

高表达甲胎蛋白的晚期肝细胞癌靶向治疗进展

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摘要

肝细胞癌(HCC)伴血清甲胎蛋白(AFP)高表达($AFP \geq 400 \text{ ng/mL}$)的患者亚群, 代表了一个具有独特生物学特征、高度侵袭性和不良预后的高危群体。该亚群在临床上与更大的肿瘤负荷、更高的血管侵犯率及复发风险密切相关。其病理生理学基础涉及关键致癌信号通路的异常激活、上皮-间质转化(EMT)过程的驱动, 以及免疫抑制性肿瘤微环境的形成。近年来, 针对这一特定人群的靶向治疗及联合策略已取得重要进展, 显著改变了治疗格局。本文旨在系统回顾针对高表达AFP晚期肝细胞癌的靶向治疗及其联合方案的演进与关键证据。未来的研究方向应致力于深入阐明AFP驱动HCC进展的分子机制, 推动基于生物标志物的前瞻性临床试验, 并整合多组学与人工智能技术, 以实现真正意义上的个体化治疗, 最终改善这一高危患者群体的生存结局。

关键词

肝细胞癌, 甲胎蛋白, 靶向治疗, 免疫治疗, 联合治疗

Advances in Targeted Therapy for Advanced Hepatocellular Carcinoma with High Alpha-Fetoprotein Expression

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Abstract

The patient subgroup with hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC) and high serum alpha-fetoprotein (AFP) levels (AFP $\geq$ 400 ng/mL) constitutes a distinct, high-risk population characterized by unique biological features, highly aggressive behavior, and a poor prognosis. Clinically, this subgroup is strongly associated with a greater tumor burden, a higher incidence of vascular invasion, and an increased risk of recurrence. The underlying pathophysiology involves the aberrant activation of key oncogenic signaling pathways, the induction of epithelial-mesenchymal transition (EMT), and the establishment of an immunosuppressive tumor microenvironment. In recent years, significant progress in targeted therapies and combination strategies for this specific patient population has substantially altered the therapeutic landscape. This review aims to systematically summarize the evolution of, and key evidence for, targeted therapies and their combination regimens in advanced, AFP-high HCC. Future research should focus on further elucidating the molecular mechanisms by which AFP drives HCC progression, advancing biomarker-driven prospective clinical trials, and integrating multi-omics with artificial intelligence. These efforts are crucial for realizing true personalized therapy and ultimately improving the survival outcomes for this high-risk patient population.

Keywords

Hepatocellular Carcinoma, Alpha-Fetoprotein, Targeted Therapy, Immunotherapy, Combination Therapy

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1. 引言

肝细胞癌(HCC)是全球第六大常见癌症和第三大癌症相关死亡原因,其发病率在部分地区仍呈上升趋势[1]。流行病学研究显示,慢性乙型病毒性肝炎、慢性丙型病毒性肝炎、误食黄曲霉毒素、非酒精性脂肪性肝病以及乙醇成瘾等是导致HCC发生的主要危险因素[2]。由于起病隐匿,多数HCC患者在确诊时已属中晚期,丧失了手术、消融和肝移植等根治性治疗的机会,预后极差[3]。甲胎蛋白(AFP)作为一种由胎儿肝细胞和卵黄囊合成的糖蛋白,在成年人健康状态下血清浓度极低。然而,在约60%~80%的HCC患者中,其血清水平会显著升高,成为其诊断、疗效监测和预后评估的关键指标[4]。大量研究表明,血清AFP水平与HCC的预后密切相关。高表达AFP($\geq$ 400 ng/mL)通常被认为是一个强烈的负向预后标志,预示着肿瘤具有更强的侵袭性、更高的复发率和更短的总体生存期(OS)[5]-[9]。生物学研究揭示,高水平AFP并非被动标志物,而是可能作为主动因子,通过促进增殖、血管生成、上皮-间质转化(EMT)、代谢重编程、免疫逃逸及化疗耐药等机制驱动HCC进展[10]。这些独特的生物学特征解释了为何高表达AFP的HCC亚组对传统治疗(如肝切除、经动脉导管化疗栓塞术TACE)的响应不佳,并凸显了为其开发特异性、高效治疗策略的紧迫性。现有关于AFP的研究多集中于其预测预后、评估疗效及联合诊断的性能,而基于AFP水平分层的晚期HCC治疗报道较少。近年来,随着对HCC分子机制的深入研究,分子靶向及联合治疗取得显著进展,深刻改变了晚期HCC的治疗格局[11]。本文将聚焦于高表达AFP(AFP $\geq$ 400 ng/mL)这一高危HCC群体,回顾其靶向治疗及其联合治疗策略的演进与研究成果。

