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· 基础研究 ·

血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与乙型肝炎病毒相关性肝细胞癌患者临床特征及预后的关系

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摘要

背景与目的: 长链非编码 RNA HULC (lncRNA HULC) 在肝癌中特异性高表达, 是肝癌重要的肿瘤标志物。本研究探讨血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与乙型肝炎病毒相关性肝细胞癌 (乙肝相关性肝癌) 患者临床特征及预后的关系。

方法: 收集 2012 年 6 月—2017 年 9 月 30 例接受手术治疗的乙肝相关性肝癌患者血清与手术标本。用 qRT-PCR 检测患者血清 lncRNA HULC 的含量, 免疫组织化学法检测患者癌组织中肿瘤侵袭转移相关标志物 VEGF、MMP-2、E-cadherin 的表达。分析患者血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与患者临床病理因素、侵袭转移相关标志物表达及术后预后的关系。

结果: 患者血清 lncRNA HULC 相对水平范围为 2.6~9.5, 以中位值 5.0 为界, 将患者分为高 lncRNA HULC 组 (12 例) 与低 lncRNA HULC 组 (18 例)。统计分析结果显示, 低 lncRNA HULC 组病理高分化比例高于高 HULC 组; 高 lncRNA HULC 组 III~IV 期比例高于低 lncRNA HULC 组; HULC-L 组肝内转移与远处转移例数均比例低于 HULC-H 组肝癌患者; 高 lncRNA HULC 组肝癌切除术后复发比例高于低 lncRNA HULC 组肝癌患者, 差异均有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$)。免疫组化结果显示, 与低 lncRNA HULC 组比较, 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者肝癌组织中促肿瘤侵袭转移蛋白 VEGF、MMP-2 的阳性表达增加, 而抑制促肿瘤侵袭转移蛋白 E-cadherin 的阳性表达明显减少。Kaplan-Meier 法分析结果显示, 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者生存率低于低 lncRNA HULC 组患者, 且肝癌切除术后复发率高于低 lncRNA HULC 组肝癌患者 (均 $P < 0.05$)。Cox 比例风险回归分析结果显示, 术前血清 HULC 水平是乙肝相关性肝癌患者预后的独立影响因素 ($OR = 1.769, P = 0.045$)。

结论: 血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与乙肝相关性肝癌患者恶性临床特征密切相关, 高血清 lncRNA HULC 水平的乙肝相关性肝癌患者预后不良。

关键词

癌, 肝细胞; 乙型肝炎病毒; 肿瘤浸润; 预后

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Relations of serum lncRNA HULC level with the clinical features and prognosis of patients with hepatitis B virus-related hepatocellular carcinoma

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Abstract

Background and Aims: Long non-coding RNA HULC (lncRNA HULC) is specifically highly expressed in hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC), and is an important tumor marker of HCC. This study was conducted to investigate the relations of serum lncRNA HULC level with the clinical features and prognosis of patients with hepatitis B virus-related HCC (HBV-related HCC).

Methods: The samples of serum and surgical specimens of 30 patients with HBV-related HCC undergoing surgical treatment from June 2012 to September 2017 were collected. The relative levels of lncRNA HULC in the serum of the patients were determined by qRT-PCR, and the expressions of tumor invasion/metastasis-associated markers VEGF, MMP-2 and E-cadherin in the cancer tissues of the patients were detected by immunohistochemical staining. The relations of serum lncRNA HULC level with the clinicopathologic factors and expressions of tumor invasion/metastasis-associated markers as well as the prognosis of the patients were analyzed.

