

· 综述 ·

病毒样颗粒在肿瘤治疗中的应用研究进展及展望

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[摘要] 病毒样颗粒 (virus-like particle, VLP) 是由一种或几种病毒结构蛋白组合而成的中空纳米颗粒, 其形态结构与天然病毒极其相似, 但不包含任何遗传物质。因VLP具有良好的天然免疫原性和安全性, 故常被用于肿瘤疫苗的开发。此外, 与传统的药物递送载体相比, VLP具有较好的生物相容性, 且靶向性强, 使得VLP在递送抗肿瘤药物方面备受关注。近年来利用VLP高效递送基因编辑工具, 为肿瘤治疗提供了新的可能。VLP可以通过多种机制来抑制肿瘤生长和转移, 如VLP可通过激活免疫应答来抑制肿瘤的生长, 通过激发机体的免疫系统, 促进肿瘤相关抗原的表达, 从而增强机体对肿瘤细胞的识别和清除能力等。本文介绍基于不同病毒来源的VLP在预防性或治疗性疫苗以及药物递送载体方面的应用研究进展, 并探讨新的开发策略。这些研究不仅可拓宽VLP在抗肿瘤领域的应用范围, 也将为未来的研究与应用展现更广阔的前景。

[关键词] 病毒样颗粒; 药物递送载体; 抗肿瘤药物; 肿瘤疫苗

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[Abstract] Virus-like particles (VLPs) are hollow nanoparticles composed of one or several virus structural proteins, which have a morphological structure similar to natural viruses but do not contain any genetic material. Due to the excellent innate immunogenicity and safety of VLPs, they are often used in the development of tumor vaccines. In addition, compared with traditional drug delivery vectors, VLPs have better biocompatibility and strong targeting ability, making them highly valued in the delivery of anti-tumor drugs. In recent years, the efficient delivery of gene editing tools using VLPs has provided new possibilities for tumor treatment. VLPs can inhibit tumor growth and spread through various mechanisms, such as activating immune responses to suppress tumor growth, stimulating the body's immune system, promoting the expression of tumor associated antigens, and enhancing the body's ability to recognize and clear tumor cells. These studies not only broaden the application scope of VLPs in the field of anti-tumor therapy, but also provide a broader prospect for future research and application. This article reviewed the research progress of VLPs derived from different viruses in preventive or therapeutic vaccines and drug delivery carriers, and explored new development strategies.

[Key words] Virus-like particles; Drug delivery vehicles; Antitumor drug; Tumor vaccine

目前, 在全球范围内癌症的死亡率仍居高不下, 严重威胁人类的健康^[1]。尽管有多种癌症

治疗方法, 如外科手术、放疗、化疗、靶向治疗及免疫治疗等, 在治疗肿瘤过程中获得了较好的

效果。然而,放疗、化疗等治疗方式也伴随着不同程度的不良反应^[2-3],因此,开发精准、高效且不良反应发生率低的癌症治疗方法具有重要的临床意义。

病毒样颗粒(virus-like particle, VLP)因其独特的优势和良好的安全性,成为新型的潜在抗肿瘤治疗策略^[4]。VLP可以通过多种机制来抑制肿瘤生长和转移,如VLP可通过激活免疫应答来抑制肿瘤的生长,通过激发机体的免疫系统,促进肿瘤相关抗原的表达,从而增强机体对肿瘤细胞的识别和清除能力等。此外,VLP还可作为药物递送载体,将化疗药物或治疗性基因偶联到VLP表面或装载到VLP内部,以此实现药物在肿瘤细胞内的局部释放,从而提高药物治疗效果并减少对健康组织的损伤^[6]。

1 VLP简介及研究进展概况

VLP是病毒去除遗传物质后形成的一种易于药物渗入的中空纳米颗粒,可有效地刺激机体产生体液免疫和细胞免疫应答^[7]。同时,还可用来装载药物,提高药物的靶向递送效率^[8]。VLP形态结构与天然病毒极其相似,由一种或几种病毒的结构蛋白组合而成,但其缺乏核酸,不能进行复制,因此,不具有任何致病性和传染性^[9]。

