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· 基础研究 ·

缺氧诱导的lncRNA AC114803在肝细胞癌中的表达及其作用

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摘要

背景与目的：缺氧是肝细胞癌（HCC）微环境的关键特征之一。缺氧可诱导编码基因和非编码RNA的表达，从而影响HCC的进展。既往研究发现缺氧反应性长链非编码RNA（lncRNA）AC114803与肾细胞癌预后相关，但其在HCC中尚未见研究。因此，本研究探讨HCC中lncRNA-AC114803表达与缺氧的关系及其功能。

方法：低氧（1%O₂）诱导后，用lncRNA芯片检测Hep3B细胞中缺氧调控的lncRNA，并用qRT-PCR在HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞中验证。通过TCGA数据分析AC114803在HCC组织中的表达及其与患者预后的关系。用AC114803过表达质粒转染HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞后，分别用CCK-8、细胞划痕实验检测细胞增殖和迁移能力的变化，用Western blot检测相关蛋白的表达变化。

结果：lncRNA芯片分析结果显示，AC114803是Hep3B细胞中在缺氧环境下明显变化的lncRNA之一；qRT-PCR验证结果显示，HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞中仅AC114803的表达在缺氧环境下明显上调（均P<0.05）。TCGA数据分析显示，AC114803在HCC组织表达明显高于正常肝组织，且AC114803高表达患者生存率明显低于AC114803低表达患者（均P<0.05）。HCC细胞（HCCLM3、Hep3B）过表达AC114803后，增殖和迁移能力明显增强，间质标志物N-cadherin和vimentin以及抗凋亡蛋白bcl-2和细胞周期蛋白CCND1明显上调，而上皮标志物E-cadherin和促凋亡蛋白bax明显下调（均P<0.05）。

结论：缺氧可诱导HCC细胞中AC114803的表达，其高表达与HCC患者的不良预后密切相关，AC114803可能通过调控上皮间质转化从而促进细胞增殖、迁移。

关键词

癌，肝细胞；低氧；RNA，长链非编码；预后；肿瘤浸润

中图分类号：R735.7

Expression of hypoxia-induced long non-coding RNA AC114803 in hepatocellular carcinoma and its function

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Hypoxia is one of the key features of microenvironment of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC). Hypoxia can induce the expressions of coding genes and non-coding RNAs thus,

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affecting the progression of HCC. Previous studies demonstrated that the hypoxia responsive long non-coding RNA (lncRNA) AC114803 is related to the prognosis of renal cell carcinoma. However, its role in HCC has not been studied. Therefore, this study was performed to investigate the relationship between AC114803 expression and hypoxia and its function in HCC cells.

Methods: After hypoxia exposure, the hypoxia-regulated lncRNAs in Hep3B cells were detected by lncRNA microarray, and then were verified in HCCLM3 and Hep3B cells by qRT-PCR. The expression of AC114803 in HCC tissues and its relationship with the prognosis of patients were analyzed in TCGA samples. In HCCLM3 and Hep3B cells after transfection with AC114803 overexpression plasmids, the changes in proliferative and migration abilities were determined by CCK-8 assay and wound healing assay, and changes in expressions of the relevant proteins were measured by Western blot analysis.

Results: LncRNA microarray analysis showed AC114803 was one of the significantly changed lncRNAs in Hep3B cells under hypoxia condition, and qRT-PCR verification showed that only the expression in AC114803 was significantly up-regulated in either HCCLM3 cells or Hep3B cells (all $P<0.05$). TCGA data analysis showed that the expression of AC114803 in HCC tissues were significantly higher than that in normal liver tissues, and the survival rate in patients with high AC114803 expression was significantly lower than in those with low AC114803 expression (both $P<0.05$). After AC114803 overexpression, the proliferation and migration abilities of HCC cells (HCCLM3 and Hep3B) were significantly enhanced, and the expressions of the mesenchymal markers N-cadherin and vimentin as well as the anti-apoptotic protein bcl-2 and CCND1 were significantly up-regulated, while the epithelial marker E-cadherin and the pro-apoptotic protein bax were significantly down-regulated (all $P<0.05$).

