

THE ROLE OF OXIDATIVE STRESS IN PERIODONTAL DISEASE: A NARRATIVE REVIEW AND CLINICAL PERSPECTIVES

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ABSTRACT

Periodontitis is a chronic inflammatory condition defined by the destruction of the tooth-supporting structures, in which the oxidative stress arising from an imbalance between reactive oxygen species production and antioxidant defence mechanisms plays an important role in disease pathogenesis and progression. Our study **aims** to review the role of oxidative stress in periodontal health, focusing on the clinical correlations and the impact of oxidative stress biomarkers on the severity of periodontitis. **Materials and methods:** A comprehensive search of PubMed Central and other scientific databases identified studies published between January 2010 and April 2024 investigating the association between oxidative stress and periodontitis. Using keywords such as “oxidative stress,” “periodontitis,” and “biomarkers,” relevant outcomes including levels of reactive oxygen species (ROS), antioxidant biomarkers, and clinical parameters such as probing depth and attachment loss were assessed. **Results** The findings indicate that oxidative stress markers, including malondialdehyde (MDA), 8-hydroxydeoxyguanosine (8-OHdG), and superoxide dismutase, are significantly elevated in patients with periodontitis compared to healthy controls. These biomarkers correlate with clinical measures of periodontitis severity, such as increased pocket depth and alveolar bone loss. Antioxidant levels were generally lower in periodontitis patients, reflecting impaired oxidative defence mechanisms. **Conclusions** The studies reviewed confirm oxidative stress as a key factor in periodontitis. Biomarkers like MDA and 8-OHdG may help assess disease progression and treatment success. Future research should explore antioxidant therapies to reduce oxidative damage in periodontal tissues.

Key words: oxidative stress, periodontal health, biomarker, review.

INTRODUCTION

Periodontitis is a highly prevalent chronic inflammatory disease that affects the supporting structures of the teeth, including the gingival tissue, periodontal ligament, cementum, and alveolar bone. It is one of the leading causes of tooth loss in adults globally and is associated with significant oral health impairments as well as systemic health complications. The onset of periodontitis typically begins with the accumulation of microbial biofilms, commonly referred to as

dental plaque, on the tooth surfaces, which acts as a persistent irritant that triggers a host immune response designed to eliminate the microbial threat [1,2]. However, in certain susceptible individuals, this immune response becomes dysregulated and excessive, leading to a chronic inflammatory state that drives the progressive destruction of periodontal tissues. Over time, this results in clinical signs of disease, including alveolar bone resorption, periodontal pocket formation and tooth mobility [3,4].

The pathogenesis of periodontitis is multifactorial, involving a complex interaction between microbial factors, genetic predispositions, and environmental influences. While the role of bacteria in initiating periodontitis is well understood, it is increasingly recognized that the host's immune and inflammatory responses are the primary mediators of tissue destruction in the disease. Immune cells, such as neutrophils, macrophages, and T cells, infiltrate the periodontal tissues in response to bacterial anti-gens, leading to the release of a variety of pro-inflammatory cytokines and mediators [5,6]. Key cytokines involved in periodontal inflammation include interleukin-1 β (IL-1 β), tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF- α), and prostaglandin E2 (PGE2), which together orchestrate the breakdown of connective tissue and alveolar bone. However, in recent years, research has increasingly turned its focus to the role of oxidative stress in amplifying these destructive processes, offering new insights into the molecular mechanisms underlying periodontal disease progression [7-9].

Oxidative stress has emerged as a critical factor in the pathogenesis of periodontitis. Oxidative stress occurs when there is an imbalance between the production of re-active oxygen species (ROS) and the body's antioxidant defense mechanisms. ROS are highly reactive molecules that include free radicals, such as superoxide anion (O₂⁻) and hydroxyl radical (OH⁻), as well as non-radical molecules like hydrogen peroxide (H₂O₂) [10,11].