Results: The relative level of serum lncRNA HULC of the patients ranged from 2.6 to 9.5. Using the median value of 5.0 as the threshold, the patients were divided into high lncRNA HULC group (12 cases) and low lncRNA HULC group (18 cases). Results of statistical analysis showed that the proportion of cases with high pathological differentiation in low lncRNA HULC group was significantly higher than that in high lncRNA HULC group; the proportion of stage III-IV cases in high lncRNA HULC group was significantly higher than that in low lncRNA HULC group; the proportion of cases with intrahepatic and distant metastasis in low lncRNA HULC group was significantly lower than that in high lncRNA HULC group; the proportion of cases with recurrence in high lncRNA HULC group was significantly higher than that in low lncRNA HULC group, and all the differences had statistical significance (all $P < 0.05$). Results of immunohistochemical staining showed that the positive expressions of tumor invasion/metastasis-promoting proteins VEGF and MMP-2 were increased while the tumor invasion/metastasis-suppressing protein E-cadherin was decreased in HCC tissues from patients in high lncRNA HULC group compared with those in low lncRNA HULC group. Results of Kaplan-Meier analysis showed that the survival rate of patients in high lncRNA HULC group was lower than that of patients in low lncRNA HULC group, and the recurrence rate of patients in high lncRNA HULC group was higher than that of patients in low lncRNA HULC group (both $P < 0.05$). Results of Cox proportional hazard regression analysis showed that preoperative serum lncRNA HULC level was an independent influencing factor for the prognosis of patients with HBV-related HCC ($OR = 1.769, P = 0.045$).

Conclusion: The serum lncRNA HULC level is closely related to the malignant clinical features of patients with HBV-related HCC, and those with high serum lncRNA HULC level may face a poor prognosis.

Key words

Carcinoma, Hepatocellular; Hepatitis B virus; Neoplasm Invasiveness; Prognosis

CLC number: R735.7

乙型肝炎病毒相关性肝细胞癌(以下简称:乙肝相关性肝癌)的临床诊断及预后评估多以甲胎蛋白(AFP)结合影像学检查为主,而AFP对

诊断肝癌的预后评估的敏感度较低^[1-3],因此,寻找剪接度高、特异度强的血清学标志物对于乙肝相关性肝癌的预后评估显得尤为重要^[4-6]。长链非

编码RNA (long non-coding RNA, lncRNA) 在肿瘤细胞的增殖、凋亡、分化及侵袭转移中发挥重要作用, lncRNA HULC (highly up-regulated in liver cancer) 是一种在肝癌中发现的特异性高表达的lncRNA, 在转录后调节基因表达, 是潜在的肝癌标志物^[7-8]。本研究主要研究血清lncRNA HULC水平与乙肝相关性肝癌临床病理学参数的关系, 并分析血清lncRNA HULC水平与患者术后生存预后的相关性, 旨在为肝癌的预后情况寻找新指标。

1 资料与方法

1.1 病历资料

收集我院2007年6月—2017年9月接受手术治疗的乙肝相关性肝癌患者术前血清标本及术后的石蜡标本各30例, 其中I~II期21例, III期9例; 高中分化17例, 低分化13例。所有病例均有完整临床资料。

1.2 纳入标准和排除标准

入选标准: 病理学确诊为肝细胞癌患者, 均为乙型肝炎病毒感染者, 临床病理资料完整; 术后有随访数据, 所有病例癌肿均手术切除。排除标准: 肝转移癌者, 术前接受过放化疗或生物治疗者, 术后无随访数据者, 合并其他恶性肿瘤者。

1.3 试剂与仪器

RNA提取和分离试剂盒 (Ambion, 美国), RiboLock RNA酶抑制剂 (Fermentas, 深圳); VEGF、MMP-2、E-Cadherin兔抗人抗体购于美国CST公司; ABC免疫组化试剂盒与DAB组化染色试剂套装购于天津麦兰伯公司。组织蜡块切片机购于德国Leica公司, 荧光定量PCR检测系统 (Bio-Rad, 美国)。

1.4 研究方法

1.4.1 qRT-PCR 实验 按文献^[9]方法, RNA提取试剂盒说明提取患者血清总RNA, 引物设计序列 (上海吉玛制药技术有限公司合成)。逆转录合成cDNA作为模板, 按照荧光定量PCR试剂盒说明书配置PCR体系, 然后上机。

