

肺鳞癌肿瘤浸润前沿细胞的EMT表型特点及临床意义

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【摘要】背景与目的 肿瘤浸润前沿 (invasive tumor front, ITF) 细胞是指肿瘤与宿主组织交界处的细胞或浸润的细胞团, 对判断患者预后具有较高的价值。本研究旨在探讨肺鳞状细胞癌 (squamous cell carcinoma, SCC) ITF 细胞的上皮-间叶转化 (epithelial-mesenchymal transition, EMT) 表型特点, 并分析与临床病理特征和预后的关系。**方法** 采用免疫组织化学SP法检测104例肺SCC ITF细胞中上皮性标志物E-cadherin/β-catenin和间叶性标志物vimentin 的表达。**结果** E-cadherin在53.8% (56/104) 的肺SCC ITF细胞中表达下调, 较非ITF细胞表达降低 ($P=0.04$), 而 vimentin在42.3% (44 / 104) ITF细胞中表达, 较非ITF肿瘤细胞表达升高; 两者均与肿瘤浸润方式、肺门淋巴结转移和患者预后有相关性 ($P<0.01$)。β-catenin在肺SCC ITF细胞的表达阳性率为67.3% (70/104), 低于非ITF细胞 ($P<0.01$), 在ITF细胞呈胞质和核阳性表达, 并与肺门淋巴结转移密切相关。**结论** 肺SCC ITF细胞中E-cadherin/β-catenin表达缺失和vimentin高表达可能与患者的不良预后有关。

【关键词】肺鳞状细胞癌; 肿瘤浸润前沿; E-cadherin; β-catenin; Vimentin

Significance of Epithelial-mesenchymal Transition Phenotype in Invasive Tumor Front Cells of Lung Squamous Cell Carcinoma

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【Abstract】 **Background and objective** The invasive tumor front (ITF) refers to cells or invasive nests in the junctional region of a tumor and its host. The ITF contains the most invasive cells of a tumor, and has a high prognostic value in carcinoma. The aim of this study is to investigate the epithelial-mesenchymal transformation phenotype in ITF cells of lung squamous cell carcinoma (SCC), and analyze the relationship between clinicopathological features and clinical outcomes of patients. **Methods** Semiquantitative immunohistochemistry was used to examine the expression of epithelial markers (E-cadherin and β-catenin) and mesenchymal marker (vimentin) in 104 lung SCC tumor tissues. **Results** A decrease in E-cadherin expression in ITF cells was observed in 56 of 104 (53.8%) tumors from patients. This result was markedly lower than that of non-ITF cells, which eventually developed metastatic tumors and were also associated with death ($P=0.04$). Vimentin expression was observed in 44 of 104 (42.3%) ITF cells, which was much higher than that of non-ITF cells. The downregulation of E-cadherin and overexpression of vimentin were associated with tumor invasive pattern, lymphatic metastasis, and poor prognosis ($P<0.01$). The expression of β-catenin was 67.3% (70/104) in ITF cells. Moreover, ITF cells showed more nuclear and plasma-positive cells, which were closely associated with metastasis ($P<0.01$). **Conclusion** The loss in expression of E-cadherin/β-catenin and overexpression of vimentin in ITF cells may be associated with poor prognosis of lung SCC patients.

【Key words】 Lung squamous cell carcinoma; Invasive tumor front; E-cadherin; β-catenin; Vimentin

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肺鳞状细胞癌(squamous cell cancer, SCC)是非小细胞肺癌(non-small cell lung cancer, NSCLC)的主要病理组织学类型之一,其发病率在全球范围内呈逐年升高趋势。虽然早期肺SCC可以治愈,但进展期患者的预后仍较差,局部复发和远处转移是其主要原因。因此,寻找可靠的预测复发及转移的分子标记物对于改善肺SCC的预后意义重大^[1]。