已知VLP按其结构可分为非包膜VLP和包膜VLP两大类^[10-12](图1)。非包膜VLP由一般的病毒衣壳组成,不含脂质膜,可采用真核和前核系统进行表达,有的甚至可以采用无细胞蛋白合成系统进行表达,如人乳头状瘤病毒(human papillomavirus, HPV)VLP。此外,非包膜VLP生产和纯化过程也相对容易^[13]。相较于非包膜VLP,包膜VLP有脂质膜,且结构更为复杂,通常在真核系统中表达,如流感病毒VLP。目前,已有多种VLP疫苗获得美国食品药品监督管理局(Food and Drug Administration, FDA)的批准,包括针对HPV、乙型肝炎病毒(hepatitis B virus, HBV)、戊型肝炎病毒(hepatitis E virus, HEV)和疟疾的疫苗^[14-16]。同时,越来越多的VLP疫苗已经进入临床试验阶段。

2 VLP在肿瘤疫苗方面的研究进展

由于VLP具有很强的免疫原性及生物学活性,易被免疫系统识别,诱导机体产生体液免疫和细胞免疫应答^[17-18]。基于此,可选择不同的表达系统进行病毒结构蛋白的表达和组装从而形成VLP,进而模拟病毒进入机体,激活机体的免疫反应,从而打破肿瘤和病毒慢性感染所产生的免疫耐受状态^[19-20]。

目前,利用VLP外源表达抗原技术已被广泛应用于VLP肿瘤疫苗的研究,该技术可有效地打破机体自身的免疫耐受状态^[21-23]。卵清蛋白(ovalbumin, OVA)的T淋巴细胞表位(OVA_T肽)是肿瘤体细胞突变产生的肿瘤特异性抗原,可使细胞毒性T淋巴细胞(cytotoxic T lymphocyte, CTL)产生强烈的免疫反应。因此, Li等^[24]设计了一种基于噬菌体P22衍生的VLP表面装载抗原肽。将OVA_T肽结合于P22 VLP表面,形成疫苗颗粒VLP-OVA_T。小鼠肿瘤模型实验表明, VLP-OVA_T使小鼠产生了强烈的TCL相关免疫反应,同时,通过提高CD4⁺T淋巴细胞、CD8⁺T淋巴细胞和效应记忆T淋巴细胞(TEM细胞)的比例,降低肿瘤浸润淋巴细胞(tumor infiltrating lymphocytes, TIL)和脾细胞中髓源性抑制细胞(myeloid-derived suppressor cell, MDSC)的比例,显著抑制肿瘤的生长。此外, Palladini等^[25]的研究结果表明,通过在噬菌体AP250 VLP表面进行定向且高密度的展示人表皮生长因子受体2(human epidermal growth factor receptor 2, HER2),可以有效地诱导机体产生针对HER2蛋白的治疗性自身抗体。这种策略被应用于预防性疫苗接种,结果发现,接种了HER2-VLP疫苗的HER2转基因小鼠,其自发乳腺癌的发生概率显著降低了50%~100%。此外,该疫苗还能抑制HER2阳性肿瘤在野生型小鼠体内的生长。这些研究表明,HER2-VLP疫苗可能成为一种经济高效的HER2阳性癌症预防和治疗新模式。

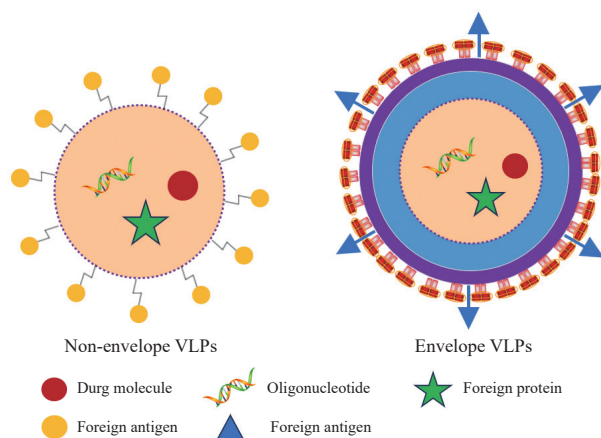


图1 作为抗原呈递和药物递送载体的无包膜和包膜VLP
Fig. 1 Naked and enveloped VLP as antigen-presenting and drug-delivery carriers

Kurg等^[26]则将3种不同的黑色素瘤抗原MAGEA4、MAGE10和MCAM与反转录病毒Gag蛋白融合,自组装形成VLP,将该VLP导入哺乳动物细胞中,发现其能够被哺乳动物细胞递呈,

