



强直性脊柱炎患者H3K27me3表达水平及其调控Th17细胞分化的表观遗传机制*

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【摘要】目的 探讨强直性脊柱炎(ankylosing spondylitis, AS)中组蛋白H3K27me3甲基化及其调节酶JMJD3和EZH2在Th17细胞分化中的作用,以揭示其在AS发病机制中的潜在作用。通过分析H3K27me3的甲基化状态及其与Th17相关因子之间的相互作用,为AS的临床治疗提供新的策略和靶点。**方法** 采集84名AS的患者(活跃期、稳定期各42例)和84名健康志愿者(对照组)血液样本,ELISA检测Th17细胞及相关细胞因子(IL-21、IL-22和IL-17),RT-PCR分析Th分化关键信号通路RORc、JAK2、STAT3基因的表达,蛋白质印迹法检测RORc、JAK2/STAT3通路蛋白、H3K27me3及相关蛋白酶EZH2、JMJD3的表达。对活动期AS患者H3K27me3、EZH2、JMJD3与Th分化关键信号通路分子的关联性进行Pearson相关分析。**结果** RORc、JAK2、STAT3 mRNA表达,活动期组>稳定期组,差异有统计学意义($P<0.05$)。H3K27me3、EZH2的表达量,活动期组<稳定期组<对照组,差异有统计学意义($P<0.05$);JMJD3、RORc、JAK2、pJAK2、STAT3、pSTAT3的表达量,活动期组>稳定期组>对照组,差异有统计学意义($P<0.05$)。活动期组Th17比例及其炎症因子的表达水平高于其他两组($P<0.05$)。H3K27me3与RORc、JAK2、STAT3、IL-17负相关, JMJD3与JAK2、STAT3、IL-17正相关,而EZH2与JAK2、STAT3、IL-17负相关($P<0.05$)。**结论** AS中H3K27me3的低表达受到基因位点JMJD3和EZH2的影响,可以调节Th17细胞的分化,从而在AS的发病和进展中发挥作用。

【关键词】 强直性脊柱炎 H3K27me3 Th17细胞分化 表观遗传调控

H3K27me3 Expression Level and Its Epigenetic Regulation Mechanisms in Th17 Cell Differentiation in Patients With Ankylosing Spondylitis CHENG Ming^{1,2}, JIA Long¹, XUE Zhiyuan¹, YANG Tao¹, ZHOU Xue¹, ZHAO Guanlan^{2△}.

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【Abstract】 Objective To investigate the roles of histone H3K27me3 methylation and its regulatory enzymes JMJD3 and EZH2 in the differentiation of Th17 cells in ankylosing spondylitis (AS), to unveil their potential involvement in the pathogenesis of AS, and to provide new strategies and targets for the clinical treatment of AS by analyzing the methylation state of H3K27me3 and its interactions with Th17-related factors. **Methods** A total of 84 AS patients (42 active AS patients and 42 patients in the stable phase of AS) were enrolled for the study, while 84 healthy volunteers were enrolled as the controls. Blood samples were collected. Peripheral blood mononuclear cells were isolated. ELISA assay was performed to examine Th17 cells and the relevant cytokines IL-21, IL-22, and IL-17. The mRNA expressions of RORc, JAK2, and STAT3 were analyzed by RT-PCR, the protein expressions of RORc, JAK2/STAT3 pathway protein, H3K27me3 and the relevant protease (EZH2 and JMJD3) were determined by Western blot. Correlation between H3K27me3, EZH2 and JMJD3 and the key signaling pathway molecules of Th cell differentiation was analyzed by Pearson correlation analysis. **Results** The mRNA expressions of RORc, JAK2, and STAT3 were significantly higher in the active phase group than those in the stable phase group ($P<0.05$). The relative grayscale values of H3K27me3 and EZH2 in the active phase group were lower than those of the stable phase group, which were lower than those of the control group, with the differences being statistically significant ($P<0.05$). The relative grayscale values of JMJD3, RORc, JAK2, pJAK2, STAT3, and pSTAT3 proteins were significantly higher in the active phase group than those in the stable phase group, which were higher than those in the control group (all $P<0.05$). The proportion of Th17 and the expression level of inflammatory factors in the active period group were higher than those in the other two groups ($P<0.05$). H3K27me3 was negatively correlated with RORc, JAK2, STAT3, and IL-17, JMJD3 was positively correlated with JAK2, STAT3, and IL-17, and EZH2 was negatively correlated with JAK2, STAT3, and IL-17 (all $P<0.05$). **Conclusion** The low expression of H3K27me3 in AS is influenced by the gene loci JMJD3 and EZH2, which can regulate the differentiation of Th17 cells and thus play a