肿瘤浸润前沿(invasive tumor front, ITF)定义为位于肿瘤与宿主组织和器官交界处的3层-6层细胞或散在浸润的细胞团。研究^[2]证实,ITF细胞与肿瘤中心部分细胞的生物学特点迥异,对判断肿瘤患者预后具有较高的参考价值。近年来研究发现,ITF细胞是发生上皮-间质细胞转化(epithelial-mesenchymal transition, EMT)最为明显的细胞,其特点是肿瘤细胞失去上皮细胞表型(E-cadherin),或者是获得了间叶细胞表型(vimentin),从而浸润性增强并促进肿瘤恶性进展。其中,E-cadherin/β-catenin复合体在调控肿瘤的EMT过程中参与了多种人类实体瘤的浸润、转移过程,但在ITF细胞中的表达意义报道不多^[3-5]。本研究旨在探讨E-cadherin/β-catinin复合体和vimentin在肺SCC ITF细胞中的表达,分析ITF细胞的EMT表型与临床病理特点的关系以及在预测SCC患者预后中的价值。

1 对象与方法

1.1 组织学标本 收集2011年1月-2012年12月间山东省立医院胸外科手术切除的肺SCC标本104例,采集患者完整的临床病理学资料。由两名病理学医生依据WHO(2004年)标准对HE切片进行复审组织学诊断。所有患者均进行了肿瘤切除以及肺门淋巴结清扫术,并在术前未进行放疗。相关临床病理资料见表1。

1.2 组织病理学评估 根据分化程度将肺SCC分为高分化、中分化和低分化3组。根据TNM分期分为I期、II期、III期和IV期。肿瘤的浸润方式通过正常组织-肿瘤组织交界处评价,根据Bryne's分类,浸润方式分为4型:1型为推挤型;2型为肿瘤为指状浸润或分离的大肿瘤细胞岛;3型为浸润

的肿瘤岛由大于15个细胞组成;4型为浸润肿瘤细胞岛小于15个细胞,包括条索样和单个细胞浸润^[6]。

1.3 免疫组织化学染色 采用SP法,组织切片经脱蜡及梯度酒精水化,3%过氧化氢H₂O₂封闭内源性的过氧化物酶,0.01 M枸橼酸钠缓冲液(pH6.0)微波加热进行抗原修复。加入一抗室温孵育60 min,山羊抗鼠二抗室温孵育30 min。抗体为E-cadherin单克隆抗体、β-catenin单克隆抗体和vimentin多克隆抗体(北京中杉生物技术公司)。切片PBS冲洗3次,DAB显色,苏木素复染。免疫反应结果经2名病理学医师在未知临床数据的情况下分别进行判断。癌旁肺组织做为阳性对照,PBS代替一抗作为阴性对照。

1.4 染色结果判断 选择典型的阳性染色区域,高倍镜下观察5个视野,每个视野计数100个细胞,总共计数500个细胞,然后计算出阳性百分率。根据染色强度和分布进行半定量评分:免疫组化分数=染色强度得分×阳性率得分。染色强度分为:阴性为0分,弱阳性1分,中等阳性2分和强阳性3分。阳性细胞比率分为:阴性为0分,<10%为1分,11%-50%为2分,51%-80%为3分,≥81%为4分。根据最终得分将染色结果分为:阴性,为0分;1分-4分为低表达,≥4分为高表达。肿瘤浸润前沿细胞的免疫组化染色结果判断也按照此标准进行^[7]。

1.5 随访和统计学分析 104例患者的随访时间为52周-144周,中位随访时间为106周。总生存率和无病生存率应用Kaplan-Meier曲线计算,用Log-rank检验对照。采用单因素和多因素Cox比例回归模型分析预后因素。临床病理学参数和E-cadherin、β-catenin和vimentin的表达关系应用χ²检验。数据分析应用SPSS 16.0 for windows统计分析软件。P<0.05为差异有统计学意义。

2 结果

2.1 EMT蛋白在肺SCC ITF细胞中的表达 E-cadherin在正常肺泡上皮呈胞膜强阳性表达,在SCC中心部分肿瘤细胞表达降低或缺失(33.0%, 34/104),在ITF细胞中表达缺失率(53.8%, 56/104),较前两者明显降低

