



· 论 著 ·

上皮-间质转化诱导转录因子在肺癌诊断和预后预测中的作用

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[摘要] **背景与目的:** 上皮-间质转化诱导转录因子 (epithelial-mesenchymal transition-inducing transcription factor, EMT-TF) 可调节肿瘤增殖、转移和肿瘤干细胞活化, 在肺癌远处转移和复发中起重要作用, 拟通过公共数据库来分析EMT-TF用于肺癌早期诊断及治疗方面的前景。**方法:** 应用Oncomine和GEPIA数据库分析EMT-TF在肺癌组织及正常组织间的表达差异, 及其与肺癌肿瘤分期的相关性; 随后, 使用Kaplan-Meier Plotter分析EMT-TF表达量与肺癌预后的关系; 最后, 通过STRING和Mentha数据库分析EMT-TF间的蛋白质-蛋白质相互作用 (protein-protein interaction, PPI) 网络及与之相互作用的分子。**结果:** 肺癌组织Twist家族BHLH转录因子1 (Twist family BHLH transcription factor 1, Twist1) 表达明显增加, 且其表达量越高, 肺癌病理分期越重、预后越差; 锌指E盒同源结合蛋白1 (zinc finger E-box binding homeobox 1, ZEB1) 和ZEB2在肺腺癌和肺鳞癌中表达降低, 并与预后不良密切相关; Snail超家族锌指转录因子2 (Snail family zinc finger 2) 在肺癌中的表达水平增加, 和肺癌临床分期具有明显相关性, 但和肺癌的预后没有相关性。**结论:** Twist1、SNAI2、ZEB1和ZEB2在肺癌中的表达量和正常组织不同, Twist1和SNAI2的表达量与肿瘤的分期及预后相关, ZEB1和ZEB2在肺癌中表达量降低与肺癌患者的预后不良相关。因此, Twist1和SNAI2可能是肺癌诊断和研究潜在的生物标志物, ZEB1和ZEB2可作为肺癌预后的预测分子。

[关键词] 上皮-间质转化诱导转录因子; 肺癌; 预后

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[Abstract] **Background and purpose:** Epithelial-mesenchymal transition-inducing transcription factors (EMT-TFs) can regulate tumor proliferation, metastasis and tumor stem cell activation, and play an important role in distant metastasis and recurrence of lung cancer. This study intended to analyze the prospect of EMT-TFs in early diagnosis and treatment of lung cancer through public database. **Methods:** ONCOMINE and GEPIA databases were used to analyze the expression difference in EMT-TFs between lung cancer and normal tissues, and the correlation between EMT-TFs expression and tumor stage of lung cancer. Then, Kaplan Meier plotter tools were used to analyze the relationship between EMT-TFs expression and prognosis of lung cancer. Finally, STRING and Mentha: the interactome browser were used to analyze the protein-protein interaction (PPI) network between EMT-TFs and the molecules interacting with them. **Results:** The expression of Twist1 in lung cancer increased significantly, and the higher the expression, the poorer the pathological stage and prognosis of lung cancer were. The expression levels of zinc finger E-box binding homeobox 1 (ZEB1) and ZEB2 in lung adenocarcinoma and squamous cell carcinoma decreased, and were closely related to the poor prognosis. The increased transcription level of Snail family zinc finger 2 (SNAI2) in lung cancer was significantly related to the clinical stage of lung cancer, while it was not related to the prognosis of lung cancer. **Conclusion:** The expression levels of Twist1, SNAI2, ZEB1 and ZEB2 in lung cancer and normal tissues were different, and the expression levels of Twist1 and SNAI2

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were related to tumor stage and prognosis, while low expressions of ZEB1/2 were associated with poor prognosis. Therefore, Twist1 may be a potential biomarker for the diagnosis and research of lung cancer, while ZEB1 or ZEB2 can be used as a predictor of the prognosis of lung cancer.

