

重视临床前类风湿关节炎演进的免疫学 机制研究和前置干预*

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【摘要】 随着对类风湿关节炎(RA)发病机制理解的加深,识别其临床前期演进特征和实施前置干预,已成为推迟甚至阻断 RA 发病的关键窗口期。本文系统梳理了近年来临床前 RA(Pre-RA)中免疫激活网络的演进规律及风险预测的进展,强调包括抗环瓜氨酸肽抗体(ACPA)阳性个体、临床可疑关节痛(CSA)患者在内的高危群体识别策略日趋多元,结合抗体谱、影像、临床特征与多组学标志物,已初步建立风险分层框架,为干预策略设计提供基础。在此笔者呼吁临床专科医师重视这一疾病早期窗口的研究价值,加强 Pre-RA 多中心协同研究,推进高危识别工具的标准化和本土化应用,构建“识别—分层—干预—随访”闭环体系,推动构建临床前 RA 的精准防控体系。

【关键词】 类风湿关节炎;临床前类风湿关节炎;免疫机制;风险预测;预防

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Focusing on immunological mechanisms and preventive interventions in the preclinical phase of rheumatoid arthritis

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【Abstract】 With growing insight into the pathogenesis of rheumatoid arthritis (RA), the identification of its pre-clinical evolution and implementation of preventive interventions has emerged as a critical opportunity to delay or even halt disease onset. This review summarizes recent advances in understanding the immunological activation networks of preclinical RA (Pre-RA) and developments in risk prediction. We emphasize that strategies for high-risk population identification, including ACPA-positive individuals and clinically suspect arthralgia (CSA) patients, are becoming increasingly multifaceted. The integration of antibody profiles, imaging features, clinical parameters, and multi-omics biomarkers has enabled the preliminary establishment of risk-stratification frameworks, laying the foundation for tailored intervention strategies. We therefore call on rheumatology clinicians to recognize the importance of this early disease window, strengthen multicenter collaboration in Pre-RA research, advance the standardization and localization of high-risk identification tools, and construct a closed-loop system of “identification-stratification-intervention-follow-up” to facilitate precision prevention and control of preclinical RA.

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【Key words】 Rheumatoid arthritis; Preclinical phase of rheumatoid arthritis; Immunological mechanisms; Risk prediction; Preventive intervention

类风湿关节炎(Rheumatoid arthritis, RA)是一种以慢性滑膜炎和进行性关节破坏为特征的自身免疫性疾病,晚期致残率高达 61.3%,给个人和社会带来沉重负担^[1-2]。尽管随着 RA“治疗时间窗”理念的推广和治疗策略优化,RA 的临床诊疗取得一定进展,但多数患者在确诊时已存在不可逆的关节结构损伤,提示以发病为起点的传统干预策略仍存在明显局限^[3-4]。近年研究表明,RA 发生是一个经历数年的多阶段免疫演进过程^[5]。在典型关节症状出现前,患者可出现自身抗体产生、免疫细胞活化及黏膜免疫紊乱等异常,提示其具有“临床前期”阶段(Preclinical phase of rheumatoid arthritis, Pre-RA)^[6]。该阶段虽尚未形成关节炎,但已具备一定的免疫病理学基础,是疾病进展的关键拐点和潜在预防窗口。因此如何在临床前期精准识别高风险个体并及时干预,已成为目前 RA 防控研究的前沿方向。然而,目前 Pre-RA 的识别与管理尚处于探索阶段,其定义标准尚未统一,免疫异常与疾病进展之间的因果机制仍不明确,前期干预策略的适应证、风险评估及伦理规范等亦有待厘清,整体面临从基础研究到临床转化的多重挑战。本文拟围绕 Pre-RA 的免疫演进机制探索,系统梳理风险预测工具及干预策略的研究进展,探讨当前 RA 精准防控的关键科学问题。呼吁临床专科医师尽快提升对 Pre-RA 阶段的认识与关注,从研究、预警、管理等多维度推进 RA 防控重心前移,为构建更早识别、更早干预、更可控风险的 RA 免疫防控体系提供理论基础与决策参考。

