

基于遗传增强间充质干细胞的衰老干预新策略

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摘要: 衰老伴随成体干细胞功能衰退, 是多种衰老相关疾病发生发展的核心因素。间充质干细胞因具备多向分化潜能、免疫调节能力及低免疫原性等优势, 被视为延缓衰老、促进再生最具前景的细胞移植材料。然而, 移植后的细胞在衰老机体恶劣微环境中存活率低、滞留时间短, 严重制约了其疗效。为解决这一瓶颈, 遗传增强策略应运而生, 即通过基因编辑手段增强细胞的归巢能力、抵抗环境压力的能力及旁分泌功能, 使其在衰老及相关疾病治疗中展现出优于野生型细胞的潜力。尽管长期安全性仍需进一步评估, 但遗传增强间充质干细胞为开发新一代延缓衰老疗法指明了方向。

关键词: 间充质干细胞; 衰老; 细胞移植; 遗传增强

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Genetically enhanced mesenchymal stem cells for aging intervention

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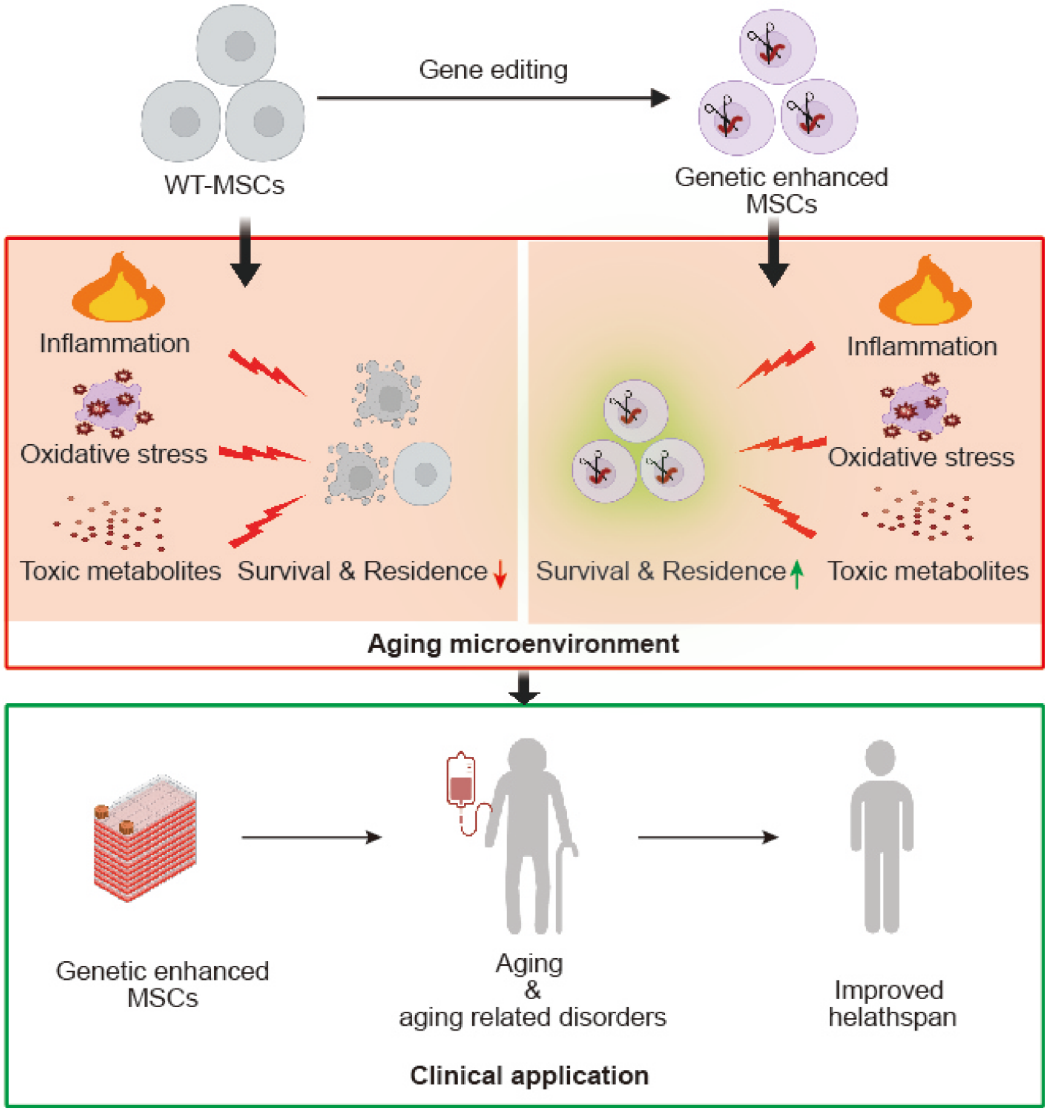
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Abstract: Aging is an inevitable physiological process accompanied by a gradual decline in the function of adult stem cells, which is widely recognized as a core factor of various aging-related diseases, including cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, neurodegenerative diseases and osteoporosis. Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs), due to their advantages such as multilineage differentiation potential, immunomodulatory capacity, and low immunogenicity, are considered the most promising cell transplantation materials for delaying aging and promoting regeneration. However, after transplantation, MSCs often face extremely low survival rates and short retention times in the harsh microenvironment of the aging body, which is characterized by oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, accumulation of toxic metabolites and reduced nutrient supply, severely limiting their therapeutic efficacy in clinical applications. To address this critical bottleneck, genetic enhancement strategies have emerged as a promising solution, which employ precise gene editing technologies such as CRISPR-Cas9 to modify target genes, thereby improving the homing ability of MSCs to damaged tissues, enhancing their resistance to adverse microenvironmental stress, and promoting their paracrine secretion of beneficial cytokines. These genetically enhanced MSCs show markedly superior therapeutic efficacy relative to wild-type MSCs in the treatment of aging and related diseases. Although the long-term safety and potential risks of genetically enhanced MSCs still require further evaluation through large-sample, long-term preclinical and clinical studies, they undoubtedly represent an important breakthrough direction for the development of next-generation safe and effective anti-aging therapies.