1.4.2 免疫组化实验 按文献^[10-11]方法, 各组肝脏组织采用4%中性等渗甲醛溶液固定, 病理科标准梯度酒精脱水、二甲苯透明, 以制作组织蜡块标

本, 然后切片, 采用免疫组织化学染色步骤按照试剂盒说明书进行: 将石蜡切片进行脱蜡、高温抗原修复、滴加相应抗体、DAB染色及封片, 然后镜检拍照等。

1.5 观察指标与结果判定

1.5.1 lncRNA HULC 含量测定 按文献^[12]方法, 目的基因量 = $2^{-\Delta\Delta CT}$, $\Delta\Delta CT = (CT_{lncRNA\ HULC} - CT_{GAPDH})_{实验} - (CT_{lncRNA\ HULC} - CT_{GAPDH})_{对照}$, 把所得到的CT值还原为目的基因的量。结果用ABI自带软件分析。

1.5.2 免疫组化阳性结果判定 按文献^[13]方法, 采用免疫组织化学染色法检测VEGF、MMP-2、E-Cadherin在肝细胞癌组织与正常肝组织中的表达情况。VEGF、MMP-2、E-Cadherin可以表达于细胞膜和(或)细胞质, 染色呈棕黄色视为阳性。依据染色强度和阳性细胞百分率判断染色结果: 弱阳性、中等阳性与强阳性。

1.6 统计学处理

用SPSS 22.0统计软件进行统计学分析。样本率的比较用 χ^2 检验。独立样本的比较采用t检验, 生存分析采用Kaplan-Meier法, 差异性检验采用Gehan-Breslow-Wilcoxon检验, Cox多因素回归分析对生存预后独立影响因素进行分析。 $P < 0.05$ 为差异有统计学意义。

2 结果

2.1 一般资料

30例乙肝相关性肝癌患者的一般资料见表1。年龄 < 60 岁与 ≥ 60 岁的乙肝相关性肝癌患者均为15例(50.0%); 男性患者23例(76.7%), 女性患者7例(23.3%); 对患者术前AFP进行分析, 其中 $\geq 400\ \mu\text{g/L}$ 病例数24例(80.0%), $< 400\ \mu\text{g/L}$ 患者6例(20.0%)合并肝硬化的患者25例(83.3%), 无肝硬化的患者5例(16.7%); 肿瘤 $\geq 5\ \text{cm}$ 患者16例(53.3%), $< 5\ \text{cm}$ 患者14例(46.7%)。

2.2 肝癌患者血清 lncRNA HULC 水平分布

乙肝相关性肝癌患者血清lncRNA HULC相对水平范围为2.6~9.5, 本文以中位值5.0为分界线, 将患者分为高lncRNA HULC组(12例)和lncRNA HULC高水平组(18例)(图1)。

表1 患者一般资料

Table 1 General information of the patients

因素	数值 [n (%)]
年龄 (岁)	
< 60	15 (50.0)
≥ 60	15 (50.0)
性别	
男	23 (76.7)
女	7 (23.3)
术前 AFP (μg/L)	
≥ 400	24 (80.0)
< 400	6 (20.0)
肝硬化	
有	25 (83.3)
无	5 (16.7)
肿瘤大小 (cm)	
< 5	14 (46.7)
≥ 5	16 (53.3)

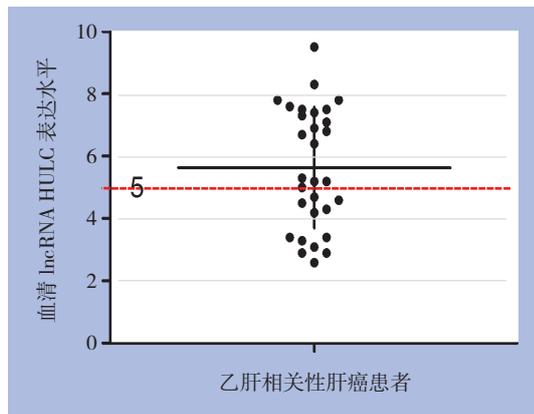


图1 患者血清 lncRNA HULC 水平

Figure 1 Serum lncRNA HULC levels of the patients

2.3 血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与患者临床病理学参数的关系

低 lncRNA HULC 组患者病理高分化比例高于高 lncRNA HULC 组患者; 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者 III~IV 期比例高于低 lncRNA HULC 组患者; 低 lncRNA HULC 组患者肝内转移与远处转移例数均比例低于高 lncRNA HULC 组患者; 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者肝癌切除术后复发比例高于低 lncRNA HULC 组患者, 两组间差异均有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$) (表 2)。

