

HYAL2基因DNA甲基化水平可用于甲状腺良恶性肿瘤的鉴别诊断

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摘要:目的 通过比较甲状腺良恶性肿瘤组织样本中HYAL2基因CpG位点甲基化水平的差异,评估其作为甲状腺癌鉴别诊断分子标志物的潜在价值。方法 采用飞行时间质谱检测190对甲状腺乳头状癌(PTC)病例和年龄、性别配对的甲状腺腺瘤中HYAL2基因启动子区域CpG位点的甲基化水平。采用免疫组化检测另外55对匹配的甲状腺良恶性肿瘤患者的HYAL2蛋白表达水平。Logistic回归分析用于评估甲基化水平每降低10%与早期PTC之间的关联并计算比值比(OR)。受试者工作特征曲线及曲线下面积(AUC)用于评估HYAL2基因特定CpG位点甲基化水平改变作为分子标志物的效能。结果 HYAL2_CpG_3位点低甲基化与早期PTC显著相关($OR=1.51, P=0.001$),且该关联在I期PTC中依旧显著($OR=1.42, P=0.007$)。年龄分层分析显示HYAL2_CpG_3甲基化水平降低与早期PTC关联在年龄小于50岁的人群中显著高于高龄组($OR: 1.89 vs 1.37, P<0.05$),且低年龄组人群中AUC最高,为0.787。免疫组化结果显示早期PTC中HYAL2蛋白表达水平显著高于甲状腺良性肿瘤。结论 HYAL2基因启动子区域甲基化水平改变与早期PTC的关联,并为DNA甲基化改变作为甲状腺良恶性肿瘤鉴别诊断的标志物提供了新思路。

关键词:HYAL2基因; DNA甲基化; 甲状腺肿瘤; 鉴别诊断; 分子标志物

Detection of DNA methylation of HYAL2 gene for differentiating malignant from benign thyroid tumors

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Abstract: Objective To assess the value of DNA methylation level of HYAL2 gene as a molecular marker for differential diagnosis of malignant and benign thyroid tumors. **Methods** DNA methylation of HYAL2 gene in tissue specimens of 190 patients with papillary thyroid cancer (PTC) and 190 age- and gender-matched patients with benign thyroid tumors was examined by mass spectrometry, and the protein expression of HYAL2 was detected immunohistochemically for another 55 pairs of patients. Logistic regression analysis was performed to calculate the odds ratio (OR) and evaluate the correlation of per 10% reduction in DNA methylation with PTC. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curve analysis was performed and the area under curve (AUC) was calculated to assess the predictive value of alterations in HYAL2 methylation. **Results** Hypomethylation of HYAL2_CpG_3 was significantly correlated with early-stage PTC ($OR=1.51, P=0.001$), even in stage I cancer ($OR=1.42, P=0.007$). Age-stratified analysis revealed a significantly stronger correlation between increased HYAL2_CpG_3 methylation and early-stage PTC in patients below 50 years than in those older than 50 years ($OR: 1.89 vs 1.37, P<0.05$); ROC analysis also showed a larger AUC of 0.787 in younger patients. The results of immunohistochemistry showed that patients with PTC had significantly higher protein expressions of HYAL2 than patients with benign tumors. **Conclusion** The alterations of DNA methylation level of HYAL2 gene is significantly correlated with early-stage PTC, suggesting the value of DNA methylation level as a potential biomarker for differentiation of malignant from benign thyroid tumors.