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Key words: mesenchymal stem cells; aging; cell therapy; genetic enhancement

衰老是一种复杂的生物学过程,其特征表现为随年龄增长而出现的多系统功能渐进性衰退。大量研究表明,衰老与心血管疾病、糖尿病、恶性肿瘤及神经退行性疾病等多种年龄相关疾病的发生发展密切相关^[1-4]。在全球人口老龄化日趋严峻的背景下,特别是在中国快速进入深度老龄化社会的特殊时期,深入理解衰老的生物学机制并探索有效的干预策略,已成为当前生物医学领域最具挑战性的科学问题之一。然而,衰老具有高度异质性和复杂性等特征,增加了衰老机制研究的难度,制约了有效干预策略的研发。

成体干细胞广泛分布于成熟个体的多种组织器官中,具有自我更新和多向分化的生物学特性。在

生理状态下,成体干细胞通过精准的自我更新与分化调控参与组织稳态的维持;而在病理条件下(如组织损伤),它们可被激活并迁移至受损部位,通过定向分化或旁分泌作用促进组织修复与功能重建^[5]。然而,随着年龄增长,体内干细胞逐渐发生耗竭(数量减少、自我更新和分化能力持续下降),这直接导致了组织再生修复能力减弱和稳态失衡,进而加速机体功能退化^[6,7]。由此可见,干细胞耗竭既是机体衰老的重要特征,也是驱动衰老进程的关键因素。

近年来,随着衰老干预研究的深入,外源性干细胞移植作为潜在的抗衰老策略受到广泛关注。其中,间充质干细胞(mesenchymal stem cells, MSCs)因其来源广泛、免疫原性低、安全性较高以及多向