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role in the pathogenesis and progression of AS.

【Key words】 Ankylosing spondylitis H3K27me3 Th17 cell differentiation Epigenetic regulation

强直性脊柱炎(ankylosing spondylitis, AS)是一种以脊柱炎症性变化为特征的慢性疾病,早期表现为背部畸形、膝关节和髋关节强直等症状,这些症状多为不可逆,严重影响患者的生活质量^[1]。AS的治疗面临着高难度和复发率,约30%~40%的患者在诊断后20年内因反复发作而丧失劳动力^[2-3]。这种疾病的复杂性促使科研人员探究其背后的机制,其中H3K27me3的作用引起了广泛关注^[4-5]。H3K27me3是组蛋白H3赖氨酸27位点的三甲基化,它在调节基因表达中发挥关键作用^[6],特别是通过影响Th17细胞的分化和活动参与AS的病理过程。Th17细胞是一类在AS发病机制中起着关键作用的T细胞亚群,与其他细胞因子和信号通路紧密相连^[7]。研究H3K27me3在Th17细胞分化中的角色,不仅有助于深入理解AS的病理机制,还可能为临床防治AS提供新的策略。因此,本研究旨在探讨H3K27甲基化及其去甲基酶对Th17细胞在AS中的影响,分析其表观遗传调控的可能路径及机制,以期改善AS患者的预后提供新的视角。

1 资料与方法

1.1 研究对象

选取2020年1月-2021年12月在成都市金牛区人民医院确诊为AS的患者84例,同时期内课题组招募的84名健康志愿者作为对照组。临床资料的收集经成都市金牛区人民医院伦理委员会批准(批准号QYYKJ-2023-35)。纳入标准:①AS诊断组由临床医师结合患者病史、实验室检查确诊^[8];②参考文献^[7]将AS患者分为活动期患者(BASDAI \geq 4分,脊柱痛VAS评分 \geq 4分)和稳定期各42例;③年龄18~50岁;④非妊娠期或哺乳期妇女;⑤未伴随其同类型脊柱关节病;⑥无心血管严重疾病;⑦没有危急性感染病史,依从性高。排除标准:①伴随有严重的脏器类疾病,不适宜开展研究;②关节严重畸形;③入院前半个月使用激素治疗患者;④合并恶性肿瘤;⑤合并心脏系统疾病包括先天性心脏病、心脏瓣膜疾病、扩张型心肌病等;⑥不遵从医嘱而影响到研究结果。

确诊组男女性别分别为40、44例,年龄24~57岁;对照组中男女性别分别为39、45例,年龄22~60岁;两组的基本资料差异无统计学意义($P>0.05$),满足对比研究要求。