Keywords: HYAL2 gene; DNA methylation; thyroid tumor; differential diagnosis; molecular marker

近年来甲状腺癌的发病率在全球范围迅速上升,位居内分泌系统恶性肿瘤的首位。其中甲状腺乳头状癌(PTC)是最常见的类型,约占甲状腺癌的80%以上^[1]。目前细针穿刺活检(FNAB)是临幊上最常用的甲状腺结节诊断手段,可通过细胞形态学评估结节的良恶性^[2]。由

于甲状腺良恶性肿瘤的细胞学特征经常发生重叠,约有10%~30%的FNAB诊断为不明确的细胞学结果^[3]。因此急需探索新的标志物以提高甲状腺良恶性鉴别的准确性。

DNA甲基化是最常见的表观遗传学改变,它是指在DNA甲基转移酶的作用下,真核生物基因组CpG二核苷酸的胞嘧啶5号碳位共价键结合一个甲基基团,该过程不涉及基因序列的改变^[4]。DNA甲基化水平异常是癌症发生发展的早期事件和伴随事件,其在癌症诊断、治疗和预后方面具有重要价值^[5-6]。

透明质酸酶2(HYAL2)是一种广泛分布于人体组织中的透明质酸酶^[7]。其作用是将高相对分子质量透

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明质酸(HA)降解为相对分子质量为20000的HA片段，并进一步被HYAL1降解为小分子HA片段，后者通过刺激癌症相关炎症、肿瘤血管生成和转移等促进癌症的发生发展^[8-9]。既往研究表明，HYAL2参与了癌症的发生^[10]、进展^[11]和预后^[12]等多个过程。此前，我们发现与乳腺良性肿瘤相比，乳腺癌恶性组织中HYAL2基因启动子区域cg27091787位点DNA高甲基化水平显著升高^[13]。然而，目前还没有HYAL2基因DNA甲基化改变与甲状腺癌的关联研究，也没有评估其作为甲状腺良性肿瘤鉴别诊断分子标志物价值的文献报道。

因此，本研究分析了190对甲状腺良恶性肿瘤组织中HYAL2基因DNA甲基化水平差异，同时检测了另外55对甲状腺良恶性甲状腺肿瘤组织中HYAL2蛋白水平。研究结果有利于评估HYAL2基因DNA甲基化改变在甲状腺肿瘤鉴别诊断中的价值。

1 资料和方法

1.1 研究对象

本研究中所有福尔马林固定石蜡包埋(FFPE)的甲状腺组织均来自于徐州医科大学附属淮安医院病理科。甲状腺癌分期以2017年美国癌症联合会甲状腺癌分期系统(第八版)为依据。甲状腺癌纳入标准为：具有乳头状结构和典型核特征的早期(病理分期I~II期)甲状腺乳头状癌病例；尚未进行手术或相关治疗；无其他癌症或转移癌。排除标准为：滤泡变异型甲状腺乳头状癌(FVPTC)；具有乳头状核特征的非侵袭性甲状腺滤泡型肿瘤(NIFTP)。良性肿瘤入组标准为与恶性肿瘤年龄、性别和住院年份匹配的甲状腺腺瘤。所有样本诊断均由两位有经验的病理科医师确认，且有完整的临床数据记录。最终，本研究选取于2019年1月~2020年6月收集的190对甲状腺乳头状癌和甲状腺腺瘤病例检测其HYAL2基因DNA甲基化水平，其中男性40对，女性150对。PTC病例中位(四分位数间距；IQR)年龄为51.00(44.00~57.00)岁；I期病例173人(91.05%)，II期病例17人。甲状腺腺瘤病例中位(IQR)年龄为53.00(46.00~60.25)岁。

此外，本研究还收集了同一时期另外55对(34对女性)年龄、性别均衡可比的早期PTC和甲状腺腺瘤患者的FFPE组织切片并检测了HYAL2蛋白表达水平。良性与恶性甲状腺肿瘤病例的中位(IQR)年龄分别为47.00(36.00~52.00)和43.00(31.00~51.00)岁。

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1.2 基因组DNA提取与重亚硫酸盐转化

采用FastPure FFPE DNA Isolation Kit试剂盒(诺

维赞)提取石蜡包埋组织切片的DNA。采用EZ-96 DNA Methylation Kit试剂盒(Zymo Research)对1 μg DNA进行重亚硫酸盐转化。

