

综述

滤泡辅助性T细胞在自身免疫病中作用的研究进展

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[摘要] 滤泡辅助性T细胞 (follicular helper T cell, T_{fh}细胞) 近年被定义为新的CD4⁺T细胞亚群, 主要表达C-X-C趋化因子受体5、可诱导共刺激分子等表面分子, 分泌细胞因子白细胞介素-21, 其关键转录因子为B细胞淋巴瘤分子6。T_{fh}细胞存在于淋巴组织的生发中心及外周血中, 可促进B细胞的成熟与分化、生发中心的形成及抗体的产生, 在系统性红斑狼疮、类风湿性关节炎、原发性干燥综合征等多种自身免疫病的发病机制中发挥重要作用, T_{fh}细胞数量和(或)功能的异常参与组织损伤等病理过程, 并促进疾病进展。该文就T_{fh}细胞的生物学特性以及其在不同类型自身免疫病中的作用进行了综述, 为进一步揭示某些自身免疫病的发病机制提供参考, 并为通过靶向该细胞来治疗疾病提供新的思路。

[关键词] 滤泡辅助性T细胞; 自身免疫病; B细胞; 自身抗体; 白细胞介素-21

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Research progress in roles of follicular helper T cells in autoimmune diseases

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[Abstract] Follicular helper T cells (T_{fh} cells) have been defined as a new subset of CD4⁺T cells in recent years, mainly expressing surface molecules such as C-X-C motif chemokine receptor type 5, inducible co-stimulator, and secreting cytokine interleukin-21, a key transcription factor of which is B cell lymphoma 6. They exist in the germinal center (GC) of lymphoid tissue and in the peripheral blood as well. With the ability to promote B cell maturation and differentiation, GC formation and antibody production, T_{fh} cells play important roles in the pathogenesis of many autoimmune diseases, such as systemic lupus erythematosus, rheumatoid arthritis, and primary Sjögren's syndrome. The abnormal quantity and/or quality of T_{fh} cells will cause pathological processes like tissue injury and promote disease progression. This article reviews the biological characteristics of T_{fh} cells and their roles in different autoimmune diseases, which may help to further reveal the pathogenesis of certain autoimmune diseases and provide a new way to treat these diseases by targeting these cells.

[Key words] follicular helper T cell; autoimmune disease; B cell; autoantibody; interleukin-21

滤泡辅助性T细胞 (follicular helper T cell, T_{fh}细胞) 属于CD4⁺T细胞亚群, 可促进B细胞的成熟与分化及抗体的产生, 并支持生发中心 (germinal center, GC) 的形成^[1]。目前研究认为, T_{fh}细胞在系统性红斑狼疮、类风湿性关节炎、原发性干燥综合征、系统性硬化病、重症肌无力、炎症性肠病等多种自身免疫病的发病机制中发挥着重要作用。本文对

T_{fh}细胞及其在自身免疫病中作用的研究进展作一综述, 旨在进一步揭示T_{fh}细胞在自身免疫病发病机制中的作用, 为疾病的治疗提供新的线索。

1 T_{fh}细胞的生物学特性

T_{fh}细胞最初在扁桃体淋巴滤泡内的GC中被发

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现^[2],主要来源于CD4⁺初始T细胞,具有支持GC形成、决定GC中的B细胞分化为记忆B细胞(memory B cell, Bm细胞)或浆细胞,以及促进抗体产生的功能^[3]。Tfh细胞的特征性功能分子包括表面分子、转录因子、细胞因子(图1)。

1.1 表面分子

Tfh细胞的表面分子包括:C-X-C趋化因子受体5(C-X-C motif chemokine receptor type 5, CXCR5)、可诱导共刺激分子(inducible co-stimulator, ICOS)、CD40配体(CD40 ligand, CD40L)、肿瘤坏死因子受体超家族成员4(tumor necrosis factor receptor superfamily member 4, OX40)、程序性死亡受体-1(programmed cell death protein 1, PD-1)等。

CXCR5在Tfh细胞表面高表达。在C-X-C趋化因子配体13(chemokine C-X-C motif ligand 13, CXCL13)的作用下,CXCR5介导Tfh细胞迁移至淋巴滤泡的T细胞-B细胞交界处并与B细胞相互作用^[4]。