2. 高表达甲胎蛋白 HCC 患者的临床特征及预后

AFP 作为经典的 HCC 生物标志物, 尽管学术界在不断探寻新的标志物, 但其地位至今仍不可替代[4] [12]。在 HCC 中, 血清 AFP 水平的显著升高(≥ 400 ng/mL)其临床意义远超一个单纯的不良预后指标, 它更关键地指向了一个独特的 HCC 亚群, 该亚群呈现出高度侵袭性的临床病理学表型, 而这正是其治疗困难与预后恶劣的根本原因。

高表达 AFP 的 HCC 往往呈现出更大的肿瘤负荷、更强的侵袭性和更差的预后。一项研究表明, 血清 AFP 异常与 HCC 患者预后较差、肿瘤体积较大、淋巴结及远处转移密切相关[13]。另一项国内大规模回顾性研究证实, 术前 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 的 HCC 患者, 其肿瘤在病理学上更倾向于表现为更大的肿瘤负荷和更高的侵袭潜能, 如肿瘤直径更大、多发结节、微血管侵犯(MVI)、卫星灶形成及肿瘤包膜不完整[14]。更为关键的是, AFP 的预后价值具有独立性。该研究明确指出, $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 是接受根治性肝切除术后患者 OS 和肿瘤复发的独立危险因素, 且这种风险呈剂量依赖关系: 与 $\text{AFP} < 400$ ng/mL 的患者相比, $\text{AFP} \geq 1000$ ng/mL 的患者 5 年生存率骤降至 45.7%, 复发率则剧增至 67.2%。此外, $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 还被证实是 HCC 侵犯门静脉系统、形成门静脉癌栓(PVTT)的重要预测因子, 其肿瘤侵袭性极强, 患者预后极差[6] [15] [16]。高 AFP 水平已被证明可以预测肝切除术后及肝移植后的肿瘤复发的风险[17] [18]。有研究指出, 血清 AFP 水平, 并非肿瘤负荷本身, 是与肝移植术后生存最密切相关的肿瘤特征[19]。从分子机制层面看, 高表达 AFP 与 EMT、免疫微环境抑制及多条致癌信号通路(如 PI3K/AKT/mTOR、Wnt/ β -catenin)激活密切相关, 共同促进了肿瘤侵袭, 致使患者预后不良[20]-[22]。 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 的 HCC 患者具有“肿瘤负荷大、临床侵袭性强、预后差”的临床表型, 这一亚群不仅是高危人群筛选和预后判断的重点, 也是精准治疗探索的重要方向。

3. 一线治疗

在一线治疗领域, 针对 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 的 HCC 晚期患者的策略已从单药靶向时代迈向高效联合治疗时代, 其中靶向联合免疫治疗已确立为标准方案, 而靶向联合介入治疗则为特定患者群体提供了重要选择。

3.1. 分子靶向单药治疗

靶向治疗通过与肿瘤生存、增殖和转移所必需的特定分子结合, 精准阻断下游致癌信号传导, 从而控制肿瘤生长[23]。尽管仑伐替尼在亚太、欧洲和北美地区 20 个国家 III 期研究中及多纳非尼在中国 III 期研究中证实其总体生存优于索拉非尼[24] [25], 但两者研究并未对 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 亚组进行预设分析, 限制了其在该高危人群中的精准应用。虽然有研究揭示 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 的 HCC 患者体内 VEGF 信号通路显著激活, 为抗血管生成靶向药物的应用提供了理论基础[21], 但目前尚缺乏前瞻性 III 期临床试验证据支持任何单药靶向药物成为此类患者的一线标准治疗。