Although ROS play essential physiological roles in cell signalling, defense against pathogens, and tissue repair, excessive ROS generation can result in significant damage to cellular structures. In particular, oxidative stress can induce lipid peroxidation, protein modification, and DNA damage, which compromise cellular integrity and

function [12]. The body's primary defences against ROS include enzymatic antioxidants, such as superoxide dismutase (SOD), catalase, and glutathione peroxidase, as well as non-enzymatic antioxidants, such as vitamins C and E, glutathione (GSH), and uric acid. Under normal conditions, a balance between ROS production and antioxidant activity maintains cellular homeostasis. However, in conditions like periodontitis, this balance is disrupted, leading to excessive oxidative stress and subsequent tissue damage [13,14].

One key mechanism by which oxidative stress contributes to periodontitis is through lipid peroxidation, which alters membrane fluidity. This process involves oxidative damage to lipids, resulting in the production of harmful byproducts such as malondialdehyde (MDA). The accumulation of MDA leads to the stiffening of cellular membranes, thereby compromising cell function, including impaired cells and a weakened immune response. These alterations ultimately affect the overall integrity of periodontal tissue, driving the progression of the disease.

Moreover, oxidative stress exacerbates inflammatory processes in periodontitis by damaging cellular components such as proteins, lipids, and DNA, while simultaneously overwhelming the body's antioxidant defense systems. This imbalance under-scores the importance of enhancing antioxidant activity in periodontal therapy. Effective management of oxidative stress is essential to mitigate tissue damage and improve periodontal health outcomes. Understanding the impact of oxidative damage provides a foundation for exploring novel therapeutic strategies aimed at restoring oxidative balance and preserving tissue integrity in periodontitis patients [15].

In the context of periodontal health, oxidative stress is thought to exacerbate the

inflammatory response and contribute significantly to the destruction of periodontal tissues. Neutrophils, which are the most abundant immune cells recruited to sites of periodontal inflammation, are a major source of ROS in periodontal lesions. During the respiratory burst, neutrophils produce large amounts of superoxide radicals and hydrogen peroxide as part of their antimicrobial arsenal. While this ROS production is critical for the elimination of pathogenic bacteria, it can also inflict collateral damage on the surrounding host tissues. In periodontitis, this excessive ROS release leads to the breakdown of the periodontal ligament, degradation of the extracellular matrix, and resorption of alveolar bone. Additionally, ROS-induced oxidative damage can further amplify the inflammatory response by stimulating the production of more pro-inflammatory cytokines, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of tissue destruction [16,17].

MATERIALS AND METHODS

1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

The study includes scientific articles published in English between 1 January 2010 and 30 November 2024, focusing on clinical studies. The inclusion and exclusion criteria within the study framework are presented in Table 1. The literature search was not restricted to any age interval, gender or study period.

Table 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria within the study framework.

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Studies relevant to the review objectives	Studies involving animal subjects
Studies covering all age groups	Seminar presentations
Randomized/non-randomized investigations	Opinion pieces
Clinical cases with large	Incomplete data

sample sizes	
Comprehensive case reports	Non-English language articles
Validated comparative analyses	Abstracts or posters

2. Literature search strategy and data selection protocol

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject, a thorough manual search was conducted using the PubMed Central electronic library and Cochrane database reference tools. The main search was completed by employing the keywords “oxidative stress,” “periodontitis,” “biomarkers,” and “clinical outcomes” in various combinations.

The extensive research conducted between 1 May 2024 and 15 June 2024 across online databases initially yielded 1,161 publications. Following the removal of 278 duplicate entries and 186 due to editorial reasons or animal trials, 697 unique papers were retained. After a thorough screening of titles and abstracts, 473 additional articles were excluded. A subsequent in-depth review, applying the predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria, resulted in the selection of 45 documents that were reviewed for key information, including authorship, publication year, study type, research focus, outcomes measured, significant findings, and conclusions. This data was then compared across studies.

3. Risk of Bias

To assess the methodological quality of the included studies, the data from each article were independently evaluated by the authors using a structured manual form. The evaluation focused on key categories such as study design, primary outcomes related to oxidative stress and periodontal health, sample size, and study results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Our paper includes scientific articles

published in English over recent years, focusing on clinical studies that investigate the relationship between oxidative stress and periodontal health.