1.2 研究方法

1.2.1 血液标本收集

采集研究对象空腹静脉血5 mL, 30 min内在4℃环境

下低速离心15 min,分离血清在低温(2~6℃)环境下保存。取血液沉淀2 500 r/min、10 min离心处理,分离外周血单个核细胞。

1.2.2 ELISA法检测外周血CD4⁺细胞中Th17及相关细胞因子IL-21、IL-22和IL-17的表达

参照ELISA试剂盒说明书操作,检测外周血CD4⁺细胞中IL-21、IL-22和IL-17的含量,检测Th17比例。

1.2.3 RT-PCR法检测RORc、JAK2/STAT3通路信号分子mRNA表达

取各组对数生长期单个核细胞,根据说明书要求通过试剂盒进行总RNA的提取处理,提取后基于反转录试剂盒(日本TaKaRa公司)逆转录,再进行PCR扩增,设置 β -actin为参照,使用 $2^{-\Delta\Delta C_t}$ 法计算各组目的基因的相对表达量。所用引物序列如下: β -actin, F: 5'-TGTCACCAACTGGGACGATA-3', R: 5'-GGGGTGTGGAAGGTCTCAA-3'; RORc, F: 5'-GAGAAGGACAGGGAGCCAAG-3', R: 5'-GCGGAAGAAGCCCTTGCAC-3'; JAK2, F: 5'-GGATGTGAGTGGGAGCTGAG-3', R: 5'-CCTGCTTCTGAAACCCGGC-3'; STAT3, F: 5'-CTGTGTGACACCAACGACCT-3', R: 5'-GGGTTTCAGCACCTTCACCAT-3'。

1.2.4 蛋白质印迹法检测RORc、JAK2/STAT3通路蛋白、H3K27me3及相关蛋白酶EZH2、JMJD3的表达

取分离的单个核细胞用PBS溶液冲洗,RIPA蛋白裂解液裂解后离心,取上清液,测定后在低温环境条件下保存;然后根据实验要求取总蛋白上样加入1 \times SDS凝胶加样缓冲液,煮沸后变性10 min,顺序加样,然后在一定电压条件下开始凝胶电泳;在转膜过程中应用到湿式电转仪(美国TaKaRa公司)转膜,通过5%TBST 4℃封闭1 h;加入一抗RORc、JAK2、pJAK2、JMJD3、EZH2兔多抗(1:500)(美国TaKaRa公司)、 β -actin一抗(1:2 000,杭州吉诺生物医药技术有限公司),4℃环境下孵育12 h;加入羊抗鼠二抗(上海艾研生物科技有限公司)孵育60 min,化学发光测定后定影,通过Image J软件分析图像确定灰度值,目的蛋白相对表达量=目的蛋白灰度值/内参灰度值。

1.3 统计学方法

采用SPSS22.0软件进行统计分析,其中符合正态分布的计量数据以 $\bar{x}\pm s$ 表示,多组间计量差异性对比进行单因素方差检验,组间两两比较进行SNK- q 检验;关联分析进行Pearson检验; $P<0.05$ 为差异有统计学意义。

2 结果

2.1 H3K27me3及相关蛋白酶EZH2、JMJD3的表达情况

H3K27me3、EZH2相对灰度值,活动期组<稳定期组<对照组,差异有统计学意义($P < 0.05$); JMJD3相对灰度值,活动期组>稳定期组>对照组,差异有统计学意义($P < 0.05$)。见表1。H3K27me3与JMJD3呈负相关关系($r = -0.224, P = 0.031$)、与EZH2呈正相关关系($r = 0.314, P = 0.017$)。

2.2 Th分化关键信号通路RORc、JAK2/STAT3蛋白和基因的表达

RORc、JAK2、pJAK2、STAT3、pSTAT3蛋白相对灰度值,活动期组>稳定期组>对照组,差异有统计学意义

表 1 各组H3K27me3及相关蛋白酶相对灰度值比较 ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Table 1 Comparison of the relative grayscale values of H3K27me3 and the relevant protease in each group ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Group	H3K27me3	JMJD3	EZH2
Activity period (n=42)	0.62±0.19 ^{a,b}	0.55±0.13 ^{a,b}	0.60±0.17 ^{a,b}
Stable period (n=42)	1.28±0.23 ^a	0.30±0.08 ^a	1.14±0.13 ^a
Control (n=84)	1.78±0.25	0.19±0.74	2.46±0.58
F	195.475	180.145	928.147
P	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

^a $P < 0.05$, vs. control; ^b $P < 0.05$, vs. stable period.

