

PCSK9抑制剂在脂质代谢和动脉粥样硬化中的应用

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摘 要

自2003年在家族性高胆固醇血症中发现致病基因前蛋白转化酶枯草杆菌素9 (PCSK9)以来, 以PCSK9为靶点的研究进展迅速。近年来PCSK9抑制剂被证实具有良好的降低血脂作用, 还有潜在的抗炎、降低心血管风险作用, 已经作为一种新型降脂药物应用于心血管疾病。现对PCSK9基因与脂质代谢的关系、PCSK9抑制剂的临床研究进展和PCSK9抑制剂的安全性等进行综述。

关键词

PCSK9抑制剂, 低密度脂蛋白胆固醇(LDL-C), 动脉粥样硬化, 炎症

Application of PCSK9 Inhibitors in Lipid Metabolism and Arteriosclerosis

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Abstract

Since the discovery of the pathogenic gene proprotein convertase subtilisin 9 (PCSK9) in familial hypercholesterolemia in 2003, studies of targeting PCSK9 have progressed rapidly. In recent years, PCSK9 inhibitors have been proven to have good lipid-lowering effects, as well as potential anti-inflammatory and cardiovascular risk-reducing effects, and have been used as a new type of li-

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pid-lowering drugs in cardiovascular diseases. This article reviews the relationship between PCSK9 gene and lipid metabolism, the clinical research progress of PCSK9 inhibitors and the safety of PCSK9 inhibitors.

Keywords

PCSK9 Inhibitors, Low-Density Lipoprotein Cholesterol (LDL-C), Arteriosclerosis, Inflammation

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1. 引言

据国家心血管中心公布的《中国心血管病报告 2018》[1]数据显示,目前我国心血管病患者人数达 2.9 亿,总体来看,我国心血管病患者率及死亡率仍在不断增加。动脉粥样硬化性心血管疾病(Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease, ASCVD)是世界范围内的一个主要健康问题,是世界各地发病率和死亡率高的原因。它与多种危险因素有关,其中,最重要的危险因素是脂质代谢紊乱。血浆低密度脂蛋白胆固醇(LDL-C)升高是动脉粥样硬化和心血管疾病(Cardiovascular Disease, CVD)的重要危险因素。他汀类药物是临床降脂治疗的基石,然而相当大一部分患者不能耐受他汀类药物,即使在最大耐受剂量他汀类药物治疗后,一些患者仍存在显著的心血管残余风险。动脉粥样硬化是由内皮细胞的功能改变引起的,伴随动脉壁内层 LDL-C 的积累,粘附分子的表达和趋化剂的释放。前蛋白转化酶枯草杆菌素/kexin9 型(proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type9, PCSK9)是一种原蛋白转化酶,通过引导肝脏 LDL 受体进入溶酶体进行降解,来增加循环中 LDL-C 水平。阻断 PCSK9 对 LDL 受体影响的单克隆 PCSK9 抗体在心血管试验中显示了有益的结果。PCSK9 在动脉粥样硬化斑块形成的每一步中都起着重要的作用。越来越多的证据表明,PCSK9 是预防和治疗动脉粥样硬化新方法的分子靶点[2]。在此,我们将重点关注与 PCSK9 相关的主要认识,从其发现到其在脂质代谢的作用,参与动脉粥样硬化斑块的形成,以及 PCSK9 抑制剂在临床中的应用。

随着生活质量的提高,更多不良生活方式的形成,尽管过去几年内治疗方法取得了很大进展,降低了死亡率,但心血管疾病患者人数还在增加。动脉粥样硬化是一种慢性疾病,持续终生。在各种危险因素中,血脂异常,特别是 LDL-C 水平[3] [4],在动脉粥样硬化过程的发生和进展中起着举足轻重的作用[5]。韩国一项研究表明[6], LDL-C 水平与心血管疾病病死率之间存在关联, LDL-C 高于 3.34 mmol/L 的患者,死亡风险显著增加。人群和遗传学研究已经确定了 LDL-C 在动脉粥样硬化性心血管疾病中的因果关系[7]。动脉粥样硬化过程起始于内皮细胞的功能改变,致动脉粥样硬化 LDL-C 在巨噬细胞的作用下沉积在动脉壁内膜上,伴随着动脉壁内层 LDL-C 的积累、氧化和糖基化,粘附分子的表达和趋化剂的释放[8],有助于斑块的形成和动脉粥样硬化。这个过程一般比较缓慢,其中最容易受累的就是脑动脉和冠状动脉,导致动脉硬化的原因很多,其中包括高血压病、糖尿病、不良生活方式(吸烟)、遗传因素等,ASCVD 的发生发展给人类生活带来了很大影响,造成了沉重的经济负担,随着生活条件的向好,更应该注意改善生活方式、减少危险因素的摄入,尽早做好预防。