ICOS表达水平的上调为Tfh细胞分化的重要检查点。ICOS配体(ICOS ligand, ICOSL)主要表达于抗原提呈细胞表面^[5]。ICOS/ICOSL通过磷脂酰

肌醇3激酶/蛋白激酶B/哺乳动物雷帕霉素靶蛋白(phosphatidylinositol 3 kinase/protein kinase B/mammalian target of rapamycin, PI3K/AKT/mTOR)信号通路转导活化信号^[6],促进Tfh细胞分化、迁移至淋巴滤泡,并参与GC的形成^[5]。WAN等^[7]研究发现,细胞外调节蛋白激酶(extracellular regulated protein kinase, ERK)通路可抑制锌指蛋白831(zinc finger protein 831, ZFP831)的表达,ZFP831可通过上调B细胞淋巴瘤分子6(B cell lymphoma 6, BCL-6)和转录因子7(transcription factor 7, TCF7)的表达来促进Tfh细胞分化。ICOS对抑制Tfh细胞分化的ERK通路无激活效应。

Tfh细胞表面的CD40L可与B细胞表面的CD40作用,促进B细胞的增殖、分化及抗体类别转换^[5]。较强的CD40/CD40L作用可促进B细胞表面ICOSL的表达,从而进一步促进Tfh、B细胞间的相互活化,产生高亲和力的B细胞并使之分化为更长寿的浆细胞^[8]。一般认为,CD40L与CD40相互作用可启动B细胞的活化,而后CD40L被辅助性T细胞内吞;但GARDELL等^[9]研究发现,当CD40L与CD40作用时,CD40L将脱离辅助性T细胞并转移至B细胞表面,为B细胞的活化提供持续刺激。

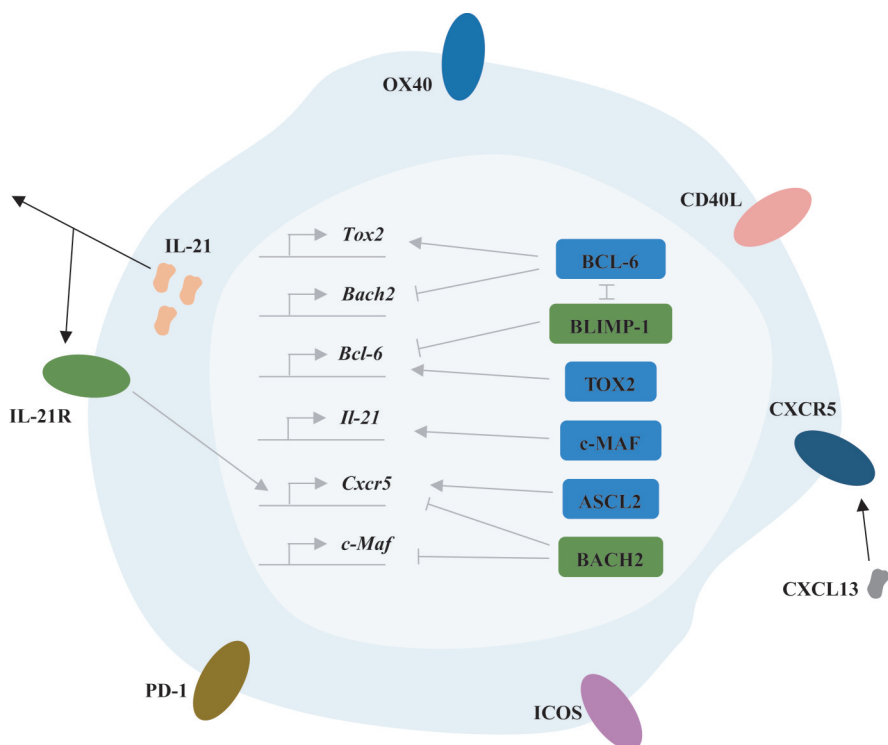


图1 Tfh细胞及其主要功能分子

Fig 1 Tfh cell and its main functional molecules

OX40与OX40配体(OX40 ligand, OX40L)的相互作用是Tfh细胞的又一重要共刺激信号^[10]。OX40/OX40L主要通过核因子 κ B(nuclear factor κ B, NF- κ B)及PI3K/AKT通路转导活化信号,上调CXCR5、BCL-6、白细胞介素-21(interleukin-21, IL-21)、CXCL13的表达水平,促进Tfh细胞的分化与成熟,并增强GC反应^[11]。

