Elaboration of tantalum oxide and carbon nanotubes composite coatings on titanium for biomaterial applications

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Publication date:
2011

Document Version
Peer reviewed version

Elaboration of tantalum oxide and carbon nanotubes composite coatings on titanium for biomaterial applications

Anthony Maho, Stéphanie Linden, Christelle Arnould, Simon Detriche, Joseph Delhalle, Zineb Mekhalif

Laboratory of Chemistry and Electrochemistry of Surfaces (CES)

University of Namur (FUNDP), Belgium

Contact: **zineb.mekhalif@fundp.ac.be**

General context: titanium-based biomaterials

- **Titanium and its alloys** constitute very interesting and useful plateforms for **dental and osseous biomedical applications** thanks to their low density, high fatigue strength, inertness to human body, corrosion resistance, … However, toxicity of certain alloying elements (Ni in Nitinol, …), long-term degradation and weak osseointegration remain problematic features [1].
- One solving approach => formation of a **thin tantalum coating** on Ti surface by **sol-gel** process: Ta, with its very passivating oxide layer, is highly resistant to corrosion, biocompatible and bioactive, has good radio-opacity, … Nevertheless, high price and important density restrict its use as a bulk material [2].
- Multiwalled **carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs)** can be incorporated to form a **composite Ta-based coating** on Ti owing to their ability to improve the mechanical properties of the implant. They can also **specifically interact with osteoblasts and osteoclasts** and promote the bone regeneration process by **mimicking the structure of collagen fibers** and **favor the formation of an hydroxyapatite layer** [3].
- Hydroxyapatite formation can also be favored by the presence of **molecular films of amino-tris-methylene phosphonic acid** on the Ta_2O_5-based surface. The utilization of such **multifunctional phosphonic acid molecules** is of particular interest, as some $-PO_3H_2$ functions can be used as strong anchoring feet with the metallic oxide surface while others, acting as terminal groups, directly favor the hydroxyapatite growth at the interface with body environment [4].

Global strategy

(A) **Sol-gel co-deposition of Ta_2O_5/MWCNTs composite coatings on Ti substrates: optimized treatment**

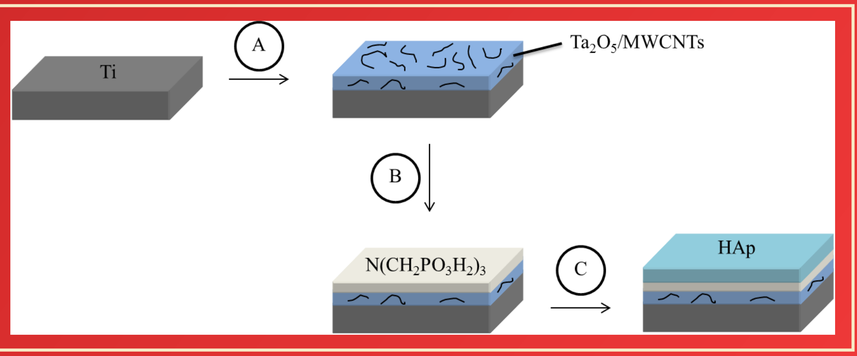
⇒ **10 min immersion in a sol-gel solution** made of 4.0 mL abs. EtOH, 0.2 mL of HCl (acid catalyst), and 8.0 mg of oxidized MWCNTs

⇒ **10 min gradual hydrolysis** in distilled water

⇒ **3 min drying at 300°C**

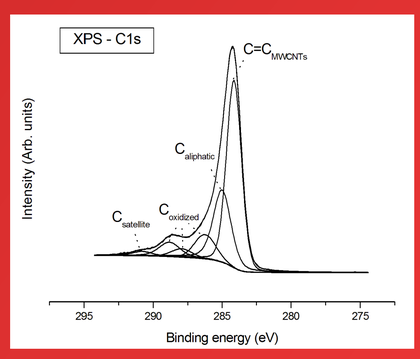
(B) **Grafting of an amino-tris-methylene phosphonic acid layer**: **1 h immersion** in a 10^{-3} M $N(CH_2PO_3H_2)_3$ aqueous solution at 25°C and pH~1

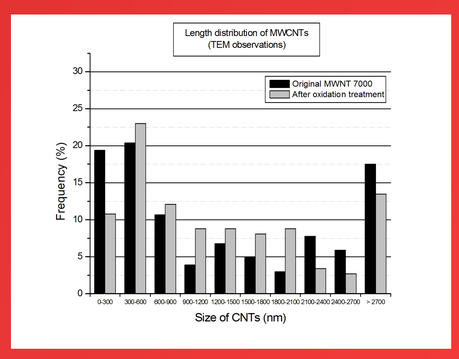
(C) *In vitro* **hydroxyapatite surfacial growth**: **7 days immersion** in 30 mL of a **Simulated Body Fluid** at 37°C and pH 7.25



Results and discussion

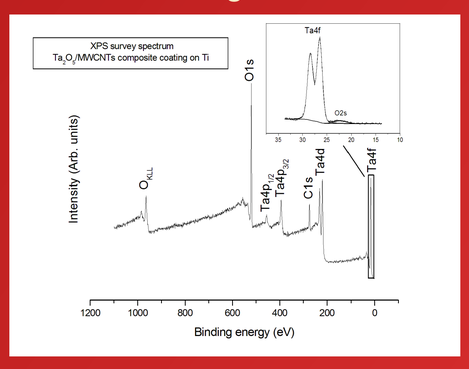
- **MWCNTs oxidative treatment**
  - **Optimized procedure**: oxidation in a **0.1 M $KMnO_4/H_2SO_4$ mixture at 60°C during 2 h**
    - ⇒ MWCNTs are soluble in abs. EtOH
    - ⇒ Oxidation of MWCNTs is confirmed by XPS (C1s signal)
    - ⇒ A global moderate shortening of the tubes is observed (length distributions out of TEM characterizations)

