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· 论 著 ·

慢性乙型肝炎患者血清细胞因子 IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21、IL-4 表达水平及意义

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[摘要] **目的** 探索初治慢性乙型肝炎(CHB)患者血清中细胞因子表达水平及其与病毒载量和肝脏炎症程度的关系, 以期为临床动态评估CHB的病情和预后提供新思路。**方法** 选择2018年10月至2019年11月就诊于海军军医大学(第二军医大学)第一附属医院感染科的初治慢性乙型肝炎病毒(HBV)感染者68例, 健康对照者12名, 通过ELISA检测血清中细胞因子IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21和IL-4表达水平, 化学发光法检测HBV血清学标志物, qPCR法检测血清HBV DNA定量, 全自动生化分析仪检测肝功能指标。采用Spearman相关分析评估血清细胞因子与病毒载量及肝脏炎症程度的相关性, 绘制ROC曲线评价血清细胞因子水平对肝脏炎症程度的判断效能。**结果** 相较于健康对照者, 初治CHB患者血清IL-17A [17.50 (11.99, 25.36) pg/mL vs 13.74 (9.07, 16.94) pg/mL, $Z=-2.001$, $P=0.045$]、IL-21 [37.12 (23.85, 77.66) pg/mL vs 20.30 (17.90, 24.19) pg/mL, $Z=-3.485$, $P<0.01$]水平升高, IL-2 [57.19 (31.10, 79.92) pg/mL vs 73.06 (62.41, 105.84) pg/mL, $Z=-2.509$, $P=0.012$]水平降低, IL-4 [11.40 (5.79, 18.62) pg/mL vs 10.84 (8.05, 25.20) pg/mL, $Z=-0.681$, $P=0.496$]水平差异无统计学意义。不同病程CHB患者的IL-17A表达水平差异有统计意义 ($H=8.870$, $P=0.031$)。与非活动状态患者相比, 炎症活动状态CHB患者血清中IL-17A [17.71 (12.25, 27.92) pg/mL vs 16.51 (6.29, 20.22) pg/mL] 和IL-21 [39.29 (24.71, 83.19) pg/mL vs 25.06 (19.37, 49.43) pg/mL] 水平升高, IL-2 [57.19 (31.10, 77.68) pg/mL vs 71.24 (48.07, 117.39) pg/mL] 水平下降 (均 $P<0.05$)。IL-4 [11.40 (5.94, 18.12) pg/mL vs 14.57 (3.12, 24.49) pg/mL] 水平差异无统计学意义 ($P>0.05$)。HBeAg阳性CHB患者、HBeAg阴性CHB患者血清IL-17A [15.34 (10.65, 25.04)、19.98 (15.55, 34.14) pg/mL vs 13.74 (9.07, 16.94) pg/mL, $H=10.061$, $P=0.007$] 和IL-21 [37.74 (25.06, 82.87)、51.74 (23.32, 83.82) pg/mL vs 20.30 (17.90, 24.19) pg/mL, $H=12.444$, $P=0.002$] 水平高于健康对照者, IL-2 [57.19 (37.45, 79.92)、37.45 (18.32, 73.06) pg/mL vs 73.06 (62.41, 105.84) pg/mL, $H=6.576$, $P=0.037$] 水平低于健康对照者。初治CHB患者血清IL-17A、IL-21、IL-4水平与HBV DNA定量无相关性 ($r=0.02、0.23、0.07$, 均 $P>0.05$)。IL-2水平与HBV DNA定量存在弱相关性 ($r=0.32$, $P=0.01$)。初治CHB患者血清IL-17A、IL-21水平与丙氨酸转氨酶(ALT)水平 ($r=0.59、0.49$, 均 $P<0.01$) 和天冬氨酸转氨酶(AST)水平 ($r=0.47、0.36$, 均 $P<0.01$) 均存在相关性, 而IL-2、IL-4水平与ALT、AST水平均无相关性 (均 $P>0.05$)。ALT \geq 300 U/L初治CHB组、ALT $<$ 300 U/L初治CHB组及健康对照组间血清IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21水平差异有统计学意义 (均 $P<0.05$)。其中ALT \geq 300 U/L初治CHB组IL-17A、IL-21水平均高于ALT $<$ 300 U/L初治CHB组及健康对照组 (均 $P<0.01$)。ALT $<$ 300 U/L初治CHB组IL-2水平低于健康对照组、IL-21水平高于健康对照组 (均 $P<0.01$)。ROC曲线分析结果显示, IL-17A判断肝脏炎症程度的AUC值为0.893 3 (95% CI 0.793 0~0.993 6), IL-21判断肝脏炎症程度的AUC值为0.760 0 (95% CI 0.622 7~0.897 3)。**结论** IL-17A、IL-2和IL-21参与慢性HBV感染进程。初治CHB患者无论HBeAg阳性与否或炎症程度高低, 血清IL-17A和IL-21水平均升高, IL-2水平均下降; IL-2与HBV DNA定量有一定相关性; IL-17A和IL-21与ALT及AST均存在正相关; 检测IL-17A和IL-2有助于病情评估与预后判断。

