

Osteogenesis imperfecta: pathogenesis, classification, and treatment

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Highlights

- Alteration in the genes related to the type I collagen production causes OI.
- Bisphosphonate is the mainstream treatment for OI.
- Excessive TGF β signaling and ER stress are the pathogenesis of OI.

Abstract. Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) is a congenital skeletal disorder characterized by varying degrees of bone fragility and deformities. Extraskkeletal manifestations, such as blue sclera, dentinogenesis imperfecta, growth disturbance, hearing impairment, and muscle weakness, occasionally accompany OI. Many genes have been identified as causative of OI, such as the type I collagen gene and genes involved in the folding, processing, and crosslinking of type I collagen molecules, osteoblast differentiation, and bone mineralization. According to the discovery of the causative gene of OI, nosology and classifications have also been revised and the “dyadic approach” based nomenclature according to the severity and each causative gene of OI was recently adopted. Intravenous or oral bisphosphonates have been administered to treat bone fragility in children with OI and a reduction in the frequency of bone fractures has been reported. However, despite the increase of bone mineral density, evidence of bone fracture prevention is limited. Recently, excessive transforming growth factor β signaling pathway and excessive endoplasmic reticulum stress have been reported as the pathogenesis of OI, and treatment strategies based on these pathogeneses have been developed. This review summarizes the molecular basis, transition of nosology and classification, status of bisphosphonate therapy, and development of treatment strategies.

Key words: fracture, child, bisphosphonate, classification, treatment

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Introduction

Osteogenesis imperfecta (OI) is a congenital skeletal disorder characterized by varying degrees of skeletal fragility and bone deformities. Extraskelatal manifestations include dentinogenesis imperfecta (DI), blue sclera (BScl), hearing impairment, growth disturbances, and muscle weakness. OI is a genetically heterogeneous disorder caused by pathogenic variants of type I collagen genes (*COL1A1* and *COL1A2*) and genes involved in collagen folding, processing, crosslinking of type I collagen molecules, osteoblast differentiation, and bone mineralization. The frequency of OI is approximately 1/15,000–20,000, and the modes of inheritance thereof include autosomal dominant, autosomal recessive, and X-linked recessive inheritance. Diagnosis is based on clinical symptoms, family history, and radiological examination, including bone survey by radiography, measurement of bone mineral density (BMD) by dual X-ray absorptiometry (DXA), and molecular diagnosis.

Intravenous bisphosphonate infusion, including cyclic pamidronate (PAM) infusion (1) and oral bisphosphonate administration (2, 3), have been used for the treatment of bone fragility in children with OI. However, there are still many concerns regarding bisphosphonate therapy, such as the limited evidence of bone fracture reduction, excessive suppression of bone resorption (bisphosphonate-induced osteopetrosis) (4) and atypical femur fracture (5), and the risk of medication-related osteonecrosis of the jaw (MRONJ), although MRONJ has not been reported in children with OI (6, 7).

Treatment strategies based on the pathogenesis of OI have been developed to resolve these problems. We, therefore, aimed to review and summarize the genetic causes of OI, transitions in nosology and classification, bisphosphonate therapy, and new treatment strategies for OI.

Type I collagen production and pathogenesis of OI

Type I collagen is an extracellular matrix expressed in various tissues, such as bone, skin, and tendons. Type I collagen procollagen is formed as a heterotrimer, and consists of two $\alpha 1$ chains and one $\alpha 2$ chain, which are coded by the *COL1A1* and *COL1A2* genes, respectively, and are assembled from the C-terminus to the N-terminus (Fig. 1). In the endoplasmic reticulum (ER), prolyl 4-hydroxylase and lysyl hydroxylase cause posttranslational modifications of proline and lysine residues of procollagen, respectively, for protein folding. Specific hydroxylation of proline 986 in the $\alpha 1$ chain by the prolyl 3-hydroxylation complex, consisting of prolyl 3-hydroxylase1 (P3H1), cartilage-associated protein (CRTAP), and peptidylprolyl isomerase B (PPIB), is also an important process for protein folding (8–11). The ER chaperone heat shock protein 47 and FKBP65, encoded by the *SERPINH1* and *FKBP10*

