Impact of Alendronate Sodium plus Elcatonin on Postoperative Bone Pain in Patients with Osteoporotic Fractures

Baohui Wang,1 Yindi Sun,1 Da Shi,2 Xiuwei Han,2 Na Liu,1 and Bo Wang2

1Pain Ward of Orthopedics Department of TCM, Honghui Hospital, Xi’an Jiaotong University, Xi’an, 710000 Shaanxi Province, China
2Joint Ward of Orthopedics Department of TCM, Honghui Hospital, Xi’an Jiaotong University, Xi’an, 710000 Shaanxi Province, China

Correspondence should be addressed to Bo Wang; wangbo306@outlook.com

Received 30 June 2022; Revised 3 August 2022; Accepted 16 August 2022; Published 7 September 2022

Academic Editor: Zhijun Liao

Copyright © 2022 Baohui Wang et al. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Objective. This research aims to investigate and analyze the impact of alendronate sodium (ALN) plus elcatonin (EC) in treating postoperative bone pain (BP) in patients with osteoporotic fractures (OPFs).

Methods. One hundred and thirty-eight cases of OPFs admitted between July 2018 and July 2021 were selected, of which 68 cases receiving ALN were set as the control group and 70 cases receiving ALN plus EC were set as the research group. Intercomparisons were performed in terms of BP, curative effect, complication rate, and serum bone metabolism indexes such as bone Gla protein (BGP), parathyroid hormone (PTH), and bone alkaline phosphatase (BALP).

Results. Better postoperative BP relief, higher overall response rate, and lower complication rate were identified in the research group versus the control group. On the other hand, the research group presented with increased BGP and BALP after treatment, higher than those in the control group, while the posttreatment PTH decreased obviously and was lower versus the control group. Conclusions. For OPF patients, ALN plus EC contributes to significantly reduced postoperative BP, improved clinical efficacy, higher treatment safety, and better bone metabolism, which has high clinical application value.

1. Introduction

Osteoporosis (OP), one of the most prevalent systemic metabolic bone conditions, is mainly characterized by decreased bone mineral density and bone mass as well as abnormal bone microstructure, resulting in increased bone fragility and consequently elevated risk of fractures [1, 2]. As indicated by related statistics, the number of global OP patients has exceeded 200 million, with approximately 9 million new cases and as many as 1.5 million osteoporotic fracture (OPF) patients in the United States each year [3]. OPFs, which account for about 80% of all fractures, are usually caused by injury or bone lesion-induced stress [4, 5]. OPFs are shown to be often accompanied by postoperative bone pain (BP), which adversely affects patients’ physical and mental health as well as activities of daily living [6]. Moreover, if OPFs are not timely intervened and alleviated, they are prone to refractures, further increasing the risk of disability in patients [7]. Further research on the treatment and intervention of OPFs is therefore critical for management optimization of such patients and reducing the incidence of OPF-related morbidity and disability rates.

At present, the treatment of OPFs is challenging, with a high risk of postoperative complications. Postoperative drug therapy is helpful to improve bone metabolism balance and relieve postoperative BP [8, 9]. Of them, alendronate sodium (ALN) is a commonly used oral bisphosphonate for the treatment of OP, which can prevent brittle fractures by promoting osteoclast (OC) apoptosis and preventing bone resorption [10]. Reported by Deardorff et al. [12], ALN was preventive against nonvertebral fractures in postmenopausal OP women. Elcatonin (EC), which is also an antible resorption drug like ALN, mainly inhibits bone resorption by reducing
the number of OCs and inhibiting their secretory activity [13]. Animal experiments show that EC can inhibit the systemic acceleration of bone resorption and bone turnover caused by bone injuries without delaying the healing process of bone defects, which has a good effect on fracture healing [14]. EC has also been shown to help patients with osteoporotic vertebral fractures relieve pain, inhibit bone resorption, and improve their quality of life [15]. Another study has pointed out that EC can be combined with ALN to act on ovaries removed rats, which has a synergistic enhancement effect on trabecular structure and bone strength of mice [16].