1 重视 Pre-RA 演进中发病机制的异质性

近年来,关于 RA 起源的研究重心逐步从滑膜局部炎症转向“黏膜-系统-滑膜”的整体免疫激活通路。研究表明 RA 可能起始于肺、口腔、肠道等黏膜部位的慢性炎症环境,并通过一系列免疫学链条逐步演进为滑膜的局灶性炎症,为 RA 早期识别与靶向干预提供了全新的理论框架^[7-8]。

1.1 黏膜炎性微环境启动自身免疫 “黏膜起源假说”认为,RA 特异性自身免疫首先在关节外黏膜组织发生^[9]。遗传易感个体(如携带 HLA-DRB1 共享表位)在环境因素作用下,易于肺、牙龈、肠道等黏膜界面出现免疫异常^[10]。长期吸烟可激活肺泡巨噬细胞的 Toll 样受体(Toll-like receptor, TLR)并上调瓜氨酸化酶(Peptidyl arginine deiminase 2, PAD2),导致局部蛋白瓜氨酸化形成自身抗原^[11]。在口腔,慢性牙

周炎与 RA 风险增加相关;典型菌株如牙龈卟啉单胞菌(*P. gingivalis*)表达的 PAD 酶(Porphoryomonas gingivalis peptidyl arginine deiminase, PPAD)可催化宿主蛋白瓜氨酸化,诱导抗瓜氨酸蛋白抗体(Anti-citrullinated protein antibodies, ACPA)产生^[11-12]。肠道菌群失调亦参与 RA 发生,在自身抗体阳性的 RA 高危个体中,肠道菌群多样性下降,短链脂肪酸(Short-chain fatty acids, SCFAs)产生菌减少,而促炎菌株如 *Prevotella copri* 丰度增加,该菌蛋白与关节自身抗原之间存在分子模拟,可激活交叉反应性 T 细胞^[13-15]。综上,多种部位黏膜免疫失衡共同构成 Pre-RA 阶段“免疫耐受破坏”的初始驱动力,这些外周部位持续的慢性炎症和抗原刺激会打破机体对自身抗原的耐受,促使自身免疫反应启动^[10]。但目前尚未有定论哪个黏膜部位最关键,或者这些通路是否可相互替代或协同。

1.2 自身抗体谱扩展标志免疫失衡 在耐受失衡之后,适应性免疫系统被逐步激活,自黏膜部位启动的自身抗原的持续刺激下,B 细胞在滤泡辅助性 T 细胞(Follicular helper T cells, Tfh)支持下,于生发中心持续分化,产生高亲和力 ACPA、类风湿因子(Rheumatoid factor, RF)及抗氨甲酰化蛋白(Anti-carbamylated protein antibodies, anti-CarP)等抗体^[16]。此外研究表明随着病程进展,自身抗体的靶标呈现“表位扩展”(Epitope spreading)趋势,anti-Carp、抗双氨基酸化蛋白等抗体陆续出现,与临床转化高度一致^[17-18]。同时多种免疫细胞亚群出现异常扩增,研究表明出现克隆性扩张的优势 B 细胞受体序列的 RA 高风险人群,关节炎风险增高 6 倍^[19]。并且这些优势 B 细胞克隆会迁移并富集到患者滑膜组织中,提示其直接参与关节炎。此外糖基化研究表明在 RA 发生前,IgG 抗体的 Fc 段半乳糖基化减少,增强其与巨噬细胞 Fc γ 受体结合能力,促进白细胞介素(IL)-1 β 、IL-6 等炎症因子释放^[20-21]。上述免疫特征提示,自身抗体不仅是标志物,更可能主动参与致病过程,其动态演变是临床前阶段的重要生物学特征。

1.3 免疫迁移与滑膜炎形成 在 Pre-RA 后期,免疫反应由系统循环向关节局部转移,标志着向显性关节炎的转化^[22]。大量 ACPAs 和 RF 形成的免疫复合物沉积于滑膜和微血管周围,通过 Fc γ 受体和 TLR 等通路激活巨噬细胞、树突细胞以及中性粒细胞等先天免疫细胞,释放肿瘤坏死因子(TNF)、IL-1、IL-6 等

