

Recent Advances on Relationship Between Inorganic Phosphate and Pathologic Calcification: Is Calcification After Breast Augmentation with Fat Grafting Correlated with Locally Increased Concentration of Inorganic Phosphate?



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Abstract

Background Pathologic calcification has frequently occurred after breast augmentation with fat grafting as well as other conditions such as breast cancer, trauma, myocardial infarction, arteriosclerosis and even after reduction mammoplasty. Inorganic phosphate, correlated with fat metabolism, is an important factor that induces pathologic calcification such as vascular calcification.

Methods A literature search was conducted using PubMed with the keywords: calcification, inorganic phosphate, fat. Studies related to the process of pathologic calcification, correlation between inorganic phosphate and pathologic calcification, between inorganic phosphate and fat metabolism in pathologic calcification were collected.

Results Various mechanisms were referred to in pathologic calcification among which inorganic phosphate played an important role. Inorganic phosphate could be liberated, under the effect of various enzymes, in the process of fat metabolism. The authors hypothesized that a large-scale necrotizing zone, which could occur in fat grafting with large amounts per cannula, might provide a high-phosphate environment which might contribute to differentiation of surrounding cells such as stem cells or regenerated vessel cells into osteoblast-like cells that induce pathologic calcification.

Conclusion Inorganic phosphate, which was correlated with fat metabolism, played a significant role in pathologic

calcification. We firstly hypothesize that calcification after fat grafting may be related to locally increasing concentrations of phosphate in a necrotizing zone. Further research should be conducted to verify this hypothesis.

Level of Evidence V This journal requires that authors assign a level of evidence to each article. For a full description of these Evidence-Based Medicine ratings, please refer to the Table of Contents or the online Instructions to Authors www.springer.com/00266.

Keywords Inorganic phosphate · Pathological calcification · Fat graft

Introduction

Nodules or calcifications frequently occurred after breast augmentation with fat grafting [1–3]. Clinically, studies indicated that multilayer, multipoint and multitunnel with small amounts per cannula injection could reduce fat necrosis and calcifications [4, 5]. However, there was a lack of evidence that illustrated the molecular mechanism of calcification after breast augmentation with fat grafting.

Besides after fat grafting, pathological calcification occurred in various kinds of diseases such as breast cancer, trauma, myocardial infarction, arteriosclerosis and even after reduction mammoplasty [6–10], indicating that there might be some common mechanisms in these pathological calcifications.

Calcification after fat grafting often occurs in the cyst wall located surrounding the necrotizing zones [11] containing new vessel cells [12]. The process of vascularization also occurs in breast cancer, trauma or wound healing followed by breast surgery [13, 14]. Myocardial infarction and arteriosclerosis are vascular diseases. Therefore, the

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authors tried to find out common mechanisms of pathologic calcifications in studies related to vascular calcification.

Mechanisms of vascular calcification were studied worldwide, and various studies indicated that inorganic phosphate (Pi) contributed to the formation of vascular calcification [15, 16]. Pi is also one of the metabolites of phospholipids [17]. Although there was no evidence before, Pi might be produced after fat grafting. Therefore, we searched related studies to find molecular mechanisms and potential relationships between Pi and calcification which could help to prevent calcification after fat grafting.

Materials and Methods

A literature review was conducted using PubMed with the keywords: calcification, inorganic phosphate, fat. Studies related to the process of pathologic calcification, correlation between inorganic phosphate and pathologic calcification, and between inorganic phosphate and fat metabolism were collected.

Results

Process of Pathologic Calcification

The process of pathologic calcification is a combination of the actively regulated process of mineralization similar to bone formation [18, 19] and a passive one that seemed to take place when the abundance of calcification inhibitors were decreased, which was a major step that initiates specific osteogene expression and transdifferentiation into osteoblast-like cells [20]. Similarly, the presence of bioapatite crystals, which are the main components of pathologic calcification, might be achieved by two different growth processes: A pathological crystallization process that occurs in biological niches which is a purely physicochemical process and a matrix-mediated mineralization process in which the extracellular matrix acts as a template for site-directed nanocrystal nucleation [21].