Given the current lack of related research on ALN plus EC in relieving postoperative BP in OPF patients, this study aims to fill the gap and provide new insights into OPF treatment.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Baseline Information. From July 2018 to July 2021, 138 patients with OPFs were selected, with 68 patients receiving ALN and the other 70 patients treated with ALN plus EC being assigned to control group and research group, respectively. The control group had 26 males and 42 females aged

### Table 1: Patients’ baseline data [n (%), mean ± SD].

| Variables                        | n  | Control group (n = 68) | Research group (n = 70) | $\chi^2$ | P     |
|----------------------------------|----|-----------------------|-------------------------|---------|-------|
| Sex                              |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| Male                             | 51 | 26 (38.24)            | 25 (35.71)              | 0.094   | 0.759 |
| Female                           | 87 | 42 (61.76)            | 45 (64.29)              |         |       |
| Age (years old)                  |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| <60                              | 47 | 20 (29.41)            | 27 (38.57)              | 1.289   | 0.256 |
| ≥60                              | 91 | 48 (70.59)            | 43 (61.43)              |         |       |
| Average age (years)              | 138| 62.89 ± 5.65          | 62.68 ± 9.24            | 0.161   | 0.873 |
| Course of disease (years)        | 138| 4.21 ± 1.04           | 4.43 ± 1.47             | 1.012   | 0.313 |
| Etiology                         |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| Falls                            | 79 | 38 (55.88)            | 41 (58.57)              |         |       |
| Collision                        | 37 | 18 (26.47)            | 19 (27.14)              |         |       |
| Other accidents                  | 22 | 12 (17.65)            | 10 (14.29)              |         |       |
| Fracture site                    |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| Intertrochanteric fracture of femur | 80 | 37 (54.41)         | 43 (61.43)              |         |       |
| Femoral neck fracture            | 58 | 31 (45.59)            | 27 (38.57)              |         |       |
| Diabetes mellitus                |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| No                               | 68 | 32 (47.06)            | 36 (51.43)              |         |       |
| Yes                              | 70 | 36 (52.94)            | 34 (48.57)              |         |       |
| Hypertension                     |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| No                               | 46 | 26 (38.24)            | 20 (28.57)              |         |       |
| Yes                              | 92 | 42 (61.76)            | 50 (71.43)              |         |       |
| Drinking history                 |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| No                               | 65 | 34 (50.00)            | 31 (44.29)              |         |       |
| Yes                              | 73 | 34 (50.00)            | 39 (55.71)              |         |       |
| Smoking history                  |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| No                               | 44 | 22 (32.35)            | 22 (31.43)              |         |       |
| Yes                              | 94 | 46 (67.65)            | 48 (68.57)              |         |       |
| Marital status                   |    |                       |                         |         |       |
| Single                           | 39 | 23 (33.82)            | 16 (22.86)              |         |       |
| Married                          | 99 | 45 (66.18)            | 54 (77.14)              |         |       |

![Figure 1: Postoperative bone pain. **P < 0.01.](image)
2.2. Eligibility Criteria. All patients enrolled were confirmed with primary OP and fractures caused by it, with surgical treatment, postoperative BP, and no other recent treatment. In contrast, those with fractures injured to spinal cord and nerve root, hyperthyroidism, malignant tumor, deterioration of organ function, and abnormal cognitive function or communication function were excluded, as well as those with allergies to the study medication. In addition, patients complicated by impairment, serious cardiovascular diseases, and those who did not take the medication as required were ruled out.

2.3. Therapies. Both cohorts were given oral calcium carbonate D3 600mg once a day and active vitamin D3 (0.25 μg/time) twice daily after surgery. On this basis, the control group received ALN tablets (Beijing Fuyuan Pharmaceutical Co., Ltd., H20059029), per os, 70 mg/time, once a week. The research group was treated with EC injection (Luye Pharma Group, H20040338) by intramuscular injection on the basis of the control group, 10 U/time, twice a week. Patients in both groups were treated for half a year.

2.4. Endpoints

2.4.1. BP. The severity of BP was assessed preoperatively and six months after treatment using the Visual Analogue Scale (VAS) [17], an instrument with a score range of 0-10 points and the score in direct proportion to BP severity.