1.3 引物设计及目的片段扩增

基于前期研究，本研究围绕cg27091787位点进行引物设计，得到位于转录起始位点(TSS)1500 bp位置(启动子区域)处长度为220 bp的扩增片段，共包含4个CpG位点。正向引物：aggaagagagTGGGGTTTATT TTAAATTTAGTAGGG；反向引物：cagtaatacgactcact ataggagaaggctAACACATTATCCTATCACACAAAAA TA；扩增片段：TGGGGCCCACCTCAAATCCAGT AGGGTGTGAGAGGATGGGGTCAGGTGGTGGTG CTTTGGGAGTCAAAATACTTGGGGTCGTTCA GCTGATGGTCCCCCAGAGCAGGTGCCAAGAA GGGAACTAGCCTGGGGGGAGGGTCGGGGGA CTTCCAGTAGCTGAGTCCGTTTTTCCACTGA GAGCTCCGCATCCTGTGACAGGACAATGTG TT(大写字母表示特定于序列的区域，非特定标记以小写字母表示。引物和CpG位点上均不存在常见单核苷酸多态性)。采用聚合酶链式反应(PCR)扩增目的片段，反应体系包括经重亚硫酸盐处理的基因组DNA 1 μL，PCR CoralLoad缓冲液0.5 μL，DNA聚合酶0.05 μL，甲基化特异性上游引物0.5 μL，甲基化特异性下游引物0.5 μL，无酶水补齐至5 μL。190对样本PCR实验分为两个批次完成(批次1：95例PTC vs 95例甲状腺腺瘤；批次2：95例PTC vs 95例甲状腺腺瘤)，每批次中良恶性肿瘤患者的年龄和性别均匹配。

1.4 基质辅助激光解吸电离飞行时间质谱(MALDI-TOF)半定量检测甲基化水平

MALDI-TOF(Agena)用于半定量检测本研究中所有样本的甲基化水平。其操作流程已在前期研究中详述^[14]。在扩增产物中加入虾碱性磷酸盐孵育，再加入T-Cleavage反应体系37 °C孵育3 h，最后用树脂进行去离子化操作。产物离心后将微量上清上样到384SpectroCHIP进行飞行时间质谱分析。通过SpectroACQUIRE v3.3.1.3软件收集数据，并在MassArray EpiTyper v1.2软件上实现可视化。

1.5 甲状腺肿瘤组织免疫组化及其评估

将FFPE切片脱蜡并固定在硅烷涂层的载玻片上。将其与多克隆兔抗HYAL2抗体在4 °C摇床上缓慢摇动孵育过夜(ab68608)。随后，采用ultraView Universal DAB Detection Kit(Roche)进行检测。

HYAL2蛋白表达由两名合格的病理科学家根据染色强度和阳性细胞百分比，使用半定量免疫反应评分进行独立评估^[15]。染色强度的细胞评分为0到3分：0=无，1=弱，2=中等，3=强。阳性细胞的百分比得分如

下:0(0%~10%),1(11%~30%),2(31%~50%),3(51%~70%)和4(71%~100%)。染色强度和阳性细胞百分比之和即为HYAL2表达水平的总分(0-7)。

本研究中所有的PTC病例和良性肿瘤均平行处理。

1.6 统计学方法

SPSS 25.0和GraphPad Prism 8对数据进行统计学分析。多因素校正的logistic回归用于评估HYAL2基因的CpG位点甲基化水平改变与PTC的关联,并计算其比值比(OR)和95%置信区间(CI)。批次效应校正是将批次变量值(1和2)作为名义变量纳入logistic回归分析。工作特征曲线(ROC曲线)用来评估其在甲状腺癌鉴别诊断中的诊断效能。统计检验均为双侧, $P<0.05$ 被认为是差异有统计学意义。

