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· 文献综述 ·

基于血液代谢组学的肝癌新型诊断及预后标志物研究进展

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摘要

肝癌具有高度异质性及复杂性, 因其早期诊断困难和预后较差, 对患者健康和医疗系统带来了重大挑战。血液代谢组学作为一项新兴的系统生物学技术, 通过对血液中小分子代谢物的全面分析, 能够揭示肿瘤的代谢特征, 为肝癌的早期诊断和预后评估提供了新思路。近年来, 代谢组学技术在探索肝癌(包括肝细胞癌、肝内胆管癌及转移性肝癌)特异性血液代谢标志物方面取得了重要进展, 为更精确的个体化诊疗奠定了基础。然而, 现有研究尚存在样本规模有限、标志物验证不足及技术规范化等问题, 亟需通过大规模、多中心的研究及多组学整合分析进一步优化和验证血液代谢组学的应用价值。本文综述了肝癌血液代谢组学的研究现状, 重点讨论其在早期诊断、预后预测中的潜力和面临的挑战, 旨在为肝癌精准诊疗提供参考。

关键词

肝肿瘤; 代谢组学; 生物标记; 肿瘤; 综述
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Advances in blood metabolomics for novel diagnostic and prognostic biomarkers of liver cancer

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Abstract

Liver cancers are characterized by high heterogeneity and complexity, posing significant challenges in early diagnosis and prognosis, which burden patients and healthcare systems. Blood metabolomics, an emerging system biology technology, analyzes small molecular metabolites in the blood to reveal metabolic features of tumors, offering novel insights for the early diagnosis and prognosis evaluation of liver cancers. In recent years, substantial progress has been made in identifying specific blood metabolic biomarkers for liver cancers, including hepatocellular carcinoma, intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma, and metastatic liver cancer, laying the foundation for more precise personalized treatments. However, current studies face limitations such as small sample sizes, insufficient biomarker validation, and the need for standardization. Large-scale, multi-center studies and integrated multi-omics analyses are urgently

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required to optimize and validate the application of blood metabolomics. This review summarizes the current state of research on blood metabolomics in liver cancers, focusing on its potential and challenges in early diagnosis and prognosis prediction, aiming to provide insights into precision diagnosis and treatment of liver cancers.

Key words Liver Neoplasms; Metabonomics; Biomarkers, Tumor; Review

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2020年的统计报告^[1]指出,在世界范围内,肝癌发病率和病死率在所有恶性肿瘤中分别位居第6位和第3位,给全球带来了沉重的疾病负担。根据疾病原发部位,肝癌可分为包括肝细胞癌(hepatocellular carcinoma, HCC)、肝内胆管癌(intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma, ICC)、混合型肝细胞-胆管细胞癌等在内的原发性肝癌以及包括结肠癌、胃癌、胰腺癌等转移至肝脏的继发性肝癌。肝癌的早期诊断是获得早期干预的前提条件,而有效的预后预测手段能精准指导个性化治疗决策,提高两者的效能对改善患者的预后意义重大。尽管一些传统的生物标志物如甲胎蛋白(alpha-fetoprotein, AFP)、异常凝血酶原(des-gamma-carboxy prothrombin, DCP)、糖类抗原19-9(CA19-9)等已被应用至临床,其对于肝癌诊断及预后预测的敏感度及特异度均被认为有待提高^[2-6],寻找高效的新型特异性标志物一直是肝癌诊治研究的重点。近年来,代谢组学的蓬勃发展为此带来了希望,在探索癌症发生发展机制^[7-8]、疾病的诊断^[9-10]与预后预测^[11]等方面取得了突破性的进展。本文对包括HCC、ICC及转移性肝癌在内的几种肝恶性肿瘤的新型诊断及预后预测血液代谢标志物研究进展作一综述。

1 肝癌代谢重编程与代谢组学技术

肝脏对于维持机体代谢稳态至关重要,肝癌的发生发展通常伴有肝功能失调及代谢紊乱。肝癌代谢重编程是指肝癌细胞改变肝细胞原来的代谢方式以获取足够的营养来满足其快速生长及播散需要的一种现象^[7,12],病理状态下代谢方式的改变造成了血液代谢产物的差异。