There are molecular and mechanistic similarities between bone formation and vascular calcification (VC), which is one of the common pathologic calcifications [22–24]. The mechanisms of VC have been extensively reviewed [25, 26]. (1) Loss of mineral inhibiting factors: extraosseous biomineralization might be driven not only by upregulation of activating factors but also by downregulation of such inhibiting factors [27]. Ca/P precipitation in the medium occurred over time in the absence of inhibitors even in normal levels of Ca and P [28]. (2) Induction of calcification: as cells matured into osteoblasts or chondrocytes, they expressed osteochondrogenic genes and

released a type of membrane-invested microparticle, known as matrix vesicles (MVs), into the extracellular milieu in both non-pathological and pathological conditions [29–32]. These matrix vesicles contained a variety of enzymes and factors, including alkaline phosphatase (ALP) and annexins (Anx) [27, 33, 34] which are critical for growth plate-MV mineral nucleation [35]. (3) Cell death: mineralization detected *in vivo* and *in vitro* coincided with an increase in apoptosis [36, 37]. Inhibition of apoptosis resulted in a decrease in mineralization, whereas stimulation of apoptosis increased the degree of calcification [38]. In calcified lesions, thin elastic lamellae were observed by elastin staining, indicating that elastin degradation could occur in the area. Elastin degradation might be involved in the development of vascular calcification [39] through increasing affinity of extracellular matrix (ECMs) for Ca [40], which facilitates growth of hydroxyapatite along the elastic lamellae. (4) Circulating nucleational complexes such as aggregates of calcium phosphate and proteins might initiate ectopic mineralization, and there is evidence that mineralization first occurred in MVs and subsequently spread from vesicles to the extra-vesicular interstices and then into adjacent collagen fibrils [41–43]. Abundant macrophages, associated with regions of MVs [44], perform specialized roles including regulating the inorganic phosphate/pyrophosphate (Pi/PPi) ratio in the intra- and extracellular fluid, managing mineral nucleation, controlling calcium and Pi ion homeostasis, and interacting with the surrounding ECM to direct HA localization and growth [42, 45–47], in initiating matrix mineralization. Extracellular processing resulted in mature three-chained collagen type-1 molecules, which assembled into collagen fibrils [48]. These fibrils then combined to form larger fibers that acted as a natural scaffold for hydroxyapatite crystals to grow between [49]. Bacteria or other agents might also produce such *nidi*, if present in blood and urine [50, 51]. Ca/P complexes further stimulated macrophages to release MVs capable of mineralization, with increased calcium influx and ALP activity. Ca/P stimulation enriched S100A9 and Anx5 expression in Mac-MVs [44]. Inactivation of the S100A9 gene tended to decrease MVs in plasma. Ca/P-stimulated S100A9^{-/-} mouse peritoneal macrophages released Mac-MVs with lower calcific potential than those isolated from WT mice [44].

Calcifying nanoparticles (CNP) formed two distinct forms of apatite. The early formed apatite consisted of extremely small flakes, plates and crystals. Under conditions of serum or protein depletion, these apatite crystals coalesced to form larger structures [52]. The size of crystals was important in determining their effects on target cells [53, 54]. Ca/P crystals in the range of 1–2 μm or less in diameter were endocytosed and caused toxic effects in vascular smooth muscle cells (VSMCs) by inducing the

release of proinflammatory cytokines from macrophages, whereas crystals with a diameter greater than 20 μm were mostly inert which was possibly due to lack of cellular uptake of these larger particles [55].

Effect of Inorganic Phosphate on Pathological Calcification

There are two extracellular mineral ions, Pi and Ca, that play critical roles in the regulation of mineralization [56], Ca induced VSMC calcification in vitro and Ca and P are synergistic [57]. In the MVs, the presence of Pi, generated from PHOSPHO1 and PiT1/2 as well as from ATPase and ADPase, accompanied calcium on its way into the mitochondrial matrix, where it formed a precipitate mostly consisting of hydroxyapatite [58–60]. Pi induced the mRNA expression of the M2 without significantly changing the expression of M1 [61].

Pi could induce vascular calcification in a dose-dependent and time-dependent manner [62–64]. The direct addition of Pi had been used successfully in place of β -glycerophosphate as a source of phosphate for physiological and pathological models of mineralization in vitro [36, 65]. Although β -glycerophosphate alone was sufficient to induce in vitro mineralization of osteoblast and chondrocyte cells [65–67], the addition of ascorbic acid or dexamethasone further enhanced mineralization through the upregulation of ALP activity and collagen production [68–72].

Elevated phosphate resulted in loss of smooth muscle markers (SM α actin, SM22 α) and elevated expression of osteochondrogenic markers (Runx2/Cbfa1, osterix, ALP, osteopontin) [63, 64, 73, 74].