2.4.2. Efficacy. Markedly effective was indicated if the fracture basically recovered after treatment, with normal shape, significantly increased bone mineral density, and basically disappeared pain; if patients showed fracture healing, with a certain degree of pain relief and increase in bone mineral density, it is considered effective; ineffective was considered if patients had no significant changes before and after treatment. The percentage of the sum of the cases with markedly effective and effective treatment in the total number of cases is the overall effective rate.

2.4.3. Safety. The cases of gastrointestinal reactions, fever, headache, fatigue, and other complications were recorded, and the complication rate was calculated.

2.4.4. Bone Metabolism. Bone metabolism was evaluated before and 6 months after intervention by detecting serum parameters such as bone Gla protein (BGP), bone alkaline phosphatase (BALP), and parathyroid hormone (PTH). Before the test, fasting cubital venous blood (5 mL) was sampled early in the morning. After serum separation, BGP, BALP, and PTH were detected by the enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), with the reagents all supplied by the Shanghai Fuyu Biotech.

2.5. Statistical Processing. Data analysis and picture drawing were carried out through the GraphPad Prism 6 (GraphPad Software, San Diego, USA). A chi-square test was used for intergroup comparison of count data recorded as case number/percentage (n%). Mean ± SEM was used for measurement data, and the inter- and intragroup differences were identified by independent sample t-test and paired t-test, respectively. P < 0.05 was the significance level in this study.

3. Results

3.1. Baseline Data. The two cohorts of patients differed insignificantly in baseline data like sex, age, average age, disease course, etiology, fracture site, diabetes mellitus, hypertension, drinking/smoking history, and marital status (P > 0.05) (Table 1).

3.2. Postoperative BP in Two Groups. We evaluated patients’ postoperative BP by the VAS. The two groups had no statistical difference in the pretreatment VAS score (P > 0.05). After treatment, the score reduced markedly in both cohorts (P < 0.05) and was lower in research group (P < 0.05) (Figure 1).

3.3. Clinical Efficacy of Two Groups. We analyzed the efficacy of the two groups to evaluate the impacts of the two groups to evaluate the impacts of the two

| Categories | Control group (n = 68) | Research group (n = 70) | $\chi^2$ value | P value |
|------------|------------------------|------------------------|----------------|---------|
| Gastrointestinal reactions | 5 (7.35) | 7 (10.00) | — | — |
| Fever | 0 (0.00) | 2 (2.86) | — | — |
| Headache | 2 (2.94) | 0 (0.00) | — | — |
| Fatigue | 0 (0.00) | 1 (1.43) | — | — |
| Total incidence | 7 (10.29) | 10 (14.29) | 0.509 | 0.476 |
interventions on patients’ clinical outcomes. A statistically higher overall response rate was determined in research group when compared to control group (90.00% vs. 64.71%, \( P < 0.001 \)) (Table 2).

3.4. Complication Rate of Two Groups. We observed and recorded the cases of gastrointestinal reactions, fever, headache, and fatigue and found no statistical difference in the complication rate between groups (\( P > 0.05 \)) (Table 3).

3.5. Serum Bone Metabolism in Two Groups. By detecting BGP, BALP, and PTH, the impacts of the two interventions on patients’ bone metabolism were evaluated. The three bone metabolism indices were not statistically different between them prior to treatment (\( P > 0.05 \)). After intervention, BGP and BALP increased, while PTH decreased in both cohorts (\( P < 0.05 \)), with higher BGP and BALP and lower PTH in research group as compared to control group (\( P < 0.05 \)) (Figure 2).

4. Discussion

OP has a predilection for the elderly and women, and its pathological feature is the disequilibrium between bone formation and bone resorption [18]. The incidence of OPFs is constantly on the rise, and by 2025, there will be 3 million new OPF patients worldwide, bringing a huge economic burden to the healthcare system [19]. Moreover, such brittle fractures are linked to premature death and disability, which calls for related drug prevention [20]. Anti-OP drug intervention can help osteoporotic patients reduce the risk of fractures and complications [21].

