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SCFAs对肠道免疫调控的研究进展

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摘要: 肠道微生物群与宿主是共生关系, 二者共同进化。短链脂肪酸 (short-chain fatty acids, SCFAs) 通过保护肠上皮屏障的完整性来维持肠道内环境平衡, 并通过影响肠道免疫细胞的分化调节免疫系统。作为肠道微生物群发酵膳食纤维产生的一类重要代谢物, SCFAs 通过抑制组蛋白脱乙酰酶或激活 G 蛋白偶联受体调节肠道免疫细胞功能与分化, 在宿主的健康和免疫介导的疾病中发挥至关重要的作用。该文从 SCFAs 的来源、运输和信号转导, 以及 SCFAs 对免疫细胞、免疫屏障及肠道疾病的影响等六个方面展开综述, 并重点介绍了 SCFAs 对免疫细胞的作用。

关键词: 短链脂肪酸 (SCFAs); 免疫细胞; 肠道免疫屏障; 炎症性肠病

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Advances in the intestinal immune regulation by SCFAs

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Abstract: Gut microbiota co-evolve with host symbiotic relationships. Short-chain fatty acids (SCFAs) maintain intestinal homeostasis by protecting the integrity of the intestinal epithelial barrier, and regulate the function of innate immune cells involved in the immune system. As a class of important metabolites produced by the fermentation of dietary fiber in the gut microbiota, SCFAs regulate the function and differentiation of intestinal immune cells by inhibiting histone deacetylases or activating G-protein-coupled receptors, playing a vital role in disease. This article reviews the production of SCFAs, transport and signal transduction, and the effects of SCFAs on immune cells, immune barriers and intestinal diseases, and focuses on the effects of SCFAs on immune cells.

Key words: SCFAs; immune cell; intestinal immunological barrier; inflammatory bowel diseases

短链脂肪酸 (short-chain fatty acids, SCFAs) 是碳原子数小于 6 的羧酸, 主要包括乙酸 (acetate)、丙酸 (propionate) 和丁酸 (butyrate), 能溶于水和乙醇。在结肠, 厌氧微生物通过发酵膳食纤维、未消化的蛋白质、上消化道和胃中少量的多肽, 以及其他难以消化的碳水化合物而产生大量 SCFAs^[1]。研究发现肠道微生物群与 SCFAs 的产生密切相关。相比于有菌小鼠, 缺乏肠道微生物的无菌小鼠肠道和外周

组织中 SCFAs 浓度非常低, 并且在先天性免疫、获得性免疫以及免疫耐受性等多个方面都受到不同程

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度的影响和损害^[2-3]。随着组学分析技术的不断普及,越来越多的研究发现 SCFAs 具有调控肠道免疫细胞的分化、保护肠道屏障以及调节肠道免疫相关疾病等功能。本文对 SCFAs 的来源、运输及信号转导方式进行归纳,总结了 SCFAs 对免疫细胞的调控机制及其对肠道免疫屏障的维护作用,并综述了 SCFAs 在肠道疾病中的作用。

1 SCFAs的来源

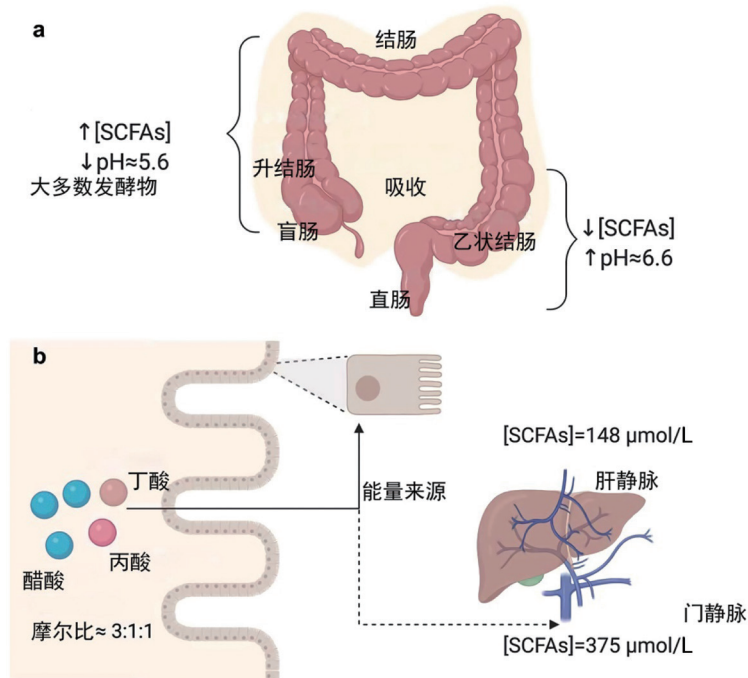
SCFAs 主要由结肠内细菌发酵膳食纤维产生^[4-5]。根据饮食中的纤维含量,机体每天在结肠中产生大约 500~600 mmol 的 SCFAs^[6], SCFAs 的总浓度与 pH 呈负相关,从盲肠和结肠近端 (70~140 mmol/L; pH≈5.6) 到结肠远端与直肠 (20~70 mmol/L; pH≈6.6) 呈现递减的趋势^[7]。其中,乙酸、丙酸和丁酸是最主要的 SCFAs^[1], 约占所有 SCFAs 的 80%, 在结肠中的摩尔比约为 3:1:1^[7], 而甲酸、戊酸和己酸等其他 SCFAs 的产量较少 (图 1), 发酵伴随产生氢、甲烷和二氧化碳等气体^[8]。其中,乙酸由丙酮酸通过乙酰辅酶 A 和 Wood-Ljungdahl (WL) 通路产生,可作为脂肪酸合成的底物^[9]; 丙酸通过琥珀酸途径转化为甲基丙二酸辅酶 A 而产生^[10]; 丁酸