genes, respectively, stabilize the triple helix and prevent procollagen aggregation during trafficking to the Golgi (12, 13). KDELR2 stimulates intracellular recycling of ER-resident proteins (14). The triple helical domain in both the $\alpha 1$ and $\alpha 2$ chains consists of multiple repeats of glycine–X (proline is predominant)–Y (hydroxyproline is predominant). Procollagen is secreted from cells, and N- and C-terminal propeptides are enzymatically cleaved from procollagen by a disintegrin and metalloproteinase with thrombospondin motifs 2 (ADAMTS-2) and BMP1 (bone morphogenetic protein 1)/tolloid-like proteinases, respectively. Cleaved N- and C-terminal propeptides are used as the bone formation markers, aminoterminal propeptides of type I collagen (PINP) and carboxyterminal propeptides of type I collagen (PICP), respectively. Lysyl oxidases connect mature type I collagen molecules by pyridinoline crosslinking, and form type I collagen fibers embedded in the extracellular matrix by secreted protein acidic and rich in cysteine (SPARC), which is a matricellular glycoprotein that binds to the extracellular matrix (15).

Table 1 summarizes the types and causative genes of OI registered in OMIM (<https://omim.org>). Approximately 90% of OI cases are caused by the heterozygous pathogenic variants in *COL1A1* and *COL1A2*, which encode $\alpha 1$ and $\alpha 2$ chains of type I collagen molecules, respectively (16). There is a clear genotype–phenotype correlation between the type of variant in the type I collagen gene and OI severity. Nonsense, frameshift, and splice site variants, which cause early mRNA termination, reduce the expression of type I collagen. These variants are called “quantitative defects,” and tend to lead to mild clinical phenotype type 1 OI. In contrast, alteration of glycine in glycine–X–Y repeats in $\alpha 1$ and $\alpha 2$ chains to other amino acids, called “qualitative defects,” which affect the structure of type I collagen molecules and tend to result in severe clinical phenotype-like types 2, 3, and 4 OI (17–22). Type 5 OI is characterized by excessive callus formation after bone fracture, ossification of the interosseous membrane, and the absence of DI or BScl. Type 5 OI is caused by the specific c.-14C>T heterozygous variant of the *IFITM5* gene (23, 24). The *IFITM5* gene encodes bone-restricted IFITM-like (BRIL) protein, which activates the transcription of *SERPINF1*, and *SERPINF1* encodes pigmented epithelium-derived factor (PEDF), which is an antiangiogenic factor (25–28). Other than type I collagen genes, various genes relating to prolyl 3-hydroxylation complex components (*P3H1* (10), *CRTAP* (8, 9), and *PPIB* (11)), osteoblast differentiation (*SP7* (29), *TMEM38B* (30), *WNT1* (31), *CREB3L1* (32), *SPARC* (33), and *MBTPS2* (34)), bone mineralization (*IFITM5* (23, 24) and *SERPINF1* (35)), and collagen processing and crosslinking (*SERPINH1* (36), *FKBP10* (37, 38), *PLOD2* (39), and *BMP1* (40)) have been found by the development of next generation sequencing. Recently, a biallelic pathogenic variant of plekstrin homology-like domain family B member 1 (*PHLDB1*) was reported to result in mild OI (41), which was registered as type