LDL-C 的降低是降低心血管风险的重要目标。目前,他汀类药物仍然是降脂治疗的主要方法之一,他汀类药物是 3-羟基-3-甲基戊二酰辅酶 A (HMG-CoA)还原酶的抑制剂,是胆固醇生物合成的限速酶,它

彻底改变了血脂异常的治疗, 由于它在减少高胆固醇血症和减少 LDL-C 方面的巨大成功, 它迅速成为这个指标一线治疗的选择[9]。但他汀类药物的治疗不能使高危患者 LDL-C 达标, 尽管使用了最大耐受剂量, 增加辅助降脂治疗, 如依折麦布, 某些患者也不能达到对血脂异常的满意控制, 残余心血管风险仍然很高[10]。此外, 许多患者甚至出现了对他汀类药物的不耐受性和耐药性[11]。2020年《超高危动脉粥样硬化性心血管疾病患者血脂管理中国专家共识》[12]建议, 将超高危患者 LDL-C 目标降低到 $< 1.4 \text{ mmol/L}$ 且较基线降幅 $> 50\%$ 。有研究表明, 每降低 1 mmol/L 低密度脂蛋白胆固醇, 心肌梗死、冠状动脉死亡、缺血性卒中、冠状动脉重建等主要心血管事件风险按比例降低 20% 以上[13]。因此, 对于需要进一步降低 LDL-C 的患者, 需要额外的强效降脂药物。PCSK9 的发现以及该蛋白突变与家族性高胆固醇血症的相关性[14], 导致了 PCSK9 作为降低 LDL-C 和血脂异常相关 ASCVD 的新的治疗靶点。最近受到了相当多的关注。

2. PCSK9 及其作用机制

PCSK9, 最初被称为神经凋亡调节转化酶 1 (NARC-1), 是由 Seidah 等人在 2003 年发现的[15]。对 PCSK9 的生理功能的深入了解, 最初源于 PCSK9 基因功能突变导致显性家族性高胆固醇血症的发现。随后的研究表明, PCSK9 基因功能缺失突变或变异的个体不仅表现出较低的血浆 LDL-C 水平, 而且 CVD 的风险也较低[16] [17] [18]。PCSK9 是人类 1 号染色体 PCSK9 基因编码的含有 692 个氨基酸的丝氨酸蛋白酶, 是一个 72 kDa 的酶原, 包括四个结构域, 即 N 端前结构域、信号肽、催化结构域和 C 端结构域[19], 主要在肝细胞中合成, 但包括肠道、大脑、肾脏、胰腺、肺等其他组织也表达这种蛋白, 但肝脏中的表达最为丰富, 它以自分泌形式与 LDL 受体(LDL-R)结合, 参与调节肝脏载脂蛋白 B 的摄取和胆固醇代谢[20]。通过抑制 LDL-R 再循环回细胞表面, 从而上调低密度脂蛋白水平, 对低密度脂蛋白颗粒的代谢至关重要。反过来, LDLR 介导了 PCSK9 从血浆中的清除, 而不管 PCSK9 的组织来源如何。