Conclusion: Hypoxia can induce the expression of AC114803 in HCC cells, and high expression of AC114803 is closely associated with the poor prognosis of HCC patients. The action of AC114803 may probably be associated with promoting cell proliferation and migration by regulating the epithelial-mesenchymal transition process.

Key words

Carcinoma, Hepatocellular; Hypoxia; RNA, Long Noncoding; Prognosis; Neoplasm Invasiveness

CLC number: R735.7

原发性肝癌是世界第五大常见肿瘤，其中75%~85%为肝细胞癌（HCC），而中国该病发病例数约占全球的45.3%^[1]。尽管现有治疗手段如手术切除、局部射频消融治疗和介入治疗等取得了不错的进展，但由于较高的复发和转移率，HCC患者的5年生存率仍不到12%^[2]。越来越多的研究表明在HCC中存在大量分子的异常表达，在癌症进程中发挥重要的调控作用^[3-4]。进一步探索HCC进展的机制将有助于治疗方法的改进，最终改善患者预后。

实体肿瘤中，由于肿瘤细胞的快速增长对氧的大量消耗导致缺氧微环境的产生，缺氧进一步诱导肿瘤细胞适应性地表达缺氧诱导因子1α（hypoxia-inducible factor-1α，HIF-1α），而HIF-1α参

与调控多种靶基因的表达，进而促进肿瘤细胞的多种恶性生物学行为^[5-6]。长链非编码RNAs（long non-coding RNAs，lncRNA）是一类长度>200核苷酸的非编码RNA，在包括HCC在内的多种肿瘤中表达紊乱，并影响患者预后^[7-8]。研究^[9-10]发现，缺氧不仅可以调控蛋白编码基因的表达，同时也可以诱导lncRNA的表达。缺氧诱导的lncRNA表达可通过多种机制影响细胞的增殖、迁移和代谢，进而影响患者预后^[11-12]。然而，仍有很多缺氧反应性lncRNA，以及这些lncRNA调控肿瘤进程的机制有待发现。本研究通过芯片发现了HCC细胞中的缺氧反应性lncRNA AC114803，并进一步探索了其对HCC生物学功能的影响及可能的机制，以期更好地理解HCC进展的分子机制。

1 材料与方法

1.1 数据来源

本研究下载了TCGA数据库(<https://portal.gdc.cancer.gov>)中HCC的转录组数据(HCC组织374例,正常组织50例),同时获取了患者的生存时间。

1.2 实验材料

人HCC细胞系HCCLM3和Hep3B购买于中科院上海细胞库,缺氧培养箱(PHCbi),Dulbecco的改良Eagle培养基(Dulbecco's Modified Eagle Medium,DMEM)(Sigma),青霉素-链霉素双抗(HyClone),胰酶及胎牛血清(Gibco),RNA提取试剂TRIzol(Life technologies),RNA反转录试剂盒(ThermFisher),SYBR Premix Ex Taq™ II Kit(Takara),AC114803过表达质粒和阴性对照质粒、AC114803引物,18S引物(北京擎科),RIPA细胞裂解液,BCA蛋白定量试剂盒,5×蛋白示踪缓冲液,转染试剂lip8000,CCK-8试剂盒(碧云天),聚偏二氟乙烯(polyvinylidene fluoride,PVDF)膜,增强化学发光(enhanced chemiluminescent,ECL)试剂(Millipore),N-cadherin,E-cadherin,vimentin,β-actin抗体(Proteintech),bcl-2,bax,CCND1抗体(Santa Cruz)。