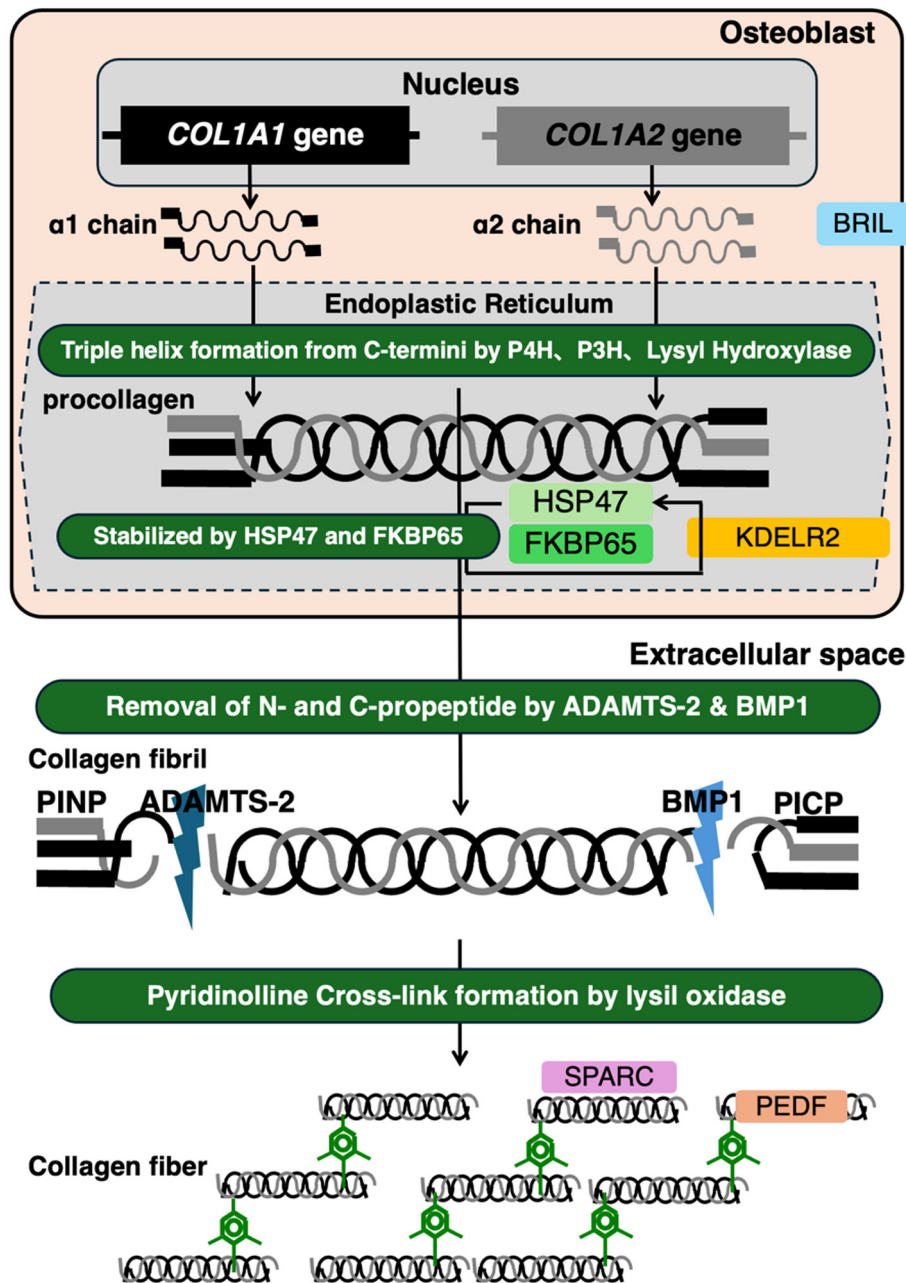


Fig. 1. Mechanisms of the type I collagen synthesis. BRIL activates the transcription of *SERPINF1* gene which encodes PEDF. BRIL and PEDF affected bone mineralization. KDEL2 stimulates intracellular recycling of ER-resident proteins such as HSP47 and FKBP65. SPARC binds the collagen to extracellular matrix. ADAMTS-2, a disintegrin and metalloproteinase with thrombospondin motifs 2; BRIL, bone-restricted Ifitm-like; BMP1, bone morphogenetic protein; FKBP65, 65-kDa FK506-binding protein; HSP47, heat shock protein 47; KDEL2, KDEL endoplasmic reticulum protein retention receptor 2; P3H, Prolyl 3-hydroxylase; P4H, prolyl 4-hydroxylase; PEDF, pigment epithelium-derived factor; PICP, carboxyterminal propeptides of type I collagen; PINP, aminoterminal propeptides of type I collagen; SPARC, secreted protein acidic and rich in cysteine.