[关键词] 慢性乙型肝炎; 细胞因子; 白细胞介素17A; 白细胞介素2; 白细胞介素21; 白细胞介素4

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Expression of serum cytokines IL-17A, IL-2, IL-21, and IL-4 in patients with chronic hepatitis B and its significance

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[Abstract] Objective To explore the expression levels of cytokines in serum of treatment-naive chronic hepatitis B (CHB) patients and its relationships with viral load and liver inflammation, so as to provide new ideas for dynamic assessment of disease and prognosis of CHB. **Methods** A total of 68 treatment-naive patients with chronic hepatitis B virus (HBV) infection, who were admitted to Department of Infectious Diseases of The First Hospital Affiliated to Naval Medical University (Second Military Medical University) from Oct. 2018 to Nov. 2019, and 12 healthy controls were enrolled. The expression levels of cytokines interleukin (IL)-17A, IL-2, IL-21, and IL-4 in serum were tested by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA). Chemiluminescence method was used to detect HBV serological markers, quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) was used to detect serum HBV DNA quantification, and automatic biochemical analyzer was used to detect liver function indexes. Spearman correlation analysis was used to evaluate the correlations of serum cytokines with viral load and degree of liver inflammation. Receiver operating characteristic (ROC) curves were drawn to evaluate the efficacy of serum cytokines in judging liver inflammation. **Results** Compared with the healthy controls, the serum IL-17A and IL-21 levels in the treatment-naive CHB patients were significantly higher (17.50 [11.99, 25.36] pg/mL vs 13.74 [9.07, 16.94] pg/mL, $Z = -2.001$, $P = 0.045$; 37.12 (23.85, 77.66) pg/mL vs 20.30 [17.9, 24.19] pg/mL, $Z = -3.485$, $P < 0.01$), the IL-2 level was significantly lower (57.19 [31.10, 79.92] pg/mL vs 73.06 [62.41, 105.84] pg/mL, $Z = -2.509$, $P = 0.012$), and there was no significant difference in IL-4 level (11.40 [5.79, 18.62] pg/mL vs 10.84 [8.05, 25.20] pg/mL; $Z = -0.681$, $P = 0.496$). The expression levels of IL-17A in CHB patients with different disease courses were significantly different ($H = 8.870$, $P = 0.031$). Compared to the patients with inflammatory inactive CHB, the serum IL-17A and IL-21 levels were significantly higher (17.71 [12.25, 27.92] pg/mL vs 16.51 [6.29, 20.22] pg/mL and 39.29 [24.71, 83.19] pg/mL vs 25.06 [19.37, 49.43] pg/mL), the IL-2 level was significantly lower (57.19 [31.10, 77.68] pg/mL vs 71.24 [48.07, 117.39] pg/mL) (all $P < 0.05$), and there was no significant difference in IL-4 level (11.40 [5.94, 18.12] pg/mL vs 14.57 [3.12, 24.49] pg/mL, $P > 0.05$) in the patients with inflammatory active CHB. The levels of serum IL-17A (15.34 [10.65, 25.04], 19.98 [15.55, 34.14] pg/mL vs 13.74 [9.07, 16.94] pg/mL, $H = 10.061$, $P = 0.007$) and IL-21 (37.74 [25.06, 82.87], 51.74 [23.32, 83.82] pg/mL vs 20.30 [17.90, 24.19] pg/mL, $H = 12.444$, $P = 0.002$) in hepatitis B e antigen (HBeAg)-positive CHB patients and HBeAg-negative CHB patients were significantly higher than those in healthy controls, while the level of IL-2 (57.19 [37.45, 79.92], 37.45 [18.32, 73.06] pg/mL vs 73.06 [62.41, 105.84] pg/mL, $H = 6.576$, $P = 0.037$) was significantly lower than that in healthy controls. There were no correlations between serum IL-17A, IL-21, IL-4 levels and HBV DNA quantification in treatment-naive CHB patients ($r = 0.02, 0.23, 0.07$, all $P > 0.05$), while the level of IL-2 was weakly correlated with HBV DNA quantification ($r = 0.32$, $P = 0.01$). There were correlations between serum IL-17A, IL-21 and alanine transaminase (ALT) ($r = 0.59, 0.49$, both $P < 0.01$), aspartate transaminase (AST) ($r = 0.47, 0.36$, both $P < 0.01$) in treatment-naive CHB patients, while IL-2 and IL-4 had no significant correlations with ALT or AST (all $P > 0.05$). There were statistically significant differences in serum levels of IL-17A, IL-2, and IL-21 among the treatment-naive CHB group with ALT ≥ 300 U/L, the treatment-naive CHB group with ALT < 300 U/L, and healthy control group (all $P < 0.05$). Specifically, the levels of IL-17A and IL-21 in the treatment-naive CHB group with ALT ≥ 300 U/L were significantly higher than those in the treatment-naive CHB group with ALT < 300 U/L and healthy control group (all $P < 0.01$). The level of IL-2 in the treatment-naive CHB group with ALT < 300 U/L was significantly lower than that in healthy control group, while the level of IL-21 was significantly higher than that in healthy control group (all $P < 0.01$). ROC curve analysis results showed that the area under curve (AUC) values of IL-17A and IL-21 to judge the degree of liver inflammation were 0.893 3 (95% confidence interval [CI] 0.793 0-0.993 6) and 0.760 0 (95% CI 0.622 7-0.897 3), respectively. **Conclusion** IL-17A, IL-2, and IL-21 are involved in the progression of chronic HBV infection. Regardless of whether HBeAg is positive or not or the degree of inflammation, the serum levels of IL-17A and IL-21 in the treatment-naive CHB patients are increased, while the level of IL-2 is decreased. IL-2 has a certain correlation with HBV DNA quantification. IL-17A and IL-21 are positively correlated with ALT and AST. Detection of IL-17A and IL-2 is helpful for disease assessment and prognosis.