1.3 实验方法

1.3.1 细胞培养 人HCC细胞HCCLM3和Hep3B培养于含1%双抗、10%胎牛血清的DMEM培养基中,并放置于5%CO₂或1%O₂的37℃培养箱中培养。

1.3.2 lncRNA芯片 Hep3B细胞分别在常氧(20%O₂)和缺氧(1%O₂)条件下培养48 h,然后,使用TRIzol试剂从Hep3B细胞中分离总RNA,通过NanoDrop ND-1000测量RNA数量和质量。根据制造商的标准方案,应用上海数谱生物的Arraystar Human LncRNA Arrays V5芯片鉴定不同培养条件下Hep3B表达的lncRNA和mRNA。芯片数据(GSE155505)被上传到GEO数据库。

1.3.3 细胞转染 将处于生长对数期的HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞计数,按照3×10⁵个细胞/孔接种于6孔板中,待细胞融合度达约50%时进行转染。按照lip8000试剂转染说明书,将2.5 μg AC114803质粒或阴性对照质粒稀释至125 μL无血清培养基,4 μL lip8000稀释至125 μL无血清培养基,两者混合后加入6孔板细胞中,24 h后换液,继续培养至48 h。48 h收取细胞并提取RNA进行qRT-PCR检测转染

效率,同时收取细胞并提取蛋白进行蛋白质免疫印迹实验,其余细胞进行后续功能学试验。

1.3.4 RNA提取和qRT-PCR 参照TRIzol说明书将TRIzol加入细胞中提取总RNA。用核酸仪测定RNA浓度后,取1 μg RNA按PrimeScript RT试剂盒说明书将RNA逆转录为cDNA,反应条件为:16℃30 min,42℃30 min,72℃10 min。取3 μL cDNA按照SYBR Premix Ex Taq™ II Kit说明书进行qRT-PCR,反应条件为:98℃10 min,98℃10 s,60℃30 s,72℃30 s,共50个循环。反转录及qRT-PCR在BIO-RAD CFX96上进行。AC114803正向:5'-CCT CTG GGG ACT TGG ACT GAT-3',反向:5'-TGC TCT GG TGT CCT CTC TGT A-3';以人18s为内参,18s正向:5'-CGG CGA CGA CCC ATT CGA AC-3',反向:5'-GAA TCG AAC CCT GAT TCC CCG TC-3'。采用2^{-ΔΔCt}法计算AC114803的相对表达量。

1.3.5 CCK-8试验 细胞转染48 h后按5 000个/孔接种于96孔板,每组实验设5个复孔。于5%CO₂、37℃培养箱中培养0、24、48、72 h后,每孔加入10 μL CCK-8试剂,培养箱孵育1 h,酶标仪测定450 nm波长处的吸光度值(OD值)。

1.3.6 细胞划痕试验 细胞转染48 h后,用枪头在每孔细胞中十字交叉画出4条直线,PBS洗涤细胞,加入新鲜培养液,拍照,此时为0 h,继续培养48 h后拍照为48 h。细胞迁移率=(宽度_{0 h}-宽度_{48 h})/宽度_{0 h}×100%。

1.3.7 Western blotting试验 按照RIPA试剂盒步骤,在4℃条件下充分裂解细胞提取总蛋白。采用BCA法进行蛋白定量,取20 μg总蛋白加入5×上样缓冲液后100℃煮沸5 min变性蛋白。将变性蛋白质在10% SDS聚丙烯酰胺凝胶上电泳后转印至PVDF膜,用5%封闭牛奶封闭2 h,膜与一抗(N-cadherin:1:2 000; E-cadherin:1:2 000; vimentin:1:1 000; bcl-2:1:1 000; bax:1:1 000; CCND1:1:1 000; β-actin:1:2 000)4℃孵育过夜,将膜与二抗(1:3 000)室温孵育1 h,用ECL发光液显影,最后用Amersham™ Imager 680凝胶成像仪拍照。

1.4 统计学处理

采用SPSS 22.0软件对数据进行分析。符合正态分布、方差齐性的计量资料的两组间比较使用t检验,方差不齐性计量资料的两组间比较使用非参数检验。表达量采用均数±标准差($\bar{x} \pm s$)表示。根据AC114803表达中位值将患者分为高、低

