



Effects of Nd:YAG low-level laser irradiation on cultured human osteoblasts migration and ATP production: in vitro study

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Abstract

Low-level laser therapy has become one of the fastest growing fields of medicine in recent years. Many in vivo and in vitro studies have shown that laser irradiation activates a range of cellular processes in a variety of cell types and can promote tissue repair. However, few in vitro experiments have evaluated the effects of laser irradiation on cells in real time. The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of neodymium-doped yttrium aluminum garnet (Nd:YAG) laser irradiation on the migration of cultured human osteoblasts. A dedicated 96-well plate was used, and confluent cultures of the human osteoblast-like cell line, Saos-2, were injured with a wound maker. The wounded cells were then exposed to the Nd:YAG laser (wavelength of 1064 nm) for 60 s at 0.3 W (10 pps, 30 mJ). The total energy density was about 10.34 J/cm². Images of the wounds were automatically acquired inside the CO₂ incubator by the IncuCyte ZOOM™ software. In addition, after laser irradiation, the production of adenosine triphosphate (ATP) was measured using the CellTiter-Glo™ Luminescent Cell Viability Assay. Migration of cells from the border of the original scratch zone was accelerated by laser irradiation. In addition, compared with the control group, significant enhancement of ATP production was observed in the irradiated group. The present study showed that Nd:YAG laser irradiation (wavelength of 1064 nm, 0.3 W, 10 pps, 30 mJ, 10.34 J/cm², irradiation time 60 s) may contribute to the regeneration of bone tissues owing to enhanced osteoblast cell migration.

Keywords Nd:YAG laser · Wound healing · Migration · Osteoblasts

Introduction

In recent years, lasers have been widely used in the medical field for diagnosis and other purposes, and their effectiveness and efficacy have been reported. Lasers have different characteristics and can be used for various purposes depending on wavelength. Wavelengths around 800 nm are high in tissue

permeability and can be used for pain relief [1]. Wavelengths near 3000 nm are high in surface absorbency and can be used for cutting hard tissue [2].

Currently, surface absorption (CO₂ lasers and Er:yttrium aluminum garnet (YAG) lasers) and tissue-penetrating types of lasers (He:Ne lasers, Nd:YAG lasers, and diode lasers) are used in the medical and dental fields. When incision and hemostasis of soft tissue are required, high-power energy lasers are used. In contrast, low-level laser (light) therapy (LLLT) is useful for periodontal treatment [3, 4], hypersensitivity procedures [5, 6], and treatment of temporomandibular disorders [7]. Previously, procedures involving LLLT, which uses visible light (400–700 nm), were performed by the irradiation of injury sites with low-level or low-powered lasers to accelerate cellular processes, leading to better healing and decreased inflammation and pain [8–12].

In addition, near-infrared (NIR) light and visible red (VR) light with a wavelength of 700–1100 nm show lower water absorption and higher absorption by hemoglobin. In addition, because NIR light has higher tissue penetration compared to

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VR light [13–16], clinical applications of NIR light are attracting attention. However, the action and mechanisms of NIR and VR light on osteoblasts remain unclear.

Recently, *in vitro* studies on cells of different origins using a wavelength spectrum of NIR or VR light (600–1100 nm) have shown modulation of cellular processes such as the production of ATP [14–20], cyclic adenosine monophosphate (cAMP) [18–20], and matrix metalloproteinase activity [20–22].

In the field of clinical dentistry, the Nd:YAG laser is used most widely for soft tissue applications, and several studies have underscored its beneficial effects in the treatment of periodontal disease and peri-implant regions [23]. However, the molecular mechanisms of Nd:YAG lasers with a wavelength of 1064 nm are not fully understood. Thus, the purpose of this study was to examine the effects of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on the migration of cultured human osteoblasts.

Materials and methods

Cell culture

Cells of the human-derived osteoblast-like cell line, Saos-2 (Riken, Tsukuba, Japan), were cultured in 100-mm tissue culture dishes in Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium (Sigma, St. Louis, MO) supplemented with 10% fetal bovine serum (FBS; Bioserum, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia) and 1% antibiotic-antimycotic mixture (Invitrogen Corporation, Carlsbad, CA) and then incubated at 37 °C in a humidified atmosphere of 95% air and 5% CO₂.