XXIII OI in OMIM. *PHLDB1* is involved in multiple phosphorylation processes.

Transition of classifications and nosology of OI

The nosology and classification of OI has been repeatedly revised based on the discovery of new clinical

phenotypes and causative genes. In “A Nomenclature for constitutional (intrinsic) diseases of bones,” the first published nomenclature of skeletal disorders in 1971, which was developed at the meeting of the European Society of Pediatric Radiology held in Paris in 1969, OI was initially classified as “congenita” or “tarda” (Table 2) (42, 43). In 1979, Sillence *et al.* published a clinical system that classified patients with OI into

Table 1. Types of OI and causative genes registered in OMIM

Type	Phenotype OMIM number	Gene/Locus	Protein	Gene/Locus OMIM number	Location	Inheritance
I	# 166200	<i>COL1A1</i>	Collagen $\alpha 1$ (I)	*120150	17q21.33	AD
II	# 166210	<i>COL1A1</i>	Collagen $\alpha 1$ (I)	*120150	17q21.33	
III	# 259420	<i>COL1A2</i>	Collagen $\alpha 2$ (I)	*120160	7q21.3	
		<i>COL1A1</i>	Collagen $\alpha 1$ (I)	*120150	17q21.33	
IV	# 166220	<i>COL1A2</i>	Collagen $\alpha 2$ (I)	*120160	7q21.3	
		<i>COL1A1</i>	Collagen $\alpha 1$ (I)	*120150	17q21.33	AR
V	# 610967	<i>IFITM5</i>	BRIL	*614757	11p15.5	
VI	# 613982	<i>SERPINF1</i>	PEDF	*172860	17p13.3	
VII	# 610682	<i>CRTAP</i>	CRTAP	*605497	3p22.3	
VIII	# 610915	<i>P3H1</i>	P3H1	*610339	1p34.2	
IX	# 259440	<i>PPIB</i>	CyPB	*123841	15q22.31	
X	# 613848	<i>SERPINH1</i>	HSP47	*600943	11q13.5	
XI	# 610968	<i>FKBP10</i>	FKBP65	*607063	17q21.2	
XII	# 613849	<i>SP7</i>	OSTERIX	*606633	12q13.13	
XIII	# 614856	<i>BMP1</i>	BMP1	*112264	8p21.3	
XIV	# 615066	<i>TMEM38B</i>	TRIC-B	*611236	9q31.2	
XV	# 615220	<i>WNT1</i>	WNT1	*164820	12q13.12	
XVI	# 616229	<i>CREB3L1</i>	OASIS	*616215	11p11.2	
XVII	# 616507	<i>SPARC</i>	SPARC	*182120	5q33.1	
XVIII	# 617952	<i>TENT5A</i>	FAM46A	*611357	6q14.1	
XIX	# 301014	<i>MBTPS2</i>	S2P	*300294	Xp22.12	XLR
XX	# 618644	<i>MESD</i>	MESD	*607783	15q25.1	AR
XXI	# 619131	<i>KDELRL2</i>	KDEL receptor 2	*609024	7p22.1	
XXII	# 619795	<i>CCDC134</i>	CCDC134	*619795	22q13.2	
XXIII	# 620639	<i>PHLDB1</i>	PHLDB1	*612834	11q23.3	

AD, autosomal dominant; AR, autosomal recessive; XLR, X-linked recessive.