[Key words] chronic hepatitis B; cytokines; interleukin 17A; interleukin 2; interleukin 21; interleukin 4

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慢性乙型肝炎 (chronic hepatitis B, CHB) 在世界范围内流行, 炎症反复持续进展可发展为肝硬

化甚至肝癌, 全球每年约有 80 余万人死于 HBV 感染导致的肝衰竭或肝癌等相关疾病, 直接影响人们

的健康^[1-2]。WHO提出到2030年要消除病毒性肝炎危害的目标^[3],中国作为全球HBV感染人数最多的国家,在推动此目标实现方面理当表率。HBV感染人体后引起肝细胞病变主要取决于机体的免疫应答,尤其是细胞免疫,该过程既可清除病毒,亦可导致肝细胞损伤,重症肝炎的发生正是基于各种细胞因子参与形成的炎症风暴使肝细胞遭受强烈免疫打击^[4]。

细胞因子是免疫细胞合成和分泌的重要化学介质,通过其作用的受体调节免疫细胞的分化、增殖和功能,从而协调疾病反应与进展,影响HBV感染后的临床结局^[5]。IL-17A可诱导大量趋化因子和炎症因子分泌从而促进炎症反应,与CHB的发生、发展密切相关^[6];IL-2是调节肝脏免疫稳态的重要因子,有利于T细胞生长并诱导自然杀伤细胞活化^[7];IL-21在控制慢性病毒感染中发挥重要作用^[8];此外,IL-4作为负调节因子在肝脏促炎和抑炎平衡中的作用也逐渐受到关注^[9]。以IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21和IL-4为代表的细胞因子可客观反映机体免疫状态,本研究探讨了初治CHB患者及健康人群血清细胞因子水平与病毒载量和肝脏炎症程度的关系,以期为临床动态评估CHB的病情和预后提供新思路。