PD-1通过与程序性死亡配体-1(programmed cell death protein ligand 1, PD-L1)结合以抑制ICOS活化信号,从而抑制Tfh细胞的增殖。PD-1缺陷可引起Tfh细胞数量的异常增多,导致过度的B细胞增殖及抗体产生^[12]。

1.2 转录因子

转录因子包括BCL-6、胸腺细胞选择相关HMG盒蛋白2(thymocyte selection-associated HMG box protein 2, TOX2)、BTB和CNC同源物2(BTB and CNC homolog 2, BACH2)、achaete-scute复合物同系物2(achaete-scute complex homologue 2, ASCL2)。

BCL-6与促进CD4⁺T细胞向Th1、Th2、Th17等亚群分化的转录因子相拮抗^[1],是Tfh细胞分化所必需的转录因子,可促进B细胞活化及GC形成^[5]。BCL-6可被B淋巴细胞诱导成熟蛋白1(B lymphocyte induced maturation protein1, BLIMP-1)拮抗;BLIMP-1还可抑制BCL-6的表达,阻止CD4⁺T细胞向Tfh细胞分化^[1]。

TOX2可增加Tfh细胞相关基因的染色质可及性并促进Tfh细胞成熟。BCL-6可上调TOX2的表达,而TOX2表达的上调则可进一步促进BCL-6的表达。TOX2的表达还受信号转导及转录激活蛋白3(signal transducer and activator of transcription 3, STAT3)的调节。在STAT3缺陷的CD4⁺T细胞中,TOX2的表达水平下调^[13]。

ASCL2可促进T细胞表达CXCR5,降低C-C趋化因子受体7(C-C chemokine receptor 7, CCR7)的表达,但并不影响BCL-6的表达水平^[14]。ASCL2可能通过诱导NF- κ B抑制蛋白(inhibitor of NF- κ B, I κ B)家族成员I κ B δ ,即I κ B_{NS}的表达,促进CXCR5的表达^[15]。体内上调ASCL2的表达水平可加速T细胞向淋巴滤泡迁移,并促进Tfh细胞的发育^[14]。在CD4⁺T细胞内特异性敲除*Ascl2*基因或阻断ASCL2的功能,会导致Tfh细胞发育异常,并影响GC的正常

反应^[16]。

BACH2是负向调控Tfh细胞的转录因子,可直接抑制*Cxcr5*和肌腱膜纤维肉瘤原癌基因转录因子(c-musculoaponeurotic-fibrosarcoma, *c-Maf*)基因的转录。BACH2通过抑制致病性Tfh细胞的增殖从而减轻自身免疫反应。BCL-6可直接与*Bach2*基因启动子区域结合以抑制*Bach2*的转录^[17]。

1.3 细胞因子

IL-21是Tfh细胞分泌的重要细胞因子,c-MAF可促进其表达^[18]。IL-21主要通过B细胞表面的IL-21受体(IL-21 receptor, IL-21R)结合以激活Janus激酶(Janus kinase, JAK)-STAT信号通路,从而活化B细胞,促进B细胞增殖、亲合力成熟及分化为浆母细胞^[19]。Tfh细胞表面同样表达IL-21R,可能通过自分泌作用促进Tfh细胞高水平表达CXCR5并向GC趋化^[5,20]。