VSMCs were incubated in different concentrations of Ca and Pi (1, 2, or 4 mM). No calcification was observed when the Ca * Pi molar product was kept below 4 mM² in any combination. Calcification was observed when combining 2 mM Ca and 2 mM Pi, or 4 mM Ca and 1 mM Pi, but no calcification was observed when the product was obtained with 1 mM Ca and 4 mM Pi as well as no significant changes in Cbfa1, Bmp2, or SM22 α . VSMCs were incubated in the presence of a constant concentration of 1 mM Pi, with increasing concentrations of Ca and calcification increased with the increasing Ca concentration [20]. This study suggested that Ca and Pi were both indispensable in the process of calcification. ALP activity in the VSMCs MVs is regulated by exogenous calcium and β -glycerophosphate. VSMCs might also produce nucleating vesicles as a result of primary osteogenic differentiation or degenerative processes [29, 30].

The homeostasis of Pi depended on the function of sodium–phosphate cotransporter families denominated Na-

Pis [75, 76]. Among these Na-Pis, Na-Pi 3 proteins, including PiT-1 and PiT-2, were present in all phyla and they did not share significant homology with the members of the other Na-Pi families [77]. Elevated Pi-induced signaling via ERK1/2 phosphorylation was abrogated in PiT-1-deficient VSMCs. Expression of transport-deficient PiT-1 mutants promoted VSMCs matrix mineralization, but not to the extent observed with PiT-1 WT, suggesting that both Pi uptake-dependent and independent functions of PiT-1 were important for VSMC processes mediating vascular calcification [78].

Besides VSMCs, various kinds of cells had the potential to induce calcification under the condition of high phosphate. Valve interstitial cells (VICs), the main cellular component of the aortic valve [79], were actively involved in the production of extracellular matrix and mineralization [80]. Human VICs expressed PiT-1 and PiT-2. The expression of Pi transporters in VIC culture, on exposure to a mineralizing medium, was increased several folds, with the higher magnitude for PiT-1. Silencing PiT-1 significantly reduced Pi-induced mineralization. The expression of PiT-1 was increased, and the level of Akt-1 was diminished in calcific aortic valve diseased (CAVD) tissues compared to non-mineralized aortic valves [81]. Treatment with Pi caused a reduction in the Akt-1 transcript in VIC culture, whereas treatment with PFA or siRNA against PiT-1 restored the level of Akt-1 which prevented both Pi-induced apoptosis and mineralization [81].

Bone marrow stem cells (BMSCs) had a higher proliferative ability and greater osteogenic differentiation potential, in high-phosphate osteogenic medium, than adipose-derived stem cells (ADSCs) at both the mRNA and protein levels [82].

Treated with high Pi, the amount of precipitated Ca in fixed cells was much higher than that of live cells. This difference was most likely due to the amount of calcification inhibitors, such as PPI, which are produced by live cells and are missing in fixed cells [20].

Mesenchymal stem-like cells (MSLCs) from both calcified and non-calcified human aortic valve specimens were sorted into CD34-negative and positive cells. CD34-negative cells were significantly more sensitive than CD34-positive cells to high inorganic phosphate, calcifying easily in response, which can be reduced by the sodium phosphonofosphate, an inhibitor of PiT-1. Significantly, higher numbers of CD34-negative compared with CD34-positive MSLCs were localized in calcified aortic valve specimens obtained from calcified aortic stenosis patients, suggesting that CD34-negative MSLCs are responsible for calcification of the aortic valve [83].

Fibroblast growth factor 23 (Fgf23) was a potent phosphatonin [84–86] which induced increased urinary excretion of phosphate, lowering serum phosphate levels. Fgf23

bound to cell surface receptors with much higher affinity in the presence of a cofactor called klotho [87–95]. Both Fgf23 and klotho ablated mice led to increased accumulation of calcium, phosphate and sodium phosphate co-transfactor activity, developing extensive soft tissue calcification [96]. However, regardless of the dietary phosphate contents, serum phosphorus levels were consistently elevated in Galnt3 knockout mice of which low intact Fgf23 concentration was detected [97]. Calcifications appeared in Galnt3 knockout mice on the high-phosphate diet, whereas high-phosphate diet did not affect serum phosphorus concentration in normal mice [98].

High-phosphate fed (HP) severe uremia (SU) and moderate uremia (MU) mice, achieved by varying the degree of renal ablation, developed extensive arterial medial calcification (AMC), whereas normal phosphate fed (NP) uremic mice did not. AMC in the SU/HP mice was associated with a statistically significant hyperphosphatemia. MU/HP mice were not hyperphosphatemic, but a significant rise in serum Fgf23 and osteopontin (OPN) levels in this group was observed [99].