1 资料和方法

1.1 研究对象 选择2018年10月至2019年11月就诊于海军军医大学(第二军医大学)第一附属医院感染科的初治CHB患者68例为研究对象。纳入标准:(1)年龄 ≥ 18 岁;(2)符合《慢性乙型肝炎防治指南(2015年版)》^[10]中的诊断标准。排除标准:(1)合并其他肝炎病毒感染,如甲型肝炎病毒、丙型肝炎病毒、丁型肝炎病毒、戊型肝炎病毒;(2)合并自身免疫性肝炎、酒精性肝病、药物性肝损伤等其他肝病;(3)合并引起免疫功能障碍的疾病,如恶性肿瘤、艾滋病、风湿免疫性疾病等。另选12名年龄、性别与入组CHB患者相匹配的同期献血人员为健康对照。

所有入选患者及健康献血人员均对本研究知情同意并签署知情同意书,本研究获得海军军医大学(第二军医大学)第一附属医院伦理委员会审批

(CHEC2017-118)。

1.2 研究方法

1.2.1 血液样本采集 采集入组患者及健康献血人员清晨空腹时的肘正中静脉血5 mL,置于不抗凝管,3 000 r/min离心10 min(离心机半径为15.7 cm,湖南湘仪实验室仪器开发有限公司生产的L-1550型离心机),取血清用于检测肝功能、HBV DNA定量、细胞因子水平等。

1.2.2 血清细胞因子检测 采用ELISA试剂盒(美国eBioscience公司)检测血清中细胞因子IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21和IL-4水平,操作严格按照试剂盒说明书进行。

1.2.3 HBV血清病毒学检测 采用化学发光法检测HBV血清学标志物[乙型肝炎表面抗原(hepatitis B surface antigen, HBsAg)、乙型肝炎表面抗体(hepatitis B surface antibody, HBsAb)、乙型肝炎e抗原(hepatitis B e antigen, HBeAg)、乙型肝炎e抗体(hepatitis B e antibody, HBeAb)、乙型肝炎核心抗体(hepatitis B core antibody, HBcAb)],试剂盒购自美国Abbott公司。采用qPCR法检测血清HBV DNA,试剂盒购自深圳市匹基生物工程股份有限公司。反应条件为38 °C 5 min, 95 °C 10 min; 95 °C 15 s, 55 °C 50 s,共40个循环。由仪器自带软件自动分析报告结果,HBV DNA $< 5 \times 10^2$ IU/mL为阴性。

1.2.4 肝功能指标检测 采用日立7600型全自动生化分析仪检测血清丙氨酸转氨酶(alanine transaminase, ALT)、天冬氨酸转氨酶(aspartate transaminase, AST)水平,试剂盒购自上海科华生物工程股份有限公司。ALT、AST正常参考值上限均为30 U/L。

1.3 统计学处理 应用GraphPad Prism 8.0及SPSS 25.0软件进行统计学分析。呈正态分布的计量资料以 $\bar{x} \pm s$ 表示,两组间比较采用独立样本 t 检验;呈偏态分布的计量资料以中位数(下四分位数,上四分位数)表示,两组间比较采用Mann-Whitney U 检验,多组间比较采用Kruskal-Wallis H 检验。计数资料以例数和百分数表示,采用 χ^2 检验。采用Spearman相关分析评估血清细胞因子与病毒载量及肝脏炎症程度的相关性。应用ROC曲

线的AUC评价血清细胞因子水平对肝脏炎症程度的判断效能。检验水准(α)为0.05。

2 结果

2.1 研究对象的基本情况 入组的68例初治CHB患者中男48例、女20例,年龄23~68岁,中位年龄为34.5(29.0, 43.0)岁,依据《慢性乙型肝炎防治指南(2022年版)》^[11]中慢性HBV感染的自然病程进行分期: HBeAg阳性慢性HBV感染(也

称免疫耐受期、慢性HBV携带状态)5例、HBeAg阳性CHB(也称免疫清除期、免疫活动期)32例、HBeAg阴性慢性HBV感染(也称非活动期、免疫控制期、非活动性HBsAg携带状态)6例和HBeAg阴性CHB(也称再活动期)25例,其基本资料见表1。12例健康对照者中男8例、女4例,年龄为22~44岁,平均年龄(33.25±2.30)岁。初治CHB患者与健康对照者的年龄($Z=-0.857, P=0.392$)和性别($\chi^2=0.075, P=0.785$)差异均无统计学意义。