[Key words] Epithelial-mesenchymal transition-inducing transcription factor; Lung cancer; Prognosis

肺癌是全球人群中发病率最高的肿瘤（占所有肿瘤的11.6%），其死亡率也位居各类肿瘤之首（占18.4%）^[1]。目前，手术治疗仍是中早期肺癌治疗的首选方法，但仍有许多患者丧失手术机会或在术后出现复发和转移，因而早发现、早诊断、早治疗在肺癌的诊治中至关重要。对于部分无法手术或术后出现复发和转移的患者，分子靶向治疗作为新的治疗手段取得了良好的效果，正越来越受到重视。与传统化疗相比，靶向药物具有特异性强、疗效明显、不良反应较少等优点^[2]。然而，靶向药物仅适用于目标基因有突变的患者，且治疗一段时间后，大多数患者对靶向药物产生耐受。这表明，肺癌复发转移的机制异常复杂，有必要进一步探索肺癌细胞的迁移和侵袭机制，以寻找更好的生物标志物，为肿瘤治疗、靶向药物的研发提供理论支持。

近年来，越来越多的研究发现，上皮-间质转化（epithelial-mesenchymal transition, EMT）介导了肿瘤的转移、复发和肿瘤耐药^[3]。在EMT过程中，表皮表型的肿瘤细胞失去细胞极性和细胞间的紧密连接，转化为没有细胞极性且迁移侵袭能力较强的间质表型。此外，EMT还受到Twist家族BHLH转录因子1（Twist family BHLH transcription factor 1, Twist1）、Twist2、Snail超家族锌指转录因子（Snail family zinc finger, SNAI）1、SNAI2、锌指E盒同源结合蛋白1（zinc finger E-box binding homeobox 1, ZEB1）、ZEB2等转录因子的调控，它们常被视作EMT的生物标志物，可统称为EMT诱导转录因子（EMT-inducing transcription factor, EMT-TF）^[3]。研究发现，EMT还可激活肿瘤干细胞，导致耐药^[4]。因此研究EMT-TF在肺癌中的作用有助于肺癌的病理诊断与预后分析。

Twist1和Twist2是碱性的螺旋-环-螺旋蛋白（basic helix-loop-helix protein, bHLH）家族中的两个重要转录因子。在多种肿瘤中，Twist1

呈现高度甲基化，且表达明显增加^[5]，它可通过调控EMT促进肿瘤的增殖和转移^[6]。此外，Twist1还可通过诱导EMT、激活肿瘤干细胞，致使多种肿瘤对靶向药物发生耐受^[7-9]。然而，与Twist1相反，Twist2对肿瘤有明显的抑制作用，它在多种肿瘤组织中，无论是mRNA水平还是蛋白水平都有明显的下降^[10]。ZEB家族在激活肿瘤干细胞、调控肿瘤细胞凋亡、促进肿瘤血管生成和化疗药耐药等方面发挥着重要作用，因而有可能成为肿瘤诊断、预后分析以及治疗的靶点^[11]。ZEB家族有两个重要转录因子ZEB1和ZEB2，它们主要在细胞核内发挥作用。SNAI是保守的锌指家族的转录因子之一，它对果蝇中胚层的形成至关重要^[12]。SNAI在转录水平受到很多生长因子和信号分子的调节，这些因子通过结合SNAI基因的启动子区域发挥调控作用^[13-14]。SNAI1能够与组蛋白去乙酰化酶HDAC1/2相互作用，通过改变染色质的局部结构，抑制E-cadherin的表达，进而调节EMT^[15]。随着研究的深入，人们越来越关注EMT-TF在肿瘤转移复发中的作用，但目前有关EMT-TF与肿瘤分期、预后预测方面的研究很少，因此我们期望利用肿瘤在线数据库，筛选对肺癌诊断、分期和预后预测方面有一定价值的转录因子。

1 材料和方法

1.1 Oncomine Database分析、GEPIA和Lung Cancer Explore

Oncomine Database数据库中共有肺癌数据集74个，包括6 289个样本，我们通过Oncomine Database分析EMT TF在不同肿瘤中的表达水平，进而分析EMT TF在肺癌组织和正常组织中的表达差异（cut-off值： $P=0.01$, fold change of 2）。GEPIA公共在线数据库包含TCGA数据库中9 736例肿瘤标本以及GTEx数据库8 587例正常组织样

本^[16]。我们应用GEPIA比较了EMT-TF基因在肺癌（肺腺癌和鳞状细胞癌）和正常组织中的表达差异，同时还将分析EMT-TF mRNA表达水平与肿瘤临床病理学分期的相关性。

1.2 Kaplan–Meier Plotter

Kaplan-Meier Plotter能够检测近54 000个基因对21种肿瘤生存预后的影响^[17]。我们应用Kaplan-Meier Plotter Lung Cancer数据库分析EMT-TF mRNA水平对肺癌患者5年生存率的影响，例如总生存期（overall survival, OS）、无进展生存期（progression-free survival, PFS）、进展后生存期（post-progression survival, PPS）。