Cell plating and scratching

Saos-2 cells were seeded at a density of 2×10^3 cells/well in an ImageLock TM® 96-well plate with a surface area of 0.32 cm² per well (Essen BioScience, Tokyo, Japan). After reaching confluence, the FBS concentration in the medium was gradually decreased to 0% as described above. After 12 h in 0% FBS, a uniform and reproducible scratch was made in all wells of a 96-well plate using WoundMaker™ (Essen BioScience). After creating the scratch, the medium was aspirated, and the well was washed with fresh medium to remove the cells from the scratched area.

Laser irradiation

An Nd:YAG laser (Inpulse, Incisive, Richmond, CA) with a wavelength of 1064 nm was used in this study. The guide light is a diode laser with a wavelength of 630–680 nm. A 0.32-mm optical fiber was used as the tip of the Nd:YAG laser. The specifications of the Nd:YAG laser are shown in Table 1. After scratching, the Nd:YAG laser was used to irradiate the

Table 1 The specifications of the Nd:YAG laser

Wavelength (nm)	1064
Operating mode	Pulsed
Frequency (Hz)	10
Pulse duration (us)	100
Duty cycle	0.001
Power	30 mJ/100 μs
Average power (W)	0.3

cells for 60 s at an output of 0.3 W (10 pps, 30 mJ). Irradiation was performed by setting the area of the irradiation field to 1.74 cm². The total energy density was about 10.34 J/cm². The laser handpiece was fixed with a stand, and the distance from the bottom of the culture dish to the tip was about 2.4 cm. The beam divergence angle of the Nd:YAG laser is 27°; however, this is a theoretical figure, and the actual arriving energy may be lower. Cells that were scratched but not irradiated with the laser were used as the control group.

Analysis of scratched and irradiated cultures

We analyzed the cultures using the IncuCyte ZOOM™ live-cell imaging system (Essen BioScience). The cells were photographed automatically at the same place each time every 4 h until 25 h after laser irradiation. The imaging system measures the closed area of the scratch in real time and automatically calculates the cell area, scratch width, and cell density percentage at each time point. The control group consisted of eight wells, and the laser irradiation group consisted of four wells.

Effects of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on ATP production by human osteoblasts

Saos-2 cells were seeded at a density of 2×10^3 cells/well in 96-well plates. After reaching 60% confluence, the FBS concentration was reduced gradually to 0% as described above. Cells were incubated in 0% FBS for 12 h followed by Nd:YAG laser irradiation. At 24 h after laser irradiation, CellTiter-Glo™ luminescent cell viability assays (Promega, Madison, WI) and a GloMax® detection system luminometer (Promega) were used to determine ATP levels by luminescence.

Statistical analysis

The mean of the three experiments was calculated and was considered to represent the values of each experimental parameter. Data from three independent experiments are presented as the mean and standard deviation. One-way analysis of variance was used for group comparisons. The differences between the control group and each experimental group were

analyzed using Dunnett's test. *P* values < 0.05 were considered statistically significant.

Results

Cell imaging

Cell images were obtained with the IncuCyte ZOOM™ live-cell imaging system every 4 h (Fig. 1). More than 1 h after laser irradiation, more cells were observed in the laser irradiation group than in the control group.

Cell migration

Relative wound density, wound confluence, and wound width values as analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™ are shown in Figs. 2, 3, and 4, respectively. Regarding the relative wound density, migration of the cells from the border of the original scratch zone was accelerated by laser irradiation (Fig. 2). Wound confluence was enhanced by laser irradiation of the cells compared to the non-treated control group (Fig. 5). Measurement of wound widths indicated that wound closure was promoted in an irradiation time-dependent manner (Fig. 4).

Effects of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on ATP production by human osteoblasts

The effect of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on ATP synthesis by Saos-2 cells was measured using the CellTiter-Glo™ Luminescent Cell Viability Assay (Fig. 5). ATP synthesis was significantly increased in the laser-irradiation group compared to the control group.