表2 血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与患者临床病理学参数的关系 [n (%)]

Table 2 Association of serum lncRNA HULC level with clinicopathologic features of the patients [n (%)]

因素	例数 (n)	低 lncRNA HULC 组	高 lncRNA HULC 组	P
分化程度				
高分化	17	11 (64.7)	6 (25.3)	<0.05
低分化	13	1 (7.7)	12 (92.3)	
TNM 分期				
I~II	21	11 (52.4)	10 (47.6)	<0.05
III~IV	9	1 (11.1)	8 (88.9)	
肝内转移				
无	15	9 (60.0)	6 (40.0)	<0.05
有	15	3 (20.0)	12 (80.0)	
远处转移				
无	24	12 (50.0)	12 (50.0)	<0.05
有	6	0 (0.0)	6 (100.0)	
术后复发				
无	14	9 (64.3)	5 (35.7)	<0.05
有	16	3 (18.8)	13 (81.2)	

2.4 血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与乙肝相关性肝癌组织中标记物的关系

与低 lncRNA HULC 组比较, 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者的癌组织中 VEGF、MMP-2 阳性表达明显增加, 而 E-cadherin 阳性表达明显减少。结果说明, 患者血清 lncRNA HULC 处于高水平时, 其癌组织内促进肿瘤生长、侵袭转移的标记物 VEGF、MMP-2 阳性表达增加, 而抑制肿瘤生长、侵袭转移的标记物 E-cadherin 阳性表达减少 (图 2)。

2.5 血清 lncRNA HULC 水平与患者生存预后的关系

低 lncRNA HULC 组患者生存中位数为 44 个月, 高 lncRNA HULC 组患者生存中位数为 23 个月, 低 lncRNA HULC 组患者生存率高于高 lncRNA HULC 组患者 ($P < 0.05$) (图 3A)。高 lncRNA HULC 组患者肝癌切除术后复发比例高于低 lncRNA HULC 组患者, 两组差异有统计学意义 ($P < 0.05$) (图 3B)。同时采用 Cox 多因素模型分析影响乙肝相关性肝癌患者生存预后的因素, 将单因素分析中具有统计学意义的单因素, 包括肿瘤分化程度、TNM 分期、肝内转移情况及远处转移进行 Cox 比例风险回归分析, 结果显示, 术前血清 lncRNA HULC 水平是影响乙肝相关性肝癌患者生存预后的独立影响因素 ($OR = 1.769, P = 0.045$) (表 3)。