1.3 STRING和Mentha数据库

STRING数据库收集了目前研究的蛋白质间的相互作用，我们通过多基因分析筛选了EMT-TF的蛋白质-蛋白质相互作用（protein-protein interaction, PPI）网络。Mentha数据库的数据来自于依附IMEx联盟的人工管理的PPI数据库，聚集的数据为科研工作提供了一系列工具，在PPI

网络的背景下分析选定的蛋白质。通过Mentha数据库，分析EMT-TF相互作用的系数以及与之作用的分子。

2 结 果

2.1 EMT–TF在肺癌组织中的表达水平

应用ONcomine数据库，我们对比了多种肿瘤组织和正常组织中EMT-TF的转录水平（图1），并将肺癌有关的结果单独归纳于表1。在Hou肺癌数据库中，鳞癌、腺癌组织中Twist1 mRNA水平分别是正常组织的7.7倍和2.54倍，其差异有统计学意义（ $P < 0.01$ ）^[18]。在包括Hou等^[18]报道的数据库在内的4个肺癌数据库中，鳞癌SNAI2转录水平均显著高于正常组织：Yamagata数据库中，SNAI2转录水平增加2倍^[19]；Wachi等^[20]和Hou等^[18]报道，SNAI2转录水平增加3倍多；Garber数据库中^[21]，SNAI2转录水平增加4倍多，差异均有统计学意义（ $P < 0.05$ ）。

Analysis type by cancer	Twist1	Twist2	ZEB1	ZEB2	SNAI1	SNAI2
	Cancer vs normal	Cancer vs normal	Cancer vs normal	Cancer vs normal	Cancer vs normal	Cancer vs normal
Bladder cancer	2		1			
Brain and CNS cancer	1		6	1		5
Breast cancer	8	8		1		4
Cervical cancer						1
Colorectal cancer	6	2	2	1	8	5
Esophageal cancer	1					2
Gastric cancer	1		1			
Head and neck cancer			1			6
Kidney cancer	1		2	1	1	2
Leukemia	2		1	2	1	
Liver cancer			1		1	2
Lung cancer	2		5	9		1
Lymphoma	4		3	7		6
Melanoma	1					1
Myeloma						
Other types of cancer	1			1		2
Ovarian cancer	1	1	1	1		1
Pancreatic cancer	2		2			1
Prostate cancer	1		1			5
Sarcoma	3			1		7
Significant unique analyses	22 13	11	18 16	13 27	5 1	33 15
Total unique analyses	411	150	396	423	372	430

图 1 EMT–TF在不同肿瘤中的转录水平

Fig. 1 Transcription level of EMT-TF in different types of cancer

表 1 EMT-TF转录水平在肺癌和肺组织中的改变

Tab. 1 The significant changes in transcription level of EMT-TF between different types of lung cancer and normal tissues

Gene	Cancer vs normal	Fold change	P value	t test	Reference
Twist1	Squamous cell lung carcinoma vs normal	7.797	4.40E-12	10.142	Hou, et al ^[18]
	Lung adenocarcinoma vs normal	2.541	3.58E-7	5.504	Hou, et al ^[18]
Twist2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
ZEB1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
ZEB2	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SNAI1	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
SNAI2	Squamous cell lung carcinoma vs normal	2.081	0.004	4.057	Yamagata, et al ^[19]
	Squamous cell lung carcinoma vs normal	3.366	3.21E-4	6.860	Wachi, et al ^[20]
	Squamous cell lung carcinoma vs normal	3.669	1.50E-12	9.851	Hou, et al ^[18]
	Squamous cell lung carcinoma vs normal	4.199	0.001	4.475	Garber, et al ^[21]

2.2 EMT-TF的mRNA表达与肺癌临床病理学分期的关系

通过搜索基因表达谱数据动态分析 (Gene Expression Profiling Interactive Analysis, GEPIA) 数据库比较了EMT-TF在肺癌组织和正常组织中的表达差异。结果显示, 与正常组织相比, 在肺鳞癌中Twist1和SNAI2 mRNA表达增加, Twist2、ZEB1、ZEB2和SNAI1表达降低; 而在腺癌中, Twist2、ZEB1、ZEB2和SNAI1 mRNA表达水平降低, Twist1、SNAI2 mRNA表达无差异 (图2A)。