1.4 Tfh细胞的分类

依据Tfh细胞的定位,可将其分为GC中的Tfh细胞与外周血中的循环Tfh细胞(circulating Tfh cell, cTfh细胞)2类,通常Tfh细胞主要指GC中的Tfh细胞。

cTfh细胞是外周血中的一群支持B细胞分化与抗体类别转换的Tfh细胞。除定位与GC中的Tfh细胞不同外,cTfh细胞还不表达BCL-6。根据cTfh细胞表面CXCR3、CCR6的表达情况,可将cTfh细胞分为cTfh1、cTfh2、cTfh17细胞3种亚型^[21]。cTfh2、cTfh17细胞可分泌IL-21、诱导初始B细胞分化为浆细胞并分泌免疫球蛋白(immunoglobulin, Ig),同时促进抗体类别转换;cTfh1细胞不能诱导初始B细胞分泌Ig,但ICOS⁺PD-1⁺⁺cTfh1细胞可通过分泌IL-21诱导Bm细胞分化为浆细胞^[22]。目前对于cTfh细胞是起源于GC中的Tfh细胞,还是Tfh细胞的前体细胞,尚存在争议,有待进一步研究。

此外,滤泡调节性T细胞(follicular regulatory T cell, Tfr细胞)也是许多自身免疫病中存在的一类重要细胞。其具有双重特性,既表达Tfh细胞的特征性分子CXCR5、BCL-6、PD-1、ICOS,又表达调节性T细胞(regulatory T cell, Treg细胞)的特征性转录因子叉头/翼状螺旋转录因子3(forkhead/winged helix family transcription factor 3, FOXP3)。Tfr细胞主要来源于胸腺Treg细胞,在脾脏、淋巴结等淋巴

组织与外周血中均存在,可抑制B细胞分化与抗体亲和力成熟,并在GC中发挥抑制B细胞和Tfh细胞的作用^[23]。

2 Tfh细胞在不同类型自身免疫病中的作用

2.1 Tfh细胞与系统性红斑狼疮

系统性红斑狼疮是一种以免疫耐受的丧失与高亲和力自身抗体的产生为主要特征的慢性全身性自身免疫病。具有免疫原性的自身DNA通过维甲酸受体相关孤儿核受体 γ t (retinoic acid receptor-related orphan nuclear receptor γ t, ROR γ t)可激活非ICOS依赖性的IL-17⁺ Tfh细胞。在人源化小鼠模型中敲低ROR γ t和阻断IL-17,可抑制Tfh细胞的功能,改善IgG反应和狼疮性肾炎^[24]。转录因子腺病毒E4启动子结合蛋白(adenovirus E4 promoter-binding protein, E4BP4)的功能缺陷与系统性红斑狼疮疾病活动性密切相关。E4BP4通过直接与Bcl-6基因的启动子区域结合,招募组蛋白去乙酰化酶1(histone deacetylase 1, HDAC1)、组蛋白甲基转移酶zeste增强子同源物2(enhancer of zeste homolog 2, EZH2),抑制BCL-6的转录,进而抑制Tfh细胞分化。在系统性红斑狼疮中,E4BP4的功能受损,致使Tfh细胞过度增殖分化^[25]。系统性红斑狼疮患者异常产生的I型干扰素(interferon, IFN)通过激活STAT4促进Tfh细胞分泌IL-21与IFN γ ,导致B细胞功能亢进^[26]。长链非编码RNA(long noncoding RNA, lncRNA)AC007278.2在系统性红斑狼疮中通过作用于CCR7基因的启动子区域下调Tfh细胞中CCR7的表达,促进Tfh细胞分化^[27]。

许多系统性红斑狼疮患者同时患有高催乳素血症,且其催乳素水平与疾病活动性呈正相关^[28]。在狼疮鼠中,催乳素可作用于表达长亚型催乳素受体的Tfh细胞,通过STAT3促进Tfh细胞活化信号的转导;催乳素还可提高Tfh细胞OX40及IL-21的表达水平,导致Tfh细胞数量增加和功能亢进^[29]。

Tfh细胞的激酶同源域相互作用蛋白激酶1(homeodomain interacting protein kinase 1, HIPK1)基因与畸形样激酶1(misshapen-like kinase 1, MINK1)基因的单核苷酸多态性与系统性红斑狼疮的发病相关。用HIPK1、MINK1抑制剂处理Tfh细胞,

可抑制其分泌IL-21的能力^[30]。EZH2在Tfh细胞中的高水平表达可促进系统性红斑狼疮的发病,抑制EZH2可减少Tfh细胞数量,从而抑制GC形成和抗体产生^[31]。

