

亨廷顿病的发病机制和治疗进展

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亨廷顿病(HD)为遗传性进行性神经变性疾病,以异常的自主运动、认知功能障碍和精神疾病为临床特征,中老年发病,发病后 10~15 年死亡。已知致病基因为 *IT15* 基因,其 1 号外显子含有一段多态性三核苷酸[胞嘧啶-腺嘌呤-鸟嘌呤(CAG)]重复序列,当 CAG 重复拷贝数大于 36 次即引起发病^[1-2]。*IT15* 基因编码氨基末端(N 末端)含有多聚谷氨酰胺(PolyQ)的大分子蛋白质亨廷顿蛋白(Htt),目前对于变异 Htt 的致病机制尚不清楚。该病的主要病理表现为基底节区纹状体传出型棘状神经元大量缺失,此与其典型症状相关。目前的共识是:神经元变性累及脑内更多的区域,包括皮质结构^[3-4]。关于亨廷顿病的发病机制是野生型 Htt 功能缺失(loss of function)还是突变型 Htt 毒性功能获得(gain of function),尚存争论。

一、野生型 Htt 的功能

广泛表达的 Htt 对生物体具有重要作用,尤其是亨廷顿病患者受累的脑组织。由于该蛋白质氨基末端多聚谷氨酰胺的重复次数异常增多使野生型 Htt 功能下降,而纹状体神经元对 Htt 突变尤为敏感,从而影响胚胎发育、抗细胞凋亡和脑源性神经营养因子(BDNF)转录,以及轴突和囊泡转运。

1. Htt 对胚胎发育的影响 *Htt* 基因完全敲除小鼠只能存活至胚胎发育的第 8.50 天(胚胎发育共计 21 d),此后即开始形成原肠胚和中枢神经系统。有实验显示,当 Htt 表达水平降至 50% 以下时即可影响小鼠外胚层的发育,并最终导致神经管、大脑皮质和纹状体结构异常^[3,5]。由此可见,Htt 在小鼠

胚胎发育的不同阶段均是不可或缺的,当其完全缺失或表达水平下降超过 50% 以上时即可在病变早期出现亨廷顿病之表型。然而,突变的 Htt 并未使功能完全缺失,因此亨廷顿病患者在出生早期发育正常,临床症状于出生后多年方才出现。动物实验研究表明,细胞内源性 Htt 缺失,表达突变的 Htt 则能够逆转早期的胚胎发育不良,提示 Htt 在胚胎发育过程中所起的作用并不依赖于多聚谷氨酰胺^[6]。

2. Htt 的抗细胞凋亡作用 Ho 等^[7]的细胞模型研究提示,高表达 Htt 可保护非神经细胞免受突变 Htt 毒性刺激的损害。而 YAC18 转基因小鼠纹状体细胞经原代培养后过表达野生型 Htt,使纹状体细胞凋亡率降低^[8];相反,细胞内源性 *Htt* 基因被敲除后则易发生凋亡^[9]。

3. Htt 对脑源性神经营养因子转录的影响 脑源性神经营养因子是在纹状体神经元生存和皮质纹状体突触传递过程中发挥重要作用的神经营养因子^[10]。在投射至纹状体的皮质神经元中,脑源性神经营养因子与 Htt 共定位^[11]。大量动物实验结果证实,纹状体中的脑源性神经营养因子产生于大脑皮质并传递至纹状体^[11-13],当野生型 Htt 功能下降时,脑源性神经营养因子自身合成和投射至纹状体的数目同时减少,这可以解释某些神经元的选择性变性^[10,14-15]。体内和体外研究证据提示,过表达 Htt 可使 BDNF mRNA 和蛋白质表达水平升高^[15];而野生型 *Htt* 基因完全敲除或半敲除的小鼠,其脑组织中 BDNF mRNA 表达水平降低^[16-17]。对斑马鱼的观察可见,Htt 表达水平下降可导致鱼的眼睛和大脑萎缩、脑室增大,而在胚胎发育过程中提高脑源性神经营养因子表达水平则上述表型可被逆转^[18]。野生型 Htt 通过将抑制元素 1 沉默转录因子/神经元限制性沉默因子(REST/NRSF)汇集于细胞质中而阻止其与细胞核内的抑制元素 1(RE1)/NRSE 结合,进

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一步抑制 RE1/NRSE 的功能;但是 Htt 并不直接与 REST/NRSF 发生作用,而是通过形成包含 HAP1、RILP 和 dynactin 的亚单位即 p150^{Glued} 复合体与 REST/NRSF 相结合^[19]。由于,HTT 基因突变的存在使 p150^{Glued} 复合体解体,已经发生变异的 REST/NRSF 进入细胞核内,导致抑制性复合体形成并减少 BDNF 基因转录^[19]。