four groups (I, II, III, and IV) according to the severity of skeletal manifestations, mode of inheritance, and the presence of BSc and DI (44, 45). This classification became the basic framework for later OI classifications, including the revisions in 1991 after the meeting of the International Working Group on Bone Dysplasia in Bad Honnef in Deutschland (46) and in Los Angeles, CA in 1997 (47). In a 2001 revision developed by the International Working Group on the Classification of Constitutional Disorders of Bone in Oxford in 2011, clinically distinctive type V OI was established, and the term “nomenclature” was replaced by “nosology” (48). In the 2006 revision, which was developed in 2005 at a meeting of the International Skeletal Dysplasia Society (ISDS) established in 1999 to cope with the complexity of skeletal dysplasias and to revise the nosology and classification, the types of OI were changed from Roman to Arabic numerals (49). In the 2010 revision, OI was classified into five groups (1–5) by the members of the Nosology Workshop of ISDS meeting held in Boston in 2009 (50), and this classification was adopted in the 2015 (51) and 2019 revisions (52). The classifications in these revisions by ISDS were based on clinical phenotype, in contrast to the OMIM classification based on genotype. However, the 2023 revision published after the ISDS meeting in 2022 in Lausanne, adopted the “dyadic approach” based “nosology” (53), not “classification”,

according to the clinical characteristics (modified Sillence classification) and each causative gene, such as “Osteogenesis imperfecta, non-deforming (Sillence type 1), and COL1A1-related” (Supplementary Table) (54).

Bisphosphonate therapy for bone fragility of OI

Bone fragility is a main clinical symptom of OI, treated with various drugs, such as high-dose vitamin D and calcitonin; however, a significant increase in BMD may not be attained and bone fracture not sufficiently suppressed (55–57). In 1998, Glorieux *et al.* reported that cyclic PAM infusion increased BMD and reduced bone fractures in patients with severe OI (1). We also previously analyzed the effect of cyclic PAM infusion in infants with types 1, 3, and 4 OI; cyclic PAM infusion increased lumbar BMD and tended to improve compression of the lumbar spine (58). Bisphosphonate infusion, including cyclic PAM infusion, increases BMD in children with OI (59–61). Besides PAM, where usage for OI is covered by health insurance in Japan, zoledronate (ZOL), a third-generation bisphosphonate, shows high and long acting anti-resorptive activity in the treatment of OI (62–64). However, there is limited evidence of a reduction in bone fracture frequency (65). This applies to treatment with oral bisphosphonates

Table 2. Transition of nosology and classification of OI between 1970 to 2023

Year	Nosology and classification	
1970	Osteogenesis imperfecta congenita (Vrolik, Porak-Durante)	Osteogenesis imperfecta tarda (Lobstein)
1977	Osteogenesis imperfecta congenita (several forms)	Osteogenesis imperfecta tarda (several forms)
Sillence Classification		
1979	I (Congenita tarda) II (Congenita(always))	III (Congenita (tarda)) IV (Congenita tarda)
1991	Osteogenesis Imperfecta (several types)	
1997	Osteogenesis imperfecta I (without opalescent teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta I (with opalescent teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta II	Osteogenesis imperfecta III Osteogenesis imperfecta IV (without opalescent teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta IV (with opalescent teeth)
2001	Osteogenesis imperfecta I (normal teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta I (opalescent teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta II Osteogenesis imperfecta III	Osteogenesis imperfecta IV (normal teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta IV (opalescent teeth) Osteogenesis imperfecta V Osteogenesis imperfecta VI
2006	Osteogenesis imperfecta type 1 Osteogenesis imperfecta type 2 Osteogenesis imperfecta type 3 Osteogenesis imperfecta, recessive, unlinked to COL1A1 and COL1A2	Osteogenesis imperfecta type 4 Osteogenesis imperfecta type 5 Osteogenesis imperfecta type 6 Osteogenesis imperfecta type 7 (so-called “rhizomelic form”)
2010 & 2015	Osteogenesis imperfecta, non-deforming form (OI type 1) Osteogenesis imperfecta, perinatal lethal form (OI type 2) Osteogenesis imperfecta, progressively deforming type (OI type 3)	Osteogenesis imperfecta, moderate form (OI type 4) Osteogenesis imperfecta with calcification of the interosseous membranes and/or hypertrophic callus (OI type 5)
2019	Osteogenesis imperfecta, nondeforming with persistently blue sclerae (OI type 1) Osteogenesis imperfecta, perinatal lethal form (OI type 2) Osteogenesis imperfecta, progressively deforming type (OI type 3)	Osteogenesis imperfecta, moderate form (OI type 4) Osteogenesis imperfecta with calcification of the interosseous membranes and/or hypertrophic callus (OI type 5)
2023	Nomenclature by “dyadic approach” (Shown in supplemental table)	