分化与免疫调节特性,已成为衰老与再生医学领域最具前景的细胞移植材料^[8,9]。2017年,迈阿密大学米勒医学院开展的里程碑式临床研究首次评估了MSCs移植的安全性和对衰弱症的干预效果。研究数据显示,接受MSCs输注的30例75岁以上老年受试者,在输注后长达12个月的随访期间均没有出现与细胞输注相关的严重不良事件或明显供体特异性免疫反应;在输注后的3个月和6个月,受试者6分钟步行距离、短期体能测试及1秒用力呼气量等身体功能指标、免疫功能指标均得到改善,血清中肿瘤坏死因子- α (tumor necrosis factor- α , TNF- α)、白介素6(interleukin-6, IL-6)等促炎因子水平明显降低^[10,11]。2026年,研究团队进一步在148例衰弱症患者中进行了同种异体的骨髓来源MSCs移植2b期临床试验。结果显示,与安慰剂相比,接受细胞输注的患者在6分钟步行试验(主要终点)中取得了具有临床意义且呈剂量依赖性和时间依赖性的改善^[12]。上述研究证实了MSCs输注干预衰老的可行性,但大量研究表明,移植细胞面临着存活率低与存留时间短的问题,严重限制了其治疗功能的发挥。造成这一瓶颈的关键在于,衰老机体或疾病局部的病理微环境(表现为慢性氧化应激、持续性低度炎症及毒性代谢产物积累等)构成了移植细胞难以适应的恶劣生态位^[13-15]。本文系统综述了近年来干细胞干预衰老的研究进展。针对如何增强干细胞功能、提高移植细胞存活率这一核心问题,文章重点探讨了遗传增强策略在优化MSCs功能中的应用潜力,并分析了其在延缓衰老领域的临床转化前景,以期为开发新一代延缓衰老方案提供理论依据与技术参考。

1 成体干细胞衰老的核心变化

成体干细胞广泛存在于成熟个体的各种组织器官中,作为组织修复与稳态维持的核心效应细胞,在机体损伤修复过程中发挥多维度调控作用^[6,16,17]。与具有分化为所有胚层能力的多能干细胞(pluripotent stem cells)不同,成体干细胞的分化能力通常限于其所在组织的谱系,因此属于多潜能干细胞(multipotent stem cells),常被视为组织特异的祖细胞(progenitor cells)或前体细胞(precursor cells)。当组织损伤发生时,成体干细胞在炎症因子(如TNF- α 、IL-6)和趋化因子(如C-X-C基序趋化因

子配体12(C-X-C motif chemokine ligand 12, CXCL12)、CXCL2)的作用下被特异性激活,定向迁移到损伤部位并分化为终末功能细胞,从而重建受损组织的细胞组成。同时,成体干细胞还可通过分泌营养因子、调节局部微环境等方式维持组织稳态,促进再生^[18,19]。

然而,随着年龄增长,成体干细胞功能逐渐衰退、数量逐渐减少,导致组织再生与修复能力下降、损伤累积,从而加速衰老进程^[6,20,21]。研究表明,成体干细胞衰老与基因组不稳定性增加、激活机制紊乱、自我更新和分化能力异常、应激抵抗能力减弱以及分泌功能重塑等密切相关^[22-26](图1)。这些既是干细胞衰老的核心特征,也是驱动其功能衰退与耗竭的关键动力。深入理解上述调控机制,将有助于进一步揭示干细胞衰老的分子基础,并为优化干细胞移植策略提供理论指导。

1.1 基因组不稳定性增加

成体干细胞的衰老与基因组不稳定性的加剧密切相关,具体表现为基因突变的积累和表观遗传的改变。长期暴露于内源性(如氧化应激)或外源性(如辐射、化学物质)应激源,将导致DNA损伤负荷增加。据报道,每个哺乳动物细胞每天可发生数千至数万次DNA损伤事件,虽然绝大多数能被DNA损伤修复系统准确修复,但仍有极少数损伤得以留存并累积^[27]。随着年龄增长,DNA损伤应答系统功能衰退,修复通路效率下降,进一步加速了DNA损伤的积累,进而引发细胞周期阻滞、衰老或凋亡^[28]。

