

· 临床研究 ·

甲状腺乳头状癌突变等位基因肿瘤异质性的临床及其与预后相关性研究

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【摘要】目的 探讨突变等位基因肿瘤异质性(MATH)在甲状腺乳头状癌(PTC)中的临床意义。**方法** 从癌症基因图谱公共数据集下载并预处理 PTC 肿瘤测序数据及临床资料数据, 分析 MATH 与 PTC 临床病理特征的相关性, 使用 Kaplan-Meier 法进行生存分析, 验证 MATH 对 PTC 患者的预后价值。**结果** PTC 患者中 MATH 值为 2.57~93.72, 平均 29.45 ± 16.19 ; 将 ≥ 29.45 者纳入高 MATH 组, < 29.45 者纳入低 MATH 组。高 MATH 组与低 MATH 组的患者年龄、性别、临床分期、BRAF 基因型差异无统计学意义($P > 0.05$)。MATH 不是 PTC 患者总体生存期(OS)的显著预测因素($P=0.4595$); 在 BRAF 突变型 PTC 患者中, 高 MATH 者的 OS 低于低 MATH 者($P=0.0252$), 而在 BRAF 野生型 PTC 患者中, 高 MATH 者的 OS 高于低 MATH 者($P=0.0495$)。**结论** MATH 可在 BRAF 突变型和野生型亚组中可预测 PTC 患者的预后及指导临床治疗。

【关键词】 突变; 等位基因; 肿瘤异质性; 甲状腺肿瘤; BRAF 基因型; 总体生存期

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【Abstract】Objective To investigate the clinical significance of mutant-allele tumor heterogeneity (MATH) levels in papillary thyroid carcinoma (PTC). **Methods** The sequencing data and clinical data of PTC were downloaded from the public data sets of The Cancer Genome Atlas (TCGA) and preprocessed. The correlation between MATH and clinicopathological features of PTC was analyzed. Kaplan-Meier survival analysis was used to verify the prognostic value of MATH in patients with PTC. **Results** MATH scores ranged from 2.57 to 93.72 in PTC patients, with an average of 29.45 ± 16.19 . The patients with an MATH score ≥ 29.45 were assigned to a high-MATH group, and those with an MATH score < 29.45 were assigned to a low-MATH group. There was no significant difference in age, gender, tumor stage and BRAF genotype between the high-MATH group and low-MATH group ($P > 0.05$). MATH was not a significant predictor of overall survival (OS) in patients with PTC ($P=0.4595$). Whereas in PTC patients with BRAF mutation, the OS in patients with a high MATH score was significantly worse than that in patients with a low MATH score ($P=0.0252$). In PTC patients with wild-type BRAF, the OS was significantly better in patients with a high MATH score than in those with a low MATH ($P=0.0495$). **Conclusion** MATH can predict the prognosis of PTC patients with wild type or mutant BRAF, which can be used to guide clinical treatment.

【Key words】 Mutation; Alleles; Tumor heterogeneity; Thyroid neoplasms; BRAF genotype; Overall survival

甲状腺乳头状癌(papillary thyroid carcinoma, PTC)约占甲状腺恶性肿瘤的 80%^[1], PTC 是最

常见的内分泌系统肿瘤之一^[2], 亦是近 30 年发生率增长最快的恶性肿瘤^[3]。PTC 预后良好, 远处转移率较低, 全基因组测序技术显示这可能与其基因异质性相对较低有关^[4]。但部分高危患者易发生转移、复发甚至死亡^[5-6], 故寻找预后判断指标用于识别预后较差的甲状腺癌患者至关重要。目前

甲状腺癌分子标志物检测正在逐步进入临床,如BRAF突变、RAS突变、RET/PTC和PAX8/PPAR基因融合、TERT启动子突变、STRN/ALK基因融合等,然而单个基因改变仍无法准确判断预后^[7-11]。本研究应用癌症基因图谱(the cancer genome atlas, TCGA)公共数据集^[12],探讨突变等位基因肿瘤异质性(mutant-allele tumor heterogeneity, MATH)在甲状腺乳头状癌的临床预测价值。