2.2 Tfh细胞与类风湿性关节炎

类风湿性关节炎是一种以关节囊和滑膜的慢性炎症为主要特征的自身免疫病,可导致软骨损伤、骨侵蚀、关节破坏与畸形。类风湿性关节炎患者的滑膜组织中Tfh细胞数量多于骨关节炎患者^[32],外周血中cTfh细胞比例显著高于正常人^[33]。

类风湿性关节炎中Tfh细胞通过OX40降低自身抗体的唾液酸化水平。阻断OX40可减少Tfh细胞数量、恢复自身抗体的唾液酸化水平,从而抑制关节炎的发展^[34]。相较于正常人,类风湿性关节炎患者Tfh细胞中BCL-6的表达水平升高,而BLIMP-1的表达水平降低^[35]。患者CD4⁺ T细胞中磷酸化的STAT3水平急剧升高、血浆中IL-6水平升高,且两者分别与Tfh细胞比例呈正相关。异常水平的IL-6、STAT3使患者Tfh细胞的IL-6/STAT3信号轴过度激活,从而导致Tfh细胞的异常活化^[36]。除此之外,类风湿性关节炎患者血清IL-21水平高于正常人,且其与疾病活动性、血清自身抗体水平呈正相关^[37]。患者滑膜组织中的Bm细胞高表达IL-21R^[38],IL-21/IL-21R可促进B细胞的活化、增殖与分化^[3]。

2.3 Tfh细胞与原发干燥综合征

原发性干燥综合征是一种主要累及唾液腺、泪腺等外分泌腺的慢性自身免疫病。患者外分泌腺的分泌功能丧失,出现口干、眼干等症状。患者的活化cTfh细胞比例显著增加,且存在cTfh/Tfr细胞比值的升高。异常水平的Tfh细胞通过Tfh-B细胞轴促进原发性干燥综合征的发生^[39]。

患者Tfh细胞中存在ASCL2的过度表达^[16]。阿巴西普、抗ICOSL单抗可通过下调ICOS水平或阻断ICOS/ICOSL信号以抑制Tfh细胞的活化,改善原发性干燥综合征患者的症状^[40-41],提示Tfh细胞ICOS表达水平的异常升高可能促进疾病发生。DNA结合抑制因子3(inhibitor of DNA binding 3, ID3)可抑制CXCR5表达,而转录因子配对盒蛋白3(paired box protein 3, PAX3)可通过与Id3基因启动子结合启动其转录。原发性干燥综合征患者中Tfh细胞存在

ID3、PAX3的表达异常下调,异常升高的IL-21可通过抑制PAX3、ID3的表达促进疾病的发生^[42]。

2.4 Tfh细胞与系统性硬化病

系统性硬化病是一种以皮肤纤维化、微血管病变和自身抗体产生为特征的自身免疫病。患者皮损中存在Tfh细胞浸润;同时,患者cTfh细胞数量增加,其数量与疾病严重程度呈正相关,尤其与微血管病变和器官受累高度相关^[43-44]。系统性硬化病中还存在Tfh细胞的亚群失衡。患者血清中Tfh1、Tfh17细胞的水平升高,且Tfh1细胞的比例与自身抗体滴度、IL-21浓度呈正相关^[43]。

Tfh细胞可能通过IL-21和基质金属蛋白酶12(matrix metalloproteinase 12, MMP12)依赖性机制促进皮肤纤维化^[45]。系统性硬化病患者Tfh细胞分泌IL-21的能力增强并高表达BCL-6;其诱导B细胞分化并分泌IgG、IgM的能力亦高于正常人。用JAK1/2抑制剂鲁索利替尼处理系统性硬化病患者的cTfh细胞,可显著降低其分泌IL-21以及诱导浆母细胞分化的能力^[19]。

2.5 Tfh细胞与重症肌无力

重症肌无力是一种由自身抗体介导的、以神经肌接头功能障碍为特征的自身免疫病,患者出现骨骼肌无力等症状。重症肌无力患者高表达ICOS的cTfh细胞的数量增加,且患者cTfh细胞的比例与疾病严重程度呈正相关^[46]。

IL-37可通过与Tfh细胞表面的单免疫球蛋白白介素-1受体相关蛋白(single immunoglobulins IL-1-related receptor, SIGIRR)作用抑制STAT3信号,从而抑制Tfh细胞的增殖分化。重症肌无力患者Tfh细胞IL-37 mRNA以及外周血中IL-37的水平均低于正常人^[47]。