表观遗传学调控通过DNA甲基化、组蛋白修饰、染色质重塑等机制,在不改变DNA序列的前提下,动态调控染色质的转录可及性,从而精细控制基因的转录激活与表达水平,进而调控细胞的分化、增殖、应激反应等生理过程^[29]。在年轻健康的成体干细胞中,特定的表观遗传景观得以精确维持,例如干性维持相关基因的染色质处于开放状态,而分化相关基因则被稳定沉默,确保干细胞能按需激活并参与组织修复与再生。然而,在长期内源与外源压力的作用下,表观遗传调控逐渐发生错误与漂移,一方面导致基因组不稳定性增加、染色质结构完整性丧失,另一方面引发基因的异常表达,最终使成体干细胞功能下降,丧失其原有的组织稳态维持与再生修复能力^[30]。

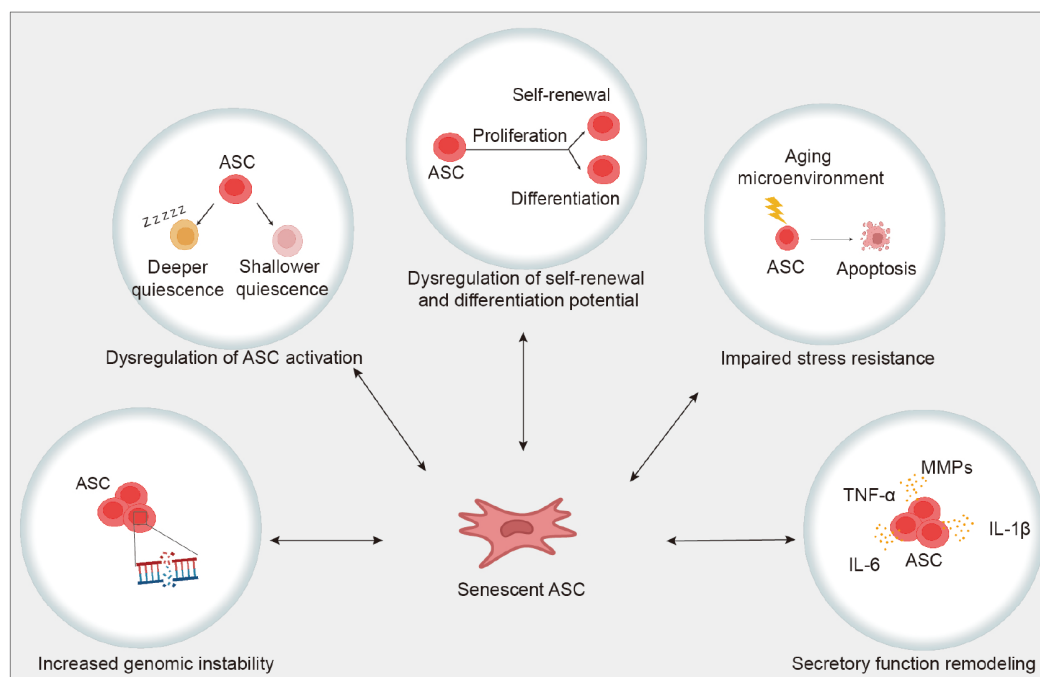


图1 成体干细胞伴随衰老的改变

ASC:成体干细胞;MMPs:基质金属蛋白酶;TNF- α :肿瘤坏死因子- α ;IL-6:白细胞介素6;IL-1 β :白细胞介素1 β

Figure 1 Senescence-related changes in ASCs

ASC: adult stem cell; MMPs: matrix metalloproteinases; TNF- α : tumor necrosis factor- α ; IL-6: interleukin-6; IL-1 β : interleukin-1 β