PCSK9 受多种因素的影响, 如年龄、性别、饮食、运动、昼夜节律、肥胖、药物(如他汀类药物)、肾脏和肝脏疾病、2 型糖尿病等[21] [22]。其中, 转录因子甾醇调节元件结合蛋白 2 (SREBP-2)受细胞内胆固醇浓度的影响, 调节 LDL-R 基因和 PCSK9 编码基因的表达[23], 他汀类药物是 SREBP-2 的激动剂, 当剂量加倍时, 一方面会降低 LDL-C 水平, 另一方面, 也会增加 PCSK9 的表达, 从而使 LDL-C 降解减少, 基于以上机制, 临床上使用他汀类药物剂量翻倍时, 不能使降脂能力翻倍, 而只能在原有基础上, LDL-C 水平仅仅再下降 6% , 即所谓的他汀 6% 效应[19]。SREBP-2 增加 PCSK9 的表达对原发性高胆固醇血症和杂合子家族性高胆固醇血症患者同样有害[24]。有研究表明, PCSK9 基因的功能获得(GOF)突变是家族性高胆固醇血症的原因, 血液中的胆固醇水平显著升高[14], 而功能丧失突变(LOF)与低胆固醇血症相关[25]。

PCSK9 在调节胆固醇稳态中起着至关重要的作用。迄今为止, PCSK9 的第一个也可能是研究最多和最重要的靶点是肝细胞表面的 LDL-R, PCSK9 通过与 LDL-C 和 LDL-R 结合形成复合物, 介导 LDL-R 在溶酶体中的内化和降解, 随后减少 LDL-R 的再循环, 减少 LDL-C 的清除, 导致 LDL-C 水平升高。在 PCSK9 缺失的情况下, LDL-R 与肝细胞表面的 LDL-C 结合, 将其转移到肝细胞内的溶酶体内, 使血浆中的 LDL-C 降解, LDL-R 重新循环回细胞表面, 结合新的低密度脂蛋白颗粒[26]。因此, PCSK9 抑制剂已经成为脂质管理的有效且新疗法, 特别是对于最大耐受他汀类及依折麦布联合治疗下, 不能达到足够的降脂效果的患者。PCSK9 的核心作用仍然是调节胆固醇稳态, 即使越来越多的研究表明, PCSK9 可以发挥更多的作用[27]。

PCSK9 是脂质代谢的关键蛋白, 参与炎症细胞因子的产生、内皮功能障碍、动脉粥样硬化斑块的发展、破裂和动脉粥样硬化血栓形成, 导致急性心血管事件[28]。动脉粥样硬化斑块的形成是一种脂蛋白驱

动的疾病,且随着身体的衰老,代谢的改变,动脉粥样硬化是一个终生的炎症过程。PCSK9 可通过促进血小板活化、白细胞募集和血凝块形成,以及通过与全身脂质变化无关的机制,促进动脉粥样硬化斑块和血栓形成。炎症过程在动脉粥样硬化的病理生理过程中起着重要的作用[29]。PCSK9 能够诱导促炎细胞因子的表达,如肿瘤坏死因子 a (TNF-a)、白细胞介素-1 β (IL-1 β)或白细胞介素-6 (IL-6),并减少巨噬细胞中抗炎细胞因子的形成[30] [31],降低了编码抗炎标志物如 IL-10 基因的表达。研究证实,PCSK9 通过结合低密度脂蛋白受体,在斑块中的相互作用增强炎症单核细胞向血管壁的浸润和分化,这些细胞在激活过程中释放细胞因子并创造一个促炎环境,最终形成泡沫细胞,直接促进炎症性动脉粥样硬化斑块的形成[32]。

PCSK9 还通过 toll 样受体 4 或核因子 κ B [30]和脂蛋白受体相关蛋白 1 通路介导心肌细胞自噬[33]并加重炎症反应。PCSK9 在心肌梗死边界区的表达也表明,PCSK9 可能通过诱导细胞凋亡和自噬在梗死的扩展中发挥作用,通过影响凋亡途径参与细胞的寿命。在全身炎症反应综合征和脓毒症患者中[34],血清 PCSK9 水平较高。临床试验中,靶向治疗可能通过改变一些促炎机制来改善急性和慢性缺血患者[35]的心脏预后。内皮功能障碍是动脉粥样硬化的最早表现,与斑块进展和动脉粥样硬化并发症有关[36]。氧化低密度脂蛋白(ox-LDL)促内皮细胞凋亡增加了其功能障碍,内皮损伤和激活导致炎症细胞附着的表面分子的表达,为动脉粥样硬化发展创造了有利条件[37]。PCSK9 的过表达已被证明会增加动脉粥样硬化斑块的大小[38]。通过增加斑块的脆弱性,从而增加斑块破裂的风险,进一步增加急性心血管事件发生的风险。PCSK9 可影响动脉粥样硬化病变的大小,在病变中的积累直接影响斑块组成,也独立于血脂水平。这一事实可以解释 PCSK9 和动脉粥样硬化之间的直接关系,以及为什么 PCSK9 过表达是致动脉粥样硬化的,而它的缺失是具有保护作用的,增加了抗 PCSK9 治疗研究的心血管益处。