表明携带有重组抗原的反转录病毒Gag VLP有望激活肿瘤的抗原特异性免疫应答, 可以作为一种潜在的VLP肿瘤疫苗。

研究者^[27]发现, 相较普通的VLP疫苗, 与肿瘤抗原融合表达的VLP和免疫佐剂相结合的新型VLP疫苗, 具有更好的抗肿瘤效果。已知人滋养层细胞表面糖蛋白抗原2 (trophoblast cell-surface antigen 2, TROP-2) 是人类细胞中的单拷贝基因表达产物, 在正常组织中表达量很低, 但在多种恶性肿瘤中呈高表达, 现已被用作有效的肿瘤免疫治疗靶点^[28]。有研究^[29-30]报道, 采用杆状病毒表达系统Bac-to-Bac构建了基于TROP-2、CD40L和Gag蛋白的重组杆状病毒, 并以不同形式组合感染TN5昆虫细胞后形成了TROP-2 VLP和TROP-2-CD40L-VLP两种不同的VLP, 分别接种于C57BL/6小鼠后发现, 相比于TROP-2 VLP免疫组, TROP-2-CD40L-VLP免疫组小鼠免疫反应更强, 并且显著地提高了肺癌细胞荷瘤小鼠的存活率。因此, 基于TROP-2肿瘤抗原和CD40L免疫佐剂相结合的新型VLP疫苗, 可作为肺癌的潜在治疗方法。

研究^[17]表明, VLP相较于传统疫苗, 具备高安全性、免疫效果佳、病毒来源多样化、表达系统多样化以及易于生产等优势, 同时填补了基因疫苗领域的空白。目前, VLP被广泛应用于抗肿瘤疫苗的研发中, 特别是针对宫颈癌、肝癌等恶性肿瘤的VLP疫苗已进入临床试验阶段, 展现出良好的治疗效果和安全性。

3 VLP在肿瘤药物递送中的研究进展

在药物递送系统中, VLP可被设计为不具有感染性, 但仍能有效进入靶细胞并释放药物的递送载体。相较于非病毒载体, VLP在转导效率、免疫原性、靶向性和安全性等方面具有显著优势^[31]。同时, VLP克服了传统病毒载体存在的风险, 使得VLP递送抗肿瘤药物成为当前研究的热点。

3.1 在化疗方面的进展

如今, 癌症治疗的第一种治疗方法是化学治疗, 常用药物如阿霉素 (adriamycin, DOX)^[32]、顺铂^[33]、紫杉醇 (paclitaxel, PTX)^[34]和5-氟尿嘧啶 (5-fluorouracil, 5-FU)^[35]等。然而, 这些药物既影响癌细胞, 也影响正常细胞^[36]。为此使用VLP作为药物递送载体则可以有效地避免上述缺陷, 且能显著提高药物的靶向性和疗效。化疗常用的VLP主要来源于乙型肝炎病毒核心蛋白 (hepatitis B virus core protein, HBc)、豇豆褪绿斑驳病毒 (cowpea

chlorotic mottle virus, CCMV) 和轮状病毒 (rotavirus, RV) 等^[37]。

研究^[38]发现, VLP可以通过化学偶联的方法装载化疗药物。因此, 使用VLP可有效地降低不良反应发生率, 且能显著提高药物的靶向性和疗效。HBC VLP作为一种颗粒性的结构蛋白, 其安全性能高, 可有效装载治疗药物。将DOX通过羧酸基团共价偶联到HBc VLP表面, 有研究^[39]结果表明, 乳腺癌和结直肠癌细胞对DOX功能化的HBc VLP的细胞摄取率远高于正常细胞。