关键促炎因子^[23-24]。这些因子不仅直接激活滑膜成纤维细胞,还招募更多免疫细胞浸润,形成正反馈炎症环路。有学者提出“二次打击”假说,在适当的“第二打击”事件(如创伤、感染、应激)后,免疫细胞和抗体大量迁移至关节滑膜,触发临床可识别的滑膜炎^[25]。在此过程种涉及众多细胞因子网络,近年来有学者提出 IL-6 和粒细胞巨噬细胞集落刺激因子(Granulocyte-macrophage colony stimulating factor, GM-CSF)是早期关键驱动因子^[26-28]。研究发现,血清阴性高危个体中存在 IL-6/STAT3 通路活化的转录特征,可预测 RA 进展^[29]。GM-CSF 则可促进髓系细胞活化,在炎症放大中发挥枢纽作用^[30]。此外新近研究提出 ACPA 可能通过直接作用于骨细胞而参与 RA 发病,解释部分患者在无明显滑膜炎时即出现骨质流失与关节疼痛,该理论为 RA 临床前期骨破坏和疼痛来源提供了新的视角^[31]。

2 重视 Pre-RA 风险识别手段与个体预测

随着 RA 防控策略由“早诊早治”向“前置识别干预”转变,如何在关节炎出现前精准识别高风险个体,成为当前研究的核心方向。近年来,识别手段不断拓展,逐步形成以血清学、影像学及多组学为基础的多层次风险预测体系,显著提升了早期预警的准确性与临床可操作性。

2.1 血清学与影像学的经典识别模式 自身抗体(尤其 ACPA/RF)是 RA 临床前期最重要的标志物。研究显示,高滴度 ACPA 阳性者 3~5 年内进展为 RA 的风险高达 20%~30%;若 ACPA 与 RF 双阳性,风险进一步升高^[32-33]。近年研究深入分析了 ACPA 的表位特异性谱,发现其针对瓜氨酸化纤维蛋白原、波形蛋白(Vimentin)、组蛋白等多种抗原的广泛反应性,与更高发病风险密切相关^[34]。一项 2024 年研究检测 9 种瓜氨酸化肽段抗体,发现任一阳性即可使个体关节炎风险显著上升(HR=8.0)^[35]。此外近年来抗 CarP、抗双氨基酸化蛋白、抗 PAD4 等新型抗体逐步纳入评估体系,其中抗 CarP 抗体可在 37% 的 ACPA 阴性患者中检出^[36-37]。除传统自身抗体,血清中其他分子如钙联蛋白(Calprotectin)、IL-6、TNF 等也被证实具有辅助预测价值,今后可能通过多因子血清指标组合来提高预测敏感性^[35]。

影像学则可反映关节局部“亚临床炎症”,高分辨率肌骨超声(Musculoskeletal ultrasound, MSUS)和磁共振成像(Magnetic resonance imaging, MRI)因其对滑膜增厚、血流信号(Power doppler)及骨髓水肿的高敏感性,逐渐成为前瞻性队列研究的关键工具^[38-39]。多项研究表明在临床可疑关节痛(Clinically

suspect arthralgia, CSA)人群中,MSUS 检出的滑膜异常或 MRI 显示的骨髓水肿均预示更高 RA 发病风险^[38-40]。在 ACPA 阳性或 CSA 患者中, MRI 发现骨髓病变者风险极高,将其加入预测模型可使曲线下面积(Area under the curve, AUC)由 0.80 提升至 0.87^[41]。然而由于 MRI 成本与可及性问题,临床上通常采用“血清和症状初筛—超声—MRI”逐级识别策略。