代谢组学是继基因组学、转录组学、蛋白质组学后兴起的一门新的系统生物学分支,主要研究生物体液、组织以及细胞中的小分子,其通过分

析生物体系受到外界刺激或扰动前后引起的代谢物图谱及其动态变化来研究生物体系代谢网络,已在挖掘疾病生物标志物及探索其发生机制中发挥出巨大潜力^[13-16]。根据研究目的不同,代谢组学可被分为非靶向代谢组学和靶向代谢组学两大类。前者属于一种无偏向性的代谢组学分析方法,先对差异代谢物进行筛选,后对其进行通路分析及机制探索;而后者针对一类特定的代谢物进行研究分析,通常适用于验证非靶向代谢组学中发现的差异代谢物,进而对其进行定量分析及深入研究^[17-18]。目前代谢组学主流的分析技术包括核磁共振(nuclear magnetic resonance, NMR)、气相色谱-质谱联用(gas chromatography-mass spectrometry, GC-MS)、液相色谱-质谱联用(liquid chromatography-mass spectrometry, LC-MS)等,这些技术平台各有其优缺点,在实践中常需组合使用以满足不同的实验需求。

2 HCC的特异性血液代谢标志物

由于起病隐匿、早期缺乏典型症状,超过半数的HCC在初诊时已为中晚期,因而丧失手术切除机会,进而影响长期生存^[19]。早期诊断对提高HCC患者的预后起到关键性作用。基于近年来代谢组学技术的快速发展,一些新型的血液代谢标志物及相应诊断模型在提高肝癌诊断的敏感性及特异性上展现出巨大潜力。

非酒精性脂肪性肝病(nonalcoholic fatty liver disease, NAFLD)被认为是HCC的高危因素之一,它在HCC的转化进程与脂质在肝脏中过量堆积而造成异常脂质代谢及促瘤微环境有关^[20-21]。Lewinska等^[22]发现在这个转化过程中患者血清中的不饱和脂肪酸和酰基肉碱逐渐减少,并通过量化代谢物开发出了诊断性能优于AFP的NAFLD相关性HCC(NAFLD-HCC)诊断评分(NHDS)。此外,

他们还通过超高效液相色谱质谱法构建了NAFLD-HCC的诊断模型,或许有望挑战GALAD模型^[23]及ASAP模型^[24]在NAFLD-HCC上的诊断效能,但仍需后续的验证研究。另一项旨在探索非酒精性脂肪性肝炎(nonalcoholic steatohepatitis, NASH)相关HCC(NASH-HCC)癌症进展的代谢重编程途径的研究^[25]对比了NASH患者与NASH-HCC患者的血清代谢特征,发现包括17:0溶血磷脂酰乙醇胺-d5、19:0溶血磷脂酰乙醇胺-d5、22:1鞘磷脂(d18:1/22:1)-d9、20:1鞘磷脂(d18:1/20:1)-d9及18:1鞘磷脂(d18:1/18:1)-d9在内的五种脂类代谢物在两种疾病中的分布具有显著差异。该研究首次提供了可用于了解和靶向NASH-HCC癌症进展的最主要代谢途径,其发现的血清差异性代谢物或许有望成为NASH-HCC的新型诊断标志物。

尽管与代谢综合征或糖尿病相关的NAFLD正在成为西方HCC患者的更常见危险因素,乙型肝炎病毒(hepatitis B virus, HBV)和丙型肝炎病毒(hepatitis C virus, HCV)感染仍是全球HCC发展的主要危险因素。据统计,HBV感染占亚洲和非洲HCC病例的约60%,占西方国家病例的约20%;而对于HCV患者而言,获得病毒学治愈的患者罹患HCC的风险可降低50%~80%^[26]。Du等^[27]对健康个体、伴及不伴HCC的HBV相关肝硬化患者的外周血血浆进行代谢组学分析,他们不仅建立了以白三烯B₄、溶血磷脂酸18:2、溶血磷脂14:0、溶血磷脂酸20:4和糖醛酸在内的五种炎症相关性代谢物组成的早期HBV相关性HCC诊断模型,受试者工作特征曲线下面积(area under curve, AUC)为0.981,且捕获到了早期患有HCC的HBV者与不伴HCC的HBV患者血浆样本代谢谱的差异。另有研究^[28]结果指向尿素可能是HCC患者的特异性血清生物标志物。研究人员进一步利用共培养细胞模型对此结果做出解释,他们认为尿素循环可以通过解毒高浓度的氨来促进癌细胞增殖,而尿素是氨代谢的副产物,因此检测到HCC患者血清中的尿素丰度明显高于不伴有HCC的HBV患者。Caponigro等^[2]对102例HCV阳性患者进行非靶向代谢组学和脂质组学血浆分析,证实了酰基肉碱作为AFP假阴性HCC患者的潜在生物标志物的潜力,这与先前Enooku等^[29]研究结果保持一致。