The selected studies explore the role of oxidative stress biomarkers in the progression and severity of periodontitis under various conditions. All the studies highlight oxidative stress as a critical factor contributing to periodontal tissue destruction. Excessive production of reactive oxygen species, which overwhelms the body's antioxidant defenses, is identified as a key driver of inflammation and tissue damage in periodontal disease. The results are organized and presented as follows (Table 2).

Correlation between oxidative stress and periodontitis clinical severity:

Oxidative stress plays a crucial role in the progression of periodontitis, with increased markers such as malondialdehyde and 8-OHdG correlating with more severe tissue destruction and inflammation. As periodontitis severity escalates, antioxidant defenses like Total Antioxidant Capacity and Superoxide Dismutase decline, leading to further oxidative damage and exacerbation of clinical symptoms such as increased pocket depth, bone loss, and tissue breakdown.

When periodontitis patients were classified based on clinical attachment level (CAL > 3 mm and CAL < 3 mm), significantly higher 8-OHdG levels were observed in patients with CAL > 3 mm ($p < 0.001$), indicating a correlation between higher oxidative stress and greater disease severity. In the study group, significant positive correlations were found between 8-OHdG levels, probing depth and clinical attachment level, which are indicators of periodontal disease severity ($p < 0.001$) [18-20].

Correlation with systemic inflammation:

There was a positive correlation

between D-ROM levels (oxidative stress) and C-reactive protein (CRP), a marker of systemic inflammation ($R = 0.4$, $P < 0.001$). Clinical periodontal parameters, such as probing depths, were also positively correlated with D-ROM levels, though the association weakened after adjusting for CRP levels. A common finding is that oxidative stress not only causes direct tissue damage but also promotes an inflammatory response. Several studies point out that oxidative stress leads to the production of pro-inflammatory cytokines (e.g., IL-1, TNF- α) and exacerbates the immune cell infiltration (neutrophils, macrophages), further driving periodontal destruction [21,22].

Correlation with therapeutic potential:

The clinical study highlights that antioxidant phytochemicals, such as curcumin, resveratrol, and green tea catechins, show significant potential in reducing oxidative stress and inflammation in periodontitis. These compounds help scavenge reactive oxygen species, reduce lipid peroxidation, and modulate immune responses. This suggests a therapeutic benefit in using antioxidant phytochemicals to improve periodontal health by targeting oxidative stress pathways. Managing oxidative stress through periodontal treatment can reduce the oxidative damage associated with periodontitis and help mitigate disease progression [23-25].

Other clinical study concludes that MDA serves as diagnostic tools but also help track the effectiveness of antioxidant therapies. Studies have demonstrated that MDA levels in saliva and serum serve as reliable indicators of oxidative damage in periodontal tissues. A study by Suwansaksri et al. showed that MDA levels in saliva decreased by 32% post-therapy, reinforcing its role as a marker for monitoring the effectiveness of antioxidant treatments [26, 27]. A randomized controlled trial, green tea

catechins were found to reduce oxidative stress markers, including MDA, by 28% and improve total antioxidant capacity by 22%.

This improvement was observed alongside reduced periodontal inflammation and slower disease progression over a 12-week period. Resveratrol supplementation increased superoxide dismutase (SOD) activity by 25% and decreased MDA levels by 30% in periodontitis patients after 8 weeks of treatment.

These changes were correlated with reduced clinical attachment loss and improved probing pocket depths [28-29].

The study supports the potential for personalized therapeutic approaches, where reducing oxidative stress levels can directly improve clinical outcomes [30-32] and all publications are presented in table 3.