VLP可以用来封装疏水性的化疗药物^[38]。相比于其他纳米载体, VLP具有良好的结构稳定性和生物兼容性, 可以通过展示靶向配体实现特异性药物递送, 从而提高药物疗效并减少不良反应。CCMV在酸性和其他恶劣环境下均有较高稳定性, 因此常被用于药物递送载体的开发^[40]。有研究^[41]表明, CCMV VLP已被用于递送抗癌药物治疗乳腺癌。在一定pH和离子强度下, CCMV的衣壳蛋白能够自主进行解聚和装配。利用这一特性, 可以去除CCMV蛋白衣壳中的遗传物质, 形成一个直径为18 nm且内表面带有高密度正电荷的内腔包裹DOX^[42]。而利用1-乙基-3-(3-二甲基氨基丙基) 碳二亚胺盐酸盐 [1-(3-dimethylaminopropyl)-3-ethylcarbodiimide hydrochloride, EDC] 和N-羟基丁二酰亚胺 (N-hydroxy succinimide, NHS) 将DOX偶联到CCMV衣壳蛋白天冬氨酸和谷氨酸的羧基上则可提高DOX的装载量。同时, 有研究^[43]报道, 利用EDC-NHS将叶酸 (folic acid, FA) 偶联到CCMV VLP上, 还可增强药物对癌症部位的靶向能力。结果显示, 装载有DOX的CCMV VLP在乳腺癌细胞MCF-7中展现出选择性摄取和细胞毒性, 证实了CCMV VLP作为抗肿瘤药物递送载体的研究潜能。

此外, Kim等^[44]开发了基于噬菌体P22 VLP的靶向可调递送纳米平台, 可以将DOX精确地递送到靶细胞。使用SpyTag/SpyCatcher蛋白连接系统将DOX偶联在噬菌体P22 VLP内部, 并成功地递送到靶细胞的细胞质和细胞核中, 产生有效的细胞成像和选择性靶细胞杀伤作用。研究^[5]表明, 与野生P22 VLP相比, 这种经过修饰的P22 VLP在乳腺癌细胞MDA-MB-468和SK-BR-3中表现出较高的细胞摄取率和较高的细胞毒性。然而, 它们对乳腺癌细胞MCF-7的细胞毒性要低于游离DOX^[45]。

VLP的中空结构可以封装疏水性化疗药, 或

通过化学键、生物素-亲和素系统 (biotin-avidin system, BAS) 连接化疗药物精准作用于肿瘤细胞。体现了VLP在化疗递送中兼具精准性、安全性和多功能性, 是突破传统化疗局限的重要策略之一。

3.2 在基因治疗方面的进展

基因治疗是指将外源正常基因导入靶细胞, 以纠正、补偿因缺陷和异常基因引起的疾病, 从而达到治疗的目的, 被认为是目前治疗肿瘤和基因性疾病最有发展前景的方法^[46]。传统的基因治疗工具, 如脂质体等, 存在包装容量有限、生产困难等缺陷, 而VLP不仅能克服上述缺陷, 还可在细胞内靶向递送特定基因, 且转染效率高, 因此为基因治疗开辟了新模式^[47-48]。目前已知VLP可参与递送DNA^[49]、mRNA^[50]和siRNA^[51]等基因治疗药物, 以精确调控特定肿瘤的基因表达, 从而达到抑制肿瘤细胞的目的。病毒的结构蛋白内部通常带有对核酸具有亲和性的氨基酸残基, 因此以病毒结构蛋白为主体的VLP可作为携带基因治疗药物的良好载体, 用于肿瘤的基因治疗^[52]。Lin等^[53]通过将来源于人JC多瘤病毒 (JC polyoma virus, JCPyV) 的VLP作为基因药物递送载体, 该载体可成功地将携带肺癌特异性自杀基因启动子 (SP-B) 和CD59特异性短发夹RNA (shRNA) 的表达质粒 (pSPB-shCD59) 递送到肺肿瘤细胞内, 从而有效地抑制肺部肿瘤的生长。Ao等^[54]将人类免疫缺陷病毒群体特异性抗原 (HIV-Gag) 与半胱天冬酶8 (CASP8) 基因融合的Gag-CASP8蛋白与VSV-G结合形成Gag-CASP8-VLP。该VLP可以有效地进入乳腺癌细胞并将活性CASP8导入其中, 诱导细胞凋亡。在4T1小鼠乳腺癌模型的肿瘤组织中注射Gag-CASP8-VLP可以有效地抑制肿瘤生长。

Zhang等^[55-57]采用CCMV VLP装载寡核苷酸 (oligonucleotide, ODN), 并将其递送到肿瘤相关巨噬细胞 (tumor-associated macrophages, TAM)。研究者采用拆装重组的方式将ODN 1826导入CCMV VLP的空腔内部, 得到封装的CCMV-ODN1826-VLP。该VLP进入小鼠体内后, 通过激活Toll样受体9 (Toll-like receptor-9, TLR) 信号转导通路从而诱导TAM的吞噬活性。并且在小鼠皮下结肠癌的研究中发现, CCMV-ODN1826-VLP在TAM中表现出比游离的ODN1826更高的细胞摄取率, 显著增强了TAM的吞噬活性; 且与游离的ODN1826相比, CCMV-ODN1826-VLP在结肠癌和黑色素瘤小鼠