表达组，使用R语言的survival包绘制生存曲线，采用Kaplan-Meier法计算其与生存的相关性。 $P<0.05$ 视为差异有统计学意义。

2 结 果

2.1 缺氧对HCC细胞AC114803表达的影响

将Hep3B细胞缺氧处理48 h后通过芯片检测缺氧相关的lncRNA，结合TCGA预后分析，图1A展示了与HCC患者预后有关的缺氧诱导变化倍数较大的lncRNA。通过qRT-PCR进一步验证，发现

在HCC细胞HCCLM3和Hep3B中仅AC114803可被缺氧诱导表达（图1B-C）。

2.2 AC114803表达与HCC患者预后的关系

通过TCGA数据分析发现AC114803在HCC组织中表达水平明显高于正常组织，差异有统计学意义（ $P<0.05$ ）（图2A）。根据AC114803表达中位值将患者分为高表达组和低表达组，采用Kaplan-Meier法计算其与总生存时间的相关性，生存曲线显示，AC114803高表达组患者的总生存率明显低于AC114803低表达组（ $P<0.05$ ）（图2B）。以上结果提示AC114803在HCC中可能发挥促癌作用。

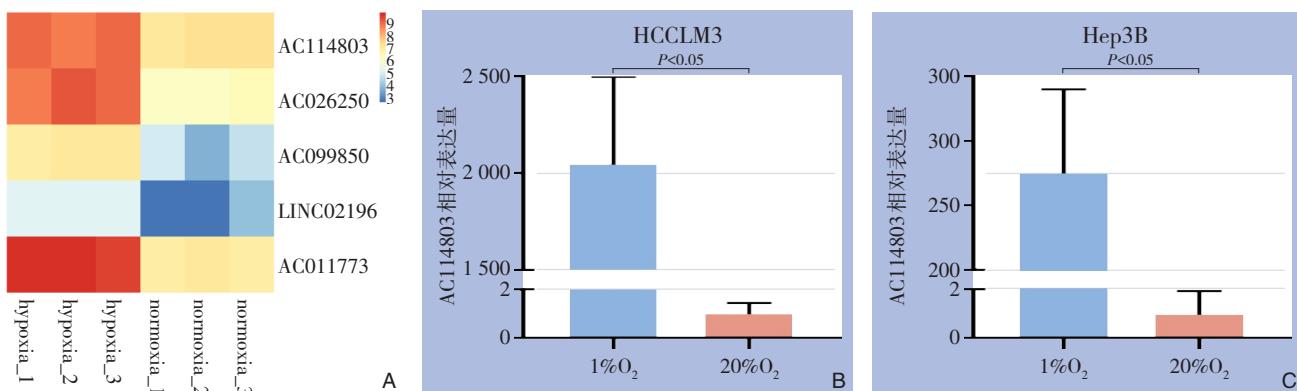


图1 缺氧对HCC细胞AC114803表达的影响 A: 芯片检测Hep3B细胞系中缺氧诱导的lncRNA; B-C: qRT-PCR检测缺氧对HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞中AC114803表达的影响

Figure 1 Influence of hypoxia on expression of AC114803 in HCC cells A: The lncRNAs induced by hypoxia in Hep3B cells detected by microarray; B-C: The effect of hypoxia on the expression of AC114803 in HCCLM3 and Hep3B cells detected by qRT-PCR