1.2 干细胞静息态调控机制紊乱

大多数成体干细胞群处于退出细胞周期的“静息态”。只有在机体受到损伤时,处于静息态的成体干细胞被激活,从而进入细胞周期。激活后,部分增殖细胞用于补充干细胞库,另一部分则分化为功能细胞,参与组织再生修复与功能稳态维持^[31]。进入静息态是成体干细胞维持群体稳态、为组织修复储备资源的重要方式,而静息与激活状态的精准平衡,是干细胞发挥正常生理功能的关键^[18]。研究发现,成体干细胞维持静息状态与激活状态之间平衡的能力随年龄增长而下降。在衰老小鼠大脑中,炎症微环境联合Wnt信号的活化使神经干细胞进入深度静息态。这一状态虽避免了神经干细胞数量的完全耗竭,但也导致其在脑损伤修复中更难被激活^[32],最终造成组织再生修复能力受损。另一方面,伴随衰老高表达的成纤维细胞生长因子2(fibroblast growth factor 2,FGF2)可抑制小鼠肌肉干细胞中静息态维持关键因子Spry1的表达。Spry1作为受体酪氨酸激酶(receptor tyrosine kinases,RTKs)的负反馈抑制剂,可直接抑制RAS-MAPK/ERK通路,其表达下调导致肌肉干细胞丧失静息态而趋向耗竭^[33,34]。在

人的肌肉干细胞中,衰老使SPRY1基因发生高甲基化而沉默,同样导致肌肉干细胞静息态丧失和趋向耗竭^[35]。

1.3 自我更新和分化能力异常

成体干细胞的自我更新依赖活化细胞的不对称分裂,这一过程是维持干细胞库稳定性、保证组织长期再生修复能力的核心机制^[36]。随着年龄增长,调控不对称分裂的关键通路会发生异常改变,引发自我更新能力的紊乱。例如,在神经系统中,神经干细胞的自我更新潜能随年龄衰退,导致衰老大脑中神经干细胞数量减少^[37]。在造血系统中,活化的造血干细胞分裂后向自我更新方向偏斜而不能及时分化出所需的功能细胞,进而引发贫血表型^[38]。无论是自我更新能力的异常增高还是降低,最终均会导致成体干细胞耗竭及机体再生修复能力下降,从而促进衰老和衰老相关疾病的发生发展^[39]。

同时,成体干细胞的分化轨迹也会随着年龄增长发生改变,主要表现为分化方向的系统性偏斜与异常谱系分化。例如,在造血系统中,衰老时造血干细胞呈现髓系分化偏向,使得髓系细胞数量增加而淋系细胞减少,进而引发免疫稳态失衡,增加老年性

血液系统疾病的发病风险^[40,41]。神经系统中衰老的神经干细胞倾向于向星形胶质细胞分化,而向神经元分化减弱,直接导致神经再生能力下降^[42]。在肌肉组织中,衰老的肌肉干细胞逐渐丧失成肌分化潜能,转而向成纤维细胞分化,从而加剧与年龄相关的纤维化进程^[43]。干细胞分化方向的系统性偏斜与异常谱系分化,本质上是干细胞的功能性丧失,会直接导致组织修复能力减弱、损伤持续累积,从而促进衰老和衰老相关疾病的发生发展。

值得注意的是,成体干细胞的偏向分化还会导致细胞群体异质性降低。干细胞异质性是指同一干细胞群体内存在功能、表型、分化潜能、代谢状态等各不相同的细胞亚群,是干细胞发挥多样生理功能的基础。当发生分化偏斜时,适应能力更强但功能受损的优势亚群数量增加,而功能性干细胞亚群因无法适应衰老微环境而被淘汰,这进一步加剧干细胞功能的整体衰退^[44]。

1.4 应激抵抗能力减弱

细胞在内外环境应激压力下(如氧化应激、辐射损伤等)具备一定的维持自身功能与稳态的能力,即应激抵抗能力。这一能力随年龄增长而逐渐降低,是导致成体干细胞进行性耗竭的关键因素。研究者发现年轻与年老小鼠接受相同剂量辐照后,年老组肠道中存活隐窝数量更少且体积更小^[45],这为肠道干细胞存在年龄相关的应激抵抗能力降低提供了实证依据。机制研究表明,在老年个体来源的MSCs中,超氧化物歧化酶、过氧化氢酶、谷胱甘肽过氧化物酶等抗氧化酶基因表达下调。经过氧化氢处理后,细胞内活性氧累积显著增加、凋亡率升高,提示其氧化应激阈值降低^[46]。此外,在体外培养条件下,晚期MSCs对氧化刺激更敏感,表现为过量活性氧产生及超氧化物歧化酶、谷胱甘肽过氧化物酶和过氧化氢酶等抗氧化蛋白的表达下调,进而导致细胞功能受损并诱导凋亡^[47]。