为探究EMT-TF的表达水平与肿瘤分期的相关性, 我们采用stage plot方法对GEPIA数据进行了分析, 结果显示, Twist1、SNAI1和SNAI2表达水平与肺癌临床病理分期具有明显相关性, 而Twist2、ZEB1和ZEB2的表达水平与临床病理学分期无相关性 (图2B)。

2.3 Twist1与肺癌患者预后相关

我们采用Kaplan-Meier Plotter工具分析了EMT-TF mRNA水平与肺癌5年生存率之间

的关系, 结果发现, Twist1和Twist2的表达增加提示肺癌患者的不良预后 ($P < 0.05$): 例如Twist1、Twist2高表达组患者OS、PFS均较低 ($P < 0.05$), SNAI1高表达组患者PFS、OS和PPS均较低 ($P < 0.05$), ZEB1、ZEB2低表达与肺癌的不良预后相关, 其中ZEB1的表达降低与肺癌OS降低相关, ZEB2的低表达与肺癌的PFS和OS预后不良显著相关 (图3)。

2.4 EMT-TF的相互作用及通路

我们首先采用STRING分析了EMT-TF之间的PPI, 结果显示, EMT-TF之间存在直接或间接的相互作用, 其中Twist1和Twist2在信号网络中起关键作用 (图4A)。随后, 我们采用Mentha数据库进一步展示了TF之间的相互作用以及与它们相互作用的分子, 并且显示了分子作用的部位 (图4B)。KEGG通路分析发现, EMT-TF受到细胞外界微环境的变化, 如细胞因子等的调控, 发挥促进肿瘤迁移和侵袭的作用, 进而导致转移的发生。