3.2. 分子靶向药物联合免疫检查点抑制剂治疗

免疫检查点抑制剂(ICIs), 如抗 PD-1/PD-L1/CTLA-4 抗体, 通过阻断负向免疫调节通路, 重新激活机体抗肿瘤免疫反应[26]。ICIs 与靶向治疗的结合是晚期 HCC 一线治疗的突破, 其科学基础在于靶向治疗(尤其是抗血管生成药)可改善肿瘤微环境, 增强免疫细胞浸润与活性, 从而增敏 ICIs 的疗效[27]。

全球 III 期研究 IMbrave150 确立了阿替利珠单抗联合贝伐珠单抗抗体(“T + A”方案)的一线标准治疗地位。在该研究的 $\text{AFP} \geq 400$ ng/mL 亚组中, “T + A”方案相较于索拉非尼, 显著提高了患者的 1 年总生存率(67.2% vs 54.6%), 并延长了中位无进展生存期(mPFS, 6.8 个月 vs 4.3 个月), 且疗效

稳健[28][29]。该方案是首个成功的靶免联合 III 期试验,开启了肝癌治疗的靶免联合时代。随后,ORIENT-32 研究在中国 HBV 相关 HCC 患者中验证了信迪利单抗联合贝伐珠单抗类似物(IBE305)的疗效,其 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 亚组同样观察到显著的生存获益[30]。CARES-310 研究则证实,卡瑞利珠单抗联合阿帕替尼方案在 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 亚组中,可使死亡风险降低 37%,疾病进展或死亡风险降低 60%,为这类高危患者提供了又一个强有力的一线治疗选择[31]。然而,并非所有靶免联合方案均取得成功。LEAP-002 研究中,仑伐替尼联合帕博利珠单抗联合方案虽在 AFP > 400 ng/mL 亚组显示 OS 获益趋势(HR 0.67),但在总人群中未能达到统计学显著性终点[32]。同样,COSMIC-312 研究显示,卡博替尼联合阿替利珠单抗联合方案虽在该亚组中延长了 OS 和 PFS,但伴随更常见的严重不良事件[33]。这些结果提示,在选择靶免方案时,需综合考量其在特定亚组的疗效数据与安全性特征。

3.3. 分子靶向药物联合介入治疗

介入治疗通过导管将化疗药物直接输注至肿瘤供血动脉,最大化瘤内药物浓度,降低全身毒副作用。经动脉导管化疗栓塞术(TACE)等介入治疗可诱导局部缺氧,上调 VEGF 水平,而 TKI 类药物能有效抑制此效应,二者联合具备协同增效的理论基础[34]。

LAUNCH 研究结果表明,对于不可切除 HCC, TACE 联合仑伐替尼组的 mOS (17.8 个月 vs 11.5 个月)和 mPFS (10.6 个月 vs 6.4 个月)均显著优于仑伐替尼单药组,且在 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 亚组分析中,联合治疗的优势依然显著[35]。对于伴门静脉癌栓(PVTT)的患者,有研究显示肝动脉灌注化疗术(HAIC)联合索拉非尼疗效优于索拉非尼单药,且在 AFP ≥ 1000 ng/mL 的极高危亚组中亦能带来生存获益[36]。但另一项荟萃分析指出,在该亚组中 OS 改善未达到统计学显著性[37],提示其应用仍需精准筛选获益人群。

4. 二线治疗及后续治疗探索

对于一线治疗失败的 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 的 HCC 患者,二线治疗策略的核心是基于生物标志物的精准选择。

4.1. 分子靶向单药治疗

AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 是指导二线靶向治疗的关键预测性生物标志物,其中雷莫芦单抗联合治疗地位尤为突出。REACH 研究的探索性分析意外发现,在索拉非尼治疗失败后,基线 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 的亚组(n = 250)从雷莫芦单抗联合治疗中获得了显著的 OS 改善(7.8 月 vs 4.2 月; HR 0.67; P = 0.006) [38]。基于此发现,前瞻性的全球 III 期临床试验 REACH-2 专门入组 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 的晚期 HCC 患者,结果证实雷莫芦单抗联合治疗相较于安慰剂显著改善了 mOS (8.5 个月 vs 7.3 个月; HR 0.71; P = 0.0199)和 mPFS (2.8 个月 vs 1.6 个月; HR 0.452; P < 0.0001),且安全性可控,主要不良事件为高血压和低钠血症[39]。REACH-2 成为首个在生物标志物富集人群中取得成功的 HCC III 期试验。后续对 REACH 与 REACH-2 的合并分析进一步确认,雷莫芦单抗联合治疗对亚洲和非亚洲、不同病因背景的 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 患者均有显著益处[40][41],且 REACH-2 China 研究也证实了其在人群中的获益趋势与安全性[42]。