Discussion

Several reports on NIR lasers have shown promotion of bone formation by a variety of methods. Son et al. [24] revealed that LLLT with a diode laser with a wavelength of 808 nm accelerates the bone healing process in early stages of bone formation in vivo. In addition, our recent study revealed that 910-nm laser irradiation of periodontal tissue leads to metabolic activation, which ultimately increases the rate of tooth movement in rats [25]. An in vitro study showed that NIR laser irradiation with a wavelength of 910 nm enhances cell proliferation and migration of human gingival epithelial cells [26]. In addition, we also showed that NIR laser irradiation (910 nm, 2.85–17.1 J/cm²) enhances cell proliferation and migration of mouse calvaria osteoblast cells [27]. On the other hand, Ninomiya et al. [28] reported that Nd:YAG laser irradiation with a wavelength of 1064 nm accelerates bone formation in the femur metaphysis. We also showed that Nd:YAG laser irradiation affects bone metabolism during tooth movement in vivo [29]. Thus, we hypothesized that Nd:YAG laser irradiation with a wavelength of 1064 nm, which is within the NIR range, may affect osteoblast metabolism.

A few experiments using a wound healing test have been conducted to examine the influence of Nd:YAG laser irradiation in vitro, but no experiments have evaluated its influence on cells in real time. Thus, here we investigated the influence of an Nd:YAG laser, which has not been extensively studied, on the migration of bone lineage cells in vitro using WoundMaker™ and IncuCyte ZOOM™. WoundMaker™ is different from conventional wound makers because it allows scratches to be made very accurately. The IncuCyte ZOOM™ system is a live-cell imaging and analysis platform that enables quantification of cell behavior over time by automatically gathering and analyzing images around the clock. The system provides insight into active biological processes in real time, which is not possible using single- or end-point

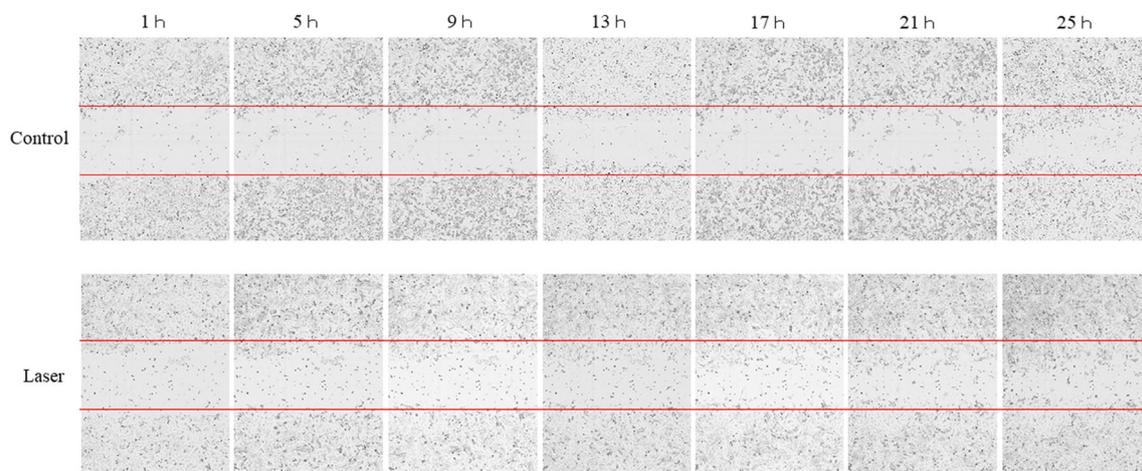


Fig. 1 Cell imaging of human osteoblasts after Nd:YAG laser irradiation. Cell images were acquired with the IncuCyte ZOOM™ live-cell imaging system every 4 h. More cells were observed in the laser irradiation group than in the control group