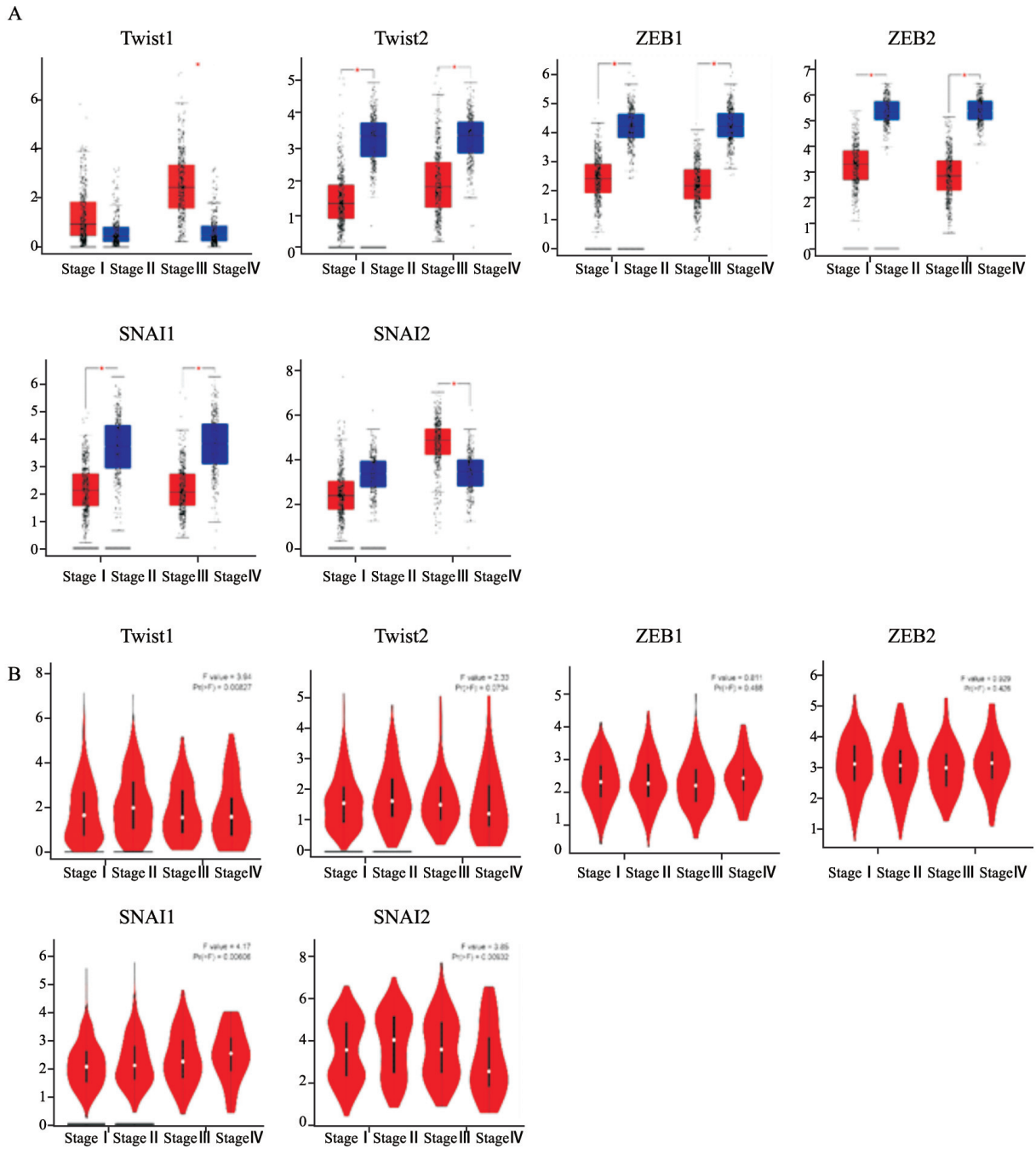


图 2 EMT-TF的mRNA水平以及与肺癌临床病理分期的关系

Fig. 2 The association of EMT-TF mRNA transcription level and tumor stage in lung cancer patients