资料与方法

一、数据收集

2018年12月从TCGA数据库(<https://tcga-data.nci.nih.gov/tcga/>)下载并预处理PTC测序数据集,同时下载临床资料数据,进行临床病理相关性分析和预后分析,分期使用分化型甲状腺癌UICC第七版。

二、数据集的筛选

对下载的TCGA PTC数据集根据可否获取III级WES数据行MATH分析及临床数据筛选,剔除无法分级及临床病理参数不详或不完整的病例以及缺乏预后随访资料的病例,选取可进行异质性分析、同时包含完整临床参数和生存资料的352例患者。

三、统计学分析

使用R语言3.53版本maftools R包进行MATH计算:(1)计算每个位点的突变等位基因分数(mutation annotation format, MAF),作为突变体读取量与总读取量的比值;(2)从MAF中位数中求出每个MAF的绝对差异,将这些绝对值的中位数乘以1.4826,从而生成中位绝对偏差(median absolute deviation, MAD);(3)MATH=100×MAD/中位数。MATH可有效代表肿瘤特异性突变位点MAF值的分布偏差,即MAF偏离该样本的MAF整体分布程度,MATH值越大,则肿瘤异质性越高^[13]。

高MATH组与低MATH组的临床指标比较采用 χ^2 检验或Fisher确切概率法;用survival、survminer包行Kaplan-Meier生存分析。 $P < 0.05$ 为差异有统计学意义。

结 果

一、PTC患者MATH值分布

352例患者中,MATH为2.57~93.72,平均 29.45 ± 16.19 ,MATH值的分布见图1。选取

MATH=29.45为界值, ≥ 29.45 纳入高MATH组,认为肿瘤异质性较高; < 29.45 纳入低MATH组,认为肿瘤异质性较低。高MATH组147例、低MATH组205例。

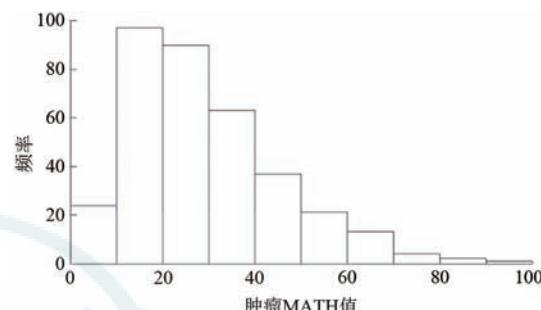


图1 甲状腺乳头状癌突变等位基因肿瘤异质性值的分布

二、2组临床病理指标的比较

高MATH组与低MATH组年龄、性别、临床分期、BRAF基因型差异均无统计学意义($P > 0.05$,表1)。

三、MATH与PTC患者预后的相关性

Kaplan-Meier生存分析示,MATH值不是PTC患者总体生存期(overall survival, OS)的显著预测因素($P=0.4595$,图2)。在TCGA数据集中最常见单基因突变为BRAF突变(突变率为63.6%),其次为TRET启动子突变(突变率为9.4%);由于TRET启动子突变患者数量较少,故仅选取BRAF突变型、野生型行亚组分析,BRAF基因型对PTC患者的生存率无显著影响($P=0.9364$,图3)。在BRAF突变型PTC患者中,高MATH者的OS低于低MATH者($P=0.0252$,图4),而在BRAF野生型PTC患者中,高MATH者的OS高于低MATH者($P=0.0495$,图5)。

