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### **PAPER**



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## Synthesis and characterizations of natural limestone-derived nano-hydroxyapatite (HAp): a comparison study of different metals doped HAps on antibacterial activity†

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Earth-abundant mineral limestone obtained from North Sumatera, Indonesia, has been utilized to synthesize nano-hydroxyapatite (HAp). Although HAp is biocompatible to the human bone, its

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Indonesia

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the **synthesis of large-scale HAp powder**. The synthesis method has a vital role in determining the morphology, crystal structure, and purity of the HA<sup>2</sup>1<sup>2</sup> Its crystal structure can be either monoclinic or hexagonal, depending on the synthesis method.

doping ions had been used in  $t\vert_2$  previous reports to enhance the antibacterial activity of HAp, such as silver  $(Ag<sup>+</sup>)$ , zinc  $(Zn<sup>2+</sup>)$ ,



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magnesium ( $Mg^{2+}$ ), and copper ( $Cu^{2+}$ ) ions.<sup>19-21</sup> Among them, silver is the most widely explored due to its high antibacterial

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for several hours to form Ca( $\overline{O_4}$ ). Then, 3.1 mL phosphoric dish. Finally, the Petri dish was transferred to an incubator and<br>acid ( $H_3PO_4$ , J. T Baker, Mexico) was added into the solution and<br>cultured at 37 °C for on the above considerations, hydrosyapatite synthesis (spectrophotometer (PTS1000, Digliab, 158<br>
are highly critical. Affining the rate are several responses a pertrophotometer (PTS1000, Digliab, 158<br>
are highly critical. <sup>51</sup><br>Ischematically shows the<br>atteral limestone. In detailed at 900 °C for 5 hours in<br>CaO. This CaO was then<br>esize HAp. The HAp was<br>into 500 mL deionized (L<br>everal hours to form Ca(<br>H<sub>3</sub>PO<sub>4</sub>, J. T Baker, Mexico<br>nuously s<sup></sup>

#### $2.2$

many) was used to identify the crystal structure of un-doped<br>HAp and metal ion-doped HAp. The morphology was recorded using a field-emission scanning electron microscope (FE-SEM, JSM 6500F, JEOL, Tokyo, Japan). The element composition was investigated by an electron dispersive spectroscopy (EDS) and analyzed using integrated calibration and application tool powders were measured with a Brun gler-Emmet-Teller (BET)<br>nitrogen adsorption method. The nitrogen adsorption and

*tococcus aureus* (*S. aureus*) bacteria (ATCC 251 $\frac{2}{2}$ ). The bacterial activity was evaluated based on the plate count technique **2**<sup>29</sup> es on a Petri dish, similar to the previous report.<sup>20</sup> The initial bacteria were inoculated overnight in Luria–Bertani <mark>a</mark>edium at<br>37 °C. The concentration of bacteria was diluted in phosphatedish. Finally, the Petri dish was transferred to an incubator and<br>cultured at 37 °C for 20-24 h. The amounts of bacteria were 0.5 mL bacteria solution was spread on agar medium on a Pari

average number of bacteria (CFU) on the testing sample with pristine HAp and metal ions-doped HAp. The antibacterial activity of each sample is determined by triplicate measurements. The means and standard deviations of the antibacterial rate were calculated using Origin Pro Software (Origin Lab Corporation).



Fig. 1 Synthesis steps of HAp from natural limestone-extracted CaO.

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#### $\frac{6}{5}$ **Results and discussion**

### 3.1 Crystal analysis

XRD analysis was carried out to study the crystal properties of as-synthesized hydroxyapatite, including the phase transformation,  $\cos\left(\frac{1}{2}\right)$  structure, lattice parameters, and estimated crystallite size. Fig. 2 shows the X-ray diffraction patterns of assynthesized HAp from Sidikalang natural limestone with different metal ion dopants. The X-ray diffraction pattern of pristine HAp is similar to standard ICDD-PDF no. 9-432. The 20 peaks that located at 31.77°, 32.19°, 32.90°, 34.05°, 35.48°, 39.20", 39.82", 42.03", 43.80", 45.30", 46.71", 48.10", 48.62", and 49.45° are related to (211), (112), (300), (301), (212), (310), (311), (113), (203), (222), (312), (320), and (213) planes, respectively. There is a slight peak-shift to a higher angle than the standard file due to a smaller lattice parameter. The XRD pattern of Agdoped HAp shows several new peaks compared to that of pristine HAp which corresponds to the formation of secondary phases. The peaks located at  $31\frac{10}{10}$  and  $34.60^\circ$  (assigned with symbol \*) correspond to beta-tricalcium phosphate ( $\beta$ -TCP)



Fig. 2 X-ray diffraction patterns of un-doped, Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mgdoped HAp.