ALN, as a first-line therapy, can validly lower the possibility of developing vertebral and nonvertebral fractures by inhibiting bone turnover and increasing bone mass, with a significant effect on improving bone strength [22]. ALN exerts an inhibitory effect on bone resorption through the mevalonate pathway, but it has to bind to plasma proteins due to low bioavailability, resulting in low bone tissue resorption rate and thus affecting the therapeutic effect [23]. EC is a derivative of eel calcitonin, which is synthesized by substituting disulfide bonds with vinyl bonds, with potent analgesic actions [24, 25]. Previous studies have confirmed that EC can be combined with bisphosphonates (such as risedronate) to treat patients with chronic back pain, with a pain-relieving effect [26]. In our study, 138 patients with OPFs were included, with the control group receiving ALN and the research group receiving ALN plus EC. The research group had a VAS score significantly lower than the pretreatment level and control group three months after therapy.
safety and clinical promotion value. The labeled dataset used to support the analysis of the two intervention methods on bone metabolism of OPF patients. BGP and BALP are related indexes of bone formation. In the process of fracture healing, it is necessary to strengthen bone formation function of osteoblasts, so as to regulate bone formation and promote bone healing [28]. PTH, a marker of bone turnover, can promote the release of bone calcium and phosphorus into blood by activating OCs, thus strengthening bone resorption and reducing bone mass [29]. As such, the increase of BGP and BALP levels and the decrease of PTH can help improve bone metabolism and inhibit acute bone loss, thus relieving OPF-associated BP to a certain extent [30]. In our research, the research group showed statistically higher postrtreatment BGP and BALP and lower PTH than the pretreatment levels and control group, demonstrating far superior effects of the combined drug intervention on improving bone metabolism balance when compared to ALN monotherapy. EC is also shown to play an antibiotic resorption role by enhancing the osteoinduction related to recombinant human bone morphogenetic protein-2 and can promote the anabolism of osteoblasts [31]. According to Ji et al. [32], EC can inhibit bone resorption by binding to EC-like receptors on OC membrane, thus disrupting OC activity. Our study confirmed that patients with OPFs can relieve postoperative BP through the intervention of ALN plus EC, which provides a new idea for clinical management of such patients.

This study still shows room for improvement. First, the clinical sample size is small, which may have certain influence on the experimental results. Second, there is a lack of short-term and long-term prognosis analysis. If relevant analysis can be supplemented, it will help to further understand the impacts of the two intervention methods on the prognosis of OPF patients. Third, no relevant basic experiments have been carried out to reveal the mechanism of ALN combined with EC in the treatment of OPFs.

5. Conclusion

In summary, ALN plus EC can significantly reduce postoperative BP in patients with OPFs, improve curative efficacy, and enhance specific bone metabolism balance, with high safety and clinical promotion value.

Data Availability

The labeled dataset used to support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon request.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no competing interests.