Multiple ectopic calcifications in subcutaneous tissues occurred in a case of human chronic renal failure, which might be related to elevated high serum phosphate [100].

A summary of the effects of inorganic phosphate on pathological calcification is shown in Table 1.

Relationship between inorganic phosphate and fat metabolism in pathologic calcification

In humans, 85% of total body phosphorus is in bone, 14% is intracellular, and only 1% is in extracellular fluid [101].

The most common cause of elevated levels of serum phosphate is reduced urinary excretion with reduced renal function [102]. Disturbance of the serum concentration of phosphate led to the development of hypophosphatemia (< 0.8 mM) or hyperphosphatemia (> 2 mM), compared with the normal concentration range of 1–1.5 mM in humans [103]. In mice, normal serum phosphate levels ranged from 2 to 2.6 mM, whereas animals with surgically induced chronic kidney disease manifest levels of 3.5 mM [28, 104].

Phosphate is mainly an intracellular ion, whereas calcium is mainly an extracellular ion. However, during cell injury or death the ion barrier formed by the cell membrane can be disrupted [105]. Calcium and phosphate ions might then accumulate on the surface of apoptotic bodies through their external phosphatidylserine residues [49].

Serum phosphate levels correlated with cardiovascular calcification, and they were also directly proportional to the low-density lipoprotein (LDL) levels and inversely proportional to the glomerular filtration rate [106]. Lipoprotein-associated phospholipase A2 (Lp-PLA2) was overexpressed in tissues of CAVD. Lp-PLA2 converted

Table 1 Summary of effects of inorganic phosphate on pathological calcification

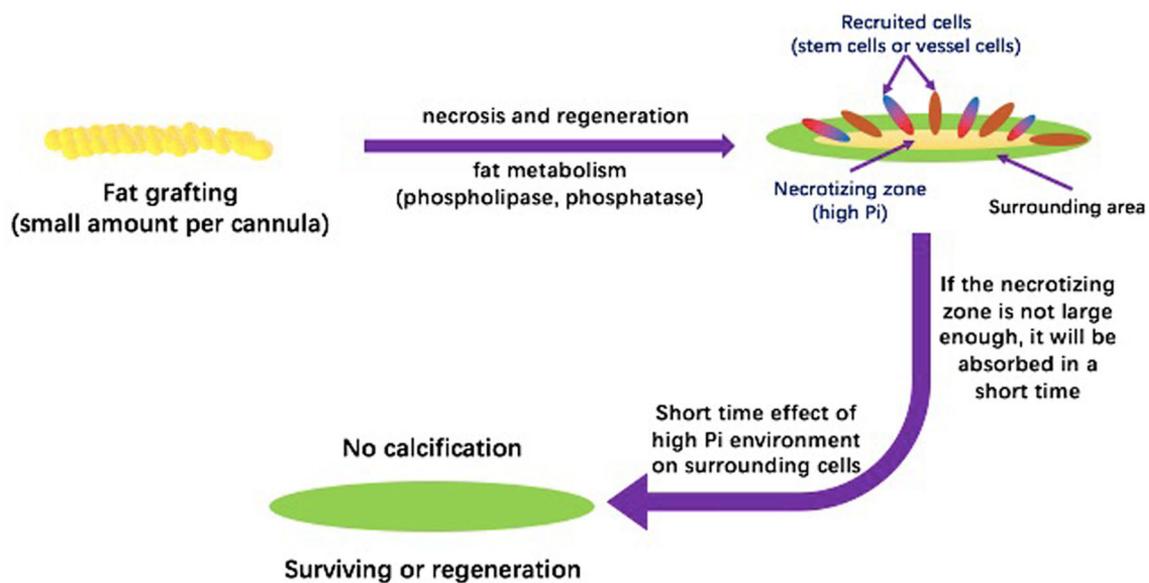
References	Content
Sonou [62] Jono [63]	Pi-induced VC in a dose-dependent and time-dependent manner
Lee [64] Steitz [73] Moe [74]	Elevated Pi resulted in loss of smooth muscle markers and elevated expression of osteochondrogenic markers
Villa-Bellosta [20]	Pi and Ca were both indispensable in the process of calcification
Biber [75] Tenenhouse [77] Chavkin [78] Mathieu [80]	Homeostasis of Pi depended on Na-Pis, including PiT-1. PiT-1 was important for VSMC processes mediating VC
Zhang [82]	Mineralization of VICs was induced by high Pi
Nomura [83]	Calcification of BMSCs and ADSCs was induced by high Pi
Ichikawa [98]	CD34-negative MSLCs are more responsible for calcification of the aortic valve than CD34-positive MSLCs
El-Abbada [99]	Calcifications appeared in the mice with hyperphosphatemia
Zhang [100]	Arterial calcification was associated with statistically significant hyperphosphatemia
	Multiple ectopic calcifications in subcutaneous tissues occurred in a case of human chronic renal failure that might be related to elevated high serum phosphate