(均 $P < 0.05$)。见表2。RORc、JAK2、STAT3 mRNA表达,活动期组>稳定期组,差异有统计学意义($P < 0.05$)。见表3。

表 2 Th分化关键信号通路RORc、JAK2/STAT3蛋白相对灰度值比较 ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Table 2 Comparison of the relative grayscale values of RORc and JAK2/STAT3 proteins, the key Th cell differentiation signaling pathways ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Group	RORc	JAK2	pJAK2	STAT3	pSTAT3
Activity period (n=42)	1.10±0.47 ^{a,b}	0.91±0.37 ^{a,b}	0.29±0.17 ^{a,b}	0.88±0.25 ^{a,b}	0.51±0.22 ^{a,b}
Stable period (n=42)	0.63±0.29 ^a	0.75±0.30 ^a	0.20±0.12 ^a	0.67±0.18 ^a	0.39±0.14 ^a
Control (n=84)	0.34±0.16	0.41±0.15	0.03±0.06	0.44±0.11	0.16±0.10
F	56.064	32.953	46.936	56.980	51.100
P	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

^a $P < 0.05$, vs. control; ^b $P < 0.05$, vs. stable period.

表 3 Th分化关键信号通路RORc、JAK2、STAT3 mRNA表达比较 ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Table 3 Comparison of the mRNA expression of RORc, JAK2, and STAT3, the key Th cell differentiation signaling pathways ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Group	RORc	JAK2	STAT3
Activity period (n=42)	4.39±0.77 ^{a,b}	2.90±0.47 ^{a,b}	4.11±0.52 ^{a,b}
Stable period (n=42)	2.67±0.56 ^a	1.55±0.34 ^a	2.36±0.43 ^a
Control (n=84)	1.04±0.22	1.08±0.23	1.28±0.27
F	370.294	288.834	486.454
P	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

^a $P < 0.05$, vs. control; ^b $P < 0.05$, vs. stable period.

2.3 外周血CD4⁺细胞中Th17及其细胞因子表达情况

活动期组Th17比例及其炎性因子的表达水平高于其他两组,差异有统计学意义($P < 0.05$)。见表4。

2.4 活动期AS患者H3K27me3及其相关蛋白酶与Th分化关键信号通路分子相关性分析

见表5。H3K27me3与RORc、JAK2、STAT3、IL-17呈负相关关系($P < 0.05$); JMJD3与JAK2、STAT3、IL-17正相关($P < 0.05$); EZH2与JAK2、STAT3、IL-17都存在负相关关系($P < 0.05$)。

表 4 外周血CD4⁺细胞中Th17及其细胞因子表达水平比较 ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Table 4 Comparison of Th17 and its cytokine expression levels in peripheral blood CD4⁺ cells of each group ($\bar{x} \pm s$)

Group	Th17/%	IL-17/(ng/mL)	IL-21/(ng/mL)	IL-22/(ng/mL)
Activity period (n=42)	6.24±1.44 ^{a,b}	39.49±6.58 ^{a,b}	39.96±3.74 ^{a,b}	42.56±3.91 ^{a,b}
Stable period (n=42)	5.07±1.29 ^a	31.02±4.47 ^a	29.41±3.02 ^a	34.02±3.14 ^a
Control (n=84)	2.20±0.98	25.57±3.13	18.86±1.77	26.36±2.23
F	115.895	84.837	534.435	274.729
P	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

^a $P < 0.05$, vs. control; ^b $P < 0.05$, vs. stable period.

表5 活动期AS患者H3K27me3及其相关蛋白酶与Th分化关键信号通路分子相关性

Table 5 Correlation between H3K27me3 and its relevant protease and the key signaling pathway molecules of Th cell differentiation

Variable	RORc	JAK2	STAT3	Th17	IL-17	IL-21	IL-22
H3K27me3	<i>r</i>	-0.234	-0.250	0.445	-0.214	-0.226	0.223
	<i>P</i>	0.016	0.013	<0.001	0.035	0.026	0.028
JMJD3	<i>r</i>	0.232	0.553	0.248	0.210	0.236	0.105
	<i>P</i>	0.022	<0.001	0.014	0.035	0.020	0.125
EZH2	<i>r</i>	-0.320	-0.247	-0.254	0.014	-0.351	0.024
	<i>P</i>	0.004	0.016	0.026	0.271	0.007	0.187