由两个乙酰辅酶 A 分子缩合后还原为丁酰辅酶 A, 丁酰辅酶 A 进而通过经典途径转化为丁酸^[11], 在肠腔中含量高^[12]。

大部分 SCFAs 的吸收发生在结肠, 被结肠细胞用作能量来源, 满足宿主约 9% 的能量需求^[13-14]。其中, 丁酸主要留在肠上皮细胞中并被利用, 乙酸和丙酸则很容易被运输到其他细胞和器官中发挥作用^[15]。而不被结肠细胞利用的 SCFAs 通过肠系膜上静脉和下静脉被输送到门静脉 (SCFAs 的浓度为 375 μmol/L)。进入肝静脉后, SCFAs 的浓度下降, 约是门静脉血的 39% (约为 148 μmol/L), 之后通过体循环到达骨骼肌、肝脏和脂肪组织等外周组织发挥作用^[16]。少量 SCFAs 随粪便排出, 其主要成分为丙酸和丁酸。早先文献常通过测量粪便中 SCFAs 的浓度计算出 SCFAs 的总排泄率, 从而粗略估计膳食纤维摄入量^[17-19]。值得注意的是, 粪便中 SCFAs 的浓度不能反映其在肠道中的浓度和产生率, SCFAs 总排泄率值无法准确展现肠道内 SCFAs 的真实代谢信息^[17]。

2 SCFAs的运输

目前已知 SCFAs 通过三种途径进入肠上皮细



a: 大多数未消化的碳水化合物在盲肠和结肠中发酵, SCFAs 的吸收沿整个结肠进行。SCFAs 浓度与 pH 呈负相关。盲肠和结肠的 SCFAs 浓度最高, pH 值约为 5.6, 直肠的 pH 值较高 (约 6.6), SCFAs 浓度较低; b: 在结肠中, 乙酸、丙酸和丁酸的摩尔比分别为 3:1:1, 且大多数 SCFAs 被结肠细胞用作能量来源。

图1 乙酸、丙酸和丁酸的产生、吸收及运输^[7]

胞后发挥作用: 第一种途径是 SCFAs 通过被动扩散直接被结肠上皮细胞所吸收; 第二种运输途径是由转运蛋白介导进入肠上皮细胞, 大多数 SCFAs 以这种方式转运; 第三种途径是结合受体后进入肠上皮细胞并被免疫细胞吸收利用。目前研究主要集中在钠偶联单羧酸转运蛋白 1/2 (SMCT1/2) 和单羧酸转运蛋白 1/4 (MCT1/4)。SMCT1 和 SMCT2 均属于 SLC5 基因家族, 是仅在结肠上皮细胞顶端膜表达的钠离子偶联转运体, 介导 SCFAs 在肠腔内的吸收。转运蛋白 SMCT1 (编码基因为 SLC5A8) 最早作为结肠中的候选肿瘤抑制因子而被发现。高浓度的 SCFAs 通过下调 SMCT1 的表达抑制亚急性瘤胃酸中毒 (SARA) 奶牛瘤胃对 SCFAs 的吸收^[20]。转运蛋白 SMCT2 (编码基因为 SLC5A12) 在底物选择性和 Na⁺ 依赖性方面与 SMCT1 非常相似^[21]。MCT1 (编码基因为 SLC16A1) 和 MCT4 (编码基因为 SLC16A3) 是 H⁺ 偶联转运蛋白^[21-22], 在乳腺癌、骨癌、结肠癌和肾癌等多种癌症中被发现过表达^[23]。其中, MCT1 主要在结肠上皮顶端膜和基底膜表达, 而 MCT4 仅在结肠上皮基侧膜表达。早期对 MCT1 转运的研究大都集中在乳酸上^[24], 近年研究发现 MCT1 在结肠癌组织中表达下降, 细胞内丁酸浓度也显著降低^[25]。就组织分布、调节和底物特异性而言, MCT4 与 MCT1 表现相似^[24]。此外, SCFAs 还可通过调节 MCT4 的表达来降低大鼠肾结石和尿酸水平^[26]。