表1 不同病程CHB患者的基本资料

Tab 1 Basic information of CHB patients with different disease courses

Item	HBeAg-positive chronic HBV infection n=5	HBeAg-positive CHB n=32	HBeAg-negative chronic HBV infection n=6	HBeAg-negative CHB n=25
Age/year, $\bar{x} \pm s$	32.80±7.46	33.34±7.71	38.67±11.43	42.48±12.42
Male, n (%)	3 (60.0)	22 (68.8)	2 (33.3)	21 (84.0)
HBsAg/(IU·mL ⁻¹)	>1×10 ⁴	+	<1×10 ³	+
HBeAg/(IU·mL ⁻¹)	+	+	-	-
lg(HBV DNA/[IU·mL ⁻¹]), M(Q _L , Q _U)	4.70 (3.16, 8.11)	6.59 (4.93, 7.70)	-	5.37 (3.91, 6.25)
ALT/(U·L ⁻¹), M(Q _L , Q _U)	17.00 (16.50, 25.50)	141.50 (68.25, 255.50)	17.50 (14.00, 28.25)	281.00 (138.00, 503.00)
AST/(U·L ⁻¹), M(Q _L , Q _U)	20.00 (17.00, 26.50)	67.50 (41.00, 103.50)	21.00 (17.75, 25.50)	148.00 (79.00, 273.50)

+: Positive; -: Negative. CHB: Chronic hepatitis B; HBsAg: Hepatitis B surface antigen; HBeAg: Hepatitis B e antigen; HBV: Hepatitis B virus; ALT: Alanine transaminase; AST: Aspartate transaminase; M(Q_L, Q_U): Median (lower quartile, upper quartile).

2.2 血清细胞因子表达水平比较 初治CHB患者血清IL-17A水平为17.50(11.99, 25.36) pg/mL, 高于健康对照[13.74(9.07, 16.94) pg/mL], 差异有统计学意义($Z=-2.001, P=0.045$)。初治CHB患者血清IL-2水平为57.19(31.10, 79.92) pg/mL, 低于健康对照[73.06(62.41, 105.84) pg/mL], 差异有统计学意义($Z=-2.509, P=0.012$)。初治CHB患者血清IL-21水平为37.12(23.85, 77.66) pg/mL, 高于健康对照[20.30(17.90, 24.19) pg/mL],

差异有统计学意义($Z=-3.485, P<0.01$)。初治CHB患者血清IL-4水平为11.40(5.79, 18.62) pg/mL, 健康对照的为10.84(8.05, 25.20) pg/mL, 两者差异无统计学意义($Z=-0.681, P=0.496$)。

因不同病程的CHB患者免疫状态不同, 本研究进一步对各病程患者的细胞因子水平进行了比较, 结果(表2)显示不同病程CHB患者的血清IL-17A表达水平差异有统计学意义($H=8.870, P=0.031$)。

表2 不同病程CHB患者血清细胞因子表达水平比较

Tab 2 Differences in cytokine expression level in serum of CHB patients with different disease courses

Cytokine	(pg·mL ⁻¹), M(Q _L , Q _U)				H value	P value
	HBeAg-positive chronic HBV infection n=5	HBeAg-positive CHB n=32	HBeAg-negative chronic HBV infection n=6	HBeAg-negative CHB n=25		
IL-17A	9.95 (5.80, 17.66)	15.34 (10.65, 25.04)	10.19 (1.99, 21.58)	19.98 (15.55, 34.14)	8.870	0.031
IL-2	55.01 (39.59, 74.91)	57.19 (37.45, 79.92)	100.63 (48.93, 144.51)	37.45 (18.32, 73.06)	6.913	0.075
IL-21	20.83 (18.25, 54.77)	37.74 (25.06, 82.87)	31.62 (23.64, 57.74)	51.74 (23.32, 83.82)	3.330	0.343
IL-4	12.47 (2.14, 20.05)	11.40 (6.87, 18.73)	18.08 (10.44, 35.22)	10.31 (4.33, 16.80)	2.228	0.526

CHB: Chronic hepatitis B; IL: Interleukin; HBeAg: Hepatitis B e antigen; HBV: Hepatitis B virus; M(Q_L, Q_U): Median (lower quartile, upper quartile).