4. Htt 对轴突和囊泡转运过程的影响 Htt 的表达部位主要位于神经元胞质内,尤其在囊泡相关蛋白质丰富的细胞器内表达明显增加^[20]。加利福尼亚的研究者发现,果蝇神经元 Htt 表达水平降低后轴突转运受阻,野生型 Htt 具有促进哺乳动物神经元线粒体在轴突中快速转运的作用;而且与保留 50% Htt 相比,完全敲除 HTT 基因的果蝇其线粒体表型更明显,说明 Htt 的作用存在剂量效应^[21]。

二、神经变性机制

1. 脑源性神经营养因子缺失致神经元变性 脑源性神经营养因子产生于大脑皮质,并顺向运输至纹状体。动物实验表明,纹状体神经元中的脑源性神经营养因子来源于大脑皮质,亨廷顿病患者皮质脑源性神经营养因子水平仅为正常人的 50%^[12]。由此认为,亨廷顿病患者皮质脑源性神经营养因子水平和分布直接影响纹状体对该突变的易感性,皮质脑源性神经营养因子水平的降低或升高可分别加重或减轻纹状体神经元缺失^[22]。一项动物实验研究发现,脑源性神经营养因子敲除小鼠其基因表达水平与亨廷顿病患者尸体解剖所见纹状体病变相类似^[22]。另外,敲除 BDNF 基因的 R6/1 系小鼠,其亨廷顿病表型提前出现,而且行为学表型更为严重^[23]。上述结果均提示,脑源性神经营养因子表达水平降低在亨廷顿病的病理进展过程中起至关重要的作用。

2. 兴奋性机制和皮质纹状体功能失调 过量谷氨酸引起的兴奋性毒性可导致皮质神经元突触间联系和环路功能失调,此为兴奋性机制和皮质纹状体功能失调的首要原因。当发生亨廷顿病时,由于皮质传出纤维释放谷氨酸增加、胶质细胞摄取谷氨酸减少,导致谷氨酸受体过度激活。而且纹状体投射神经元突触后谷氨酸受体高反应性及其病理性下游通路均可致病^[24-25]。

3. 蛋白酶体降解 突变的 Htt 可被蛋白酶体降解并由此加速神经变性的进程。例如:突变的 Htt 可被半胱氨酸蛋白酶剪切,而抑制上述剪切过程有

助于减轻亨廷顿病转基因小鼠的病情^[26],进一步说明 Htt 片段较全长毒性更大。研究显示,Caspase-3 和 Caspase-7 的剪切位点分别为第 513 和 552 位点,而 Caspase-6 和 Caspase-2 的剪切位点则分别位于第 586 和 552 位点^[27-29],此已被 Caspases 抑制剂和点突变的实验方法所证实^[29]。除了半胱氨酸蛋白酶,钙蛋白酶亦参与 Htt 的剪切,虽然野生型和突变型 Htt 均能被剪切,但后者更易被剪切并产生氨基末端片段^[29-30]。自发现 HTT 基因片段导致的神经元毒性比全长更严重以来,目前已将抑制 Htt 剪切过程作为治疗亨廷顿病的切入点,发现翻译后修饰起重要作用:Htt 的 S434 位点被细胞周期蛋白依赖性激酶 5 (CDK5) 磷酸化后即可阻止蛋白质的剪切过程;而 S421 位点磷酸化则可减少 Caspase-6 介导的 Htt 剪切和 Caspase-6 片段在细胞核内的聚集^[31-32]。

4. 突变 Htt 的错误折叠、聚集和清除 对亨廷顿病而言,神经元变性的主要表现是由突变 Htt 引起的聚集物在纹状体神经元的聚集。突变 Htt 所产生的聚集物存在于大脑皮质神经元,青少年患者(38%~52%)较成年患者(3%~6%)更为常见,而且这种聚集物仅见于纹状体中等棘状神经元,苍白球和小脑鲜见^[30]。生物化学分析表明,细胞核内聚集物主要由 Htt 片段组成,而细胞质内聚集物 Htt 片段和全长共存,但聚集物进入细胞核后毒性更大^[33];其毒性主要来源于聚集物囊括了其他含多聚谷氨酰胺的蛋白质,并使这些蛋白质失去生理功能。有许多细胞内蛋白质,例如转录因子和转录调控因子均含多聚谷氨酰胺结构,而聚集物则因汇集了可溶性动力蛋白而影响胞体与突触末端间的轴突转运能力^[34-35]。聚集物在亨廷顿病中起主要毒性作用,最有力的证据是:随着病程的进展,聚集物亦相应增加。对于可调控表达突变 Htt 的转基因小鼠,出现行为和认知损害后,阻止其转基因系统继续表达突变的 Htt,则小鼠原已形成的聚集物逐渐消失,且其行为和认知损害程度也得到缓解^[36]。生物化学研究显示,聚集物难以被分解或发生变性,而神经元本身则具有降解细胞核内外聚集物的能力,因此有效的治疗方法即是减少聚集物的形成和使突变的 Htt 失活^[36]。大量证据表明,泛素蛋白酶体系统不能完全降解突变的 Htt,导致聚集物形成,与此同时其本身功能也失调^[37]。另有实验亦支持上述研究结果,特异性蛋白酶体抑制剂可促进亨廷顿病神经元和模型动物脑组织中聚集物的形成,而过表达