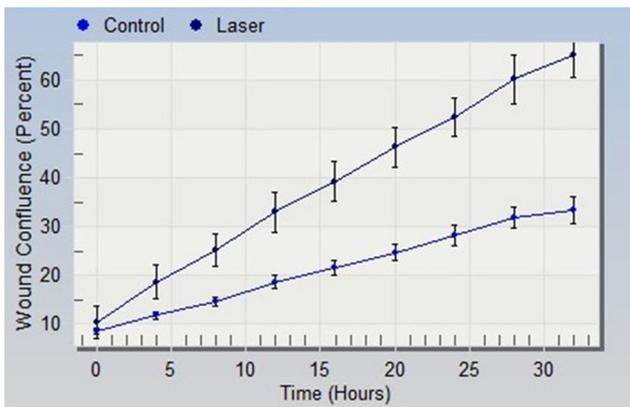


Fig. 2 Wound density analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™ after the wound healing test. Relative wound density was analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™. Migration of cells from the border of the original scratch zone was accelerated by laser irradiation compared with the control

measures alone. Experiments using this system have been published in over 1000 articles in recent years, and the system has been shown to be extremely reliable [30–32].

In the present study, the wound width was decreased by treatment with Nd:YAG laser irradiation at a dose of 10.34 J/cm² compared with the untreated control, suggesting that Nd:YAG laser irradiation enhances osteoblast cell migration. In addition, relative wound density and confluence were increased by Nd:YAG laser irradiation (1064 nm, 0.3 W, 10 pps, 30 mJ, 10.34 J/cm²) compared with the control. Further, ATP production was increased following irradiation with the 1064-nm Nd:YAG laser, suggesting that Nd:YAG laser irradiation enhances human osteoblast cell proliferation.

Several reports [33–36] have been published on the effects of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on cell proliferation and differentiation. The results differ depending on the output number, the amount of energy, the method of irradiation, and the irradiation time. Chellini et al. reported no change in Saos-2 cell counts between laser and control groups 4 h after Nd:YAG laser

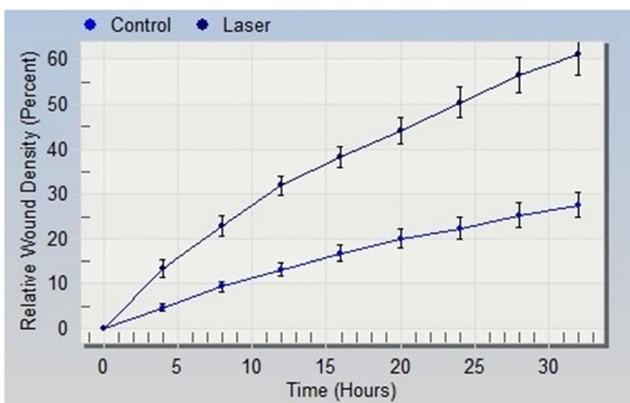


Fig. 3 Wound confluence analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™ after the wound healing test. Wound confluence, which was analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™, was enhanced by laser irradiation compared to non-treated control human osteoblasts

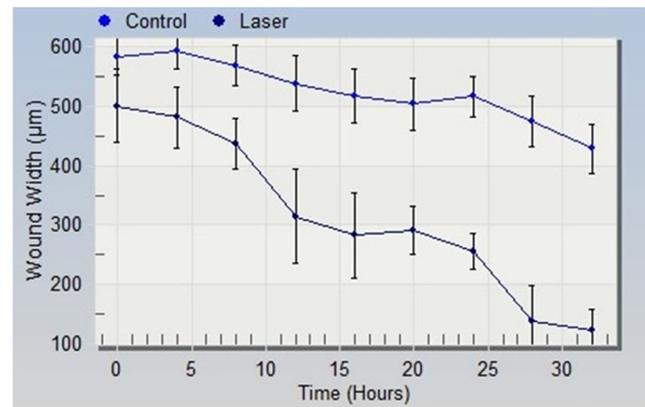


Fig. 4 Wound width analyzed by IncuCyte ZOOM™ after the wound healing test. Measurement of the wound width indicates that wound closure was promoted in an irradiation time-dependent manner compared with the non-treated control

irradiation (1064 nm, 1 or 1.4 W, 20 mJ, 1.5 J/cm²). However, a significant increase in cell counts was observed in the laser irradiation group compared with the control group at 48 h after Nd:YAG laser irradiation. Laser irradiation has also been shown to lead to significant production of type I collagen [33].