模型中均可抑制肿瘤生长^[58]。

此外, 基因治疗与化疗的联合应用可发挥两者的协同抗肿瘤作用, 是一种具有广阔前景的抗癌策略^[59-60]。有研究者^[59]构建了一种基于HBc VLP的双靶向给药系统, 该系统是通过HBc VLP表面的氨基酸序列进行靶向改造, 以增强其对特定肿瘤的靶向效率。另外, YES相关蛋白 (YAP) 是Hippo信号转导通路下游的转录共激活因子, YAP对于肿瘤的发生、发展和转移起着至关重要的作用。基于此, 有研究者^[61]设计并使用脑靶向肽 (TGN) 和精氨酸-甘氨酸-天冬氨酸 (RGD) 肽修饰后的HBc VLP装载PTX和YAP siRNA, 可实现对侵袭性脑肿瘤的联合治疗, 并显著抑制了小鼠胶质母细胞瘤的生长, 展现了良好的抗肿瘤效果。因此, VLP的基因治疗与化疗的联合给药系统通过使用低剂量的细胞毒性药物实现高抗肿瘤效率, 为肿瘤治疗提供了更加高效的方案。

4 总结与展望

VLP因其拥有良好的天然免疫原性、较好的生物相容性和安全性, 故常被用于疫苗和药物递送载体的开发, 具有广阔的应用前景 (表1)。最新的研究热点是利用VLP高效递送基因编辑工具 (如CRISPR/Cas9和碱基编辑器), 保护基因编辑工具免遭降解, 该技术在小鼠体内实现了高效的基因编辑, 为肿瘤治疗提供了新的可能。

尽管VLP在肿瘤治疗领域的研究已取得显著进展, 但在实际的应用当中仍有许多问题需要解决, 如VLP生产成本高、表达量较低、不能形成正确的组装体、分离纯化中很难同时具有高收率和高纯度、规模化生产等。同时, 某些VLP在储存或递送过程中易解聚或降解, 需开发低温保存或冻干技术, 确保VLP在医疗用途当中的有效性。此外, VLP难以高效地将药物递送到目标细胞内, 这限制了其在临床治疗中的应用, 研究人员也需要进一步的提高VLP的药物装载效率。

未来, 随着这一系列问题的逐步解决, VLP有望在肿瘤治疗领域中发挥更加重要的作用。同时, 随着生物技术与人工智能的深度融合, 在未来的设计中应该充分发挥VLP目前已有的优势, 融合更多的学科技术, 丰富其功能, 并为临床治疗提供帮助。

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表1 用于疫苗和药物递送的病毒样颗粒的比较

Tab. 1 Comparison of virus-like particles for vaccine and drug delivery

Mode of treatment	Delivery system	Cargo material	Loading method	Targeted cell	References
Vaccination	P22 VLPs	OVA _r peptide	Genetic conjugation	EG.7-OVA	[24]
	AP250 VLPs	HER2	Genetic conjugation	MDA-MB-453	[25]
	HBc VLPs	OVA peptide, gp100	Genetic conjugation	B16-F10 B16-OVA	[62]
Chemotherapy research	HBc VLPs	DOX	Chemical conjugation	HepG2 HT-29	[39]
		PTX	Encapsulation	U87 MG	[59]
		5-FA	Chemical conjugation	A431	[63]
	CCMV VLPs	DOX	Encapsulation, Chemical conjugation	MCF-7	[42-43]
	VP6-based VLPs	DOX	Chemical conjugation	HT-29	[64]
	P22 VLPs	DOX	Chemical conjugation	SK-BR-3 MDA-MB-468	[44]
	FMDV VLPs	DOX	Chemical conjugation	Hela F81	[65]
Gene therapy research	JCPyV VLPs	DOX	Encapsulation	LS174T	[66]
		pSPB-shCD59	Encapsulation	A549	[53]
		pPSAtk	Encapsulation	22RV1 PC-3	[67]
	HBC VLPs	YAP siRNA	Encapsulation	U87 MG	[59]
	CCMV VLPs	ODN1826	Encapsulation	B16-F10	[55-57]

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