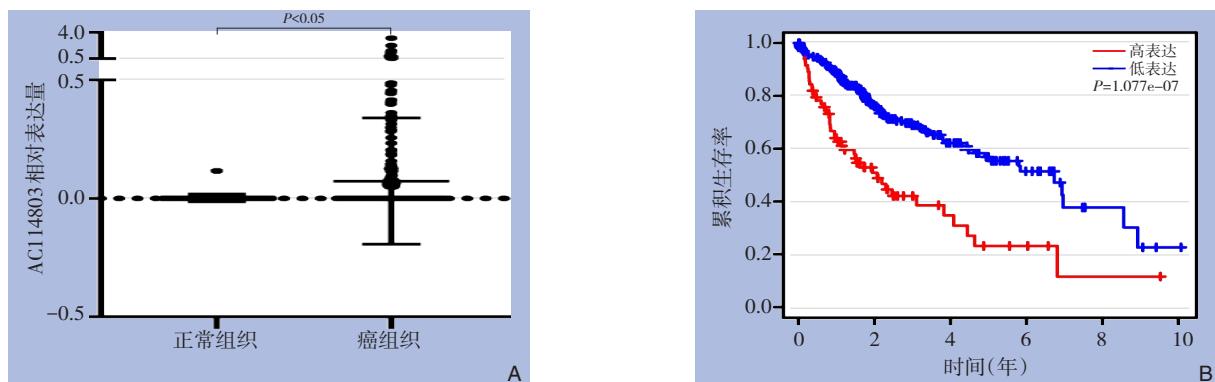


图2 HCC的TCGA数据中AC114803的表达及与预后的关系 A: AC114803在HCC组织和正常组织中的表达；B: 不同AC114803表达水平患者的总生存曲线

Figure 2 The expression of AC114803 in HCC and its prognostic value from TCGA data analysis A: The expression of AC114803 in HCC tissues and normal tissues; B: Overall survival curves of HCC patients with different expression levels of AC114803

2.3 AC114803对HCC细胞增殖的影响

在HCC细胞HCCLM3和Hep3B中转染AC114803过表达质粒和阴性对照质粒，用RT-

qPCR检测转染效率，结果显示AC114803质粒组和阴性对照组的AC114803相对表达量分别是 345.310 ± 27.377 和 1.000 ± 0.271 (HCCLM3)， 70.510 ± 2.589 和

1.000 ± 0.164 (Hep3B), 差异均有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$) (图 3A-B)。通过 CCK-8 试验检测 AC114803 对细胞增殖能力的影响, 结果显示, 自转染后第 3 天, AC114803 过表达组细胞增殖能力明显

增加, 差异均有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$) (图 3C-D), 提示过表达 AC114803 可以促进 HCC 细胞的增殖能力。