3 SCFAs的信号转导

SCFAs 主要通过组蛋白脱乙酰酶 (HDAC) 和 G 蛋白偶联受体家族 (GPCRs) 两条途径参与宿主健康或疾病的调节。第一种是 HDAC 途径。SCFAs 进入细胞后调节靶细胞的表现遗传修饰, 通常是调节组蛋白乙酰化和去乙酰化, 即通过调节组蛋白周围 DNA 的卷曲来控制基因的表达^[27]。研究表明, 微生物-G 蛋白偶联受体-组蛋白脱乙酰酶调控网络是介导山羊瘤胃内 SCFAs 对肠上皮细胞发挥作用的主要途径, 其中丁酸的摩尔比例与组蛋白脱乙酰酶 1 (HDAC1) 的表达呈负相关^[28]。SCFAs 通过直接抑制 HDAC 的活性, 促进 Toll 样受体 TLR2 或 TLR3 诱导的细胞因子表达^[29]。作为 HDAC 的内在抑制物, 乙酸、丁酸和丙酸通过抑制 HDAC 诱导的组蛋白内赖氨酸残基的脱乙酰化来促进基因表达^[30]。对小鼠单独使用丁酸、丙酸和乙酸后发现小鼠大脑内 HDAC 的活性均被显著抑制^[27-31]。

另一种是 GPCRs 途径, SCFAs 通过细胞膜受体进行细胞信号转导。目前已证实的 SCFAs 受体主要包括 G 蛋白偶联受体 GPR109A (也称羟基羧酸受体 2, HCAR2)、GPR43 (又称游离脂肪酸受体 2, FFAR2)、GPR41 (或称游离脂肪酸受体 3, FFAR3), 以及属于 GPCRs 的其他细胞膜受体^[32]。GPCRs 有 800 多个成员, 是人体中广泛表达的膜蛋白家族。其中, GPR43 可以通过 G 蛋白或 β -arrestin 调节细胞信号通路, 参与大多数生理功能的调节^[33]。最近有研究比较了 GPR43 基因敲除 (GPR43^{-/-}) 小鼠与野生型 (WT) 小鼠, 发现在雷帕霉素靶标 (mTOR) 信号转导和转录激活因子 3 (STAT3) 的介导下, SCFAs 通过 GPR43 受体促进肠上皮细胞中 RegIII γ 和 β -防御素的表达^[34]。SCFAs-GPR43 的互作导致 GPR43^{-/-} 小鼠结肠炎、关节炎和哮喘模型均表现出炎症加重的状况, 包括结肠长度缩短、每日活动指数 (daily activity index, DAI; 是衡量体重减轻、直肠出血和大便一致性的综合指标) 增加, 以及结肠中炎症介质髓过氧化物酶 (myeloperoxidase, MPO) 活性增加; 此外, 葡聚糖硫酸钠 (DSS) 诱导的 GPR43^{-/-} 结肠炎小鼠结肠黏膜组织中肿瘤坏死因子 α 和 IL-17 蛋白水平明显高于 WT 小鼠^[35-36]。研究发现高纤维饮食诱导小鼠肠上皮细胞中的 GPR43 和 GPR109A 以及下游 NLRP3 的炎症途径被激活^[37], 并进一步激活下游的 mTOR、PI3K 或 MAPK 信号通路^[38-39]。GPR41 和 GPR43 还可通过激活肠上皮细胞中细胞外信号调节的 p38 信号通路来诱导免疫应答中趋化因子和细胞因子的产生^[40]。由此可见, SCFAs 通过刺激 GPR43 在抵抗肠道炎症上发挥着重要作用, 可能成为治疗肠道相关疾病的重要靶点。此外, 研究表明 SCFAs 与 GPCRs 或 HDAC 相互作用, 通过体液效应、间接激素和免疫途径以及神经通路影响大脑功能^[27]。