1.5 分泌功能重塑

成体干细胞(尤其是MSCs与神经干细胞)随年龄增长会出现“分泌功能重塑”,其核心表现为衰老相关分泌表型(senescence-associated secretory phenotype, SASP)的建立与旁分泌信号网络的紊乱。这一改变不仅会削弱干细胞自身的旁分泌支持作用,还会通过塑造促炎微环境,诱导邻近细胞进入衰老状态,形成“衰老级联反应”,加速机体整体衰

老。对于MSCs而言,衰老导致其旁分泌作用减弱,血管内皮生长因子(vascular endothelial growth factor, VEGF)、表皮生长因子(epidermal growth factor, EGF)、胰岛素样生长因子-1(insulin-like growth factor-1, IGF-1)等再生因子合成减少,削弱了对组织微环境及其他细胞的营养与支持作用;同时,衰老MSCs还会持续高表达IL-6、IL-8、C-C趋化因子配体-2(C-C motif chemokine ligand 2, CCL2)、基质金属蛋白酶(matrix metalloproteinases, MMPs)等SASP核心组分,通过持续塑造局部促炎微环境而诱导邻近细胞进入衰老状态^[48]。神经干细胞的分泌功能是其发挥神经修复功能的重要机制,可分泌神经营养因子如脑源性神经营养因子(brain-derived neurotrophic factor, BDNF)、神经生长因子(nerve growth factor, NGF)、FGF等,抗炎因子如IL-10、转化生长因子(transforming growth factor, TGF)等,以及促血管生成因子如血管内皮生长因子VEGF、肝细胞生长因子(hepatocyte growth factor, HGF)等。这些因子发挥神经保护、抗炎、促进血管新生、改善微环境、增强突触可塑性等作用^[49,50]。然而,随着年龄增长,神经干细胞的分泌活性显著下降。研究发现,老年小鼠脑内的神经干细胞表现出外泌体释放减少、神经营养因子含量下降,进而导致神经再生与突触可塑性受损^[51,52]。

2 MSCs移植的效应基础和未来挑战

成体干细胞在器官维持、组织再生与内环境稳态调控中扮演重要角色,然而这些能力随年龄增长逐渐衰退。近年来,研究者尝试通过外源性干细胞移植重建组织稳态、延缓机体衰老并干预衰老相关疾病,相关研究已取得初步成效^[53]。其中, MSCs来源广泛、免疫原性低、具备多向分化潜能与免疫调节作用等优势,成为干细胞移植领域最具应用前景的细胞类型之一^[8,54]。然而,目前仍然存在一些制约MSCs临床转化进程的瓶颈问题。下文将系统总结MSCs移植发挥抗衰老作用的核心效应基础,深入剖析其临床应用中面临的关键挑战,为后续优化策略的开发指明方向。