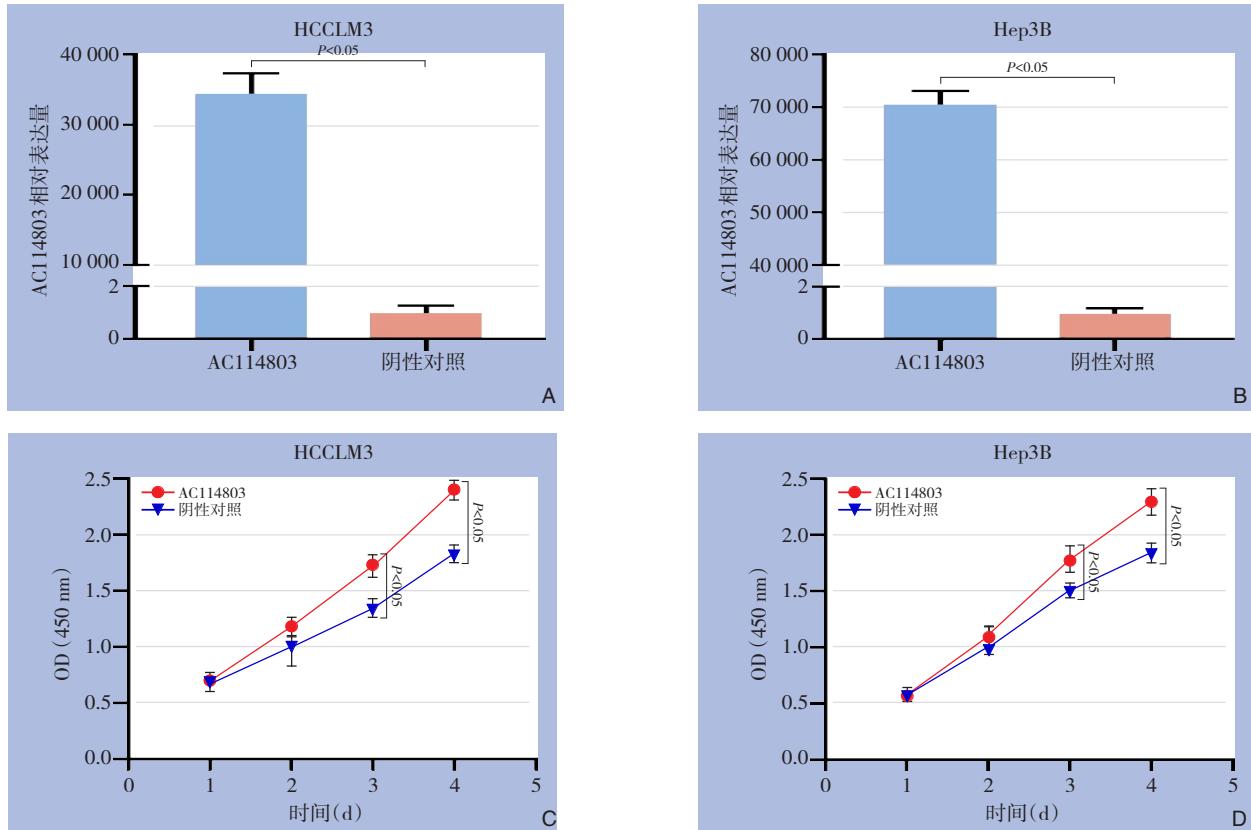


图3 过表达AC114803对HCC细胞增殖的影响 A-B: qRT-PCR检测HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞转染AC114803过表达质粒或阴性对照质粒后AC114803的相对表达量; C-D: CCK8试验检测AC114803对HCCLM3和Hep3B细胞增殖能力的影响

Figure 3 The effect of AC114803 overexpression on the proliferation in HCC cells A-B: The relative expressions of AC114803 in HCCLM3 and Hep3B cells after transfected with AC114803 overexpression plasmid and empty plasmid detected by qRT-PCR; C-D: The effect of AC114803 on the proliferation ability of HCCLM3 and Hep3B cells detected by CCK8 assay

2.4 AC114803对HCC细胞迁移的影响

为了进一步探索 AC114803 对细胞迁移能力的影响, 在 HCC 细胞 HCCLM3 和 Hep3B 中转染 AC114803 过表达质粒和阴性对照质粒 48 h 后进行细胞划痕试验。结果显示 AC114803 质粒组和阴性对照组的细胞迁移率分别为 0.490 ± 0.018 和 0.296 ± 0.084 (HCCLM3), 0.507 ± 0.065 和 0.312 ± 0.056 (Hep3B), 差异均有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$) (图 4A-B), 提示过表达 AC114803 可以促进 HCC 细胞的迁移能力。

2.5 AC114803对细胞增殖和迁移相关蛋白表达的影响

为了揭示 AC114803 促进 HCC 细胞增殖和迁移

能力的潜在机制, 在 HCC 细胞 HCCLM3 和 Hep3B 中转染了 AC114803 过表达质粒和阴性对照质粒, 48 h 后检测了细胞增殖和迁移相关蛋白的表达。结果显示 AC114803 过表达组间叶细胞标志物 N-cadherin 和 vimentin 表达上调, 而上皮细胞标志物 E-cadherin 表达下调, 提示 AC114803 可能通过促进上皮间质转化过程促进细胞的迁移; 同时发现 AC114803 过表达组抗凋亡蛋白 bcl-2 表达上调而促凋亡蛋白 bax 表达下调, 细胞周期蛋白 CCND1 表达上调, 提示 AC114803 可能通过抑制细胞的凋亡、调控细胞周期促进 HCC 细胞的增殖 (图 5)。