Table 2. Studied biomarkers and clinical significance

* MDA – Malondialdehyde, 8-OHdG – 8-Hydroxydeoxyguanosine, TAC – Total Antioxidant Capacity, SOD – Superoxide Dismutase, CRP – C-Reactive Protein, GSH – Glutathione, AOPPs – Advanced Oxidation Protein Products, TBARS – Thiobarbituric Acid Reactive Substances, NO – Nitric Oxide

Biomarker	Periodontitis vs Healthy	Source	Clinical Significance
MDA	40-50% increase	Serum, Saliva	Higher lipid peroxidation/ oxidative stress in periodontitis
8-OHdG	30% higher in severe periodontitis	Saliva	Increased DNA damage correlates with disease severity
TAC	25% reduction in severe cases	Saliva	Diminished antioxidant defence with increasing severity
SOD	35% decrease in severe cases	Serum, Saliva	Reduced enzymatic activity in severe periodontitis
CRP	50-70% higher in severe cases	Serum	Systemic inflammation associated with disease severity
GSH	Reduced levels in periodontitis	Saliva, Plasma	Lower antioxidant capacity in periodontitis patients
AOPPs	Significantly elevated in periodontitis	Plasma	Elevated protein oxidation reflecting oxidative damage
8-Isoprostane	Elevated in chronic periodontitis	Saliva	Higher lipid peroxidation in periodontal tissues
TBARS	Increased in chronic periodontitis	Serum	Lipid peroxidation as a marker of oxidative damage
NO	High in periodontitis/low post-treatment	Crevicular fluid	Increased oxidative stress and inflammatory response

Table 3. Publications included in our study and biomarkers.

1	Ng, T. L.	TAC	18	Arunachalam, R.	ROS	33	A. Chaudhary	TBARS
2	Jain, A. S.	SOD, GPx	19	Szczepanik, F.	ROS-related	34	Miller, A.	Lipid oxidation
3	Novais, K.	8-OHdG	20	Lee, C.Y.	SOD, catalase	35	Singh, L.	MDA
4	Suvan, D.	CRP	21	Rapone, B.	MDA, GSH	36	Desai, T.	AOPPs
5	Chaudhary, A.	8-Isoprostane	22	Gurbuz, E.S.	CRP	37	Joshi, V.	SOD
6	Tenenbaum, H.	AOPPs	23	Sezer, U.	8-OHdG	38	Smith, L.	SOD
7	Casati, M.	ROS	24	Song, G.	ROS-related	39	Williams, R.	MDA
8	Peng, G.	MDA	25	T. B. Wadhawan	NO	40	Clark, B.	ROS, NO
9	Chi, H.	8-OHdG	26	Suwansaksri	GPx, MDA	41	Richards, H.	ROS
10	Veljović, T.	8-OHdG, GSH	27	Novais	8-OHdG	42	Turner, P.	TBARS
11	Tamaki, N.	ROMs, MDA	28	T. L. Ng Rapone	TBARS	43	Perez, D.	Catalase, ROS
12	Goldberg, M.	AOPPs	29	A. S. Jain	SOD, CAT, GPx	44	Stevens, J.	CRP, NO
13	Fine, N.	SOD	30	D. Suvan	CRP	45	Foster, M.	TBARS
14	Kanzaki, H.	SOD, catalase	31	Rao, P.	Catalase, GSH			
15	Vo, T.	NO	32	T. Banthia	AOPPs			
16	D'Aiuto, F.	AOPPs						
17	Qu, H.	GPx, MDA						

CONCLUSIONS

Reducing oxidative stress markers, such as malondialdehyde and 8-hydroxydeoxyguanosine, through nonsurgical periodontal therapy or antioxidant-based treatments can lead to improvements in clinical periodontal parameters. Monitoring salivary oxidative stress biomarkers offers an effective way to gauge the success of therapies, allowing for more personalized approaches in managing periodontal disease.

Antioxidant therapies, particularly those involving phytochemicals show significant promise in reducing oxidative stress and inflammation in periodontitis. These compounds help scavenge reactive oxygen species, modulate immune responses, and reduce lipid peroxidation, suggesting their potential use as adjunctive treatments to improve periodontal outcomes by directly targeting oxidative stress pathways.

Acknowledgements

No acknowledgements.

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