3. PCSK9 抑制剂

尽管他汀类药物仍然是降低循环中 LDL-C 的基石,但他汀类药物单药治疗在临床实践中尚未取得更加满意的效果,因为超过 70%的动脉粥样硬化 CVD 患者没有达到 LDL-C < 70 mg/dL 水平[39]。且他汀类药物带来的不良反应,导致患者停止此类药物的摄入,药物依从性差也是导致 CVD 患者风险增加的一个主要因素。因此,为应对降低 LDL-C 的需要,以及提高患者对药物治疗的依从性,促进了新的降脂治疗方法的研发。自 PCSK9 作为一种与脂质代谢相关的分子被发现不久,人们对其靶向高胆固醇血症的治疗方法兴趣剧增。相关研究表明,缺乏 PCSK9 表达或活性[40] [41]的人类和小鼠 LDL-C 水平低且没有有害后果,促进了 PCSK9 抑制剂的研发,该抑制剂阻断其在 LDL-R 上的功能,并显著降低循环中 LDL-C 水平。这些药物包括单克隆抗体(evolocumab 和 alirocumab)和一种小干扰 RNA 药物(inclisiran) [42] [43]。

依洛尤单抗(evolocumab)和阿利西尤单抗(alirocumab)已经获得了美国食品和药品管理局(FDA)的批准,用于临床,可能作为他汀类药物的单药或附加治疗用于家族性高胆固醇血症和 ASCVD 患者,可显著降低低密度脂蛋白水平,降低心血管事件的发生率[44] [45]。依洛尤单抗的 III 期临床试验评估了依洛尤单抗对高脂血症和高心血管风险、纯合子家族性高胆固醇血症、杂合子家族性高胆固醇血症(HeFH)或他汀类药物不耐受患者的疗效[46]-[51]。这些试验表明,每周 140 mg 或每月 420 mg 的皮下注射剂量可显著降低 60%的 LDL-C 水平。相关随机对照试验报告[35] [52]称,每月增加 420 mg 依洛尤单抗可使冠心病患者的 LDL-C 降低 59%,导致心血管事件发生率比他汀类药物降低 9.8%。在 FOURIER 试验中,27,564 例动脉粥样硬化性心血管疾病患者被随机分配到接受依洛尤单抗组(每 2 周 140 mg 或每月 420 mg)或安慰剂组[35],在第 48 周时,依洛尤单抗显著降低了 LDL-C 水平,并降低了心血管事件的风险。此外,依洛尤单抗治疗显著降低了主要心血管终点事件(MACE)的发生风险[35],对糖尿病[53]、代谢综合征[54]

或既往缺血性卒中患者[55]也有益处。

ODYSSEY COMBO II 期随机对照试验中, 与依折麦布相比, 阿利西尤单抗显著降低了 apoB、非 HDL-C、TC 和 Lp (a)水平[56] [57] [58], 且没有额外的不良事件。在 ODYSSEY MONO 试验中[59], 未接受他汀类药物或其他任何降脂治疗的且含有心血管危险因素的高胆固醇血症患者, 随机分为接受阿利西尤单抗注射治疗组和接受依折麦布口服治疗组, 经过 24 周的治疗, 阿利西尤单抗组与依折麦布组相比, 显著降低 LDL-C 水平。阿利西尤单抗组皮下注射部位不良反应发生率 < 2%。研究表明[60] [61], 阿利西尤单抗可减少急性冠脉综合征发生不良心血管事件风险, 不会增加新发糖尿病的风险。LDL-C 水平越低, 预后越好, 已经成为一种普遍趋势。FOURIER 和 ODISSEY 研究结果, 支持 PCSK9 抑制剂作为治疗血脂异常的辅助策略, 美国心脏病学会临床实践指南[62]指出, 应用最大耐受剂量他汀类药物和或依折麦布的 CVD 患者、LDL-C \geq 90 mg/dL 的患者, 建议予以 PCSK9 抑制剂治疗。PCSK9 抑制剂可显著降低 LDL-C 水平, 进一步降低心血管风险。