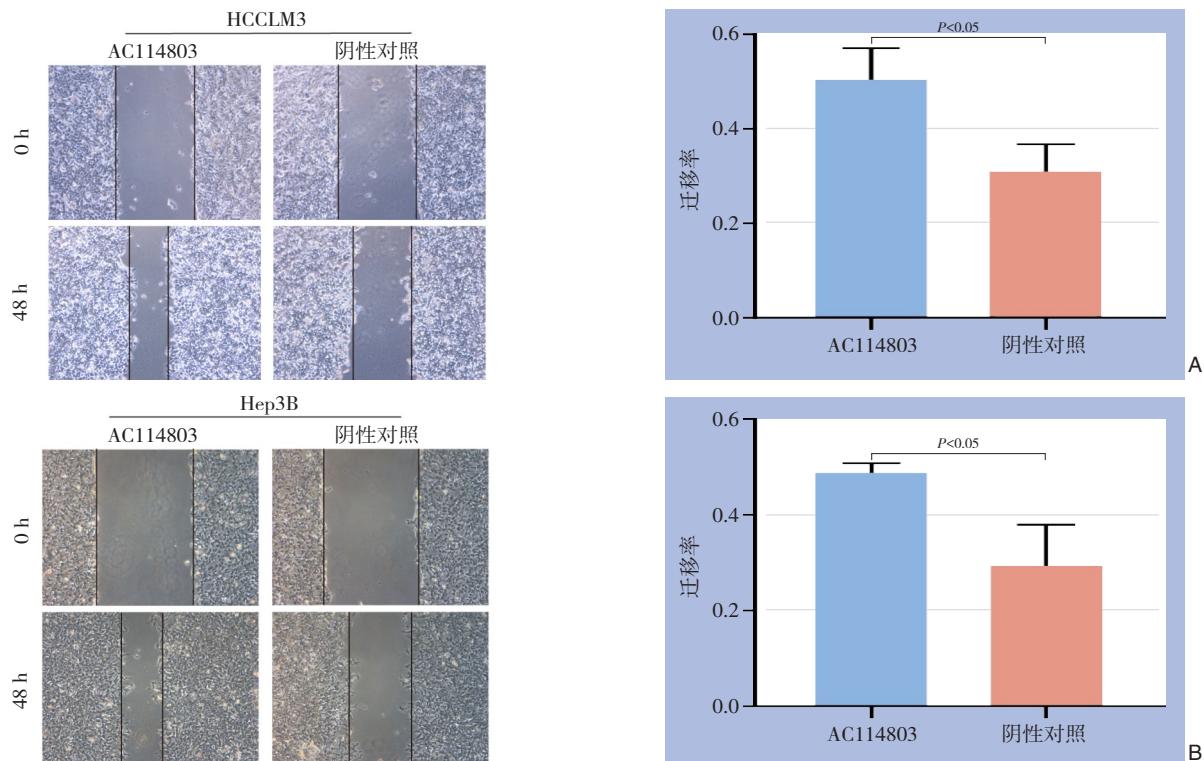


图4 过表达AC114803对HCC细胞迁移的影响 A: HCCLM3细胞; B: Hep3B细胞

Figure 4 The effect of AC114803 overexpression on migration ability in HCC cells A: HCCLM3 cells; B: Hep3B cells

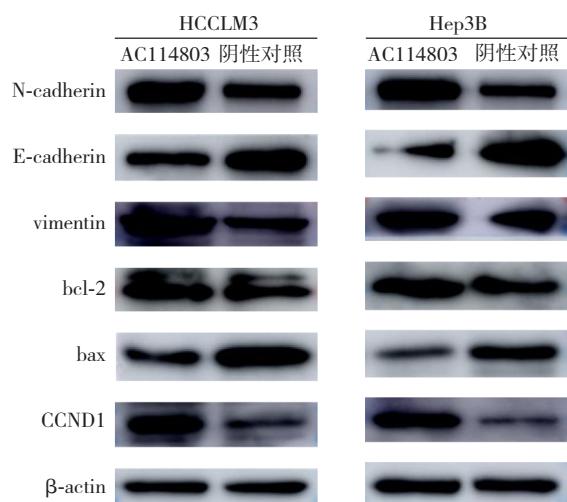


图5 过表达AC114803对增殖和迁移相关蛋白表达的影响

Figure 5 The effect of AC114803 overexpression on the expressions of proteins associated with cell proliferation and migration