oxidized LDL (ox-LDL) into lysophosphatidylcholine (LPC) [107], which was a strong promoter of mineralization through a cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP)/protein kinase A (PKA) pathway. Lp-PLA2 was produced locally, within the aortic valve, by macrophages and was transported in the aortic valve by LDL, and enhanced lipid retention/modification [108]. Blood plasma levels of lipoprotein have also been associated with an increased risk of aortic valve stenosis [109]. Fish oils, such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), which inhibited lipid oxidation, also inhibited vascular calcification [110]. Mineralization in VSMCs induced by the free fatty acid, palmitic acid, is blocked by EPA through a mechanism requiring long-chain acylCoA synthetase-3 and nuclear factor- κ B [111], suggesting that pro-oxidant lipids positively regulate vascular calcification.

Acidic phospholipids were present at high levels in cells at the mineralizing front in pathologic calcifications [112]. Detergent pretreatment of bioprosthetic heart valves, shown to inhibit mineralization, is likely acted by the detergent-mediated extraction of phospholipids and other proteolipids [113]. Delipidation of bioprosthetic valves significantly reduced their calcific degradation when

Table 2 Summary of relationship between inorganic phosphate and fat metabolism in pathologic calcification

References	Content
Rajamannan [107]	Lipoprotein-associated phospholipase A2 was overexpressed in tissue of CAVD
Kamstrup [109]	Levels of lipoprotein were associated with aortic valve stenosis
Kageyama [111]	Pro-oxidant lipids positively regulate vascular calcification
Bailey [112]	Acidic phospholipids were at high levels in cells at the mineralizing front in pathologic calcification
Shen [114]	Delipidation of bioprosthetic valves significantly reduced their calcific degradation
Martin [17]	Phospholipid was hydrolyzed to produce phosphatidic acid which liberated inorganic phosphate under the effect of ALP
Houston [115]	PHOSPHO1, a kind of phosphatase, might be responsible for generating Pi for mineralization through highly specific activities for phosphoethanolamine (PEA) and phosphocholine (PChol)
Stewart [116]	
Roberts [117]	
Roberts [118]	PEA and PChol played an important role in controlling the first step crystal deposition inside the MVs
Stewart [119]	

**Fig. 1** Hypothesis of no calcification formation after fat grafting with small amount per cannula

implanted in rats [114], which further supported the view above. Phospholipid was hydrolyzed to produce phosphatidic acid which liberated inorganic phosphate under the effect of ALP [17].