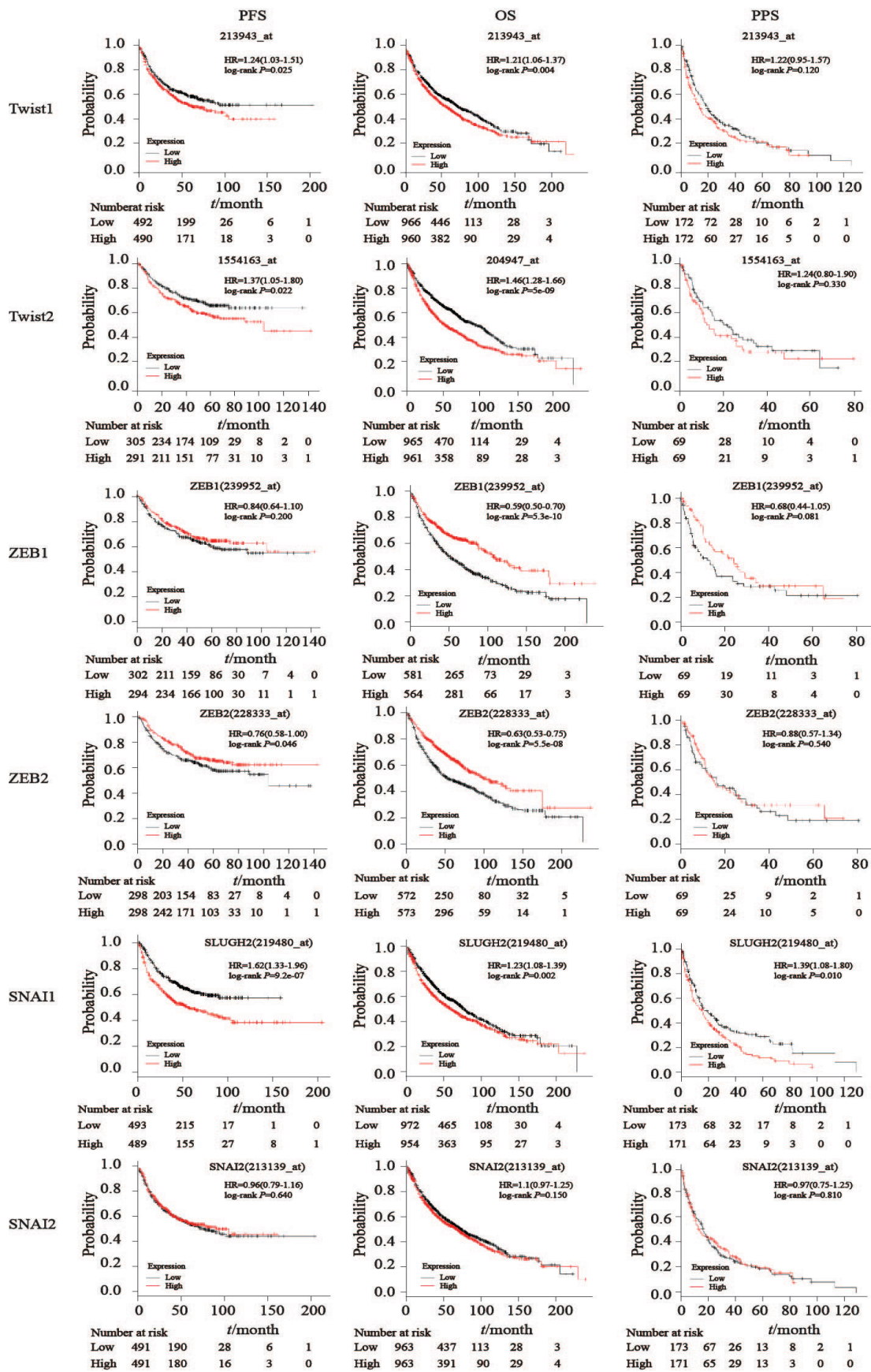


图3 EMT-TF与肺癌预后的相关性

Fig. 3 The correlation of EMT-TF expression level and prognosis of lung cancer patients