表1 E-cadherin、β-catenin和vimentin在肺SCC肿瘤中央细胞及ITF细胞的表达

Tab 1 Comparison between E-cadherin, β-catenin and vimentin expression of ITF cells and tumor central cells

Group	E-cadherin				β-catenin				Vimentin			
	N	L	H	P	N	L	H	P	N	L	H	P
Non-ITF	14	20	70	0.008	7	9	88	0.013	80	16	8	0.008
ITF	26	30	48		13	21	70		60	24	20	

N: negative; L: low expression; H: high expression; ITF: invasive tumor front. SCC: squamous cell carcinoma.

($P<0.05$)。 β -catenin在正常肺泡上皮呈胞膜阳性,中心肿瘤组织阳性率为84.6% (88/104),而ITF细胞的阳性率为67.3% (70/104),较正常组织和非ITF细胞均明显降低($P=0.01$),部分细胞还出现了胞质和细胞核表达(20.0%, 21/104)。 $Vimentin$ 在正常肺组织上皮细胞不表达,但在23.1% (24/104)的SCC非ITF细胞的肿瘤组织强弱不等的阳性表达,而在ITF的细胞阳性率明显增加(42.3%, 44/104高表达)($P=0.008$)(图1,表1)。

2.2 SCC ITF细胞中E-cadherin、 β -catenin 和vimentin表达与各临床病理特征的关系 E-cadherin、 β -catenin和vimentin在SCC ITF细胞的表达与患者的性别、年龄、肿瘤部位、肿瘤大小、组织学分化程度和临床分期均无相关性。ITF细胞中E-cadherin低表达和vimentin高表达在3型、4型浸润方式的ITF细胞中更为明显(P 分别为0.01和0.02)。 β -catenin在ITF细胞的表达与浸润方式无关,但是在3型、4型浸润方式中出现细胞核/质异常染色的比率(27.9%, 17/61)明显高于1型、2型浸润方式(15%, 6/40)($P=0.04$)。此外,

三者在ITF细胞中的表达均与肺门淋巴结转移和肿瘤复发相关。ITF细胞中E-cadherin下调组, β -catenin下调组和Vimentin上调组出现淋巴结转移率与对照组相比(66.1% vs 45.8%; 73.5% vs 48.6%; 70.0% vs 48.4%),具有明显差异(P 分别为0.04、0.02和0.03)。ITF细胞中E-cadherin低表达组, β -catenin低表达组和vimentin高表达组出现肿瘤复发率与对照组相比(35.7% vs 18.8%; 41.2% vs 21.4%; 42.5% vs 18.8%),差异明显(P 分别为0.04、0.04和0.01)。分析三者间的表达关系显示, E-cadherin的表达与 β -catenin正相关($P=0.01$),与vimentin表达呈负相关($P=0.035$);而vimentin和 β -catenin两者的表达不相关(表2)。

2.3 生存分析 根据最后一次随访的结果,24例(23.1%)患者无瘤存活,20例(19.2%)患者带瘤生存,60例患者(57.7%)死于肿瘤复发。*Kaplan-Meier*法分析显示ITF E-cadherin高表达组和vimentin低表达组的患者预后分别较ITF E-cadherin低表达组和vimentin高表达组好($P<0.01$)(图2)。根据单因素的Cox比例风险回归模型分析,肿瘤大

