

全程新辅助治疗应用于局部进展期直肠癌的最新进展

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摘要

本综述通过检索全程新辅助治疗(Total neoadjuvant therapy, TNT)模式的最新的临床研究性文章, 旨在讨论局部进展期直肠癌(Local advanced rectal cancer, LARC) TNT模式的最新研究进展、临床意义以及对该模式发展的展望。

关键词

局部进展期直肠癌, 全程新辅助治疗, 综述

Recent Advances in Total Neoadjuvant Therapy for Locally Advanced Rectal Cancer

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Abstract

This review aims to discuss the latest research progress, clinical significance and prospect of TNT for locally advanced rectal cancer (LARC) by searching the latest clinical research articles on TNT for total neoadjuvant therapy.

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Keywords

Local Advanced Rectal Cancer, Total Neoadjuvant Therapy, Review

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1. 引言

直肠腺癌系最常见的消化道肿瘤之一，近年在全世界中都呈现出患病年龄偏低趋势。最新发布的肿瘤数据显示，直肠癌的发病率和死亡率均位居高位[1]。因直肠癌处于盆位，解剖位置较深，以及复杂的淋巴回流，造成手术难度大，局部复发率高，预后极不乐观。一直以来，临床工作者都在探索更加优化的治疗方式，局部进展期直肠癌(Local advanced rectal cancer, LARC)的治疗也将单一的手术切除融合化学治疗、放射治疗等手段，促成了现如今的多学科综合治疗(multidisciplinary team, MDT)，这使得 LARC 的局部控制率得到大幅度提高。

目前被临床广泛认可的标准化 LARC 治疗模式为新辅助治疗——新辅助同步放化疗(neoadjuvant chemoradiotherapy, NCRT) + 全直肠系膜切除术(total mesorectal excision, TME) + 术后辅助化疗(adjuvant chemotherapy, ACT) [2]虽然种方案在降低复发率方面有较好获益[3]短期疗效(5 年局部复发率为 5%)与长期效果(远处复发率为 23%)，但远期生存率(Long-term survival rate): 3 年 DFS 及 5 年 OS 均无统计学意义[4] [5]，且由于手术创伤，造成的器官功能障碍如输尿管、神经、膀胱损伤引起排尿功能障碍等，在很大程度上影响患者的生存质量[6]。围绕现阶段 NCRT 模式所面临的困境，许多研究者进行了发问：如何优化治疗模式？是否可以调整化学治疗、肿瘤放射治疗、手术治疗的使用顺序？应用这三种治疗手段的时机该怎么判断？是否低估了术前化学治疗的潜力？基于此诞生了全程新辅助治疗(total neoadjuvant therapy, TNT)的模式[7]。简单概括 TNT 模式的新思路：其是将全直肠系膜切除术后的辅助化学治疗全周期提至新辅助同步放化疗之前或手术间歇期内(即从新辅助同步放化疗结束到 TME 手术的间隔时间)，旨在增加术前治疗强度，进而使肿瘤安全性增加[8]。另一方面该模式将手术间歇期进行了一定程度的延长，充分利用肿瘤调强放射后效应，以及化学治疗的药物效益，使实体肿瘤进一步退缩，以求达到 R0 切除。若达到临床完全缓解(clinical complete remission, cCR)则可以免于手术，只等待观察即可，减少了不必要的手术创伤。许多关于 TNT 模式疗效及安全性的临床课题正在如火如荼地进行，并得到了令人振奋的结果，这使得 LARC 治疗指南对 TNT 模式进行了重点阐述[9]。

2. 局部进展期直肠癌(LARC)

2.1. LARC 的概念

局部进展期直肠癌是一个相对的概念，是介于早期直肠癌和晚期直肠癌的中间期，临床工作者应当清楚的认识其定义，在治疗前对患者进行精确的分期及危险分层是很有必要的。LARC 即经病理或影像学发现的直肠原发肿瘤限于系膜内或侵及周围组织结构(c/pT3-4b)，盆腔出现淋巴结转移(c/pN1-2)而没有远处器官转移(m0)的距肛门 12 cm 以内的直肠癌[10]。