such as alendronate and risedronate; therefore, evidence of bone fracture prevention remains controversial (2, 3, 66–68).

Bone strength, which prevents fractures, is defined as 70% BMD and 30% bone quality (69). Bone quality is defined by bone microstructure, bone turnover, microfractures, and bone tissue calcification. Trabecular bone score (TBS), which is calculated using the images of DXA, quantifies the bone microstructure (70). Bisphosphonate treatment affects TBS differently according to the clinical severity of OI (71), and the relationship between TBS and bone fractures differs according to the genotype of the type I collagen gene (72). BMD and bone quality should be assessed, and the treatment protocol should be stratified according to the severity of OI to reduce bone fractures effectively. However, currently, there are no methods to assess bone quality in clinical settings. Therefore, further research on treatment protocols using bisphosphonates that are suitable for bone fracture prevention according to the severity of OI is necessary.

Novel therapeutic strategy for children with OI

Recent studies have focused on novel treatment strategies, other than bisphosphonates, for bone fragility in children with OI. Sclerostin is an inhibitor of Wnt signaling, which stimulates bone formation. Loss of function variants in the *SOST* gene, which codes for sclerostin, cause sclerosteosis, which shows high BMD (73, 74). Anti-sclerostin antibodies are currently used in adult patients with osteoporosis who are at high risk of bone fractures. Sclerostin antibody injections in various types of OI model mice show various results according to the age, sex, and types of OI model mice, such as *Brl/+* (75, 76), *CRTap(-/-)* (77), *Col1a1(Jrt)/+* (78–80), and *oim/oim* (81, 82). Romosozumab and setrusumab are currently undergoing phase 3 clinical trials for children with OI (NCT05972551, NCT05768854, and NCT05768854; see ClinicalTrials.gov, <https://clinicaltrials.gov>).

Denosumab is an antibody against receptor activator of the NF- κ B ligand (RANKL), which expresses in osteoblasts and stimulates differentiation and maturation of osteoclasts (83). Denosumab suppresses

bone resorption and is currently used to treat adult patients with osteoporosis, bone erosion caused by rheumatoid arthritis, giant cell tumors of the bone, bone lesions caused by multiple myeloma, and metastasis of solid tumors. Clinical trials have also been conducted in children and young adults with OI. However, the phase 3 (NCT03638128/NCT02352753) study was terminated because of safety concerns regarding high levels of calcium, and no other clinical trials have been registered on the ClinicalTrials.gov website.