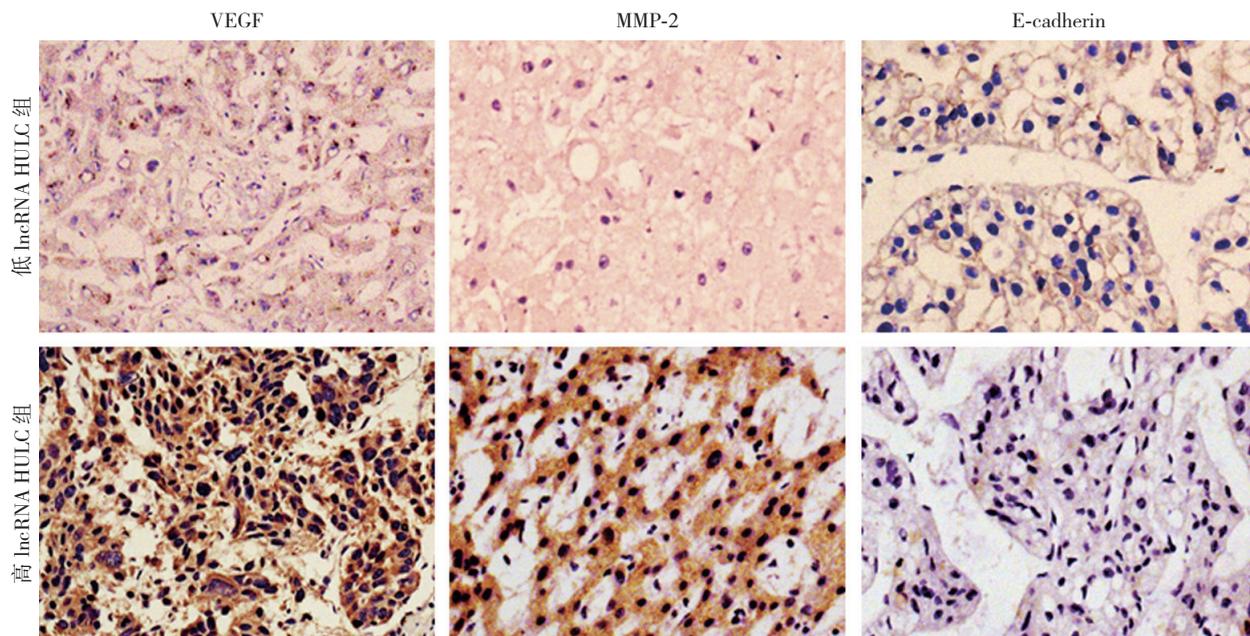


图 2 免疫组化检测 VEGF、MMP-2 与 E-cadherin 的表达 (×400)

Figure 2 Immunohistochemical staining for the expression of VEGF, MMP-2 and E-cadherin (×400)

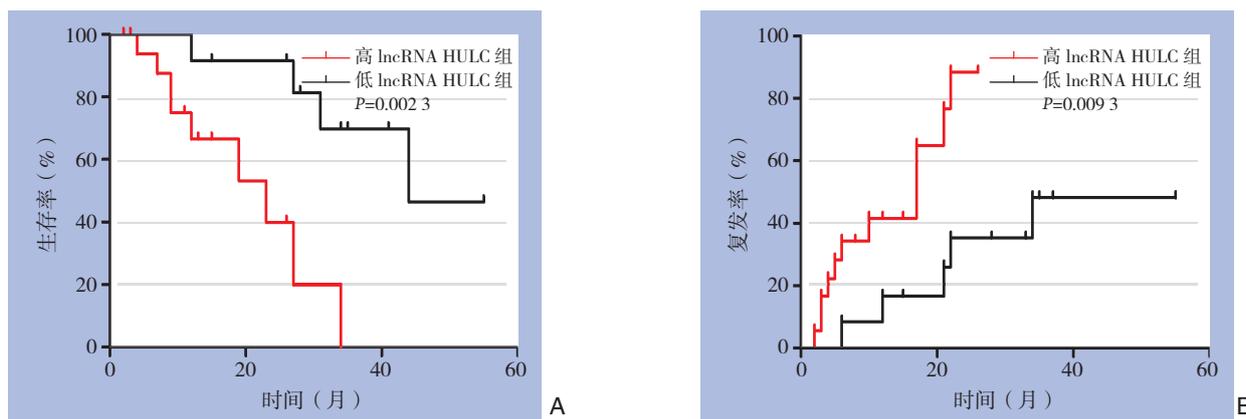


图 3 Kaplan-Meier 曲线分析 A: 不同血清 lncRNA HULC 水平患者的生存率; B: 不同血清 lncRNA HULC 水平患者的术后复发率

Figure 3 Kaplan-Meier curve analysis A: The survival rates of patients with different serum lncRNA HULC levels; B: The postoperative recurrence rates of patients with different serum lncRNA HULC levels

表 3 影响乙肝相关性肝癌患者生存的 Cox 多因素分析

Table 3 Multivariate Cox analysis of factors affecting the survival of patients with HBV-related HCC

因素	β	SE	Wald	df	P	Exp (β)
lncRNA HULC	0.571	0.284	4.024	1	0.045	1.769
分期	0.004	0.924	0.000	1	0.997	1.004
肝内转移	0.053	0.831	0.004	1	0.949	1.054
远处转移	-0.464	0.839	0.306	1	0.580	0.629