2.1 MSCs移植的核心效应基础

研究证实, MSCs主要通过向功能细胞分化、旁分泌作用以及免疫调节作用促进组织的再生和修复(图2)。利用荧光示踪等技术,研究人员观察到

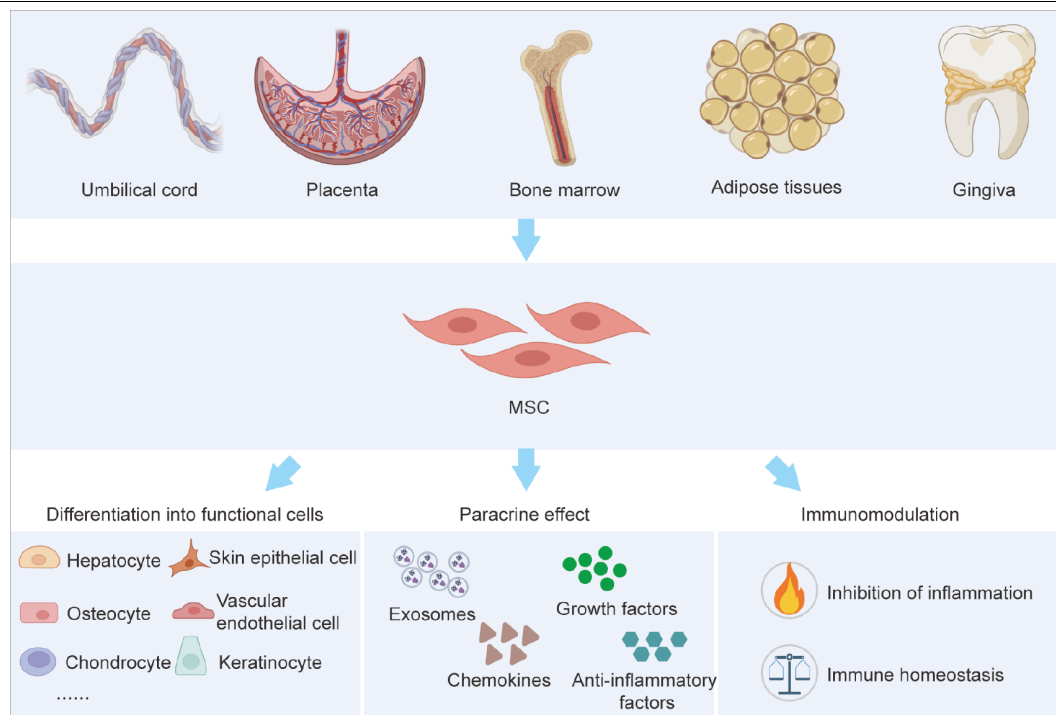


图2 MSCs的来源和发挥作用途径

Figure 2 Sources and functional pathways of MSCs

MSCs在特定条件下能够归巢至损伤部位,分化为肝细胞、软骨细胞、骨细胞、血管内皮细胞、皮肤上皮细胞和角质形成细胞等,进而参与组织重建^[55-58]。然而,在实际应用中,MSCs移植后存留时间过短、分化效率低,难以形成良好的组织整合^[59,60]。随着研究的深入,逐渐明确旁分泌功能及免疫调节能力是MSCs发挥抗衰老与组织修复作用的核心机制。MSCs被证实能分泌一个庞大而多样的“生物活性因子库”,涵盖VEGF、FGF-2、HGF、基质细胞衍生因子-1 α (stromal cell-derived factor-1 α , SDF-1 α)等分子。这些因子相互协同,在促血管生成、抗凋亡、调节免疫微环境、动员内源性干细胞等方面发挥关键作用,有效促进组织修复和再生^[61-63]。

2.2 MSCs移植面临的未来挑战

近年来,MSCs已被广泛应用于神经、免疫、心血管、肌肉、骨骼以及呼吸系统等主要器官系统疾病的干预研究^[8,64],其中多项进入临床试验阶段,显示出其临床转化的广泛潜力^[65]。然而,该策略在临床应用层面仍面临诸多挑战,其中疗效不稳定、移植存活率低是最核心的问题。在衰老及衰老相关疾病中,常存在氧化应激水平升高、持续炎症、毒性代谢产物积累等不利局部微环境^[1,66],严重影响移植MSCs的存活与功能维持(图3)。研究人员通过荧

光素酶标记和活体成像技术发现,移植的细胞在第2天便大量减少,到第7天时已无法检测到信号^[67]。另有研究报道,MSCs移植后的7天内超过90%的细胞会死亡^[68]。

细胞存活率低是当前MSCs治疗领域亟待突破的关键瓶颈。大量细胞在短期内死亡或被清除,导致其分泌生物活性因子(如抗炎因子、生长因子)不足,无法持续发挥免疫调节、组织修复等作用,是导致MSCs治疗效果不稳定的主要原因。如果通过增加移植细胞数量来弥补存活率低的问题,不仅会提高成本,还可能因细胞聚集、栓塞等问题增加副作用风险。因此,开发优化细胞质量和提高移植细胞存活率的关键技术,提升移植细胞在病灶区恶劣微环境中的适应能力,将有助于促进MSCs移植的临床转化与推广应用。