与非活动状态 (HBeAg 阳性慢性 HBV 感染、HBeAg 阴性慢性 HBV 感染) 患者相比, 炎症活动状态患者 (HBeAg 阳性 CHB、HBeAg 阴性 CHB) 血清 IL-17A [17.71 (12.25, 27.92) pg/mL vs 16.51 (6.29, 20.22) pg/mL] 和 IL-21 [39.29 (24.71, 83.19) pg/mL vs 25.06 (19.37, 49.43) pg/mL] 水平升高、IL-2 [57.19 (31.10, 77.68) pg/mL vs 71.24 (48.07, 117.39) pg/mL] 水平下降 (均 $P < 0.05$), IL-4 [11.40 (5.94, 18.12) pg/mL vs 14.57 (3.12, 24.49) pg/mL] 水平差异无统计学意义 ($P > 0.05$)。HBeAg 阳性 CHB 患者、HBeAg 阴性 CHB 患者血清 IL-17A [15.34 (10.65, 25.04)、19.98 (15.55, 34.14) pg/mL vs 13.74 (9.07, 16.94) pg/mL, $H=10.061, P=0.007$] 和 IL-21 [37.74 (25.06, 82.87)、51.74 (23.32, 83.82) pg/mL vs 20.30 (17.90, 24.19) pg/mL, $H=12.444, P=0.002$] 水平高于健康对照者, IL-2 [57.19 (37.45, 79.92)、37.45 (18.32, 73.06) pg/mL vs 73.06 (62.41, 105.84) pg/mL, $H=6.576, P=0.037$] 水平低于健康对照者, IL-4 [11.40 (6.87, 18.73)、10.31 (4.33, 16.80) pg/mL vs 10.84 (8.05, 25.20) pg/mL, $H=0.515, P=0.773$] 水平差异在 3 组间无统计学意义。

2.3 初治 CHB 患者血清细胞因子表达与病毒载量

的关系 初治 CHB 患者血清 IL-17A、IL-21、IL-4 水平与 HBV DNA 定量无相关性 ($r=0.02、0.23、0.07$, 均 $P > 0.05$), IL-2 水平与 HBV DNA 定量存在弱相关性 ($r=0.32, P=0.01$)。

2.4 初治 CHB 患者血清细胞因子表达与肝脏炎症程度的关系 初治 CHB 患者血清 IL-17A、IL-21 水平与 ALT 水平存在相关性 ($r=0.59、0.49$, 均 $P < 0.01$), IL-2、IL-4 水平与 ALT 水平无关 ($r=0.09、0.07$, 均 $P > 0.05$)。初治 CHB 患者血清 IL-17A、IL-21 水平与 AST 水平存在相关性 ($r=0.47、0.36$, 均 $P < 0.01$), IL-2、IL-4 水平与 AST 水平无关 ($r=0.06、-0.06$, 均 $P > 0.05$)。

本研究以 ALT 正常值上限的 10 倍为界限将初治 CHB 患者分为 ALT ≥ 300 U/L 组 (18 例) 和 ALT < 300 U/L 组 (50 例), 对组间的细胞因子水平进行比较。结果如表 3 所示, ALT ≥ 300 U/L 初治 CHB 组、ALT < 300 U/L 初治 CHB 组及健康对照组间血清 IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21 水平差异有统计学意义 (均 $P < 0.05$), 3 组间 IL-4 水平差异无统计学意义 ($P > 0.05$)。与 ALT < 300 U/L 初治 CHB 组及健康对照组相比, ALT ≥ 300 U/L 初治 CHB 组 IL-17A、IL-21 水平均升高 (均 $P < 0.01$); 与健康对照组相比, ALT < 300 U/L 初治 CHB 组 IL-2 水平降低、IL-21 水平升高 (均 $P < 0.01$)。

表 3 不同肝脏炎症程度初治 CHB 患者血清细胞因子表达水平比较

Tab 3 Comparison of serum cytokine expression level in treatment-naive CHB patients with different degrees of liver inflammation

Cytokine	Healthy control $n=12$	CHB with ALT < 300 U·L ⁻¹ $n=50$	CHB with ALT ≥ 300 U·L ⁻¹ $n=18$	(pg · mL ⁻¹), $M(Q_L, Q_U)$	
				H value	P value
IL-17A	13.74 (9.07, 16.94)	15.12 (10.43, 19.96)	32.86 (24.81, 45.75)** $\Delta\Delta$	27.557	< 0.01
IL-2	73.06 (62.41, 105.84)	48.07 (29.14, 79.03)**	63.88 (56.47, 82.37)	8.581	0.014
IL-21	20.30 (17.90, 24.19)	26.43 (22.97, 51.06)**	74.42 (57.58, 99.03)** $\Delta\Delta$	21.438	< 0.01
IL-4	10.84 (8.05, 25.20)	11.94 (5.00, 22.07)	11.40 (6.56, 16.87)	0.480	0.786