4 SCFAs对肠道免疫屏障的作用

肠道是人体内最大的免疫系统。作为结肠和回肠细胞的关键能量来源, SCFAs 通过保护肠道上皮屏障的完整性来维持肠道内环境平衡, 并通过影响肠道免疫细胞的分化来调节免疫系统^[3]、影响肠上皮屏障和防御功能^[41] 等重要作用。

4.1 SCFAs调控肠道免疫细胞的功能

作为细菌发酵产物的 SCFAs 在几乎所有肠道免疫细胞的功能和分化中发挥着重要作用^[42]。SCFAs 通过抑制 HDAC 活性调节免疫细胞功能^[43], 或通过激活 GPRs (GPR41、GPR43 和 GPR109a) 调节肠

道免疫细胞分化^[44],包括与中性粒细胞、巨噬细胞、树突状细胞等天然免疫细胞互作,减少这些天然免疫细胞的募集和迁移进而调控其功能。此外,T细胞和B细胞的分化及其介导的抗原特异性免疫也受到SCFAs的调控^[45]。

4.1.1 SCFAs调控中性粒细胞的募集

中性粒细胞是先天免疫系统的重要组成部分,同时也是最早被招募到感染和炎症部位的细胞之一^[46]。SCFAs通过调节炎症趋化因子(CXCL1和CXCL8)的产生来改变中性粒细胞的招募^[40]。作为中性粒细胞上SCFAs的唯一功能性受体,GPR43受体在中性粒细胞中高表达^[47]。与*Gpr43*^{-/-}小鼠相比,乙酸可以激活WT小鼠中性粒细胞的高钙离子通道活性^[35]。乙酸-GPR43信号可以加速中性粒细胞募集至炎症的部位,激活炎症小体,进一步促进IL-1 β 的释放,从而增强小鼠的先天免疫反应^[48]。此外,SCFAs还参与了中性粒细胞吞噬作用的调节^[47]。Cholan等^[49]发现,非哺乳类动物(斑马鱼)中性粒细胞中的*hcar1*基因(GPR81)的表达量高于其他免疫细胞,而肠道内*hcar1*基因的表达量与肠道微生物群的存在与否没有明显关联,但丁酸在体外调节中性粒细胞的募集,发挥促炎作用仍依赖于*hcar1*基因的表达。

4.1.2 SCFAs参与巨噬细胞的激活

研究通常关注在淋巴组织中的巨噬细胞,较少关注外周组织来源的巨噬细胞。巨噬细胞是肠道固有层中含量最丰富的免疫细胞类型,其功能也逐渐被关注^[50]。TLR是巨噬细胞模式识别受体,能识别病原体表面的病原相关分子。在肠道黏膜表面,SCFAs被TLR识别,刺激肠上皮细胞NF- κ B的激活,影响促炎介质的产生,发挥先天性免疫反应^[51]。比如,丁酸处理巨噬细胞后,一氧化氮、IL-6、IL-8、IL-12、IL-1 β 和TNF α 等促炎介质表达量显著下调^[43-51],这可能与激活巨噬细胞中的GPR41受体有关^[14]。此外,研究还发现SCFAs通过靶向激活巨噬细胞的GPR43受体来下调IL-8的表达,具有改善人呼吸系统炎症的作用^[52]。

4.1.3 SCFAs改变树突状细胞的成熟与分化

丁酸在肿瘤坏死因子、脂多糖等诱导剂的作用下抑制树突状细胞的成熟,或者通过抑制组蛋白去乙酰化抑制树突状细胞的分化和成熟^[53],也抑制IL-6、IL-10和IL-12等促炎介质的转录,从而影响结肠固有层巨噬细胞的极化^[54]。研究还发现用丁酸处理的树突状细胞显示出较低刺激T细胞的能

力^[55]。此外,丁酸在HDCA抑制剂非依赖性结肠癌细胞凋亡中具有积极作用^[56]。Goverse等^[57]证实了SCFAs体外诱导肠上皮细胞中维生素A转换酶(RALDH1)的表达,且它的表达水平与肠系膜淋巴结树突状细胞中维生素A转换酶的活性有关,同时肠道调节性T细胞数量增加,腔内IgA的产量增加。此外,丁酸还被证明可以通过产生抗炎细胞因子和诱导耐受树突状细胞来调节肠道上皮炎症以及对抗原的耐受性^[58]。