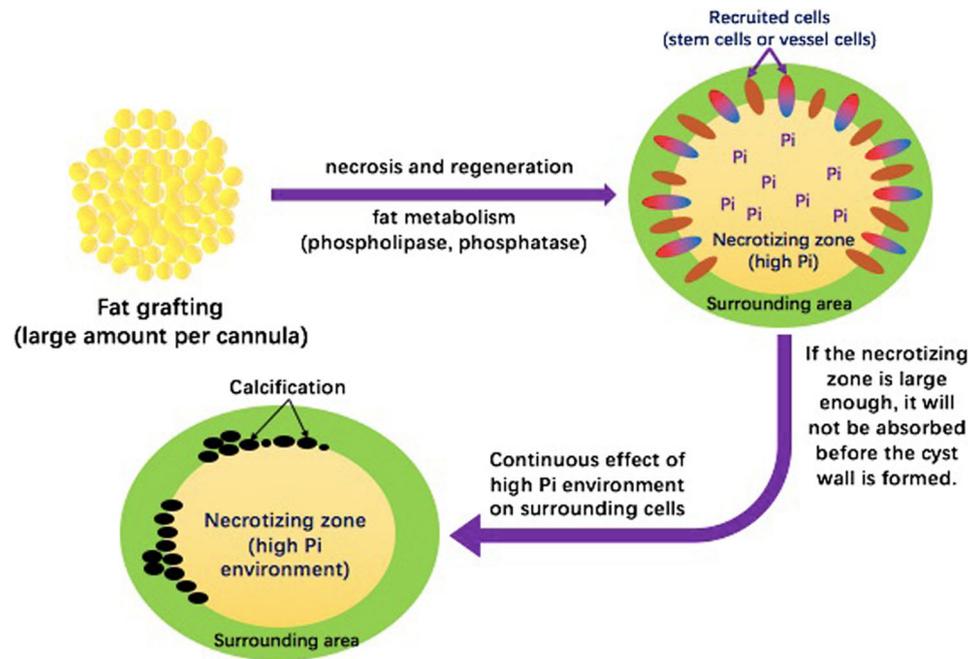
PHOSPHO1, a kind of phosphatase, might be responsible for generating Pi for mineralization through highly specific activities for phosphoethanolamine (PEA) and phosphocholine (PChol) [115–117], which play an important role in controlling the first step of crystal deposition inside the MVs [118, 119]. PEA and PChol are the two most abundant phosphomonoesters in cartilage [120]. PHOSPHO1 also controlled ALP expression in mineralizing cells and was essential for mechanically competent mineralization [121, 122]. PHOSPHO1 was highly

expressed in mineralizing chondrocytes [117] and osteoblast-derived MVs [118, 119]. PHOSPHO1 inhibition by MLS-0263839 in mineralizing cells reduced calcification. Combined inhibition of PHOSPHO1 by MLS-0263839 and ALP by MLS-0038949 further reduced calcification [123]. Lansoprazole, an inhibitor of PHOSPHO1 and ALP, also inhibited mineralization [124–126].

A summary of the relationship between inorganic phosphate and fat metabolism in pathologic calcification is shown in Table 2.

Is calcification after autologous breast augmentation with fat grafting correlated with locally increasing concentration of inorganic phosphate?

Fig. 2 Hypothesis of calcification formation after fat grafting with large amount per cannula



Nodules or calcifications are common complications after breast augmentation with fat grafting [1–3]. After fat grafting, the innermost zone is a fat necrotizing zone, which might be correlated with oil cyst and calcification [127]. Calcification after fat grafting often occurs in the cyst wall located in the regenerating zones [11] containing stem cells or new vessel cells [12]. We hypothesized that there are similar mechanisms between calcification after breast augmentation with fat grafting and other types of pathologic calcifications such as vascular calcification. Because there is a close relationship between fat metabolism and inorganic phosphate, we hypothesized that during the process of fat necrosis, there are locally increased concentrations of inorganic phosphate, which might provide an environment of mineralization for the recruited cells such as stem cells or regenerated vessel cells surrounding this necrotizing zone. If the range of the necrotizing zone is not large enough, it would be absorbed in a short time. Then the effect of high Pi on the surrounding area was terminated, and no calcification would be formed (Fig. 1). However, if the range of the necrotizing zone is large enough that the process of physical absorption of the necrotic tissue could not be totally completed within a short time, transdifferentiation of the surrounding cells such as stem cells or vessel-related cells into osteoblast-like cells might occur under the continuous effect of high-phosphate environment, which might form cyst walls or calcification in several months (Fig. 2). We thought that most conditions such as breast cancer, trauma, myocardial infarction, arteriosclerosis and reduction mammoplasty that caused pathological calcification would experience the process of

necrosis and regeneration which was similar to fat grafting. The authors thought that in the process of necrosis, there would be some products such as phosphate and there were new vessels formed in the process of regeneration. Therefore, our hypothesis could also explain common mechanisms of these pathological calcifications. However, due to the lack of direct evidence, further studies should be conducted to verify this hypothesis and further to verify what kinds of surrounding cells mainly contribute to the formation of calcification under the environment of high phosphate.

Conclusion

Inorganic phosphate, which is correlated with fat metabolism, plays a significant role in pathologic calcification. We firstly hypothesized that calcification after fat grafting might be related to locally increasing concentrations of phosphate in a necrotizing zone, which might provide an environment for the surrounding live cells to transdifferentiate into osteoblast-like cells. Further research should be conducted to verify this hypothesis.

Compliance with Ethical Standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest to disclose.

Ethical Approval All analyses were based on previous published studies, thus ethical approval is unnecessary.

Informed Consent This study was based on previous published studies, thus informed consent was unnecessary.

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