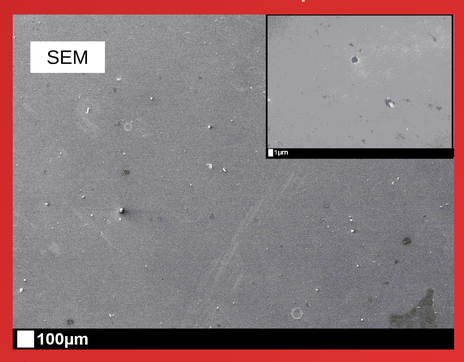


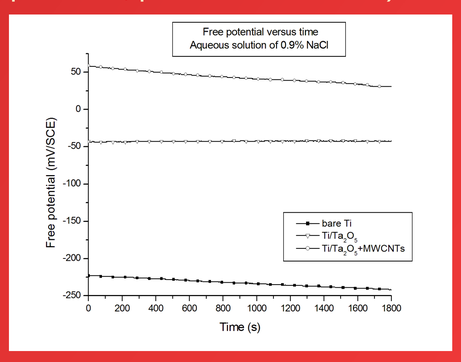


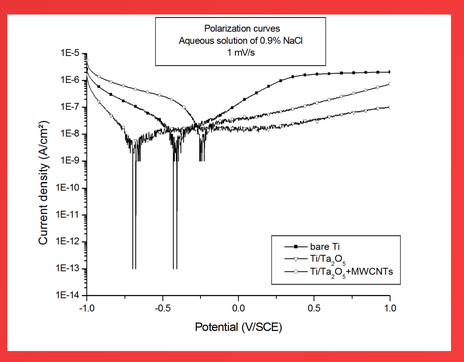
- **Sol-gel** co-deposition of **Ta_2O_5/MWCNTs composite coatings** on Ti **(A)**
  - Formation of **uncracked, adherent and homogeneous deposits** (XPS, SEM)
  - **Passivation and high corrosion resistance** are observed with composite coatings (free potential, polarization curves)

A





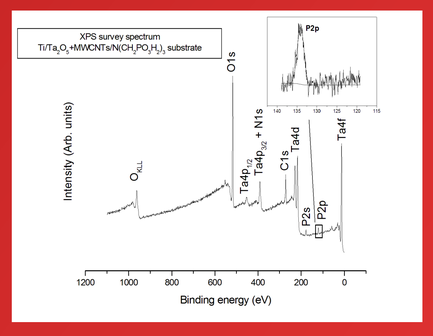




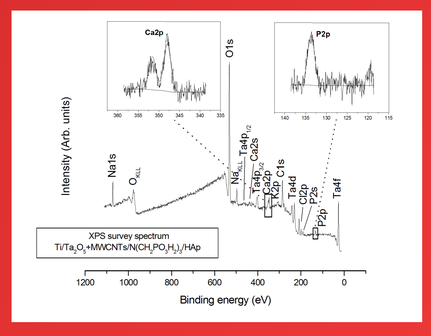
⇒ The optimized procedure allows the preparation of **high quality Ta_2O_5/MWCNTs composite coatings with great morphological, structural and adherent characteristics**.

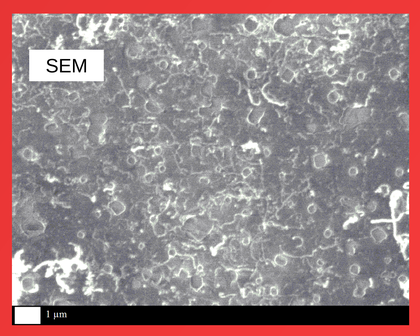
- Functionalization with a molecular film of amino-tris-methylene **phosphonic acid (B)** and ***in vitro* hydroxyapatite growth** on a "completely-functionalized substrate: Ti/Ta_2O_5+MWCNTs/$N(CH_2PO_3H_2)_3$ **(C)**

B



C





⇒ The presence of phosphonic acid molecules and hydroxyapatite is confirmed by XPS survey spectra.

⇒ SEM characterizations of « completely-functionalized » substrates reveal an **important density** of hydroxyapatite crystals with a **particularly well defined crystallinity** (Ø ~ 0.5 µm).

Conclusions and perspectives

- The considered approach allows the formation of **highly homogeneous, adherent and cracks-free tantalum-based deposits** on titanium which are particularly **resistant to corrosion**.

- The composite coating made of oxidized MWCNTs dispersed in a Ta_2O_5 matrix, combined with the presence of surfacial phosphonic acid functions, leads to **an important reinforcement of the Ti substrate's bioactivity** through the *in vitro* formation of high quality hydroxyapatite crystals.

- **Perspectives**: *in vitro* tests of proliferation and adhesion of osteoblasts, preparation of Ta_2O_5/MWCNTs composites on titanium and its alloys through electro(co)deposition, …

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Acknowledgments: FNRS-FRIA for fellowship, Elecnano^4 – 7th ECHEMS