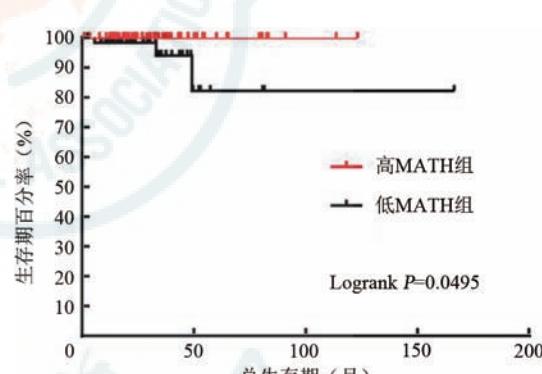
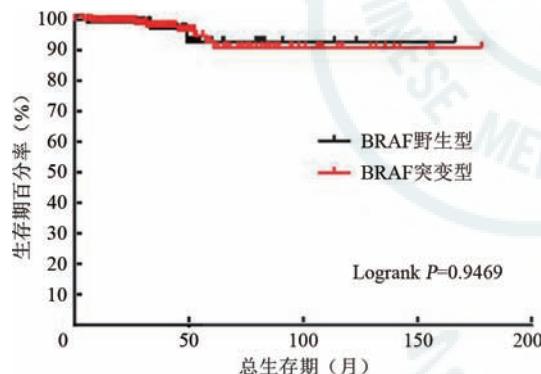
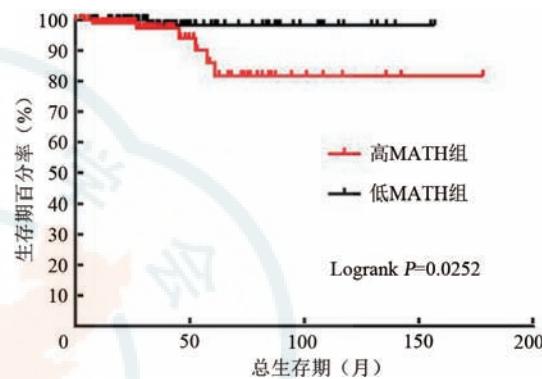
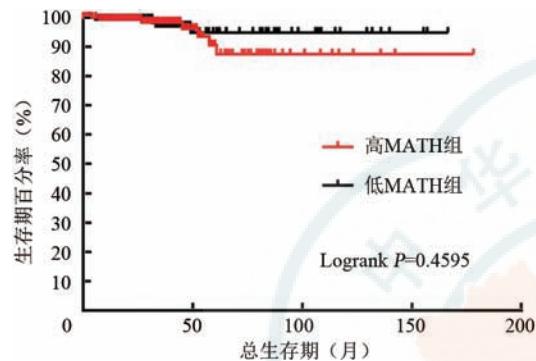
讨 论

肿瘤异质性可分为肿瘤间异质性和肿瘤内异质性,前者指不同肿瘤细胞间的基因与表型不同,而常见关于肿瘤异质性的研究是指肿瘤内异质性(intra-tumor heterogeneity, ITH)。ITH是指在同一肿瘤内以及在特定原发肿瘤与其转移之间存在不同的遗传、表型或行为特征的癌细胞亚群^[14]。肿瘤内癌细胞间的差异在疾病进展、转移和治疗耐药中具有重要意义,异质性肿瘤更有可能发展成具有耐药性或转移性的亚群。研究^[15]证明,特定组织

表1 2组甲状腺乳头状癌患者临床病理特征比较

例数	年龄		性别		临床分期				BRAF 基因型	
	< 45岁	≥ 45岁	男	女	I	II	III	IV	野生型	突变型
高 MATH 组	147	63	84	36	111	83	17	37	10	55
低 MATH 组	205	80	125	57	148	99	23	50	33	73
χ ² 值					7.19				0.121	
P 值	0.47				0.066				0.728	

注: MATH: 突变等位基因肿瘤异质性



学类型的异质性可存在于多灶性PTC，同时在分子水平上，PTC肿瘤内亦存在异质性。随着PTC的不断进展，其癌细胞分裂后的子代细胞呈现出与同代细胞或者父细胞的不同，最终导致肿瘤的生长、侵袭、预后等指标的差异^[16]。MATH来源于肿瘤的全外显子测序数据(whole-exome sequencing, WES)，已被证明是一种简单、定量和普遍适用的评估ITH程度的方法^[16]。多项研究^[17-19]表明，在头颈部鳞癌、乳腺癌中异质性的程度可以作为临床上有用的生物标记。然而，MATH可否评估甲状腺乳头状癌患者的预后，目前尚缺乏研究。

本研究中采用R语言maftools数据包提供的MATH数学算法和从PTC TCGA数据集中获得的公共数据，探讨了MATH预测PTC预后的潜在临床意义，证实MATH可在BRAF突变型和野生型亚组中可预测PTC患者的预后。