一项研究^[30]对丙酰辅酶A在癌症代谢重编程及HCC发生中的作用进行探索,认为丙酰辅酶A、

丙酰-L-肉碱和2-甲基柠檬酸可作为诊断和治疗HCC的新型代谢生物标志物。Han等^[31]结合HCC患者血清及肿瘤组织的代谢产物测定结果,发现并验证视黄醇是HCC诊断和预后的有用生物标志物,且视黄醇血清或视黄醇水平较低的HCC患者预后相对较差。在另一项研究^[32]中,1,25-二羟基胆固醇(m/z=419.281)、肉豆蔻醇棕榈酸酯(m/z=453.165)、25-羟基维生素D₂(m/z=413.265)、12-酮去氧胆酸(m/z=391.283)、溶血磷脂酰胆碱(21:4)(m/z=558.291)和溶血磷脂酰乙醇胺(22:2)(m/z=534.286)被视为区分代偿期肝硬化和早期HCC的重要生物标志物,但是上述代谢物无法预测肿瘤复发情况。Liu等^[33]采用非靶向代谢组学的方法对HCC患者及正常人群的门静脉血清代谢产物进行分析比较,结果提示包括DL-3-苯基乳酸、甘氨酸、L-色氨酸和1-甲基烟酰胺在内的四种代谢产物在HCC患者中的丰度明显较高。该研究首次报道了HCC患者门静脉血清的代谢特征,为血液代谢组学在肝癌研究中的样本形式提供了创新思路。

3 ICC的特异性血液代谢标志物

ICC是第二常见的原发性肝恶性肿瘤,肝内胆管结石^[34-35]、先天性胆管疾病如先天性胆管扩张等^[36-37]、病毒性肝炎如HBV感染^[38]等、原发性硬化性胆管炎(primary sclerosing cholangitis, PSC)^[39]等被认为是其发生发展的高危因素。

有研究^[40]对ICC患者、HCC患者、PSC患者、肝硬化患者及健康人的血清样本进行高通量质谱分析,发现血清淀粉样蛋白A1在ICC与健康对照中的分布有显著差别,血清淀粉样蛋白A1有望成为ICC潜在的生物标志物。Banales等^[41]通过比较ICC患者与HCC患者的血清脂质和氨基酸代谢物,开发出一种结合甘氨酸、天冬氨酸、鞘磷脂(42:3)和鞘磷脂(43:2)四种代谢物的诊断模型(AUC为0.890),在鉴别诊断ICC和HCC患者中具有75%的敏感度和90%的特异度。该研究还建构出一种联合磷脂酰胆碱(34:3)和组氨酸的诊断模型,可以准确区分PSC和ICC,(AUC为0.990),敏感度和特异度分别为100%与70%。在另一项研究^[42]中,研究人员使用液相色谱-串联质谱法(liquid chromatography-tandem mass spectrometry, LC-MS/MS)对ICC患者和健康人群血浆中的代谢物进行非靶向

分析, 结果证明 ICC 患者中的 2-羟基戊二酸水平高于健康对照, 该代谢标志物可能具有对 ICC 早期诊断与分层的潜力。肝切除术是 ICC 根治性治疗的主要手段, 但不同个体术后预后差异很大, 目前缺乏公认的预后预测标志物指导个性化治疗。Tan 等^[43]旨在确定可用于 ICC 患者术前风险分层的血浆代谢标志物, 他们采集 ICC 患者的术前血浆, 进行代谢组学分析并与临床资料进行匹配, 最后基于代谢组学建立出的预测模型在发现和验证队列中评估 ICC 患者 1 年总生存率时的 AUC 分别达到 0.876 (95% CI=0.777~0.974) 和 0.860 (95% CI=0.711~1.000)。

4 转移性肝癌的特异性血液代谢标志物

肝脏丰富的血流供应、独特的免疫抑制环境使得肝脏成为其他恶性肿瘤转移最常见的靶器官之一^[44]。结直肠是转移性肝癌最常见的原发部位, 大约 35%~55% 的结直肠癌患者会发生肝转移, 无法行手术切除患者的 5 年生存率低于 5%, 而肝转移灶能完全切除患者的 5 年生存率可达 30%~57%^[45-46]。