References

[1] D. Wu, A. Cline-Smith, E. Shashkova, A. Perla, A. Katyal, and R. Aurora, “T-cell mediated inflammation in postmenopausal osteoporosis,” Frontiers in Immunology, vol. 12, p. 687551, 2021.
[2] Y. X. Deng, W. G. He, H. J. Cai et al., “Analysis and validation of hub genes in blood monocytes of postmenopausal osteoporosis patients,” Front Endocrinol (Lausanne), vol. 12, article 815245, 2022.
[3] M. Rajabi, A. Ostovar, A. A. Sari et al., “Direct costs of common osteoporotic fractures (hip, vertebral and forearm) in Iran,” BMC Musculoskeletal Disorders, vol. 22, no. 1, p. 651, 2021.
[4] J. P. Brown, “Long-term treatment of postmenopausal osteoporosis,” Endocrinol Metab (Seoul), vol. 36, no. 3, pp. 544–552, 2021.
[5] Z. Yang, W. Zhang, X. Ren, C. Tu, and Z. Li, “Exosomes: a friend or foe for osteoporotic fracture?,” Front Endocrinol (Lausanne), vol. 12, p. 679914, 2021.
[6] K. Xu, Y. L. Li, and S. H. Xiao, “Vesiculo-plasty versus vertebro-plasty in the treatment of osteoporotic vertebral compression fractures with posterior wall rupture,” The Journal of International Medical Research, vol. 49, no. 12, p. 03009652110663, 2021.
[7] W. Liu, X. Jin, Z. Guan, and Q. Zhou, “Pulsed electromagnetic field affects the development of postmenopausal osteoporotic women with vertebral fractures,” BioMed Research International, vol. 2021, Article ID 4650057, 9 pages, 2021.
[8] H. Cicek, U. Tuhanigolu, H. U. Ogru, F. Seyfettinoglu, and M. Bozkurt, “An alternative treatment for osteoporotic su type iii periprosthetic supracondylar femur fractures: double locking plate fixation,” Acta Orthopaedica et Traumatologica Turcica, vol. 52, no. 2, pp. 92–96, 2018.
[9] F. Migliorini, N. Maffulli, G. Colarossi, J. Eschweiler, M. Tingart, and M. Betsch, “Effect of drugs on bone mineral density in postmenopausal osteoporosis: a Bayesian network meta-analysis,” Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 533, 2021.
[10] R. Viggers, Z. Al-Mashhadi, J. Starup-Linde, and P. Vestergaard, “The efficacy of alendronate versus denosumab on major osteoporotic fracture risk in elderly patients with diabetes mellitus: a Danish retrospective cohort study,” Front Endocrinol (Lausanne), vol. 12, p. 826997, 2022.
[11] J. S. Kang, Y. Y. Won, J. O. Kim et al., “Atypical femoral fractures after anti-osteoporotic medication: a Korean multicenter study,” International Orthopaedics, vol. 38, no. 6, pp. 1247–1253, 2014.
[12] W. J. Deardorff, I. Cenzer, B. Nguyen, and S. J. Lee, “Time to benefit of bisphosphonate therapy for the prevention of fractures among postmenopausal women with osteoporosis: a meta-analysis of randomized clinical trials,” JAMA Internal Medicine, vol. 182, no. 1, pp. 33–41, 2022.
[13] Z. Liu, M. Zhang, Z. Shen, J. Ke, D. Zhang, and F. Yin, “Efficacy and safety of 18 anti-osteoporotic drugs in the treatment of patients with osteoporosis caused by glucocorticoid: a network meta-analysis of randomized controlled trials,” PLoS One, vol. 15, no. 12, article e0243851, 2020.
[14] Y. Katae, S. Tanaka, A. Sakai, M. Nagashima, H. Hirasawa, and T. Nakamura, “Elcatonin injections suppress systemic bone resorption without affecting cortical bone regeneration after drill-hole injuries in mice,” *Journal of Orthopaedic Research*, vol. 27, no. 12, pp. 1652–1658, 2009.

[15] S. Tanaka, A. Yoshiida, S. Kono, T. Oguma, K. Hasegawa, and M. Ito, “Effectiveness of elcatonin for alleviating pain and inhibiting bone resorption in patients with osteoporotic vertebral fractures,” *Journal of Bone and Mineral Metabolism*, vol. 35, no. 5, pp. 544–553, 2017.

[16] K. Ogawa, M. Hori, R. Takao, and T. Sakurada, “Effects of combined elcatonin and alendronate treatment on the architecture and strength of bone in ovariectomized rats,” *Journal of Bone and Mineral Metabolism*, vol. 23, no. 5, pp. 351–358, 2005.

[17] J. Bielewicz, B. Daniluk, and P. Kamieniak, “VAS and NRS, same or different? Are visual analog scale values and numerical rating scale equally viable tools for assessing patients after microdiscectomy?,” *Pain Research & Management*, vol. 2022, article 5337483, pp. 1–6, 2022.

[18] H. Shi, X. Jiang, C. Xu, and Q. Cheng, “MicroRNAs in serum exosomes as circulating biomarkers for postmenopausal osteoporosis,” *Front Endocrinol (Lausanne)*, vol. 13, p. 819056, 2022.