4.1.4 SCFAs调节T细胞的分化

T细胞在维持肠道内环境稳定中起着至关重要的作用,SCFAs直接或间接地调节T细胞分化,参与特异性细胞免疫^[59]。SCFAs诱导T细胞耐受主要取决于T细胞在树突状细胞和巨噬细胞的激活或分化中的作用,以及SCFAs对T细胞的直接影响^[60]。研究表明SCFAs可以通过抑制HDCA和调节mTOR-S6K通路诱导效应T细胞和调节性T细胞的产生^[61],也可以通过激活GPR43受体促进T细胞产生IL-10^[41],这两条途径独立发挥作用。当外源性添加丁酸后,小鼠胸腺T细胞数量显著增加,提示丁酸在小鼠体内外均能诱导T细胞分化,并能改善小鼠结肠炎^[62-63]。值得注意的是,丁酸的浓度和宿主免疫环境等差异可能对肠道免疫产生有益或有害的影响^[63],而这一问题仍有待进一步解决。

4.1.5 SCFAs调控B细胞的分化

SCFAs通过保护肠道上皮屏障的完整性、促进B细胞IgA的产生和调节T细胞分化来维持肠道内环境的稳定^[41]。乙酸在体外和体内均促进B细胞分化,并保护小鼠免于关节炎^[64]。低剂量的丁酸和丙酸通过抑制HDAC活性而上调人和小鼠B细胞*Aicda*和*Prdm1*宿主基因的表达,从而参与免疫反应^[3]。此外,SCFAs激活B细胞的新陈代谢,调节基因表达,促进B细胞分化。SCFAs的这种B细胞辅助功能从肠道到全身组织都被检测到,并在小鼠和人类B细胞中保守,突显了SCFAs对B细胞的重要性^[2],但具体分子机制仍需要进一步的挖掘分析。

综上所述,不同的SCFAs对不同类型的免疫细胞的影响差异较大。而根据免疫细胞类型的不同,调控其分化的SCFAs也不同,例如,中性粒细胞通常受到乙酸的影响,而巨噬细胞和树突状细胞受到丁酸的影响。当然,SCFAs对脂肪细胞等非免疫细胞也发挥着调控作用^[65]。比如,乙酸和丙酸可抑制内源性脂肪分解,而丙酸可通过增加脂蛋白脂酶表

达来调节细胞外脂肪分解, 两者均可导致循环血脂水平和体重下降^[7]。

4.2 SCFAs对肠道免疫屏障的影响

肠道是病原体进入机体的主要部位, 由单层柱状上皮细胞覆盖的绒毛和肠腺构成^[50]。作为肠道微生物群和黏膜免疫系统之间的第一道屏障, 肠上皮细胞(IEC)不仅是微生物入侵的物理屏障, 而且也是启动和维持肠道黏膜免疫反应的关键参与者^[66], 通过感应病原微生物或其分子(如内毒素)并做出反应, 分泌黏蛋白、抗微生物肽以及细胞因子和趋化因子等免疫介质(包括CXCL1、IL-1 β 、TNF α 等), 募集并调节免疫细胞的分化和激活。肠道屏障功能的丧失会导致全身免疫失衡而引发免疫疾病^[67], SCFAs在肠道免疫屏障中的作用不可忽视。比如, 丁酸通过激活AMPK信号通路或下调Claudin 2(阳离子选择性孔道)增强肠道屏障功能^[27]; 通过调节肠上皮杯状细胞的表达和分化来帮助维持肠道屏障^[68]。此外, 丁酸还调节肠上皮细胞的O₂消耗, 有助于稳定低氧诱导因子(HIF), 发挥协调肠道屏障保护的重要作用^[7]。另外, SCFAs还具有促进钠和水的吸收、改善紧密连接、加速上皮修复等功能, 在维持胃肠道黏膜动态平衡方面起着关键作用^[69]。

5 SCFAs与肠道疾病

SCFAs对肠道健康至关重要。作为结肠细胞的能量底物, SCFAs具有抗炎和抗癌特性^[69]。较高的纤维摄入量与肠易激综合征^[70]、炎症性肠病^[71]、心血管疾病^[72]、糖尿病^[73]和结肠癌^[74]的风险降低有关, 增加可发酵膳食纤维或SCFAs的摄入量对治疗肠道疾病有许多临床益处^[35]。