2 结果

2.1 HYAL2基因启动子区域DNA甲基化水平改变与甲状腺肿瘤的关联

Logistic回归结果提示,在校正年龄、性别和批次

效应后,HYAL2_CpG_3甲基化水平每降低10%,PTC患病风险增加51%(OR=1.51,95% CI: 1.17-1.93, $P=0.001$;表1)。HYAL2_CpG_2甲基化水平降低及HYAL2_CpG_4水平增加也与PTC风险增加有关,但呈现边缘性显著(HYAL2_CpG_2:OR=1.18,95% CI: 1.00-1.39, $P=0.054$;HYAL2_CpG_4:OR=0.83,95% CI: 0.68-1.02, $P=0.075$;表1)。尚未观察到HYAL2_CpG_1与PTC的关联。

为探讨HYAL2基因特定位点甲基化水平改变与早期PTC的关联,我们进一步排除了17位II期PTC患者后进行logistic回归,并调整了年龄、性别和批次效应。与总人群中结果一致,HYAL2_CpG_3甲基化水平降低与I期PTC风险增加呈现稳健的正相关联(OR=1.42,95% CI: 1.10-1.83, $P=0.007$;表2)。HYAL2_CpG_1甲基化水平降低和HYAL2_CpG_4水平增加则与I期PTC风险增加呈现边缘性关联(HYAL2_CpG_2:OR=1.19,95% CI: 1.00-1.41, $P=0.050$;HYAL2_CpG_4:OR=0.80,95% CI: 0.65-1.00, $P=0.048$;表2)。

表1 HYAL2基因甲基化与PTC的关联分析

Tab.1 Association between methylation of HYAL2 gene and PTC

CpG sites	Thyroid adenoma (n=190)	Papillary thyroid cancer (n=190)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	<i>P</i>
	Median (interquartile range)	Median (interquartile range)	Per 10% reduction of methylation	
<i>HYAL2_CpG_1</i>	0.49 (0.44-0.53)	0.49 (0.43-0.52)	1.16 (0.96-1.40)	0.127
<i>HYAL2_CpG_2</i>	0.52 (0.46-0.61)	0.51 (0.45-0.59)	1.18 (1.00-1.39)	0.054
<i>HYAL2_CpG_3</i>	0.65 (0.61-0.68)	0.63 (0.58-0.65)	1.51 (1.17-1.93)	0.001
<i>HYAL2_CpG_4</i>	0.73 (0.67-0.77)	0.74 (0.70-0.78)	0.83 (0.68-1.02)	0.075

表2 HYAL2基因甲基化与I期PTC的关联分析

Tab.2 Association between methylation of HYAL2 gene and stage I PTC

CpG sites	Thyroid adenoma (n=190)	Papillary thyroid cancer (n=173)	Odds ratio (95% CI)	<i>P</i>
	Median (interquartile range)	Median (interquartile range)	Per 10% reduction of methylation	
<i>HYAL2_CpG_1</i>	0.49 (0.44-0.53)	0.49 (0.44-0.53)	1.13 (0.93-1.37)	0.214
<i>HYAL2_CpG_2</i>	0.52 (0.46-0.61)	0.50 (0.45-0.59)	1.19 (1.00-1.41)	0.050
<i>HYAL2_CpG_3</i>	0.65 (0.61-0.68)	0.63 (0.59-0.65)	1.42 (1.10-1.83)	0.007
<i>HYAL2_CpG_4</i>	0.73 (0.67-0.77)	0.75 (0.70-0.78)	0.80 (0.65-1.00)	0.048

2.2 年龄分层分析中HYAL2基因甲基化水平改变与甲状腺肿瘤的关联

为了消除年龄的混杂效应,我们以50岁为临界点对研究人群进行分组。在任一年龄组中,均观察到HYAL2_CpG_3甲基化水平降低的对象,其PTC风险升高。且HYAL2_CpG_3甲基化水平每降低10%,低年龄组对象的PTC风险显著高于高年龄组对象(<50岁:OR=