Teriparatide (TPD), 1-34 parathyroid hormone, is used for the treatment of adult osteoporosis patients because of its bone anabolic effects by intermittent administration, and some clinical trials of TPD used to treat adult OI patients have been reported. Gatti *et al.* also reported that 18-months of TPD treatment increased BMD in postmenopausal women with OI who were previously treated with neridronate, and that this increase is lower than those seen in postmenopausal women or patients with senile osteoporosis (84). Orwoll *et al.* reported that TPD therapy significantly increased BMD and estimated bone strength in adults with mild forms of OI (NCT00131469) (85). However, this effect is reduced in severe forms of OI. Another multicenter, randomized, double-blind study shows that TPD treatment increased areal BMD compared to a neridronate treatment in 98 adult patients with type 1 OI; however, a high fracture rate was reported in both groups (86). Currently, a randomized controlled trial of therapy with 2 years TPD treatment following a single infusion of ZOL is underway (Treatment of Osteogenesis imperfecta with Parathyroid Hormone and Zoledronic Acid [TOPaZ]; NCT03735537).

Excessive TGF β signaling has been observed in OI mouse models and in patients with OI, focused as a new pathophysiology of OI (87, 88). TGF β signaling suppresses osteoblast differentiation and mineralization. Various doses and frequencies of the anti-TGF β antibody have been administrated to mouse models of OI and the effects on bone turnover, bone geometry, and BMD are different according to the treatment protocol and the types of models (89, 90). Phase 1 clinical trials using fresolimumab, a human IgG4 monoclonal antibody that neutralizes TGF β , have been conducted on adult patients with OI (NCT03064074) (88). Fresolimumab (1 mg/kg and 4 mg/kg) was administered to eight patients with types III, IV, and VIII OI (accompanying LEPRE1 pathogenic variants). In the 1 mg/kg group, bone turnover was stimulated, and areal BMD (aBMD) of the lumbar spine increased in two patients with type IV OI, in contrast to patients with type III or IV OI, whose BMD decreased or remained unchanged after 180 days, respectively. In the 4 mg/kg group, bone turnover was suppressed compared to that in the 1 mg/kg group, and the increase in BMD in the type IV OI group was smaller than that in the 1 mg/kg group. The decrease in the lumbar spine aBMD in patients with type III OI was greater than that in the 1 mg/kg group. Another phase 1 study was conducted using SAR439459, which is a

different anti TGF β antibody (NCT05231668). However, the study was terminated prematurely at the sponsor's discretion.

Another novel pathophysiology of OI involves excessive ER stress (91). Abnormal collagen produced by pathogenic variants of OI-related genes accumulates in the ER and causes excessive stress, leading to osteoblast dysfunction and bone fragility. Several drugs have been developed to reduce this stress. 4-Phenylbutyric acid (4-PBA) is a chemical chaperone that has been experimentally proven to reduce ER stress in fibroblasts from patients with OI (92), and ameliorate osteogenesis in induced pluripotent stem cell (iPSCs)-derived osteoblasts (93, 94). The administration of 4-PBA improves bone phenotypes and reduces late bone fractures in *Aga2* OI model mice (95). In contrast, in $\alpha 2(I)$ -G610C OI models, 4-PBA treatment did not improve bone fragility, although stagnated differentiation of hypertrophic chondrocyte-to-osteoblast growth was improved (96).

Rapamycin, an mTOR inhibitor, reduces ER stress, and treatment partially improves osteogenesis of iPSCs from patients with OI (97). Rapamycin also improves trabecular bone parameters in $\alpha 2(I)$ -G610C OI model mice; however, bone fragility was not rescued, and longitudinal and transverse growth of long bones is suppressed (98). No clinical trials on 4-PBA or rapamycin have been registered at ClinicalTrials.gov.

Conclusion

Recent advances in the molecular basis, classification, and treatment of OI have been summarized. Further research on effective treatments for the prevention of bone fractures and complications is mandatory. Also, there remains many problems in transition from childhood to adult; scarceness of 1) disease educational program for patients from adolescent to adult, 2) stratified treatment strategies according to the broad disease severities of OI, 3) follow-up strategies of complications in adult, 4) doctors and multidisciplinary team with sufficient knowledge and follow-up experiences of adult patients with OI. Therefore, patient-centered strategies for seamless transition of treatment and follow-up from childhood to adulthood by multidisciplinary team with sufficient experiences and knowledges need to be developed.

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