5.1 SCFAs与炎症性肠病(IBD)

溃疡性结肠炎(UC)和克罗恩病(CD)统称为IBD。过去的50年里, UC和CD的发病率和流行率在世界范围内显著增加, 特别是在一些发展中国家和西方国家。与健康人相比, IBD患者肠道微生物普遍失调, 表现为微生物多样性减少、促炎细菌(肠杆菌科和梭杆菌科)数量增加、厚壁菌门等具有抗炎作用的菌群减少^[75], 肠黏膜和粪便中SCFAs通常会减少^[76], 可能与MCT1蛋白的表达降低有关^[77]。

乙酸、丙酸和丁酸已被证明有助于结肠调节性T(Treg)细胞的发育, 从而缓解肠道的局部炎症。SCFAs与GPR43结合降低对中性粒细胞的浸润, 从而减轻肠道炎症^[78]。其中, 丁酸在防控IBD、肠道肿瘤和吸收不良的效果和作用机制的研究逐年增

加^[79-80], 未来有望将丁酸在细胞中的作用转化用于临床治疗。研究发现, 丁酸通过与结肠细胞表面的GPR43受体偶联、抑制mRNA稳定蛋白(HuR)^[81]或刺激NF- κ B通路来减轻肠道炎症^[82-83]。口服丁酸具有下调CD患者结肠细胞中NF- κ B和IL-1 β 表达, 减轻炎症的作用^[14]; 产丁酸的伯氏杆菌具有预防坏死性肠炎, 减少盲肠和回肠中病原体丰度等重要作用^[79]。

5.2 结直肠癌(CRC)

结直肠癌是近年来全球癌症患者的主要死亡原因之一, 但病因尚不清楚。结直肠癌与许多基因有关, 关键基因主要是结肠腺瘤性息肉病(APC)基因和参与DNA错配修复(MMR)基因^[84], 其特点是在进化过程中存在多个分子通路的转移, 如降低细胞的凋亡率和调控癌细胞的转移^[79]。

在结肠炎患者中, 丁酸通过激活GPR109A, 诱导结肠上皮细胞释放IL-18, 进而参与结肠炎症和结肠癌的调节^[85]。炎症是消化道癌症发展的主要危险因素, 在患有炎症性肠道疾病的患者中, 结肠癌发生率明显增加。研究表明高SCFAs水平的膳食纤维摄入量可以有效降低结肠癌的发生^[86], SCFAs通过诱导结肠癌细胞系(HCT-116、SW480和HT-29)的自噬而保护肠道健康^[87-88]。Whitehead等^[89]最先证明丁酸能减缓结肠癌细胞系的增殖。到目前为止, 丁酸已被证明在低纤维饮食条件下可以预防结肠炎和结肠癌, 影响结直肠癌细胞的功能, 包括调节基因表达^[90]、细胞信号转导^[91]和抑制结肠癌细胞的生长^[92-93]。有研究通过评估丁酸对人结肠上皮细胞系19400个基因表达的变化, 确定了其中有221个潜在基因与人类结肠上皮细胞的增殖、分化和凋亡过程特别相关^[25]。Kim等^[94]发现WT型(*Gpr43*^{+/+})小鼠的结肠癌发展与膳食纤维摄入量成负相关, 但当缺乏*Gpr43*基因时, 补充膳食纤维或SCFAs仍能发挥抑制结肠癌发展的作用, 但效果有限。

6 展望

SCFAs是肠道微生物群发挥广泛调节作用的重要武器, 与肠道健康密切相关。目前预防或者治疗人类肠道炎症疾病的常见策略是口服外源性SCFAs或SCFAs与抗炎药、益生元、益生菌等联合使用, 以调节肠道微生物组成及其代谢产物, 进而达到治疗效果。然而, 目前多针对单一SCFA的效果开展研究, 有关多种SCFAs联合作用对肠道炎症的预防效果仍然未知; 且研究主要局限在模式动物层面,

极少在临床开展相关治疗试验, 有关 SCFAs 在调节人体免疫功能、抑制肠道疾病发生中的作用及机制仍需进一步认识。膳食纤维的摄入是调节肠道内 SCFAs 产生的重要来源, 但如何量化和控制膳食纤维摄入量, 达到调节特定肠道炎症部位的 SCFAs 的产量或比例, 是临床缓解肠道炎症或肠内营养治疗中需要重点考虑的关键问题之一。此外, 今后研究还应考虑 SCFAs 在肥胖等代谢性疾病, 自闭症、焦虑症等神经系统疾病中的预防或治疗作用。

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