其他靶向药物在该人群中也显示出疗效。RESORCE 研究的亚组分析表明,基线 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 的高危人群能从瑞戈非尼治疗中获得显著的 OS 和 PFS 益处[43]。同样,CELESTIAL 研究的亚组分析显示,卡博替尼在该水平上仍会改善患者生存[44]。一项网络荟萃分析指出,瑞戈非尼、卡博替尼和雷莫芦单抗联合治疗相较于安慰剂均显示出 PFS 和 OS 获益,但活性药物间未显示优效性[45]。此外,AHELP 研究显示,阿帕替尼在 AFP ≥ 400 ng/mL 亚组的疗效优势未达统计学显著性(HR 0.743),但在 AFP ≥ 200 ng/mL 的患者中则表现出更有利的效果(HR 0.730),提示其可能为特定人群提供生存获益[46]。

4.2. 联合治疗探索

靶向、免疫与介入疗法构成了协同互补的联合模式。介入治疗所致的抗原释放可增敏后续免疫治疗，后者则激活全身性抗肿瘤免疫反应。一项荟萃分析评估了 TKI + PD-1 抑制剂联合 TACE/HAIC 的疗效[47]，结果表明三联疗法组的 OS、PFS 和 ORR 均优于双药组，且安全性较好。在 AFP > 400 ng/mL 亚组分析中，三联疗法组的 OS 和 PFS 都能改善。然而，III 期研究 LEAP-012 显示，与 TACE 联合安慰剂相比，TACE 联合仑伐替尼 + 帕博利珠单抗虽改善了 PFS，但在 AFP > 400 ng/mL 亚组中未达统计学显著性[48]。靶向联合免疫或联合介入的策略目前尚缺乏高级别循证医学证据支持，仍处于探索阶段。随着一线靶向联合方案的普及，未来二线治疗将面临更为复杂的临床场景，如对 ICI 或 TKI 耐药后的治疗选择。开发基于耐药机制的新型联合方案、探索跨线治疗的最优序贯模式，将是后续研究的重点方向。

5. 新兴疗法与未来挑战

尽管现有靶向及联合治疗策略已显著改善了高表达 AFP 的晚期 HCC 患者的预后，但仍面临原发性耐药、继发性耐药及治疗瓶颈等挑战。为此，科学家们正积极探索直接靶向 AFP 的创新疗法，深入解析高 AFP 的 HCC 亚群的耐药机制，并致力于构建多维度生物标志物体系，以期推动治疗模式向更高层次的精准化迈进。

5.1. 直接靶向 AFP 的创新细胞与抗体疗法

鉴于 AFP 在 HCC 细胞中特异性高表达而在正常成人组织中表达极低，其本身构成了理想的肿瘤相关抗原(TAA)，为开发直接靶向的免疫疗法提供了绝佳靶点。

嵌合抗原受体 T 细胞(CAR-T)疗法：CAR-T 技术通过基因工程改造患者自身 T 细胞，使其表达能够特异性识别肿瘤表面抗原的嵌合抗原受体[49]。针对 HCC，科学研究人员已开发出靶向 AFP 衍生肽/MHC 复合物(如 AFP₁₅₈₋₁₆₆/HLA-A*02:01)的 CAR-T 细胞。临床前研究证实，这类 CAR-T 细胞能在体外和动物模型中有效识别并杀伤 AFP 阳性的 HCC 细胞，展现出强大的抗肿瘤活性[50] [51]。尽管 CAR-T 疗法在实体瘤中仍面临肿瘤微环境抑制、T 细胞浸润不足及靶点异质性等挑战，但靶向 AFP 的 CAR-T 疗法为难治性高 AFP 水平的 HCC 患者带来了新的希望，其早期临床试验正在积极探索中[52] [53]。