正常情况下,Tfh细胞受到自然杀伤细胞(natural killer cell, NK细胞)的负向免疫调节。而在重症肌无力中,NK细胞对Tfh细胞的杀伤功能受损,促进Tfh细胞增殖分化的功能增强^[48]。

2.6 Tfh细胞与炎症性肠病

炎症性肠病以肠道炎症为特点,主要包括克罗恩病和溃疡性结肠炎。炎症性肠病患者外周血中BCL-6与IL-21 mRNA的水平显著高于正常人;患者肠道组

织GC中,Tfh细胞数量明显增加,Tfr细胞数量减少。BCL-6与IL-21通过调节肠道组织GC中Tfh/Tfr细胞的比例促进炎症性肠病的发生发展^[49]。干扰素调节因子8(interferon regulatory factor 8, IRF8)通过抑制IRF4对IL-21基因启动子区域的DNA结合活性,抑制Tfh细胞的分化;IRF8还可抑制Tfh细胞表面CD40L的表达。IRF8基因缺陷将促进CD4⁺T细胞向Tfh细胞分化,并加重小鼠的结肠炎症状^[50]。乌司奴单抗是一种针对IL-12/IL-23 p40的单克隆抗体^[51],可抑制Tfh细胞的分化、降低克罗恩病患者体内GC的活性,从而起到治疗克罗恩病的效果^[52],提示IL-12、IL-23或通过促进Tfh细胞的分化促进炎症性肠病的发生。

正常情况下,Tfh细胞介导的GC反应受到Tfr细胞的负向免疫调节^[23],而细胞毒性T淋巴细胞相关蛋白4(cytotoxic T lymphocyte-associated protein 4, CTLA-4)与Tfr细胞的分化密切相关。在小鼠CD4⁺T细胞中,CTLA-4的缺陷会使Tfr细胞分化受限,导致Tfh细胞水平相对提高和GC反应增强,使自身抗体在肠上皮细胞中积累,最终导致肠道损伤^[53]。

2.7 Tfh细胞与其他自身免疫病

特发性视神经炎与视神经脊髓炎谱系疾病(neuromyelitis optica spectrum disorder, NMOSD)均以累及视神经的炎症为特征。患者cTfh细胞比例显著高于正常人^[54]。NMOSD患者cTfh细胞的比例及血清中CXCL13的水平均与急性NMOSD的严重程度呈正相关^[55],提示Tfh细胞或在疾病的进展中发挥重要作用。

原发性抗磷脂抗体综合征是一种累及多器官的自身免疫病。患者循环Tfr细胞水平显著降低,而Tfh/Tfr细胞比值升高;同时,患者血清自身抗体水平与Tfh细胞水平呈正相关^[56]。

多发性硬化(multiple sclerosis, MS)是一种以中枢神经系统炎症和神经元脱髓鞘为特征的神经炎性疾病。在MS的动物模型——实验性自身免疫性脑脊髓炎(experimental autoimmune encephalomyelitis, EAE)小鼠的中枢神经系统中存在大量Tfh细胞浸润,且Tfh细胞比例增加^[57]。MS患者血液及脑脊液中具有较高的Tfh/Tfr细胞比例,且其异常的IgG水平与Tfh/Tfr细胞比值呈正相关^[58]。

天疱疮是一种以皮肤、黏膜出现水疱和糜烂为特

征的自身免疫病。天疱疮患者外周血中Tfh17细胞水平升高。这群细胞主要通过诱导B细胞产生桥粒芯蛋白特异性自身抗体促进疾病的发生^[59]。

3 总结与展望

Tfh细胞是一种对B细胞的成熟与抗体的产生至

关重要的辅助性T细胞亚群,参与各类自身免疫病的发病及疾病进展。对Tfh细胞的功能及其作用机制的深入研究不仅有助于我们进一步揭示某些自身免疫病的发病机制,也有助于探索其临床应用前景,实现相关研究的临床转化。靶向Tfh细胞或为多种自身免疫病的潜在治疗方法,具有重要的意义。

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