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Table 1 FWHM and Crystallite sizes of un-doped, Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-doped HAp



with a lower Ca/P value of 1.5. However, the XRD pattern of other metal ions doping (Cu, Zn, and Mg) did not show any new peak, indicating that those metal ions had been successfully doped into HAp host lattice and formed a single phase of HAp. There is no apparent peak shift of metal ions-doped HAp to a higher or lower angle compared to that pristine HAp may due to pretty low concentration of those metal ions (about 1-2 at%)

**FICP** size of un-doped and doped HAp ere external in the WW167 and Cy<br>size of un-doped and doped HAp were estimated and calculation of using the Scheenter equation. As listed in Table 1, the cry<br>station values were 0.543

XPS analysis was conducted to analyze the surface chemistry resolution XPS of Ca 2p with the appearance of two <sub>spaks</sub><br>located at 347.9 and 351.5 eV, which correspond to the spinorbit of 2p<sub>3/2</sub> and 2p<sub>1/2</sub>, respectively.<sup>30</sup> The asymmetric peak of O 1s in Fig. 4b can be deconvoluted into two peaks. The peak at 532.4 eV is assigned as the O bond with P in the phosphate group.<sup>31</sup> Another weak peak of oxygen at 529.8 eV typically





Fig. 3 SEM images of (a) pristine, (b) Ag-, (c) Cu-, (d) Zn-, and (e) Mg-doped HAps with their particle size distribution.

indicates the bonding of oxygen with Ca.<sup>32</sup> The binding energies of P  $2p_{3/2}$  and P  $2p_{1/2}$  are located at 133.0 and 134.0 eV, respectively $\lambda$  as depicted in Fig. 4c. The high resolution of Ag in Ag-HAp is presented in Fig. 4d. The binding energies of

369.0 eV and 375.0 eV for spin-orbital  $3d_{5/2}$  and  $3d_{3/2}$  confirm the presence of metallic Ag with zero oxidation state.<sup>34</sup> This data agrees with the XRD result in the previous section. The highresolution XPS of Cu 2p (Fig. 4e) for Cu-HAp shows four peaks

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1045.9 eV, respectively.<sup>45</sup> For as prepared Mg-doped HAp, the high resolution of Mg (Fig. 4g) exhibits two peaks at 50.5 and 44.3 eV that indicate the presence of Mg bonding with oxygen<sup>36</sup> and phosphate,<sup>37</sup> respectively.

Table 2 tabulates the concentration of calcium, phosphor, oxygen, and metal dopants for pristine and doped HAp based on XPS peak area and sensitivity factor. The pristine HAp had the concentration of Ca, P, and O were 17.2 $\frac{1}{43}$  0.27, and 72.24%, assigned to the characteristic of OH stretching.<sup>44</sup> IR spectra respectively. With this composition, the ratio of Ca/P is 1.68 results confirm that a 1.68. There is no significant difference of  $(Ca + M)/P$  ratio for Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-HAp compared to pristine and Ag-HAps.

#### 3.4 Infrared spectra analyses

To confirm the functional group such as phosphate and hydroxide in pristine and doped-HAp, FT-IR analysis was

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carried out and the result was shown in Fig. 5. There is no significant IR spectra difference for un-doped and Ag doped-HAp, indicating that Ag dopant does not enter the  $Ca<sup>2+</sup>$  sides. For the rest of the metal ions dopant (Cu, Zn, Mg), a new and weak peak appears at a wavenumber of 940  $cm^{-1}$ , as clearly shown in Fig. 5b. This peak provides evidence that those metal ions have been successfully doped into HAp.<sup>39,40</sup> Table 3 summarizes the band assignment of IR analyses. The peak located at a wavenumber of 1035  $cm^{-1}$  is related to asymmetric stretching mode a<sup>10</sup><sub>m</sub> P and O in PO<sub>4</sub><sup>3-</sup> functional group.<sup>23</sup><br>Furthermore, the peak at 940 cm<sup>-1</sup> is also attributed to the active group of  $[PO<sub>4</sub><sup>3-</sup>]$  with symmetric stretching (vibration mode of  $v_1$ ).<sup>30,31</sup> The observable peak at around 1455 cm<sup>-1</sup> could be identified as the carbonate group  $(CO_3^{2-})$ . The functional group of carbonate might be attributed to the absorbed CO<sub>2</sub> on Ca sites as carbonate during the synthesis or during sample preparation of IR specimen. The carbonate has also appeared in HAp as stated in a previous report, even in the contraercial powder,<sup>42</sup> The other broad peak at around 3500  $cm^{-1}$  is

### **BET** analysis

BET measurement was carried out to measure the surface area, pore size, and pore volume of an-doped and different metal ions<br>doped HAp, and the result is shown in Table 4. The surface area of pristine HAp was only 21.91  $m^2$  g<sup>-1</sup>. As expected, all the metal-doped HAps have a larger surface area than that of the pristine one. The surface areas of Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-doped HAp are 30.51, 26.18, 27.88, and 26.98 m<sup>2</sup> g<sup>-1</sup>, respectively.