T 细胞衔接器(T-cell Engagers, TcEs)，如双特异性抗体(Bispecific Antibodies, BsAbs)，是一类能够同时结合肿瘤细胞表面抗原和 T 细胞表面标志物(如 CD3)的工程化蛋白。通过将 T 细胞“衔接”至肿瘤细胞旁，TcEs 可非特异性地激活 T 细胞，诱导其对肿瘤的细胞毒性攻击。目前，靶向 AFP 肽/MHC 复合物与 CD3 的双特异性抗体已进入临床前开发阶段。相较于 CAR-T 疗法，TcEs 作为“即用型”药物，具有生产便捷、成本较低、半衰期可控等优势，有望成为一种更易于临床推广的 AFP 靶向免疫策略[52] [54] [55]。

5.2. 高表达 AFP 的 HCC 亚群的潜在耐药机制

高表达 AFP 的 HCC 的独特生物学特性决定了其复杂的耐药机制，涵盖了原发性耐药与获得性耐药。潜在的耐药机制可能包括：(1) 固有的免疫抑制微环境：如前所述，高 AFP 本身可能通过多种途径营造免疫抑制性肿瘤微环境(TME)，包括招募调节性 T 细胞(Tregs)、髓源性抑制细胞(MDSCs)，以及下调树突状细胞功能等[10] [22]。这种“冷”肿瘤的免疫表型可能是导致部分患者对 ICIs 原发性耐药的重要原因。(2) 信号通路代偿与旁路激活：在抗血管生成 TKI 治疗压力下，肿瘤细胞可能通过激活其他促血管生成通路(如 FGF/FGFR、HGF/c-MET)或上调缺氧诱导因子(HIF-1 α)来维持血管生成，导致获得性耐药。高表达 AFP 的 HCC 中高度活跃的 PI3K/AKT/mTOR 和 Wnt/ β -catenin 通路，也可能在 VEGF 通路被阻断后成

为关键的“逃逸”通路，驱动肿瘤持续增殖[56]-[58]。(3)克隆演化与表型可塑性：高表达 AFP 的 HCC 的高度侵袭性与其 EMT 过程密切相关[10]。治疗压力可能筛选出具有更强 EMT 特性的耐药亚克隆，这些细胞不仅对靶向药物不敏感，还具有更强的迁移和侵袭能力。

5.3. 未来挑战：从单一标志物到多维精准分层

尽管 $\text{AFP} \geq 400 \text{ ng/mL}$ 能有效富集对特定疗法(如雷莫芦单抗克隆抗体)敏感的患者，但其固有的异质性要求我们发展更高精度的分层策略。未来的突破口在于整合多维度生物标志物。液体活检为此提供了关键工具，通过分析 ctDNA 中的基因突变(如 TP53、CTNNB1)和拷贝数变异，可构建超越静态 AFP 水平的复合生物标志物模型，用于动态预测疗效并监测耐药[59]。在此基础上，多组学分析则能揭示高 AFP 群体内部更精细的分子亚型，为阐明疗效差异提供深层生物学依据。最终，将这些分子数据与人工智能驱动的影像组学相结合，有望构建强大的多模态预测模型。这类模型旨在治疗前就精准预测患者对特定靶免或介入联合方案的反应，从而指导真正个体化的临床决策。

6. 小结与展望

尽管晚期 HCC 的治疗策略在靶向和免疫领域不断演进，但其治疗仍具挑战性。目前治疗方法主要包括局部治疗(TACE、放疗)、全身治疗(靶向药物、ICIs、化疗)以及这些方式的组合[60]。对于 $\text{AFP} \geq 400 \text{ ng/mL}$ 的高危 HCC 人群，虽多种靶向及联合治疗取得了一定成果，但如何更高效、精准、安全地治疗该人群，仍是未来探索的重要方向。

未来研究应致力于：(1) 深入阐明 AFP 驱动 HCC 恶性进展的分子机制，鉴定除 VEGF 外的其他潜在治疗靶点，为开发新型联合疗法奠定基础。(2) 通过以 AFP 水平分层设计更多前瞻性临床研究，探索更优的治疗方案，并评估 AFP 动态变化等复合生物标志物的预测价值。(3) 整合多组学分析和人工智能技术，构建整合临床、影像及分子特征的预后预测模型，推动真正意义上的个体化治疗，最终改善这一高危 HCC 群体的生存结局，并可能为 HCC 的整体治疗范式带来深远影响。

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