热休克蛋白(如 hsp40 和 70 等)和分子伴侣蛋白时,突变 Htt 所形成的聚集体则减少,罹患亨廷顿病的果蝇和小鼠的生命周期显著延长^[38-39]。蛋白酶体降解酶仅能降解多聚谷氨酰胺邻近的序列,对多聚谷氨酰胺本身并无降解作用,而未被降解的部分更容易聚集。最新研究显示,细胞质中的所有降解酶唯有嘌呤霉素敏感性氨基肽酶(PSA)可以降解多聚谷氨酰胺^[40],但目前尚无明确的证据表明嘌呤霉素敏感性氨基肽酶能够延缓疾病的发生与发展。然而,亦有资料提示,突变 Htt 形成的聚集体并不引起动物神经元缺失和行为异常^[41-42],而且有些促进聚集体形成的化合物却具有缓解上述症状之功效^[43],其证据来源于转基因小鼠实验研究^[44]。总之,Htt 突变致聚集体是产生毒性作用还是保护性作用取决于受累细胞类型和疾病发病阶段^[45-46],据认为,小聚集体甚至单体的毒性作用可能更大,而大的聚集体则有保护作用^[47-49]。因此,聚集体形成的早期过程更值得关注。

5. 自噬功能异常 与蛋白酶体途径类似,部分突变 Htt 也通过自噬途径降解。自噬过程首先是部分细胞质成分被一种“自噬体”和“自噬空泡”的双膜结构包裹,继而与溶酶体结合并最终被降解^[50]。Ravikumar 等^[49]首次提出自噬负性调节因子哺乳动物雷帕霉素靶蛋白(mTOR),当聚集体形成时雷帕霉素靶蛋白即被包裹其内,从而促进突变 Htt 片段的清除。此项发现与之前关于亨廷顿病患者脑组织自噬空泡增加的研究结果相一致^[51],而且添加自噬促进剂或增加自身基因表达水平均可以促进对突变 Htt 的清除以及减少聚集物的形成,并且改善果蝇或小鼠行为学表型^[42]。相反,当自噬溶酶体途径被抑制后可溶性 Htt 表达水平、聚集体形成及其毒性作用均显著增加,目前已知突变 Htt K444 位点发生乙酰化即能够促进自噬进而减轻自身毒性作用^[52]。在上述过程中,自噬体与溶酶体的结合至关重要^[53],倘若无此过程自噬体将聚集并增加其毒性。上述结果提示,控制溶酶体功能可能是一种新的治疗方法。近期研究亦发现,Htt 被溶酶体清除主要依赖于溶酶体相关膜蛋白 2A(LAMP2A),随着年龄的增长其表达水平逐渐降低,突变 Htt 聚集并诱发神经变性^[54-55],若于疾病早期提高溶酶体相关膜蛋白 2A 功能有可能延缓亨廷顿病的发病。

6. 线粒体功能失调致神经变性 亨廷顿病患者神经元线粒体功能缺陷的首项研究证据来自尸体

解剖所显示的大脑皮质神经元线粒体超微结构组织病理学改变^[56-57],以及影像学显示的能量代谢缺陷^[53]。随着磁共振波谱(MRS)的应用,发现症状性亨廷顿病患者基底节区和丘脑呈现 N-乙酰天冬氨酸(NAA)缺失,神经元富含此种氨基酸,其代谢变化可反映线粒体功能^[58-59]。此外 PET 研究也已证实,亨廷顿病早期患者大脑皮质和基底节区即出现乳酸合成增加,提示糖分解速度加快^[60]。与亨廷顿病细胞模型和动物模型观察结果相似,亨廷顿病患者中枢和周围神经组织中诸多参与氧化磷酸化的酶如线粒体呼吸链复合体活性下降^[61-62]。总之,突变 Htt 主要通过氧化应激、钙调节功能失调等途径导致神经元线粒体功能失调^[63-64]。

7. 细胞转录功能异常 有关亨廷顿病转录调控异常的证据显示,编码信号神经肽和神经递质受体的 mRNA 在纹状体神经元中呈特异性减少^[65-68],以及 R6/2 系小鼠模型 D1 和 D2 受体 mRNA 转录异常改变^[69-70]。DNA 微阵列研究表明,在亨廷顿病神经元和动物模型中存在大量的基因表达改变,临床症状出现之前即已存在基因调控异常改变,说明转录调控异常在亨廷顿病的发病过程中起重要作用^[34]。