1.89,95% CI: 1.20-2.98, $P=0.006$;≥50岁:OR=1.37,95% CI: 1.02-1.84, $P=0.035$;表3)。此外,仅在年龄<50岁人群中良恶性甲状腺肿瘤组织中观察到HYAL2_CpG_4甲基化水平差异(OR=0.47,95% CI: 0.30-0.75, $P=0.035$;表3)。尚未观察到其他位点甲基化水平改变与PTC事件的关联。

表3 年龄分层分析中HYAL2基因甲基化与PTC的关联

Tab.3 Age-stratified analysis of the association between methylation of HYAL2 gene and PTC

CpG sites	Thyroid adenoma	Papillary thyroid cancer	Odds ratio (95% CI)	P
	Median (Interquartile range)	Median (Interquartile range)	Per 10% reduction of methylation	
Age<50 years				
<i>HYAL2_CpG_1</i>	0.48 (0.43-0.53)	0.49 (0.43-0.53)	1.18 (0.89-1.56)	0.258
<i>HYAL2_CpG_2</i>	0.51 (0.45-0.63)	0.50 (0.43-0.58)	1.21 (0.92-1.58)	0.171
<i>HYAL2_CpG_3</i>	0.64 (0.61-0.66)	0.63 (0.56-0.65)	1.89 (1.20-2.98)	0.006
<i>HYAL2_CpG_4</i>	0.70 (0.65-0.76)	0.75 (0.71-0.78)	0.47 (0.30-0.75)	0.002
Age≥50 years				
<i>HYAL2_CpG_1</i>	0.50 (0.44-0.54)	0.49 (0.44-0.52)	1.13 (0.87-1.47)	0.347
<i>HYAL2_CpG_2</i>	0.52 (0.46-0.60)	0.52 (0.45-0.60)	1.15 (0.93-1.43)	0.207
<i>HYAL2_CpG_3</i>	0.66 (0.62-0.69)	0.63 (0.59-0.66)	1.37 (1.02-1.84)	0.035
<i>HYAL2_CpG_4</i>	0.74 (0.69-0.78)	0.74 (0.67-0.77)	1.01 (0.80-1.27)	0.951

2.3 HYAL2基因甲基化改变作为甲状腺良恶性肿瘤鉴别诊断标志物的价值

校正年龄、性别、批次效应后,总人群中曲线下面积(AUC)为0.671(95% CI: 0.617-0.725, $P=9.518E-09$;图1A),对应的灵敏度、特异度、阳性预测值(PPV)和阴性预测值(NPV)分别为74.07%, 52.94%, 61.40%和66.90%(表4)。排除II期PTC病例后,AUC为0.666(95% CI: 0.611-0.722, $P=4.897E-08$;图1B),对应的灵

敏度、特异度、PPV和NPV分别为50.29%, 74.87%, 64.90%和61.90%(表4)。按照年龄分组后,在年龄小于50岁的对象中,AUC为0.787(95% CI: 0.712-0.862, $P=3.071E-09$;图1C),灵敏度为92.50%,特异度为52.31%,PPV为70.5%,NPV为85.0%(表4)。然而,在年龄≥50岁的病例中,AUC为显著降低,为0.614(95% CI: 0.542-0.687, $P=0.003$;图1D),灵敏度为59.63%,特异度为60.66%,PPV为57.5%,NPV为62.7%(表4)。

表4 HYAL2基因甲基化鉴别甲状腺良恶性肿瘤的效能

Tab.4 Discriminatory power of HYAL2 methylation to distinguish PTC from benign tumors

Group	Area under the curve	Sensitivity	Specificity	Positive predictive value	Negative predictive value
Total population	0.671	74.07%	52.94%	61.4%	66.9%
PTC of stage I	0.666	50.29%	74.87%	64.9%	61.9%
Age<50 years	0.787	92.50%	52.31%	70.5%	85.0%
Age≥50 years	0.614	59.63%	60.66%	57.5%	62.7%