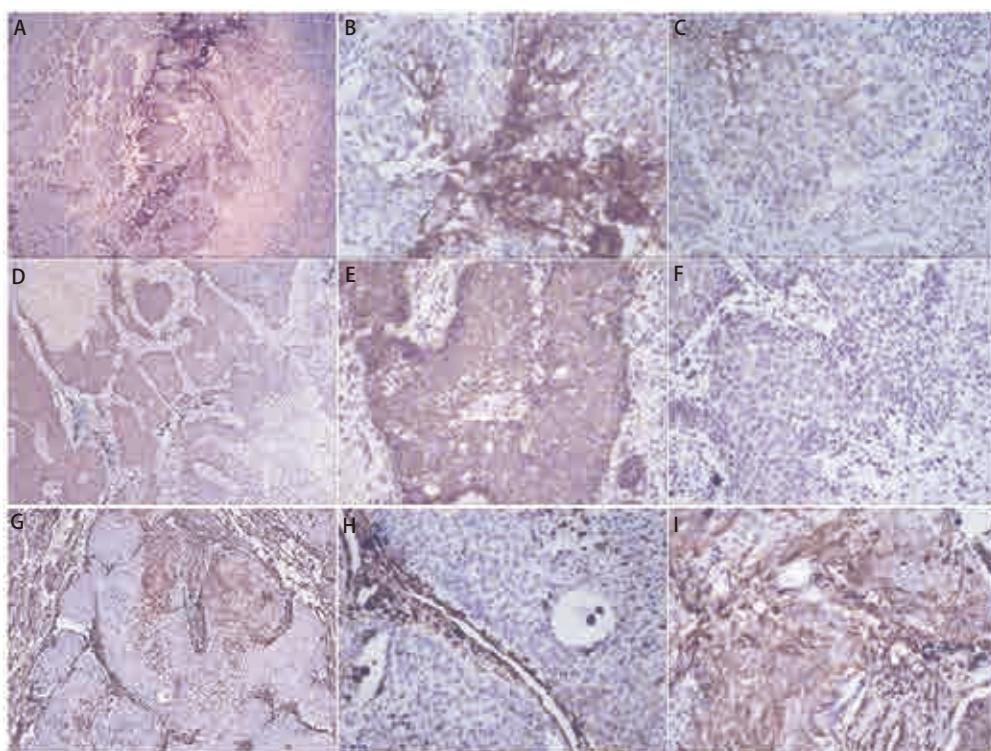


图1 EMT相关蛋白在肺SCC中的表达。E-cadherin在肺SCC组织中的表达情况(A),在中央肿瘤组织胞膜强阳性(B),而ITF细胞中为阴性(C); β -catenin在肺SCC组织中的表达情况(D),显示在肿瘤中央细胞胞膜和胞浆阳性(E),而ITF组织中为阴性(F);vimentin在肺SCC组织中的表达(G),显示肿瘤中央细胞为阴性表达(H),而在ITF组织中高表达(I)(HE染色,A. D. G ×100倍;B. C. E. F. H. I ×400倍)。

Fig 1 EMT protein expression was examined by immunohistochemistry in lung SCC. Expression of E-cadherin in lung SCC (A): E-cadherin was strong positive membranous staining (B), but negative was found in ITF cells (C); Expression of β -catenin in lung SCC (D), β -catenin was membranous or cytoplasmic positive staining (E), but negative in ITF cells (F); Expression of vimentin in lung SCC (G): vimentin was cytoplasmic positive staining (H), but negative in ITF cells (I). (A, D, H, ×100; B, C, E, F, H, I, ×400). EMT: epithelial-mesenchymal transition.

小($P=0.04$)、淋巴结状态($P=0.04$)、ITF细胞的vimentin($P<0.01$)和E-cadherin的表达水平($P<0.01$)与总生存率相关。在多因素Cox比例回归分析,ITF细胞的vimentin表达($P=0.042$)和E-cadherin表达($P=0.016$)与患者的总生存率和无病生存密切相关。

3 讨论

所谓ITF是指位于肿瘤与宿主组织或器官交界处最

前沿的3层-6层肿瘤细胞或分散的细胞团,该部分肿瘤细胞较之其他部分肿瘤细胞分化更差,其形态和功能特征更能反映肿瘤的生物多样性及侵袭性,众多研究发现多种肿瘤的预后与ITF细胞的生物学特性密切相关。