[19] C. Hong, S. Choi, M. Park, S. M. Park, and G. Lee, “Body composition and osteoporotic fracture using anthropometric prediction equations to assess muscle and fat masses,” *Journal of Cachexia, Sarcopenia and Muscle*, vol. 12, no. 6, pp. 2247–2258, 2021.

[20] A. Unnanuntana, A. Jarusriwanna, and P. Songcharoen, “Randomized clinical trial comparing efficacy and safety of brand versus generic alendronate (Bonmax®) for osteoporosis treatment,” *PloS One*, vol. 12, no. 7, article e0180325, 2017.

[21] S. Y. Jang, Y. Cha, J. C. Lee, H. Kim, K. J. Kim, and W. Choy, “Population-based analysis for risk of suicide death in elderly osteoporotic patients after hip fracture: a nested case-control study,” *Journal of Korean Medical Science*, vol. 36, no. 36, article e225, 2021.

[22] J. Sanderson, M. Martyn-St James, J. Stevens et al., “Clinical effectiveness of bisphosphonates for the prevention of fracture: a systematic review and network meta-analysis,” *Bone*, vol. 89, pp. 52–58, 2016.

[23] Z. Xiong, P. Yi, X. Tang, L. Shu, and C. Zhang, “Meta-analysis of the efficacy and safety of alendronate combined with atorvastatin in the treatment of osteoporosis in diabetes mellitus,” *BioMed Research International*, vol. 2022, Article ID 6747469, 14 pages, 2022.

[24] J. Iwamoto, M. Uzawa, Y. Sato, T. Takeda, and H. Matsumoto, “Effects of short-term combined treatment with alendronate and elcatonin on bone mineral density and bone turnover in postmenopausal women with osteoporosis,” *Therapeutics and Clinical Risk Management*, vol. 5, no. 3, pp. 499–505, 2009.

[25] K. Yoh, T. Uzawa, T. Orito, and K. Tanaka, “Improvement of quality of life (QOL) in osteoporotic patients by elcatonin treatment: a trial taking the participants’ preference into account,” *Jpn Clin Med*, vol. 3, pp. 9–14, 2012.

[26] M. Hongo, N. Miyakoshi, Y. Kasukawa, Y. Ishikawa, and Y. Shimada, “Additive effect of elcatonin to risendronate for chronic back pain and quality of life in postmenopausal women with osteoporosis: a randomized controlled trial,” *Journal of Bone and Mineral Metabolism*, vol. 33, no. 4, pp. 432–439, 2015.

[27] A. Ito, M. Takeda, T. Yoshimura et al., “Anti-hyperalgesic effects of calcitonin on neuropathic pain interacting with its peripheral receptors,” *Molecular Pain*, vol. 8, p. 1744-8069-8-42, 2012.

[28] P. Wang, J. Ding, G. Yang, W. Sun, H. Guo, and Y. Zhao, “Study on the mechanism of Qigu capsule in upregulating NF-xB/HIF-1α pathway to improve the quality of bone callus in mice at different stages of osteoporotic fracture healing,” *Evidence-based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, vol. 2021, Article ID 9943692, 10 pages, 2021.

[29] S. Lin, X. Cai, Q. Cheng et al., “Association between bone turnover markers, BMD and height loss of cemented vertebrae after percutaneous vertebroplasty in patients with osteoporotic vertebral compression fractures,” *Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research*, vol. 17, no. 1, p. 202, 2022.

[30] Z. Liu, C. W. Li, Y. F. Mao et al., “Study on zoledronic acid reducing acute bone loss and fracture rates in elderly postoperative patients with intertrochanteric fractures,” *Orthopaedic Surgery*, vol. 11, no. 3, pp. 380–385, 2019.

[31] Y. Okubo, K. Kusumoto, and K. Bessho, “Accelerators of osteogenesis by recombinant human bone morphogenetic protein-2,” *Drug Target Insights*, vol. 2, pp. 55–60, 2007.

[32] Z. Ji, C. Shi, S. Huang, X. Dang, K. Wang, and B. Lan, “Elcatonin attenuates disuse osteoporosis after fracture fixation of tubular bone in rats,” *Journal of Orthopaedic Surgery and Research*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 103, 2015.