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Table 3 Peak assignment of FTIR analysis for pristine, Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-doped HAps



#### Table 4 BET analyses of pristine, Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-doped HAp



Ag-doped HAp has the highest surface area with a 40% enhancement as compared to pure HAp. The rest metal ions doped HAp show a similar surface area with an improvement of about 22%. The enhancement of surface area was contributed by the smaller particle size of metal ions-doped HAp as depicted by SEM analysis in Fig. 2. The improved surface area after doping HAp was also reported in the previous works.<sup>44</sup> The higher surface area could be a favorite property to enhance the antibacterial rate since it will release more ions. The pore size did not significantly differ before and after being doped, except for Zn-doped HAp with a value of 1.73 nm was slightly more significant than other HAps. Similarly, the pore volume of pristine and metal-doped HAps did not alter with a size range of 0.03-0.04 cc  $g^{-1}$ .

#### 3.6 Antibacterial activities

In this study, the nano HAp is doped with different metal ion the pants to improve and to compare their antibacterial activities against E. coli and S. aureus bacteria, Fig. S17 exhibits the 2- tographic images of the antibacterial test after 24 h toward E. coli as an example for Gram-negative bacteria. As seen in Fig. S1b,† pristine HAp has a similar activity to the control one (Fig. S1a+). Interestingly, after doping with different metal ion dopants, their antibacterial performances are significantly improved, as shown in Fig. S1c-f.<sup>+</sup> The antibacterial ability is further calculated and the results are presented in Fig. 6a. The pristine HAp shows the activity of  $4.4 \pm 3.5\%$ . Ag-HAp with a bactericidal percentage of 99.9  $\pm$  0.1% exhibits the best antibacterial capability among the as-prepared HAp samples. The activity of our Ag-doped HAp was comparable to the previous reports that using synthetic chemical instead of natural source.<sup>45,16</sup> Zn-HAp with a bactericidal percentage of about 20.95  $\pm$  2.11% shows the second-highest bactericidal activity and followed by Cu- and Mg-HAps with the activities of 13.28  $\pm$  0.55% and 11.27  $\pm$  1.29%, respectively. The

antibacterial activity of different metal ions doped HAp were also tested toward S. aureus to further evaluate their activities against Gram-positive bacteria. As exhibited in photograph images (see Fig. S2<sup>+</sup>), all metal doped HAps show a much better activity than that pristine HAp. Fig. 6b shows the histogram of activity of metal doped HAps toward S. aureus. The antibacterial rate of pristine, Ag-, Zn-, Cu-, and Mg-doped HAp are 10.23  $\pm$ 3.31, 99.9  $\pm$  0.1, 69.44  $\pm$  4.35, 55.55  $\pm$  2.0, 54.62  $\pm$  2.51, respectively. This antibacterial result also confirms the similar trend to that Gram negative where the highest activity with Ag-HAp followed by Zn-, Cu-, and Mg-HAps. Therefore, it is concluded that our metals doped HAp effectively to inactivate both E. coli and S. aureus bacteria.

#### 3.7 Antibacterial mechanism

Based on the previous studies, there are two possible mechanisms of antibacterial mechanisms over metal ions-based



aureus in the presences of pristine HAp, Ag-, Cu-, Zn-, and Mg-HAps.

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material. First, the direct contact between the bacterial wall with the metal ions (upon surface oxidation) via electrostatic interption.<sup>47</sup> Second, disruption of the bacterial cell membrane by the formation of reactive oxygen species (ROS) such as superoxide  $(O_2^-)$ , hydrogen peroxide  $(H_2O_2)$ , and hydroxyl radical (OH').<sup>48,49</sup> Antibacterial results show that pristine HAp only has a deficient antibacterial activity of about 4%, which perhaps due to  $Ca^{2+}$  ions releasing in the medium. However, after doping, the antibacterial remarkably improved, implying that metal ions' release is responsible for the improvement activity. The Ag-doped HAp was found to have the highest antibacterial activity among different metal ions doped HAp. This great activity could be attributed to several factors, including surface area which is a higher surface area increased the metal ion release.<sup>50</sup> Another reason is due to the monovalent of Ag which is Ag may be easier to release compared to the bivalent metal like Zn.<sup>51</sup> The death bacteria were analyzed using a scanning electr<sub>27</sub> microscope to reveal the disruption of the wall membrane, as shown in Fig. S3.<sup>†</sup> It is clearly seen that the membrane is severely disruptive as indicated by the red arrows.

#### 4. Conclusions

Nano-hydroxyapatite has been successfully synthesized using natural limestone as the calcium source. The broad of the XRD pattern confirms that as-prepared HAp possesses a small crystallite size. The particle size of HAp significantly decreases while surface area is greatly enhanced after being doped with different metal ion dopants. The capability of HAp to kill E coli and S. aureus bacteria is also considerably improved after being doped with other metal ion dopants. The order of antibacterial activities are Ag-HAp > Zn-HAp > Cu-HAp > Mg-HAp > pristine HAp. The better antibacterial performance of metal-doped HAp is due to their ions released as elucidating in the antibacterial mechanism. This work not only demonstrates the utilization of earth-abundant natural limestone to synthesize nanohydroxyapatite but also investigates the effects of different metals doping to improve the antibacterial performance of HAp.

## **Conflicts of interest**

The authors declare that there is no conflict interest in this work.

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