2.4 甲状腺良恶性肿瘤中HYAL2蛋白表达水平评估

在另一组55对年龄、性别匹配的甲状腺良恶性肿瘤人群中,我们评估了其HYAL2蛋白的表达水平。免疫组化结果显示甲状腺腺瘤组织(图2A,B)和早期PTC(图2C,D)组织切片的染色强度和阳性细胞百分比呈现显著差异。经Mann-Whitney U检验分析,PTC组织化学评分显著高于良性肿瘤组织($P=7.30E-05$;图2E)。

3 讨论

DNA甲基化改变因其在肿瘤发生发展中的重要作用受到广泛研究^[16-17]。尽管有研究提示DNA甲基化能较好地区分甲状腺癌和癌旁正常组织、不同亚型甲状腺癌的组织学特征^[18-19],然而目前关于DNA甲基化和甲状

腺癌的相关研究十分有限^[20]。既往研究发现外周血HYAL2基因甲基化水平降低是早期头颈部肿瘤,早期乳腺癌及早期胰腺癌的潜在分子标志物^[21-23]。此外,HYAL2基因甲基化水平改变还与三阴性乳腺癌和结肠癌的预后相关^[24-25]。因此,本研究基于190对年龄性别匹配的甲状腺良恶性肿瘤样本分析了HYAL2基因特定CpG位点甲基化水平的差异。本研究结果表明,HYAL2基因甲基化水平降低与早期PTC之间存在显著关联,且在I期PTC中,该关联依旧稳健。类似地,我们前期研究发现乳腺恶性肿瘤中HYAL2基因甲基化水平高于乳腺良性肿瘤。此外,体外研究显示与非致癌乳腺细胞相比,乳腺癌细胞呈现较高的HYAL2表达水平,且经去甲基化试剂处理后,其表达水平进一步增加^[26]。