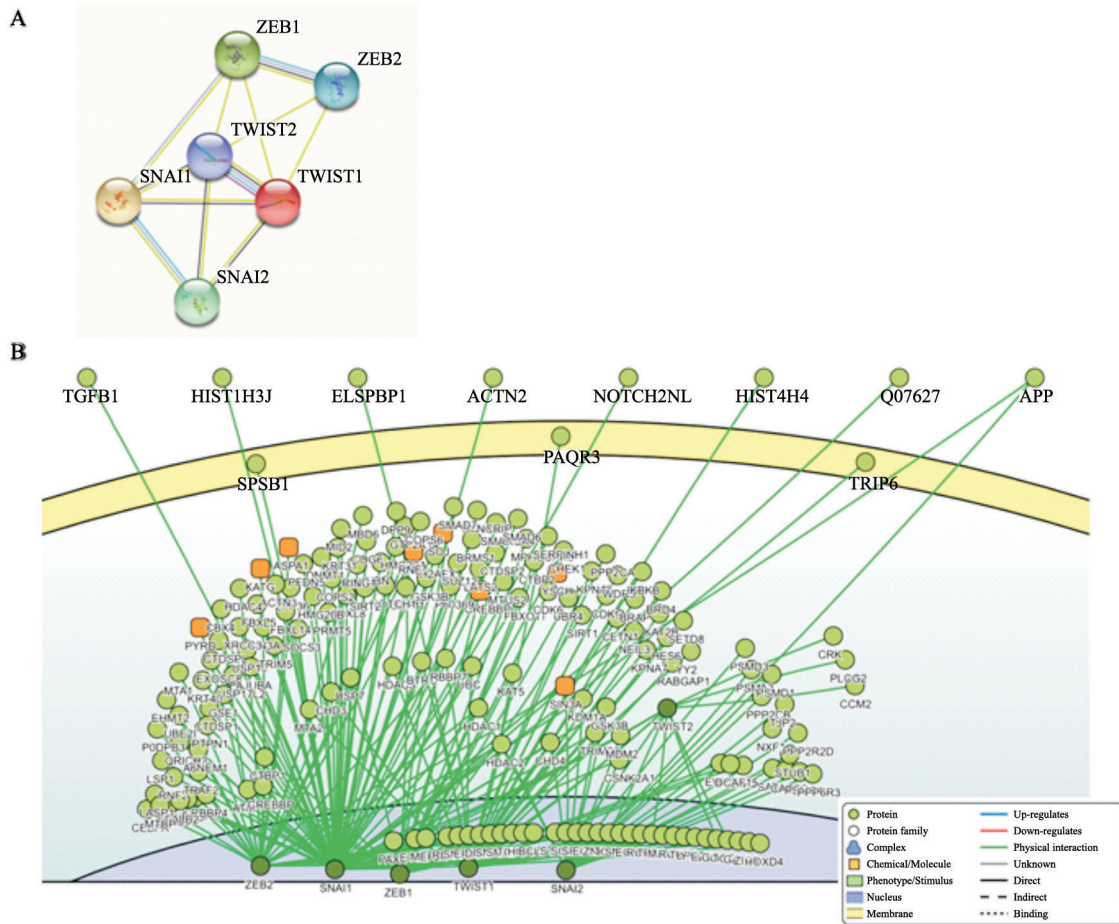


图4 PPI和EMT-TF相互作用的分子

Fig. 4 PPI network of EMT-TF and the cofunction molecules

3 讨 论

EMT是肺癌侵袭和转移的重要环节,非小细胞肺癌患者可通过EMT机制对肿瘤治疗药物产生耐药。研究发现,TGF-β可通过下列途径介导EMT:①通过Smad途径介导EMT;②通过诱导Smad复合体浸入细胞核进而调节EMT相关基因和因子的表达;③可增加SNAI1、SNAI2和ZEB1/2等EMT-TF的表达^[22]。LncRNA也能通过影响EMT的进程和肿瘤干细胞特性,发挥调节非小细胞肺癌转移的作用^[23-24]。研究表明,miRNA也能调控EMT,如抑癌因子miR-451a的过表达可破坏肺癌细胞的EMT,显著增强肺癌细胞对多柔比星治疗的敏感性^[25]。在肺癌中,很多促癌基因也能促进EMT,比如FAM83D^[26]、FOXK1^[27]、KLK4^[28]等。因此识别并阻断EMT进程,对降低肿瘤的侵袭和转移非常重要,同时

也可降低进展期肺癌患者的负荷,进而提高对手术的耐受和预后,这对肺癌乃至所有肿瘤患者都很重要。

研究发现Twist1在肺癌中受很多因素的调节,如LncRNA JPX上调Twist1后通过Wnt/β-catenin信号通路诱导EMT和肺癌细胞侵袭^[29];HR23A与Twist1相互作用促进了Twist1的泛素介导的蛋白酶体降解,从而抑制了EMT、癌细胞迁移和干细胞特性^[30];此外还包括表观遗传相关分子和miRNA。目前对Twist2的研究寥寥无几,并且对其在肺癌中的作用并无明确一致的观点^[31-32]。本研究发现Twist1在肺癌中的表达增加,并且与肺癌的临床病理学分期相关, Twist1表达增加提示肺癌患者的不良预后,以上皆提示Twist1在肺癌诊断和研究中的重要性 and 作为肺癌潜在标志物的可能。

SNAI1是一种重要的EMT-TF,可以促进肿

瘤的转移,从机制上讲,SNAI1向其目标启动子招募多个参与组蛋白去乙酰化、甲基化和泛素化的抑制蛋白复合物,并发挥其抑制功能^[33]。临床上发现,SNAI1的表达和化疗耐药、生存率降低、复发率较高和预后较差相关^[15, 33-34]。然而SNAI1是不稳定的,通过泛素化介导的蛋白酶体途径很快被降解,通过稳定SNAI1能够促进肺癌细胞的迁移^[33]。肿瘤在线数据库分析发现SNAI1在肺癌组织中的表达低于正常组织,并且与分期密切相关,但其预后和在肿瘤中的表达存在分歧。目前对于SNAI1的研究甚少,SNAI1在肺癌中降低的机制,以及它调控的基因仍有待进一步探讨;同时我们分析不同的研究存在样本的差异,以及临床数据收集样本的特异性等,使得无法对其原因进行深入分析。

ZEB1/2的作用相似,在肺癌中,各种调节因子通过作用于ZEB1/2的启动子,调节它们的表达,进而调节EMT和肺癌的侵袭和转移^[35-37]。ZEB1/2通过数据库分析发现其表达水平在肺癌中降低,但和临床病理学分期无相关性,ZEB1/2表达降低与患者的不良预后相关。同时EMT-TF在肺癌中的作用逐渐明了,本研究也发现了其与肺癌分期和预后的相关性,这可能辅助于临床诊断、分期和预后预测,同时未来的研究需要进一步探索外界及肿瘤微环境中调节EMT-TF的因子,为肿瘤的预防和治疗提供理论依据。

Twist1、SNAI2、ZEB1和ZEB2在肺癌中的表达量和正常组织不同,Twist1和SNAI2的表达量与肿瘤的分期与预后相关,ZEB1和ZEB2在肺癌中表达量降低与肺癌患者的预后不良相关。因此,Twist1和SNAI2可能是肺癌诊断和研究的潜在的生物标志物,ZEB1和ZEB2可作为肺癌预后的预测分子。

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