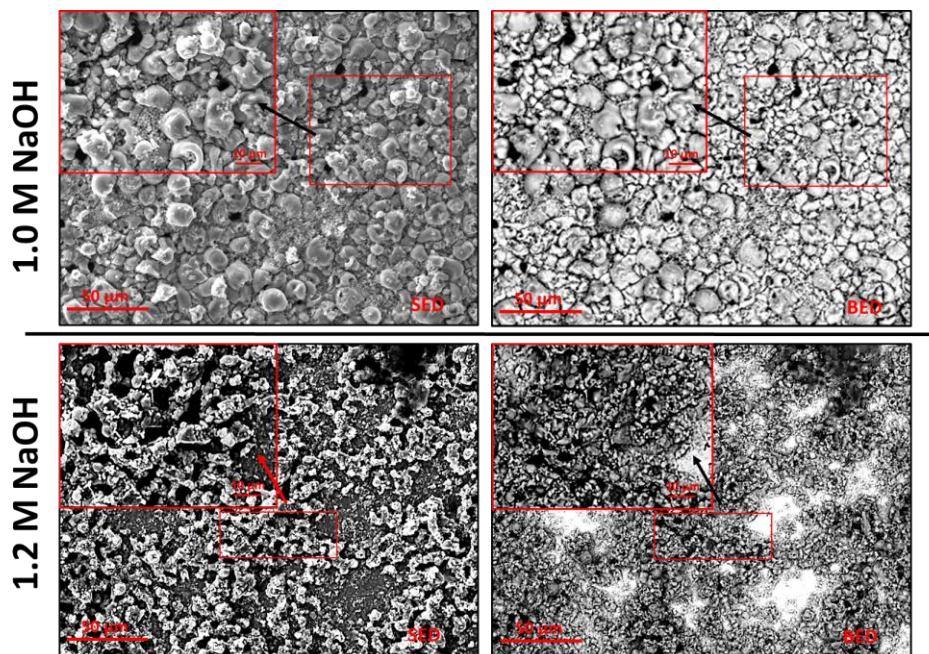


Figure 2. FE-SEM images of HAp/TiO₂ coatings on Ti substrate produced from suspensions of hydrothermally obtained HAp powder and NaOH

FTIR spectra of HAp powder and synthesized HAp/TiO₂ coating are shown in Figure 3. These spectra confirm the presence of functional groups related to HAp.

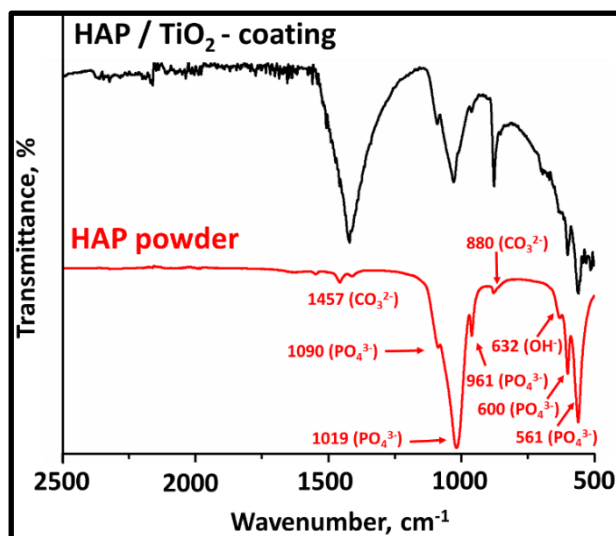


Figure 3. FTIR spectrum of hydrothermally obtained HAp powder and HAp/TiO₂ coating on Ti substrate

The peaks at 561, 600, 961, 1019 and 1090 cm⁻¹ are the characteristic bands for PO₄³⁻. The OH⁻ characteristic band occurs at 632 cm⁻¹. The bands at wavenumbers 880 and 1457 cm⁻¹ come from incorporated CO₃²⁻ in the HAp structure [11]. These CO₃²⁻ peaks originate from CO₂ that was absorbed from the air. HAp is well known to easily substitute OH⁻ by CO₃²⁻.

Conclusions

The presented study investigated the optimization of the *in-situ* anodizing/anaphoretic electrodeposition process of hydrothermally obtained HAp on Ti substrate in order to obtain HAp/TiO₂ composite coatings. The formation of these coatings was confirmed by optical microscope, FE-SEM and FTIR. The best results were obtained by applying of 60 V, from the solution containing 1.0 M NaOH. The coating showed uniformity, firmness and excellent coverage of the entire surface. Holes appeared in the coating obtained from 1.2 M NaOH suspension due to gas evolution. Further investigation under lower current in potentiostatic regime should be further investigated.

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