微转移性生长被认为是早期癌症复发的主要来源^[47], 血液代谢组学在转移性肝癌中的研究主要围绕其预后预测展开。Jonas 等^[48]建立了一个三脂代谢物模型 (磷脂酰胆碱 ae C34:0、磷脂酰胆碱 aa C36:1、溶血磷脂酰胆碱 a C18:1) 以预测结直肠癌肝转移 (colorectal cancer liver metastases, CRLM) 患者根治性肝切除术后的无病生存期 (disease-free survival, DFS)。结果提示, CRLM 患者在术后 6 个月复发风险最高, 上述三种循环脂质代谢物可能在 CRLM 患者肿瘤的微转移生长和早期复发中发挥着显著的病理生理作用。尤铂文等^[49]采用靶向代谢组学技术、使用 LC-MS/MS 对非转移性结直肠癌 (non-metastatic colorectal cancer, nmCRC) 和转移性结直肠癌患者 (metastatic colorectal cancer, mCRC) (包括 16 例肝转移) 的氨基酸、胆汁酸和脂肪酸的血浆代谢物进行检测、分析, 结果显示, 13 种代谢标志物诊断 mCRC 的 AUC 范围为 0.668~0.809, 可以很好地区分 nmCRC 和 mCRC。其中甘氨酸 (glycocholic acid, GCA) 和 CA19-9 具有良好的相关性 ($R=0.736$, $P=0.036$), 两者联合鉴别诊断时的 AUC 高于单独使用 CA19-9

或 GCA (AUC 分别为 0.828、0.768 和 0.677), 这提示 GCA 是一种很有前途的早期识别 mCRC 生物标志物。对于 CRLM 患者而言, 与单独化疗相比, 肝切除术与化疗相结合的治疗策略可提供更好的 5 年生存率。然而, 肝切除术技术复杂且价格昂贵, 且几乎 2/3 的患者会出现术后复发, 因此准确识别复发风险较高的患者对于制定不同的随访计划或避免获益有限的外科手术至关重要^[50-51]。一项研究^[52]整合了血浆代谢组学、脂质组学以及大量血浆细胞因子的多重分析方式, 发现 3-羟基丁酸酯和组氨酸可在结直肠癌肝转移瘤切除术前显著预测患者的 DFS 和总生存期。此外, 他们建立的 3-羟基丁酸酯、胆固醇、磷脂、甘油三酯和 IL-6 水平组合的多生物标志物模型能够根据患者的 DFS 将 CRLM 患者进行分类, 或许有可能预测化疗后适合行肝转移瘤切除术患者的预后, 以确定个性化管理和治疗策略。

5 小结与展望

对肝恶性肿瘤进行早期诊断及预后预测的精准把握能帮助临床医生更加科学精准且个性化地制定治疗方案、合理分配医疗资源及提高患者的生活质量^[53-54]。因此寻找高效的诊断、预后预测代谢物一直是提高肝癌预后及优化患者管理的重点工作。尽管目前基于代谢组学在探索肝恶性肿瘤特异性血液标志物上已做了相当量的工作, 但仍存在一些问题。(1) 筛选出的代谢物统一性较差: 研究者们筛选出的代谢物种类繁多, 包括脂质、氨基酸等多种代谢产物; 且对于同一代谢产物, 不同研究检测到的变化趋势也可能完全不同。这可能与血样种类 (血浆、血清)、检测方法 (NMR、GC-MS 等)、代谢组学技术限制相关, 也有可能受患者不同病因 (HBV 感染、NAFLD、酒精性肝病等) 及不同人群特征 (年龄、性别) 等影响。合理选择靶向或非靶向代谢组学方法、多种分析平台的联合使用可能是研究代谢物变化特征、代谢途径更为高效的方法。此外, 严格的成组匹配或分层条件, 如根据同一病因、在同一人群中筛选样本可能是较为科学、合理的。(2) 取样形式过于单一: 对于肝恶性肿瘤血液特异性标志物的研究, 目前绝大部分研究均是取患者或对照人群的外周血进行检测分析, 因此既无法排除受

试者全身代谢循环所引起的误差,也可能无法精准捕捉肝脏特异性代谢产物。Liu等^[33]在术中取用门静脉及下腔静脉血,能更直接地对比出入肝的血液代谢差异、缩小机体循环代谢误差,为血液代谢组学在肝癌研究中的样本形式提供了创新思路。然而下腔静脉除包括出肝的肝静脉外,仍包括髂总静脉、肾静脉等丰富的属支,因此样本选择仍有改进空间。(3)研究队列较小、缺乏内部或外部验证,需要更多大型、多中心的前瞻性研究来发掘并验证肝癌血液代谢物的价值。

肝癌的高度异质性是肝癌预防、诊治、预后监测的主要挑战,血液代谢标志物可以反映肝癌发展的综合情况,部分代谢物有成为肝癌特异性标志物的潜力。相信在这个以精准和综合为特征的医疗新时代,血液代谢组学在肝癌早期诊断、预后预测方面一定会展现出更大的应用前景。

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