** $P < 0.01$ vs healthy control group; $\Delta\Delta P < 0.01$ vs CHB with ALT < 300 U/L group. CHB: Chronic hepatitis B; IL: Interleukin; ALT: Alanine transaminase; $M(Q_L, Q_U)$: Median (lower quartile, upper quartile).

2.5 血清细胞因子水平判断初治 CHB 患者肝脏炎症程度的效能分析 以 ALT 正常值上限的 10 倍为界, 以肝脏炎症程度为因变量 (炎症程度高赋值为 1, 炎症程度低赋值为 0), 血清细胞因子水平为自变量进行二分类 logistics 回归拟合。ROC 曲线分析结果显示, IL-17A 判断肝脏炎症程度的 AUC 值为

0.893 3 (95% CI 0.793 0~0.993 6), IL-21 判断肝脏炎症程度的 AUC 值为 0.760 0 (95% CI 0.622 7~0.897 3)。Z 检验比较 2 种细胞因子的 AUC 值, 结果显示差异无统计学意义 ($Z=-1.536, P=0.938$)。见图 1。

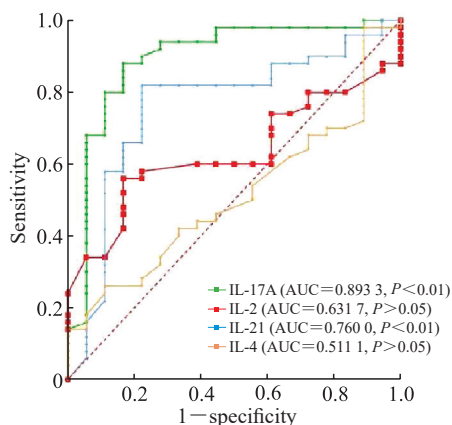


图1 血清细胞因子水平判断初治CHB患者肝脏炎症程度的ROC曲线

Fig 1 ROC curve of serum cytokine level to determine the degree of liver inflammation in treatment-naive CHB patients
CHB: Chronic hepatitis B; ROC: Receiver operating characteristic; IL: Interleukin; AUC: Area under curve.

3 讨论

CHB的发病机制较为复杂,至今仍未完全阐明,但目前的研究已证实HBV引起的免疫应答是导致炎症和肝细胞损伤的基础,也是HBV相关肝病发生、发展的基础^[12]。HBV感染后人体通过获得性免疫反应清除病毒,HBV特异性CD8⁺T细胞被广泛认为是病毒清除的最终效应者,而CD4⁺T细胞是CD8⁺T细胞和抗体应答的诱导与维持的促进因子,CHB患者血液和肝脏中特异性CD8⁺T细胞仅以低频度出现可以解释其肝病发病迁延难愈^[13]。炎症反应时某些细胞因子的分泌与杀伤性T淋巴细胞活化有关,而慢性感染中,某些抑制性细胞因子参与免疫细胞的耗竭进而无法有效清除病毒。CD8⁺T细胞直接通过细胞毒作用杀死被感染的肝细胞,但其最主要的抗病毒功能是分泌产生IL-2、TNF- α 等细胞因子抑制HBV基因的表达和复制^[14],CD4⁺辅助性T细胞(helper T cell, Th)产生的IL-4、IL-5等细胞因子是调节抗HBV获得性免疫反应所必须的^[15]。IL-17由Th17产生分泌,具有促炎功能,最大的特点是能被炎症因子诱导产生而后促进更多炎症因子分泌增强,这些因子作为激动剂再次作用于IL-17,构成了IL-17活化的正反馈调节,可加重CHB炎症反应并促进肝纤维化^[16];IL-2、IL-21和IL-4同属于IL-2家族,在CHB感染

中,特异性CD4⁺T淋巴细胞的耗竭导致IL-2分泌减少^[17],IL-21主要具有调节B淋巴细胞、CD4⁺和CD8⁺T淋巴细胞活性,发挥抗肿瘤和抗病毒等多种功能,而IL-4在HBV持续感染中可能具有双重作用,既可抑制HBV基因表达和复制,也有可能引起HBV持续感染^[18]。