3 讨论

HCC中存在大量基因的表达紊乱，包括编码基因和非编码基因^[13]。lncRNA作为非编码基因，在HCC中常异常表达并参与调控肿瘤进程^[14-15]。肝

肿瘤中常存在不同程度的缺氧，并导致HIF-1α适应性的激活，从而改变下游靶基因的表达^[5, 16]。因此，进一步地探索缺氧反应性lncRNA与HCC的关系将有助于更好地理解HCC发生发展的分子机制^[17-18]。本研究通过芯片检测发现缺氧可诱导Hep3B细胞中多种lncRNA的表达，并进一步通过qRT-PCR在HCC细胞中验证发现了一个新的缺氧诱导性lncRNA AC114803。通过TCGA数据分析发现AC114803在肿瘤组织中表达上调，其高表达与患者预后不良有关，提示AC114803可能参与调控HCC的疾病进程。研究报道多种缺氧反应性lncRNA如AC099850.4、MIR210HG和NRAV可联合作为HCC的独立预后标志物^[19]。这些研究结果表明缺氧反应性lncRNA可能参与调控了肿瘤进展，进而影响患者预后。

缺氧反应性lncRNA通过影响肿瘤的多种生物学行为调控肿瘤进展，如肿瘤细胞的增殖、迁移、血管侵犯、代谢特性等^[11-12, 20]。本研究发现AC114803可促进HCC细胞的增殖和迁移，进一步机制探索发现AC114803促进抗凋亡基因bcl-2表达，而抑制促凋亡基因bax表达，同时促进细胞增殖标志物CCND1的表达，提示AC114803可能通过

抑制细胞的凋亡促进细胞的增殖。多个研究表明缺氧诱导lncRNA表达上调，并通过不同机制促进肿瘤细胞的增殖。Wang等^[21]研究发现MIR31HG通过靶向作用于HIF-1α和P21调控细胞周期进程，抑制细胞凋亡，从而促进头颈癌细胞的增殖。Zhou等^[22]研究发现HIF-1α可以激活lncRNA RAET1K转录，RAET1K沉默显著抑制HCC细胞增殖和侵袭并阻断缺氧诱导的乳酸浓度和葡萄糖摄取的增加，提示缺氧诱导性lncRNA可能作为潜在的治疗靶点。另外，本研究发现AC114803可促进间叶细胞标志物N-cadherin和vimentin的表达，而抑制上皮细胞标志物E-cadherin的表达，表明AC114803可能促进HCC细胞的上皮间质转化(epithelial-mesenchymal transition, EMT)过程，减弱细胞的黏附能力，从而促进细胞的迁移。EMT是上皮细胞获得间质细胞特征的过程，在上皮肿瘤中常被激活，从而促进肿瘤细胞迁移、肿瘤干性和化疗抵抗等^[23-24]。lncRNAs可通过调控EMT过程影响肿瘤进展，研究发现lncRNA-PNUTS通过靶向作用于miR-205激活乳腺癌细胞的EMT过程，表现为vimentin表达增强和E-cadherin表达减弱，最终促进癌细胞的迁移和侵袭^[25]。

由于缺氧可诱导HIF-1α，HIF-2α等多种分子表达上调^[26]，后期需要进一步探索缺氧是通过何种机制诱导AC114803的表达。lncRNA可竞争性结合相应的miRNA而相互调控^[27-28]，也可以通过表观遗传学调控基因的表达等机制影响细胞的增殖、分化和凋亡等多种生物学行为^[29-30]，故下一步需要探究AC114803具体通过哪个靶点来调控增殖和迁移相关蛋白的表达。

总之，本研究新发现了HCC中的缺氧诱导性lncRNA AC114803，其高表达导致患者预后不良，这可能与AC114803促进HCC细胞的增殖和迁移能力有关。

利益冲突：所有作者均声明不存在利益冲突。

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