真实世界研究中, PCSK9 抑制剂每两周或每月皮下注射, 理论上 PCSK9 抑制剂应该有良好的依从性。一种基于 RNA 干扰治疗的抑制 PCSK9 产生的新途径, 小干扰 RNA (siRNA) inclisiran, 可迅速被肝脏吸收, 减少 PCSK9 的表达, 从而抑制 LDL-C 受体的溶酶体降解, 增强其到达细胞膜的数量, 降低循环中 LDL-C 水平, 且每 6 个月皮下注射给药方式, 进一步提高了患者依从性。ORION III 期研究[63] [64] 表明, 在 HeFH、LDL-C 升高和最大耐受他汀类药物和或依折麦布患者中, 与安慰剂组相比, inclisiran 可以使大约 80% 高危患者的 LDL-C 水平降低 47.9%, 并且降低了血浆 PCSK9 水平, 且患者耐受性良好, 并使非高密度脂蛋白胆固醇、TG、Lp (a)显著降低, 持久的降低 LDL-C 水平, 并且没有造成严重的不良反应。另一种正在开发的 PCSK9 抑制剂[65]是口服制剂, 这些制剂不同于目前基于单抗的治疗方法。MK-0616 是一种口服的 PCSK9 抑制剂, 1 期数据显示, 可以使 LDL-C 显著降低, 且没有发生严重的不良安全事件。

4. PCSK9 抑制剂的安全性

在降脂治疗过程中, 最令人担忧的是他汀类药物对肝功能、血糖、横纹肌等不良反应。大型随机对照试验显示, PCSK9 抑制剂总体上是安全且耐受性良好。PCSK9 抑制剂可能会引发过敏反应、注射部位反应、肌肉酸痛、神经功能异常、头晕等不良反应[66], 但这些副作用通常是轻微的。PCSK9 抑制剂的主要不良反应为上呼吸道感染、鼻咽炎、流感、背痛等, 其发生率低于 2% [49]。相关研究表明[67], 早期应用 PCSK9 抑制剂加强降脂并没有增加他汀类药物常见不良反应的发生率。既往关于 PCSK9 抑制剂降脂的研究均未报道其对肝功能或神经认知功能的明显损害[68]。一项对 59,733 名患者的荟萃分析[69], 收集了关于 PCSK9 抑制剂对神经认知不良事件影响的 RCT 数据, 发现 PCSK9 抑制剂没有显著增加神经认知不良反应的风险。研究表明[54], 在 2.2 年的随访中, PCSK9 抑制剂依洛尤单抗显著降低了代谢综合征患者的低密度脂蛋白胆固醇和心血管风险, 而不增加新发糖尿病、血糖恶化或其他重大安全事件风险。在真实世界中对 PCSK9 抑制剂进行长期监测是必要的。

5. 总结与展望

2003 年发现 PCSK9 后, 其知识在不到 9 年的时间里从实验室转移到临床, 脂质领域出现了一个急剧的转变。PCSK9 通路的治疗干预导致了新型降脂治疗药物的成功实施, 显著改善了极高心血管风险患者的预后。此外, 他汀类药物不耐受的患者也可能受益于 PCSK9 抑制剂。PCSK9 抑制剂是一种有效的、通常耐受性良好的降低 LDL-C 的治疗药物, 并已在心血管结局试验中被证明可以降低二级预防患者发生 ASCVD 的风险。目前的指南推荐, 接受最大耐受他汀类药物和或依折麦布治疗的高风险患者, LDL-C

仍不达标时, 建议使用 PCSK9 抑制剂, 进一步降低心血管风险。

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