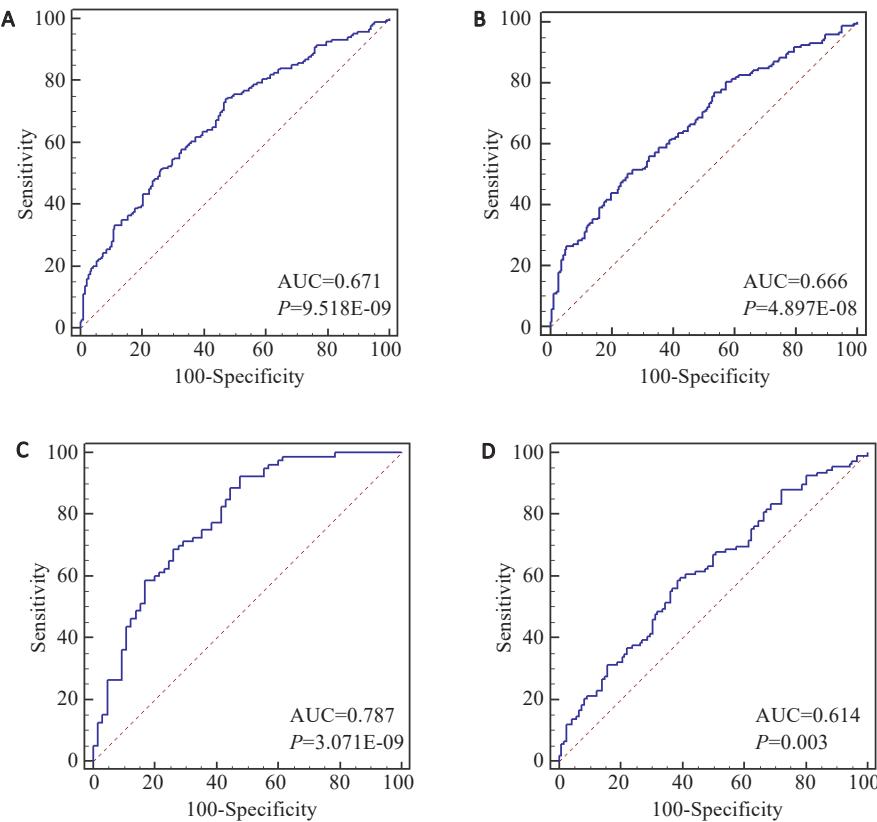


图1 HYAL2基因甲基化鉴别PTC和甲状腺良性肿瘤的ROC曲线

Fig. 1 ROC curve of HYAL2 methylation to distinguish PTC from benign thyroid tumors. A: All PTC vs thyroid adenoma; B: Stage I PTC vs thyroid adenoma; C: PTC vs thyroid adenoma, age<50 years old; D: PTC vs thyroid adenoma, age≥50 years old.

研究表明DNA甲基化谱与年龄密切相关^[27]。甲状腺癌发病率自15岁开始升高,在50~54岁达到最大值,此外,2019年中国甲状腺癌疾病负担数据显示,50~54岁甲状腺癌患者占比最高^[28]。为了消除年龄的混杂效应,我们以50岁为临界点对研究人群进行分组。尽管本研究中年龄分层分析表明低年龄组和高年龄组中均观察到HYAL2基因甲基化改变与PTC的关联,但该关联在低年龄人群中显著强于高年龄组。ROC曲线下面积也支持HYAL2基因甲基化改变在低年龄组人群中具有更高的预测价值。本研究中,与≥50岁的人群相比,<50岁的低年龄人群的HYAL2基因低甲基化和甲状腺癌具有更强的关联。相应的研究表明,随着生活环境的改变,PTC疾病负担呈现年轻化趋势,尤其是在30~49岁女性人群中^[29]。此外,本研究中女性和男性患者人数为3.75:1。雌激素是甲状腺癌的重要危险因素之一^[30]。中国女性绝经的平均年龄是49岁^[31],即我们低年龄组(<50岁)的女性大多数尚未绝经。因此我们推测低年龄组患者PTC风险升高还受雌激素水平的影响。此外,随着年龄增加,促进甲状腺癌的危险因素不断堆积,弱化了HYAL2基因DNA甲基化改变与早期甲状腺

癌的关联^[32-33]。然而,由于本研究对象来自医院,缺乏相关的生活习惯等信息,且亚组中样本量有限,因此建立信息完整的前瞻性队列研究更能反映归因于HYAL2基因DNA甲基化改变的PTC风险。尽管年龄对于HYAL2基因DNA甲基化异常和PTC关联的影响尚未完全阐明,但这提示我们在研究DNA甲基化水平与PTC风险时,应校正年龄的影响。

此外,我们通过检测另外55对年龄、性别匹配的早期PTC和甲状腺腺瘤患者FFPE组织中HYAL2的蛋白表达水平,发现早期PTC病例中的HYAL2表达水平显著高于良性肿瘤。不同的是,HYAL2基因位于染色体3p21.3区域,该区域基因缺失常常导致癌症的发生^[34]。然而,有研究报道HYAL2是一种功能拮抗性基因^[35]。类比于同样位于此区域的同家族基因HYAL1,HYAL2的促癌或抗癌作用也可能受其浓度及癌症种类影响,但尚无相关研究^[36-37]。此外,HYAL2还可能通过影响CD44前体可变剪接而发挥促纤维化或抗纤维化作用^[38]。因此,HYAL2表达与癌症的关联仍值得进一步探索。值得说明的是本研究中目的序列位于TSS1500区域(启动子区域),该区域DNA甲基化水平负向调控基因表