E-cadherin是上皮细胞中表达的一种钙依赖性跨膜糖蛋白。正常情况下E-cadherin的胞质内区段与 β -catenin形成复合体,作为细胞-细胞连接促进细胞间的粘附性,在维持细胞极性和组织学结构中发挥重要作用。已证实多种恶性上皮性肿瘤中E-cadherin/ β -catenin复合体表达下调与

表2 E-cadherin、 β -catenin和vimentin三者在SCC ITF细胞的表达与各种临床病理特征的关系

Tab 2 Relationship between E-cadherin, β -catenin and vimentin expression levels of ITF cells and clinical variables of SCC

Group	n	E-cadherin			β -catenin			vimentin		
		L	H	P	L	H	P	L	H	P
Gender		0.60			0.11			0.76		
Male	72	34	38		20	52		45	27	
Female	32	22	10		14	18		19	13	
Age (yr)		0.82			0.49			0.87		
≤50	38	21	17		14	24		23	15	
>50	66	35	31		20	46		41	25	
Tumor location		0.85			0.79			0.94		
Central	81	44	37		27	54		50	31	
Peripheral	23	12	11		7	16		14	9	
Tumor size (cm)		0.14			0.07			0.45		
≤3	62	37	25		16	46		40	22	
>3	42	19	23		18	24		24	18	
Histological differentiation		0.07			0.40			0.53		
Well	27	15	12		9	18		19	8	
Moderate	54	25	29		15	39		31	23	
Poor	23	16	7		10	13		14	9	
Invasion pattern		0.01*			0.52			0.02*		
1	18	6	12		6	12		13	5	
2	22	9	13		10	12		17	5	
3	35	18	17		10	25		23	12	
4	29	23	6		8	21		11	18	
TNM stage		0.44			0.30			0.12		
I	41	24	17		11	30		29	12	
II/III	63	32	31		23	40		35	28	
Lymph node status		0.04*			0.02*			0.03*		
N (+)	59	37	22		25	34		31	28	
N0	45	19	26		9	36		33	12	
Recurrence		0.04*			0.04*			0.01*		
Yes	29	20	9		14	15		12	17	
No	75	36	39		20	55		52	23	

n: number of patients; L: low expression, including negative and low expression; H: high expression; N0: no nodal metastasis; N(+): nodal metastasis. *: $P<0.05$.

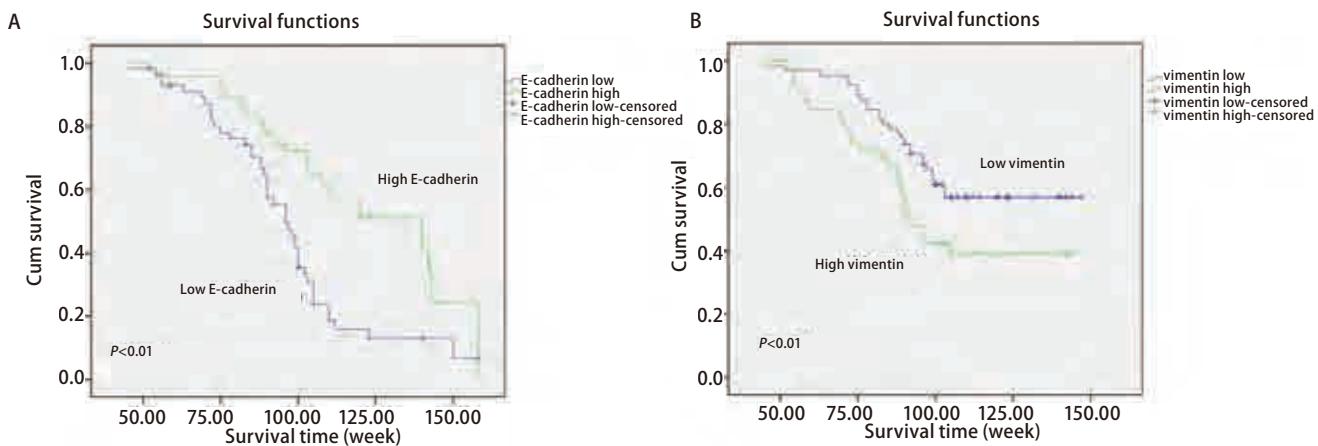


图2 ITF细胞中EMT表型与患者预后的关系。A:E-cadherin;B:vimentin。

Fig 2 Survival curve by expression of E-cadherin and vimentin in lung SCC. A: E-cadherin; B: vimentin.