3 讨论

乙肝相关性肝癌在我国是常见的恶性肿瘤，其病死率高^[14-17]。肿瘤诊断及治疗靶点是在肿瘤发生、发展和转移中起关键作用的分子^[18-20]。乙肝相关性肝癌诊断及预后判定的方法主要包括肝穿病理学、影像学检查等，然而这些方法不适用于大

规模筛查，尤其是对肝癌的早期诊断。因此，探索敏感性与特异性强的生物标志物是肝癌诊治及预后判断的重点研究方向^[21-23]。近年来发现^[24-25]，血清非编码RNA作为肿瘤生物标记物具有明显优势，在血清中具有一定的丰度、稳定性好、敏感度高特点。研究表明，lncRNA HULC与肝癌密切相关，可通过表观遗传调控、促进血管生成及

上皮-间质转化等机制参与肝癌的发生、发展^[26]。

本研究结果表明,低lncRNA HULC组患者病理高分化比例与肝内转移与远处转移例数低于高lncRNA HULC组患者;高lncRNA HULC组患者III~IV期比例与肝癌切除术后复发比例均高于低lncRNA HULC组患者。以上结果提示血清lncRNA HULC水平与乙肝相关性肝癌患者临床病理学参数的关系密切,肿瘤低分化及易侵袭转移的肝癌患者血清中,lncRNA HULC水平较高,其与肝癌细胞生物学行为密切相关。多项研究^[7, 27]已证实lncRNA HULC可作为促癌基因影响肿瘤细胞增殖、凋亡、迁移、侵袭生物学特性。

肝癌的生长、浸润和转移与肿瘤间质血管生成密切相关,VEGF能通过旁分泌形式诱导肿瘤血管生成,在肝癌的发生发展中起关键作用^[28],有研究联合检测外周血中VEGF含量可以预测肿瘤复发转移及预后风险^[29];MMP-2是降解肿瘤细胞外基质最重要的酶类^[30]。MMP-2和VEGF在肝癌肝移植受体呈高表达,与肝癌术后肿瘤细胞的侵袭和转移密切相关^[31]。而跨膜糖蛋白E-cadherin可以介导同质型细胞分子黏附,其表达降低和缺失使肿瘤细胞间黏附力下降,易于脱离原组织而发生侵袭、转移^[32]。本研究免疫组化结果表明,血清lncRNA HULC高水平的肝细胞癌组织中VEGF、MMP-2阳性表达明显增加,而E-cadherin阳性表达明显减少,提示肝癌患者血清lncRNA HULC处于高水平时,其肝癌组织内促进肿瘤生长、侵袭转移的标记物VEGF、MMP-2阳性表达明显增加,而抑制肿瘤生长、侵袭转移的标记物E-cadherin阳性表达明显减少。血清lncRNA HULC处于高水平时,肿瘤细胞活动能力增强,细胞间黏附力下降,易于发生侵袭、转移。因此,血清lncRNA HULC高水平的患者肝内癌细胞恶性程度较高。

为了进一步阐述血清lncRNA HULC水平对乙肝相关性肝癌肝切除术后生存预后的影响,本文采用Kaplan-Meier法及Cox多因素回归分析对患者生存预后影响因素进行分析。结果显示,高lncRNA HULC组患者生存率低于低lncRNA HULC组患者,且肝癌切除术后复发率高于低lncRNA HULC组患者。同时采用Cox多因素模型分析影响乙肝相关性肝癌患者生存预后的因素,结果显示,术前血清lncRNA HULC水平是影响乙肝相关性肝癌患者生存预后的重要因素。Cox多因素模型分析中,肿瘤分化程度、TNM分期、肝内转移情况及远处转移等结果显示阴性,考虑可能是由于

研究样本例数导致的偏倚,致使风险回归分析结果并无显著性差异。

综上所述,乙肝相关性肝癌患者血清lncRNA HULC水平较高且与其预后相关,可能用于肿瘤预后的评估,从而为肝癌防治提供指导,对降低病死率、改善预后具有重要意义。

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