本研究结果显示,相较于健康对照者,初治CHB患者血清IL-17A、IL-21水平升高($P<0.05$, $P<0.01$),IL-2水平降低($P<0.05$),而IL-4水平的差异无统计学意义($P>0.05$)。HBeAg阳性CHB患者、HBeAg阴性CHB患者与健康对照者3者间血清细胞因子IL-17A、IL-2、IL-21水平差异均有统计学意义(均 $P<0.05$)。HBeAg与HBV DNA的检出有明显的平行关系,HBeAg阳性是乙型肝炎病毒复制明显和传染性强的可靠标志^[19]。与病毒载量的相关性分析中,初治CHB患者血清IL-2水平与HBV DNA定量存在弱相关性($r=0.32$, $P=0.01$),提示其高表达有利于HBV复制。

在慢性HBV感染的自然病程中,一旦进入免疫清除期,患者肝炎发作,转氨酶升高,而进入HBeAg阴性的非活动性携带状态后转氨酶恢复正常,从疾病进程中可以看出,反映肝细胞损伤的转氨酶随着宿主免疫反应增强而升高。本研究结果显示,初治CHB患者血清IL-17A、IL-21水平与ALT、AST水平存在相关性(均 $P<0.01$),而IL-2、IL-4与ALT、AST水平无明显相关性(均 $P>0.05$)。

重度肝炎患者有明显或持续的肝炎症状,如乏力、食欲缺乏、腹胀等,伴ALT和/或AST反复或持续升高,如发生ALT和AST大幅升高,提示重症倾向,疾病可迅速向肝衰竭发展^[20]。本研究中,ALT高水平($ALT\geq 300$ U/L)组初治CHB患者血清IL-17A、IL-21水平高于健康对照者及低水平($ALT<300$ U/L)组(均 $P<0.01$),而低水平($ALT<300$ U/L)组IL-2表达水平低于健康对照者($P<0.01$)、IL-21水平高于健康对照者($P<0.01$),3组间IL-4水平差异无统计学意义($P>0.05$)。这与既往研究结果相符,提示IL-17A、IL-21和IL-2对CHB宿主免疫反应具有重要的调节作用。一方面,IL-17A过表达可介导多种感染性疾病与自身免疫性疾病^[21],在CHB患者血清中的表达水平随症状加重呈升高趋势^[22],IL-21水平

的升高与慢性 CHB 抗病毒的治疗应答有关^[23],能够有效抑制 HBV 复制,促进 HBV 感染患者抗病毒治疗的结局与转归^[24]。另一方面,IL-2 特异性扩增和激活调节性 T 细胞,降低肝组织内 CD8⁺ T 细胞反应,下调肝组织内促炎因子的产生,减轻炎症导致的肝损伤^[25-26]。而 IL-4 在本研究中无论根据 HBeAg 阳性与否或根据肝脏炎症程度,差异均无统计学意义,究其原因考虑入组病例数较少。同时既往有研究表明,CHB 患者血清中 IL-4 的水平低于非感染人群,但在接受抗病毒治疗后 IL-4 水平可升高并伴随 HBV DNA 定量降低^[27],另有研究表明 IL-4 可能有利于 HBV 的持续感染^[28],因此 IL-4 在 CHB 中的作用仍需要进一步研究。

ROC 曲线分析结果显示,IL-17A 判断肝脏炎症程度的 AUC 值为 0.893 3,IL-21 判断肝脏炎症程度的 AUC 值为 0.760 0,具有较好的效能,提示 IL-17A 和 IL-21 在判断肝脏炎症程度方面具有较高的临床应用价值。

综上所述,IL-17A、IL-2 和 IL-21 参与 CHB 的感染进程及免疫学发病机制,IL-17A 和 IL-21 与患者的肝脏炎症程度密切相关,在一定程度上可反映肝细胞损伤情况。本研究存在一定的局限性:

(1) 本研究为单中心研究,住院患者疾病谱受限,纳入患者相对较少,尤其是 HBeAg 阳性慢性 HBV 感染期仅有 5 例,结果可能存在偏倚;(2) 未动态随访患者治疗过程中细胞因子的变化。今后有必要开展多中心、前瞻性研究验证细胞因子在 CHB 患者病情变化中的预测效果。

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