目前PTC中常见的分子改变为BRAF、TERT突变。BRAF基因编码蛋白激酶依赖性激酶，常见突变为BRAF V600E，该突变持续激活BRAF激酶，造成MAPK通路持续活化，细胞无限分裂、增殖，肿瘤形成。目前报道^[20-23]在PTC中BRAF突变率为40%~60%。端粒酶反转录酶(telomerase

reverse transcriptase, TERT) 突变将启动子活性提高了2~4倍, 其可通过维持端粒长度使增殖癌细胞无限增殖, 导致PTC发生。目前TERT启动子突变的发生率约为10%^[24-26], 在出现远处转移病例或低分化癌中更常见。

分子标记物在PTC预后中的作用一直是争论焦点, 单基因突变或联合多基因突变已被多项研究用于预测PTC的预后, 但结果仍存在争议。仅考虑单基因突变的研究中, Tufano等^[20-21, 27]认为存在BRAF突变的PTC患者预后更差, 而Shen等^[7, 23, 28]则认为BRAF突变与肿瘤多中心性、淋巴血管侵犯、淋巴结外扩张、远处转移无明显相关性, 突变并不影响预后。同时在目前热门的TERT启动子突变中也存在类似的结果, Kim等^[25-26, 29]认为TERT启动子突变与PTC远处转移、复发及死亡率的增加相关, 而She等^[7, 27, 30]研究则认为该突变与临床特征无关或并不能导致更差的临床预后。多基因预测模型中, BRAF突变、TERT启动子突变成为近期研究热点, 二重突变发生率约10%, 与单纯携带BRAF或TERT启动子突变的PTC相比, 同时伴有BRAF和TERT启动子突变者具有更强的肿瘤侵袭性, BRAF和TERT启动子突变组合可将PTC分为4个不同的危险组, 即疾病特异性死亡风险顺序为BRAF突变、TERT启动子突变“二重奏”>TERT启动子突变=BRAF突变>无突变^[7, 10, 30-31]。无常见基因突变者约占PTC患者的30%~40%, 对其分子风险评估目前缺少进一步研究, 而BRAF突变患者中是否存在高复发风险的亚群目前也缺乏分析。

本研究使用的MATH数学算法是肿瘤内异质性的一种直观测量方法, 利用肿瘤细胞基因组上不同的亚群导致突变基因座在显示突变等位基因的序列片段读取方面的差异计算ITH。与常见的异质性研究中广泛使用的肿瘤微切割或单细胞分析相比, 数学在常规应用中具有独特的优势组合, 无需新鲜组织, 只需对肿瘤和配对的正常组织DNA进行二代测序; 同时MATH数学算法代表了肿瘤中多个细胞群的结果, 避免了直接识别或描述细胞亚群的困难^[14, 17]。ITH反映了基因组的不稳定性, 因此当发现高MATH值的BRAF突变型PTC患者预后更差。而在BRAF野生型患者中, 高MATH者OS反而优于低MATH者。同样利用TGCA数据集进行分析, Yoo等^[32]根据基因表达图谱将PTC分为非BRAF/RAS型(Non-BRAF-Non-RAS,

NBNR)、类BRAF型、类RAS型3大亚型, 类BRAF型中常见染色体拷贝数扩增, 其他类型中则存在较多的染色体拷贝数缺失。染色体拷贝数扩增常见于甲状腺癌较高危组, 染色体拷贝数缺失常见于甲状腺癌低危组^[33], 高MATH是否反应染色体缺失片段较多导致较好的预后仍待进一步探讨。

本研究是采用TCGA数据库提供的全外显子测序数据进行的分析, 纳入的样本量大, 临床资料客观完整, 具有一定的可信度, 但仍存在以下局限性: (1)由于PTC预期生存期较长, TCGA数据库中生存数据仍欠完善; (2)未对体细胞拷贝数改变与ITH之间的关系、高MATH组中基因表达的差异进行进一步的分析, 后续研究将探索与ITH相关的分子特征, 可能会为PTC中肿瘤异质性的规律提供线索。

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