2.2. LARC 标准化治疗

随着科学技术的进步，学者们不断探索 LARC 的治疗模式，国内外大量的临床前瞻性研究为 LARC

标准治疗模式(以 FU 为基础的 NCRT + TME + 辅助化疗)提供了理论依据[11] [12] [13]。

Sauer 等人开展了 CAO/ARO/AIO-94 III 期随机对照临床试验[14], 该实验将放疗 - 手术及手术 - 放疗进行了疗效对比。结果显示: ① NCRT 的 5 年积累局部复发率明显降低(6% vs 13%, $P = 0.006$); ② 毒性反应低(27% vs 49%, $P = 0.001$); ③ 保肛率(39% vs 19%, $P = 0.004$)。以此确立了术前新辅助放疗在 LARC 治疗中的地位。但两组无病生存率(disease free survival, DFS)和总生存率(overall survival, OS)无统计学差异(29.8% vs 29.6%, $P = 0.9$)。此后多项长时间随访研究亦证实给予标准化治疗后 LARC 远处转移率较高, 预后乏善可陈[15] [16]。众所周知, 远处转移是导致 LARC 患者重要的死亡原因[17]。为何标准化治疗未能使 LARC 患者取得明显生存获益呢? 部分学者认为, 标准化治疗模式中患者等待全身治疗的时间较长, 在此期间肿瘤细胞全身扩散的几率增大, 并且也与术后并发症多、患者依存性差等方面相关[18] [19]。因此进一步优化 LARC 治疗模式是很有必要的。

3. 全程新辅助治疗(TNT)模式

3.1. TNT 的概念

总的来说 TNT 模式是将手术作为直肠癌治疗的终点, 提高术前药物治疗强度。并且有很多研究支持高危组病人更加适合 TNT 模式, 即肿瘤临床分期晚、血管外侵犯、累及系膜筋膜等[20]因为这类患者具有更高的复发转移风险, TNT 模式可达到早期控制全身病灶、预防远处转移的目的。Bahadoer 等人进行了一项多中心随机对照的 III 期试验[21], 该试验对具有高危因素的 LARC 患者行短程调强放疗 + 6 个周期 CAPOX 化疗/9 个周期 FOLFOX4 + TME 手术, 实验组较标准治疗组远处转移率低(20.0% vs 26.8%, $P = 0.0048$), 表明术前行全周期化疗较术后辅助化疗的疗效更高, 且实验组放化疗毒副作用未增加, 提示高危 LARC 患者或是 TNT 模式的受益群体。

目前 TNT 有两种主要模式[22]: ① 诱导化疗(induction neoadjuvant chemotherapy, INCT), 即在 NCRT 之前行全身化疗。化疗药物可作为肿瘤放射治疗的增敏剂, 使肿瘤对治疗产生较好反应。② 巩固化疗(consolidation neoadjuvant chemotherapy, CNCT), 是在 NCRT 后的手术间歇期内行额外化疗。可在早期阶段遏制隐匿性微转移灶, 提高化疗依从性。

3.2. 诱导化疗 (INCT)

INCT + NCRT + TME 为诱导化疗的治疗模式, 是指在新辅助放疗前给予全身化学药物治疗, 以期减轻肿瘤负荷解除肿瘤压迫症状, 并改善肿瘤组织血液供应提高癌肿对放疗的敏感性。该方案可以根据肿瘤对诱导化疗的反应来预测后续治疗的敏感性, 从而及时调整放疗药物强度, 避免过度治疗[23], 有研究发现, 以 FOLFOX 为诱导化疗方案的 TNT 模式取得的临床完全缓解(clinical complete remission, cCR)与病理完全应答(pCR)之间存在相关性[24]。斯隆凯特琳癌症中心(MSK)开展的大样本回顾研究[25]是 INCT 的代表性研究之一, 该项研究将 628 例患者分为两组, 其中一组患者采取 TNT 治疗(8FOLFOX/5XELOX + NCRT + TME); 另一组患者接受传统标准治疗(NCRT + TME + ACT)。与标准治疗组相比, TNT 组的临床病理缓解率(92% vs 79%)和化疗依从性更高, 其中两成患者等待观察, 随访 1 年后, 未发现肿瘤复发转移。但两组的 DFS 无显著差异, 可能与 TNT 组纳入的患者危险度高(cT4; cN+比例高)相关, 总而言之, 该研究证实了 TNT 模式可能会给高危 LARC 患者带来生存获益。

3.3. 巩固化疗(CNCT)

NCRT + CNCT + TME 为巩固化疗的治疗模式, 是指在完成新辅助放疗后于进行手术前的间隔期

内进行的化学治疗。相关研究显示,适当延长放疗与手术的间歇期可以提高病理缓解率[26],NCCN指南也将最初4~6周的间歇期延长至5~12周。若在这段时间内不给予抗肿瘤治疗则可能会增加进展风险,于是学者们提出假设:在这期间加用巩固化疗是否会提高临床缓解,降低远处转移呢?