In a previous *in vitro* study, mouse calvaria osteoblast cell proliferation was significantly suppressed by 13.6, 11.2, and 7.5% in Nd:YAG laser-irradiation groups treated with energy intensities of 1.5, 3, and 5 J/cm² (power output 0.75 W, 15 pps, 4–12 s), respectively, compared to that of controls. Regarding osteogenic differentiation, Nd:YAG laser irradiation at intensities of 1.5, 3, and 5 J/cm² enhanced bone formation by mouse calvaria osteoblasts [34]. The present study revealed that cell proliferation was significantly increased by Nd:YAG laser irradiation (0.3 W, 10 pps, 30 mJ, 10.34 J/cm²) after 1 day, as seen with the ATP luciferase assay. In addition, laser irradiation at a dose of 10.34 J/cm² induced Saos-2 cells to

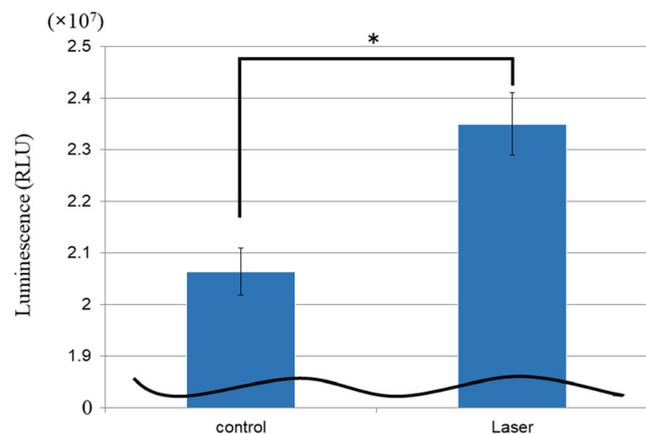


Fig. 5 Effects of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on ATP production by human osteoblasts. The effect of Nd:YAG laser irradiation on ATP synthesis by Saos-2 cells was measured using the CellTiter-Glo™ Luminescent Cell Viability Assay. ATP synthesis was significantly increased in the laser-irradiation group compared to the control group. **P* < 0.01 vs. control

migrate more rapidly than nonirradiated control cells. The difference between the two results may be explained by the following two reasons. First, in the report by Kim et al., a mouse calvarial osteoblastic cell line was used, but in our experiments, we used a human osteoblastic osteosarcoma cell line. The difference in cell types may have caused the difference in the results. Second, in the report by Kim et al., high-power output (0.7 W) was used, whereas in the present study, low-power output was used (0.3 W). According to the Arndt-Schulz law, weak stimuli promote biological or physiological responses, and strong stimuli suppress these reactions or are harmful [35, 36]. Differences in the power number of Nd:YAG laser irradiation may have altered the metabolic capacity of the cells. Further studies are necessary to evaluate the optimal output numbers for promoting cell growth and bone differentiation.

On the other hand, some reports have examined high levels of radiation energy. Nd:YAG laser irradiation (0.5 W, 10 Hz, 50 mJ) at doses of 7.9 and 15.8 J/cm² promotes proliferation of human fibroblasts at 48 h compared to controls. In contrast, laser irradiation at doses of 2.6 and 5.3 J/cm² produces no change in cell proliferation in human gingival fibroblasts [37].

Another in vitro study reported that 1064-nm laser irradiation with 5 J/cm² has a favorable stimulatory effect on wounded cells, suggesting a possible mechanism in which the wavelength may potentially influence the cellular responses of wounded cells [38]. The results of our study confirmed that Nd:YAG laser irradiation (10.34 J/cm²) of injured cells increased the cellular repair capacity. These results are similar to those reported by Evans et al. However, the results of various studies [33, 34, 37, 38] differ depending on the output number, amount of energy, pulse, irradiation time, etc. Further studies are needed to elucidate the optimal output number and associated details.

Conclusion

Nd:YAG laser irradiation under specific parameters (wavelength of 1064 nm, 0.3 W, 10 pps, 30 mJ, 10.34 J/cm², irradiation time 60 s) may induce a beneficial response as a biological defense mechanism following osteoblast cell damage.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Conflict of interest The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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