2.2 多组学与风险评分模型的精准分层模式 随着对 RA 发病异质性认识的深入及多组学与人工智能技术的发展,风险预测正由单一指标迈向多维度整合模型。2025 年,欧洲抗风湿病联盟/美国风湿病学会(European League Against Rheumatism/American College of Rheumatology, EULAR/ACR)联合推出首个用于 Pre-RA 的风险分层标准,基于晨僵、握拳困难、自觉肿胀、C 反应蛋白(CRP)、RF 和 ACPA 六项简便指标,可有效预测 1 年内进展为炎性关节炎的风险(AUC=0.80);若进一步加入 MRI 结果, AUC 可提升至 0.87~0.93,并实现低、中、高和极高四级风险,标志着高风险人群识别向临床应用迈出关键一步^[41]。与此同时,多组学数据包括蛋白组、代谢组、外周免疫表型组等,正被用于提升预测精度。最新一项英国队列研究结合基因组与代谢组数据,构建包含 17 种代谢物的代谢风险评分(Metabolic risk score, MRS),发现该评分最高十分位者 RA 发病风险为基线的 3.5 倍^[42]。高维流式和单细胞测序研究也发现, Pre-RA 人群外周血中特定外周辅助性 T 细胞(Peripheral helper T cells, HLA-DR^{hi} CD4⁺)、Th1/Th17 样淋巴细胞及异常幼稚 B 细胞亚群显著扩增,提示系统性免疫激活的早期信号^[43-44]。在此基础上,人工智能(Artificial intelligence, AI)技术被用于构建复合预测模型。例如日本研究利用全国多中心队列数据,基于 XGBoost 等机器学习算法建立针对血清阴性未分化关节炎(Undifferentiated arthritis, UA)患者的预测模型,在独立队列中表现出优于传统回归模型的判别效能(AUC 更高)^[45]。此类探索展现了 AI 在 RA 早期预测中的巨大潜力,但仍处于初步发展阶段。

3 积极探索 Pre-RA 的前置干预策略

在深入理解了 Pre-RA 的演进过程后,学者们逐步探索在 Pre-RA 阶段进行前置干预(Preventive intervention)的可能性,旨在关节不可逆损伤形成前延缓或逆转疾病进展。

3.1 生活方式及危险因素干预 RA 的发病与多种环境因素密切相关,生活方式干预被视为降低发病风险的自然策略。其中吸烟与 RA 关联最明确,美国护士健康队列研究表明戒烟超过 10 年者 RA 风险显著

降低,且每多戒烟 5 年风险进一步降低($P = 0.009$)^[46]。因此对于有 RA 家族史或自身抗体阳性的高危人群,戒烟是强烈建议的干预措施。饮食方面,抗炎性膳食模式(如地中海饮食)及特定营养素补充受到关注。VITAL 随机对照试验证实,每日补充维生素 D 与鱼油可使包括 RA 在内的自身免疫性疾病总体风险降低 25%~30%^[47]。此外,小规模观察性研究提示,规律有氧运动可能通过调节免疫功能,减少高危人群向 RA 的转化^[48]。尽管生活方式干预具有安全性高、成本低等优势,但其在临床前 RA 人群中的确切效果尚缺乏直接证据,目前多作为基础预防建议。未来需开展多中心、大样本研究,评估综合生活方式干预对 RA 发病率的实际影响。

3.2 药物干预策略 基于 RA 发病早期已存在免疫活化,研究者尝试使用小剂量传统改善病情抗风湿药(Disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs, DMARDs)在 Pre-RA 阶段干预。2022 年“TREAT-EARLIER”双盲试验纳入 236 名 CSA 患者,给予甲氨蝶呤(25 mg/周)联合关节腔注射甲泼尼龙(120 mg)治疗 1 年。随访 2 年结果显示,两组 RA 转化率差异无统计学意义,但干预组在疼痛、晨僵、功能评分及 MRI 炎症指标方面显著改善,提示早期药物干预虽未能完全阻止疾病进展,但可有效缓解临床与亚临床炎症^[49]。针对关键免疫通路的生物制剂也展现出潜力。2019 年 PRAIRI 试验显示,在 ACPA 与 RF 双阳性且伴有轻微症状或影像学炎症的高危个体中,单次利妥昔单抗(B 细胞耗竭剂)治疗可使关节炎发病延迟约 12 个月,首次验证了 B 细胞靶向治疗在 RA 预防中的可行性^[50]。随后 ARIAA 试验进一步发现,阿巴西普(CTLA4-Ig,靶向 T 细胞共刺激通路)治疗 6 个月可显著减轻手部 MRI 滑膜炎与骨髓水肿(改善率 61% vs 31%),并降低关节炎发生率(6 个月内 8% vs 安慰剂 35%, $P = 0.003$),但停药后保护作用迅速消失^[51]。上述结果表明,短期生物制剂干预虽可延缓 RA 进展,但难以实现持久保护,提示未来需探索维持性治疗或诱导免疫耐受的长效策略。