三、亨廷顿病治疗原则

与大多数神经变性疾病相同,目前对亨廷顿病亦无有效的治疗方法,现针对上述不同发病机制的治疗方案作一扼要介绍^[71-72]。

1. 减轻兴奋性毒性的药物 由谷氨酸释放增加和 N-甲基-D-天冬氨酸(NAMD)受体活性上调所引起的兴奋性毒性,是导致亨廷顿病细胞死亡的主要原因。(1)利血平:为中枢神经系统谷氨酸神经传导抑制药,对亨廷顿病小鼠模型有较好保护作用,但临床试验显示其虽对控制舞蹈样动作有效但不能持久^[73-74]。(2)金刚烷胺:其药理作用为阻断 NAMD 受体,对延缓病程和改善认知功能的效果优于利血平^[75]。(3)丁苯那嗪:为多巴胺抑制药,可同时改善舞蹈样动作和减少纹状体神经元缺失,其不良反应包括抑郁、帕金森综合征等,目前已通过美国食品与药品管理局(FDA)审批^[76-77]。

2. 增加脑源性神经营养因子表达水平 脑源性神经营养因子表达水平下降对亨廷顿病表型有所贡献。目前,有关重组脑源性神经营养因子、脑源性神经营养因子拟似体、诱导剂、BDNF 基因治疗和细胞移植等研究尚处于基础研究阶段^[78-79]。

3. 抑制 Caspases 活性药物 全长 Htt 被

Caspases 剪切后产生毒性更大的氨基片段,其在亨廷顿病的神经病理过程中起重要作用。米诺环素为第 2 代四环素类药物,主要抑制 Caspase-1 和 Caspase-3 活性^[80],临床试验发现,治疗 6 个月后可有效改善患者精神症状,治疗 1 年后可稳定运动和精神方面的症状^[81-82]。至于该药长期应用的安全性和远期效果有待进一步认证。

4. 减少 Htt 聚集药物 聚集体形成是亨廷顿病发生与发展过程中的重要特征,但其究竟起何作用尚有待进一步研究加以证实。刚果红通过破坏已形成的寡聚体结构而抑制异常多聚谷氨酰胺的寡聚化,阻止 ATP 缺失和 Caspases 激活,其在小鼠模型的效果仍有待进一步验证^[83]。此外,C2-8 等虽已在果蝇、小鼠模型中取得一定治疗效果^[84-85],但仍需临床实践验证。抑制 Htt 聚集体形成和促进已形成的聚集体被清除是两个不同的治疗方向,后者可应用如雷帕霉素靶蛋白抑制剂雷帕霉素等,但其免疫抑制方面的不良反应阻碍了其在临床的推广应用^[49]。

5. 改善线粒体功能药物 突变 Htt 可阻碍线粒体能量产生和细胞呼吸,导致细胞内 ATP 水平降低,从而促进细胞凋亡、氧化压力和兴奋性毒性。肌酐能够有效改善线粒体的呼吸功能和抗氧化作用,对亨廷顿病小鼠具有显著的神经保护作用^[86],临床试验发现对减轻亨廷顿病患者体质量和改善神经症状有一定效果,但是其最佳治疗剂量仍有待临床实践的检验^[87]。其他改善线粒体功能的药物,如辅酶 Q10(CoQ10)、二十碳五烯酸(EPA)等均有待进一步的临床验证。

6. 调控基因转录异常的药物 转录调控异常是亨廷顿病病理过程中的早期事件^[34]。组蛋白去乙酰化酶(HDAC)抑制剂辛二酰苯胺异羟肟酸(SAHA)和丁酸钠能够通过增加组蛋白乙酰化水平,进而使染色质结构更加松弛而有利于基因转录。尽管临床试验显示上述组蛋白去乙酰化酶抑制剂是安全的,但其在抑制生长、促进凋亡、致染色质结构不稳定及其他不良反应方面不容忽视^[88-89]。

7. 其他药物或治疗方法 改良的细胞内抗体,包括重组抗体和抗体片段能够透过血-脑屏障作用于 Htt 片段,降低突变 Htt 表达水平,从而减轻细胞死亡;此类细胞抗体在行为学上的效果业已在转基因小鼠实验中得到验证^[90]。但这些研究仍处于早期研究阶段,在抗原选择、胞质稳定性和可溶性,以及转运途径的选择等方面尚未获得肯定的结果。

此外,细胞移植亦是目前研究的热点,包括胎脑纹状体祖细胞、胚胎干细胞移植术等,前者由于治疗效果不能持久故未在临床推广^[91],而後者的研究尚需解决移植后能否成功诱导亨廷顿病变性的神经元等问题^[81]。

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