3 讨论

在探讨H3K27me3在AS及类似慢性炎症性疾病中的作用时,我们发现尽管其在肿瘤研究中的重要性已被广泛认可^[9-11],涉及调控表观遗传机制的多个方面,但关于H3K27me3在AS的表观遗传机制研究却相对缺乏。目前,针对H3K27me3在AS中的功能及其调控机制的研究还未得到充分的阐述,尤其是在大数据支撑下的机制探索和针对性治疗策略的开发上更是如此。这一研究空白不仅指出了我们对AS表观遗传背景了解的不足,也突显了进一步研究的迫切需求。因此,本文旨在深入探讨H3K27me3对Th17细胞分化的影响及其在AS病理过程中的作用,以期揭示AS的病理机制提供新的理解,并探索潜在的治疗靶点,为AS以及其他类似的慢性炎症性疾病的治疗研究开辟新的路径。

本研究从表观遗传学的角度分析H3K27me3在AS中的表达及其对Th17细胞分化的影响,所得结果可对这种疾病的病理研究提供参考。研究发现Th17细胞分化调节机制与其相关细胞因子表达水平密切相关,而表观遗传修饰可能是Th17细胞及其细胞因子分化调节重要影响因素之一。本研究首先探究H3K27me3及其基因位点在AS患者中的表达,结果显示AS患者H3K27me3、EZH2相对灰度值低于对照组,且活动期AS患者更低;而AS患者JMJD3相对灰度值高于对照组,且活动期AS患者更高;提示H3K27me3存在基因表观修饰。HEBEISEN等^[12]指出,RORc、JAK/ATAT通路和Th17细胞分化存在密切关系,可促进IL-17分泌。另WALSH等^[13]研究结果显示,STAT3磷酸化抑制剂对CD4⁺T细胞的Th17分化会产生抑制作用,据此可推断出JAK/STAT通路为调控Th17分化的重要通路。综合考虑探究H3K27me3基因位点与JAK/STAT通路的关系可明确Th细胞分化的表观遗传学机制,而这在既往多篇报道中均有说明;马丛等^[14]指出组蛋白乙酰化能调控基因转录,对炎性介质的释放会产生

调节作用,而抑制TH3K27me3细胞分化;另徐子琦等^[15]的大数据实验结果显示,在Th细胞的Bcl6和JMJD3位点上的修饰状态会明显影响到Th细胞分化过程。本研究结果显示,活动期AS患者H3K27me3与RORc、JAK2、STAT3、IL-17呈负相关关系, JMJD3与RORc、JAK2、STAT3、IL-17呈正相关, EZH2与RORc、JAK2、STAT3、IL-17呈负相关,符合PEREZ等^[16]的研究结果。参考PEREZ等^[16]研究结果, CD4⁺T中的RORc启动区富集此标记,根据此结果可判断出H3K27me3位点对Th17细胞分化可起到调节作用,促进IL-17分泌,进而引发AS。分析其作用机制可得, H3K27me3表达水平由JMJD3、EZH2共同调控,在Th17分化中有多方面的调节作用。JMJD3在一定条件下可特异性降解H3K27me3,这样可激活RORc基因转录,对Th17分化起到促进作用。EZH2可催化此位点,从而抑制转录过程,这样会阻碍Th17分化。相关实验研究发现敲除JMJD3的T细胞基本上未向Th17细胞分化偏移,而敲除EZH2^[17]的T细胞不受到影响,由此可推断出二者对Th分化的调节主要是通过H3K27me3起作用^[18]。

综上, H3K27me3在AS中低表达,其基因位点JMJD3、EZH2相互作用,可提高Th17特征性转录因子RORc活性,在此基础上介导AS发生和发展。但由于时间限制、样本量小,AS发病机制较复杂,本研究结果还存在一定的应用局限性,以后还应开展大样本双盲对照研究,提高所得结果的参考价值。

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利益冲突 所有作者均声明不存在利益冲突

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