3.3 免疫调节与耐受诱导策略 RA 预防与治疗的终极目标是在维持正常免疫功能的前提下重建自身免疫耐受,彻底阻断疾病进程。与传统广谱免疫抑制不同,当前研究更聚焦于“免疫稳态重置”,而临床前阶段被视为诱导免疫耐受的“理想窗口期”^[52]。围绕这一目标,近年涌现出许多从免疫调节角度寻找前置干预的新路径。一些研究聚焦调节性 T 细胞(Regulatory T cells, Treg)功能,希望通过增强 Treg 或抑制效应 T 细胞来恢复耐受^[53]。最新研究将免疫代谢引入

其中,发现 Treg 细胞的功能与其代谢状态密切相关,炎症环境下营养和代谢信号的改变会削弱 Treg 的抑制功能,因此通过小分子药物或营养干预调控免疫代谢(如促进氧化磷酸化),有望维持 Treg 稳定性,防止自身免疫失衡^[54]。目前这方面研究多处于动物模型和细胞实验阶段,但揭示了“代谢-免疫轴”对于维持耐受的重要性。此外基于微生物的调控策略也成为研究热点,益生菌/肠道微生态疗法在自身免疫病中开始受到重视。动物实验表明,特定益生菌或高纤维饮食可增加 SCFAs 生成,促进结肠 Treg 分化,从而减轻关节炎症,提示微生态干预可能成为预防 RA 的新路径^[55]。

瓜氨酸化是 RA 特异性自身抗原形成的关键环节,由肽基精氨酸脱氨酶(Peptidyl arginine deiminase, PAD)家族催化完成^[56]。近年研究发现高度选择性的 PAD4 抑制剂可有效抑制中性粒细胞的 NETosis,从而减少关节炎症、骨侵蚀和肌腱损伤,证实 PAD4 是 RA 有效的干预靶点^[57]。提示在 ACPA 阳性但尚未出现关节炎的个体中,使用 PAD 抑制剂阻断持续瓜氨酸化过程,可能减少新抗原暴露与免疫复合物沉积,从而从源头干预疾病进程。

更具前景的是抗原特异性耐受诱导策略,即通过让免疫系统“学习”不攻击自身成分来预防 RA^[58]。中国近期的一项研究开发了一种“瓜氨酸抗原(Citrullinated antigen, CitAg)疫苗”,包含多种瓜氨酸化蛋白肽段,在胶原诱导关节炎小鼠模型中显示出显著疗效,疫苗接种后小鼠关节炎减轻,Th1/Th17 细胞比例下降,血清 IL-6、TNF- α 水平降低,同时 B 细胞受体库异常重排得到纠正^[59]。这表明耐受疫苗有望协同调节 T、B 细胞应答,恢复免疫平衡,代表了迈向精准预防的重要一步。

4 小结与展望

RA 从临床前期向发病阶段的演进是一个复杂且动态的免疫异常过程,已成为近年来免疫学和风湿病学研究的焦点之一。从风险人群的精准识别,到多维度免疫机制的深入探索,再到前置干预策略的不断优化,这一阶段为疾病的一级预防与延缓发病提供了新的可能。尽管如此,前置干预的实施尚处于探索阶段,如何精准界定“高风险人群”、筛选可逆的关键免疫靶点并实现有效干预,仍需多中心、跨区域、长期随访研究的协同推进。建议未来研究进一步融合免疫机制探索与临床转化研究,以实现更高效、更可操作的风险评估与个体化干预策略,从而真正实现 RA 防治关口前移的目标。

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