肿瘤浸润转移和不良预后有关^[3-5],但有关肺SCC ITF细胞的研究少见。本研究结果显示E-cadherin在肺SCC肿瘤组织尤其是在ITF细胞中表达较正常组织降低,并与肿瘤的浸润方式、肺门淋巴结转移和复发等因素密切相关,单因素及多因素分析均显示其是肺SCC的预后标记。这与Choi等^[8]的研究结果一致。有关SCC ITF细胞EMT表型的研究目前多见于口腔SSC肿瘤中,Kim等^[9]检测到83例口腔SCC ITF细胞中E-cadherin的表达降低并与淋巴结转移和患者预后有关。而Wang等^[10]研究认为E-cadherin在肺SCC ITF细胞的表达缺失并不是无瘤生存期的预后指标。

β -catenin是一种双向功能的连接素,正常位于胞膜。在致癌因子的作用下 β -catenin聚集于细胞质和/或胞核中,与TCF/LEF(T cell factor/lymphoid enhancer factor)结合启动cyclin D1和c-myc等基因转录,加快肿瘤侵袭转移^[11]。 β -catenin在肺癌ITF中的表达鲜见报道。本研究证实肺SCC的ITF细胞中 β -catenin表达明显低于正常组织和非ITF肿瘤中心组织,同时观察到出现胞核异常表达,并且与肺门淋巴结转移和肿瘤复发相关。Choi等^[8]研究也认为 β -catenin的表达缺失与肺腺癌的预后相关,而与SCC的预后无关。Sasaya等^[12]研究了62例口腔SCC中 β -catenin的表达,显示ITF细胞 β -catenin表达降低出现胞质/胞核着色,并与不良预后有关。Zhang等^[13-15]认为肿瘤组织 β -catenin的表达缺失与肺癌患者无病生存期有关,而我们的研究中发现两者并无相关性,分析原因可能与样本数量和判断标准不同有关。目前,有关 β -catenin表达及预后意义的研究结论还有待大样本深入研究^[16,17]。

Vimentin是一种间质细胞的标志物,其表达与多种恶性肿瘤如乳腺癌、肝癌、结肠癌和前列腺癌的恶性表型和

不良预后相关^[18]。Soltermann等^[19]发现vimentin的启动子是 β -catenin/TCF细胞通路的靶点,共同参与了细胞侵袭和迁移。本文研究结果表明vimentin在肺SCC的ITF细胞表达较非ITF细胞明显增加,vimentin强阳性表达在肿瘤的ITF细胞中是常见的现象,并与肿瘤的浸润方式、肺门淋巴结转移和肿瘤复发密切相关。我们应用单因素或多因素分析显示,vimentin的过表达与短的总生存时间和无病生存时间有关,提示肿瘤ITF细胞vimentin高表达是提示不良预后的分子标志物之一。

通过分析E-cadherin/catenin和vimentin三者的表达关系,发现在肿瘤的ITF细胞E-cadherin和 β -catenin的表达呈正相关关系;vimentin和E-cadherin表达呈负相关,vimentin表达与E-cadherin丢失是细胞间叶化的特征,这些发现进一步支持了vimentin可下调E-cadherin表达的结论^[20]。然而vimentin表达与 β -catenin无关,提示可能是 β -catenin/TCF通路可能在调控vimentin表达的过程中未发挥作用。

总之,E-cadherin/ β -catenin与vimentin在肺SCC ITF细胞中的表达与患者的预后密切相关,这些指标的异常表达可预测患者的不良预后,其具体的预后价值尚需大样本资料的进一步研究。

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