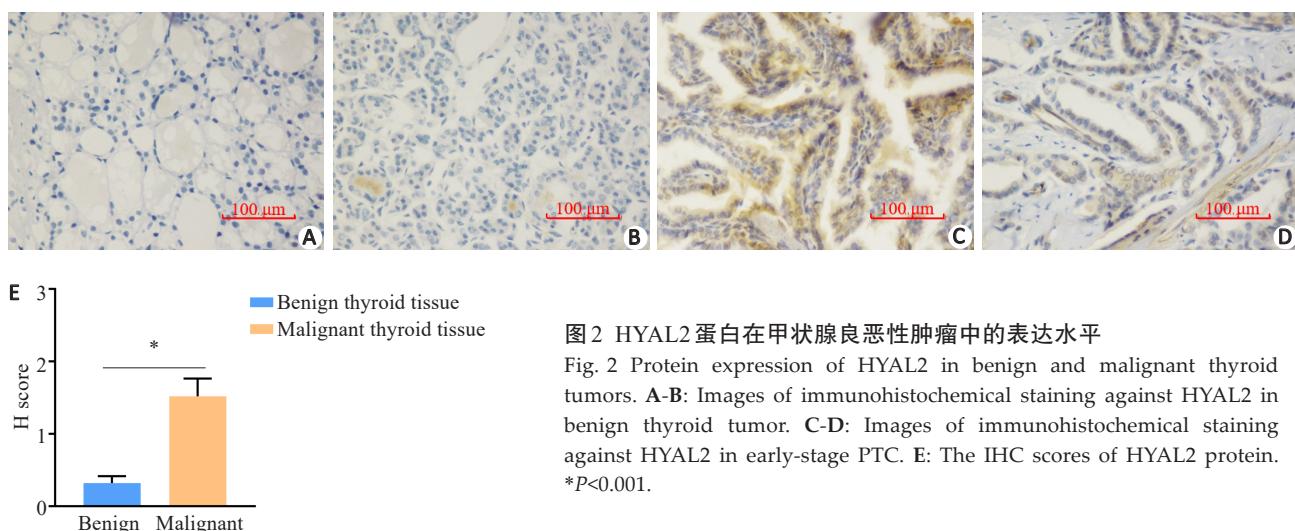


图 2 HYAL2 蛋白在甲状腺良恶性肿瘤中的表达水平

Fig. 2 Protein expression of HYAL2 in benign and malignant thyroid tumors. A-B: Images of immunohistochemical staining against HYAL2 in benign thyroid tumor. C-D: Images of immunohistochemical staining against HYAL2 in early-stage PTC. E: The IHC scores of HYAL2 protein. *P<0.001.

达^[39]。我们推测HYAL2基因可能通过上调启动子区域特定位点甲基化水平而促进其蛋白表达,进而促进癌症的发生。因此,后续的功能实验将有利于阐明HYAL2基因DNA甲基化改变调控PTC发生的可能机制。

本研究是首个探讨HYAL2基因DNA甲基化水平改变与甲状腺良恶性肿瘤关联的研究。不同于多数基于癌症和癌旁组织的鉴别诊断,本研究聚焦于甲状腺良性肿瘤的鉴别,具有较高的临床应用价值。在DNA甲基化水平分析的基础上,我们还进一步补充下游蛋白质的表达水平。此外,基于质谱的DNA甲基化水平检测手段具有高分辨率、高灵敏度和高重复性等特点,增强了本研究结果的可靠性^[40]。另外,本研究中仍然存在一些局限性,首先本研究为单一中心来源的病例对照研究,仍需要多中心研究的数据进行验证。由于FFPE组织量不足,DNA甲基化和蛋白质表达数据来自不同人群,是本研究另一主要不足之处,在一定程度上削弱了DNA甲基化改变与PTC关联的可解释性。

综上所述,我们的研究揭示了HYAL2基因启动子区域DNA甲基化水平改变与早期PTC之间存在显著关联,尤其是在年龄低于50岁的人群中。本研究支持了DNA甲基化改变在甲状腺良性肿瘤鉴别诊断中的价值,但仍需要大样本的前瞻性队列研究和功能试验进行验证。

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