多中心随机II期试验CAO/ARO/AIO-12试验[27]是第一个比较诱导化疗和巩固化疗疗效的大型临床研究,且结果数据完整。其初步结果于2019年公布:巩固化疗可改善Pcr(17% vs 25%)、对同步放化疗的依从性更好(93% vs 76%),但对化疗依存性较差(85% vs 92%)。为了观察肿瘤的长期结局,该试验将中位随访时间延长至43个月(35~60个月),2022年的数据显示[28]:巩固化疗组(B组)与诱导化疗组(A组)的3年DFS(73% vs 73%, $P = 0.82$)、3年局部复发率(5% vs 6%, $P = 0.67$)、远处转移率(16% vs 18%)均无统计学差异,两组的总生存率相似。基于以上证据,作者建议将巩固化疗(NCRT + CNCT + TME)作为首选的TNT模式,因为该模式具有更高的pCR率,而不影响DSF,也不会增加毒性反应。Garcia-Aguilar等人进行的另一项前瞻性试验——OPRA试验[29]也支持以上观点,该研究重点观察两种TNT模式治疗后肿瘤达到完全缓解或接近完全缓解的概率,将无需手术作为观察的次要终点。结果显示:巩固化疗组中符合等待观察策略的比例相当高,达76%,且巩固化疗组的3年无TME生存率明显高于诱导化疗组(53% vs 41%),这主要是因为后者的肿瘤复发率(40%)高于前者(27.5%)。作者由此得出结论,新辅助放化疗后给予巩固化疗可获得更高的器官保存率且两种方案之间没有任何生存结果差异。

然而,我们又将面临新的问题:在寻求器官保留时,是否可以放弃对诱导化疗(INCT)的研究?答案显而易见是否定的,因为OPRA研究存在一定局限性①该研究将肿瘤pCR作为观察的终点,得出的结论可能会向巩固化疗(CNCT)组倾斜[30],因为该组在完成NCRT后有更长的时间间隔(TI),而长TI可以有更好的肿瘤应答;②治疗顺序的不同会导致肿瘤特性发生改变。所以对于有保留器官愿望的LARC患者,诱导化疗仍然是一种可行的选择。

4. TNT模式的争议点及局限性

目前专家学者们将讨论的重点聚焦于以下几个方面:①首选哪种TNT序列(诱导化疗 or 巩固化疗)[31];②哪些患者亚群更受益于TNT模式;③是否应在TNT模式上做加减法。要回答此类争议最关键的是要将患者进行精确分期及风险分层,同时结合对治疗目标的不同(保留器官与否),给予个体化精准治疗,从而避免过度治疗带来的毒性和对功能的损害。

综合上述研究,TNT模式在pCR率、器官保存率、长期生存方面较传统标准模式具有显著性优势,极富研究潜力,但不能由此忽视其局限性:①长时间的新辅助治疗可能增加手术难度,使术后并发症发生率高[32];②难以早期判断肿瘤对治疗的敏感性,可能增加无反应LARC患者的短期进展风险;③接受诱导化疗后达pCR的患者能否从后续放化疗中获益仍存在争议[33],即TNT模式对部分患者存在过度治疗的可能。TNT能否突破局限,达到预设的远期控制目标,从而代替标准治疗普遍应用于临床,这仍需要大样本的长期的临床研究支持。

5. 小结与展望

目前全球正面临着直肠癌高发病率和低龄化的严峻形式,专家学者们从多个方面积极探寻有效措施,现存的直观问题是:1)影像学及病理组织学对TNT模式的适应症以及疗效(PCR、CCR)的评价一致性;2)多学科模式的配合执行力;3)采用TNT模式如何做到规范化。未来TNT模式可能会基于肿瘤微环境及基因组[33][34]的研究结果做相应“加减法”,如在TNT模式中加入免疫和靶向治疗,又或是去除放疗及手术治疗[35][36],以期达到更高的病理缓解率和更长的远期生存,使LARC患者更好获益。这些问题值得我们持续地积极地探索。

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