3 基于基因修饰的MSCs功能增强

先前的研究多通过预处理策略增强细胞耐受性,例如采用低氧、高氧、低浓度过氧化氢或血清剥夺等体外应激条件对细胞进行预适应处理,或通过与小分子药物及生物材料共移植等手段提高细胞存活率^[69-72]。这些研究从概念层面验证了改善MSCs移植效果的可行性。然而,此类预处理及共移植策

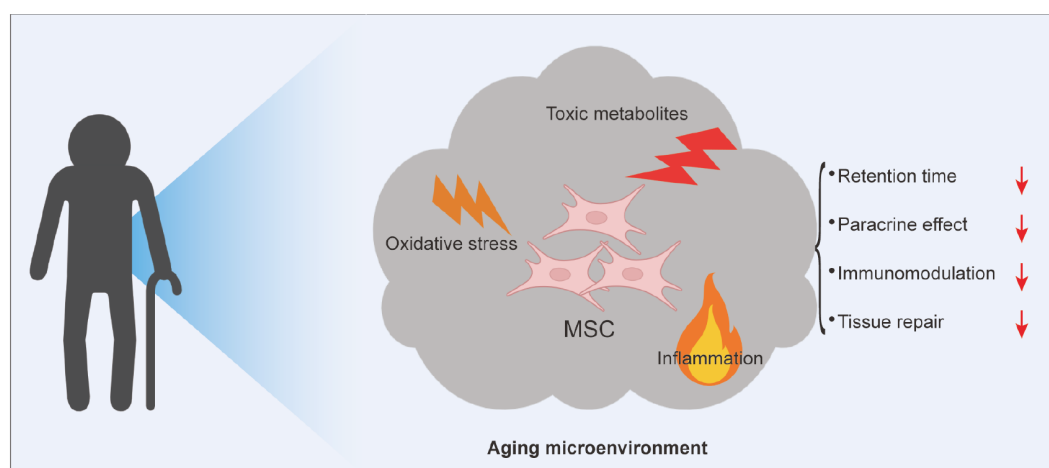


图3 衰老微环境对移植MSCs的影响

Figure 3 Effects of the aging microenvironment on transplanted MSCs

略也引入了新的复杂性与风险,包括可能引起细胞表型和功能的改变、药物对宿主组织的非特异性刺激、生物材料所引发的免疫排斥反应以及预处理效应维持时间的不确定性等。这些问题为MSCs移植效果的不稳定引入了新的影响因素,限制了其向临床应用的转化^[73-75]。随着基因工程技术的发展以及对MSCs生物学特性和作用机制的深入解析,通过对MSCs的基因进行精准修饰以提升其在实际应用中的存活率、功能性和安全性成为研究热点,该策略实现了细胞从“被动适应”环境到“主动改写”命运的根本性转变(图4)。

3.1 MSCs功能增强的主要策略

根据现有研究,通过基因修饰对MSCs进行功能增强,主要聚焦于三大方向:增强应激抵抗能力与存

活率、增强归巢与迁移能力、增强旁分泌能力。这三者相互协同,从根本上优化MSCs的生物学特性,大幅提升其体内治疗效能。

3.1.1 增强抵抗应激能力和存活率

移植后, MSCs面临的挑战是持续氧化应激、炎症、毒性代谢产物积累等恶劣微环境,这些因素导致其大量死亡。研究者通过基因编辑技术,定向激活可调控抗氧化应激、炎症反应、衰老等相关通路的关键基因 $NRF2$,成功获得应激抵抗能力显著增强的遗传增强型MSCs。 $NRF2$ 的组成型激活上调了MSCs中抗氧化、抗应激损伤、细胞周期调控、DNA修复等相关基因的表达,赋予细胞延缓衰老、提高移植效率、增强体内功能修复的能力^[76]。借助基因编辑技术,研究人员建立了人类长寿基因

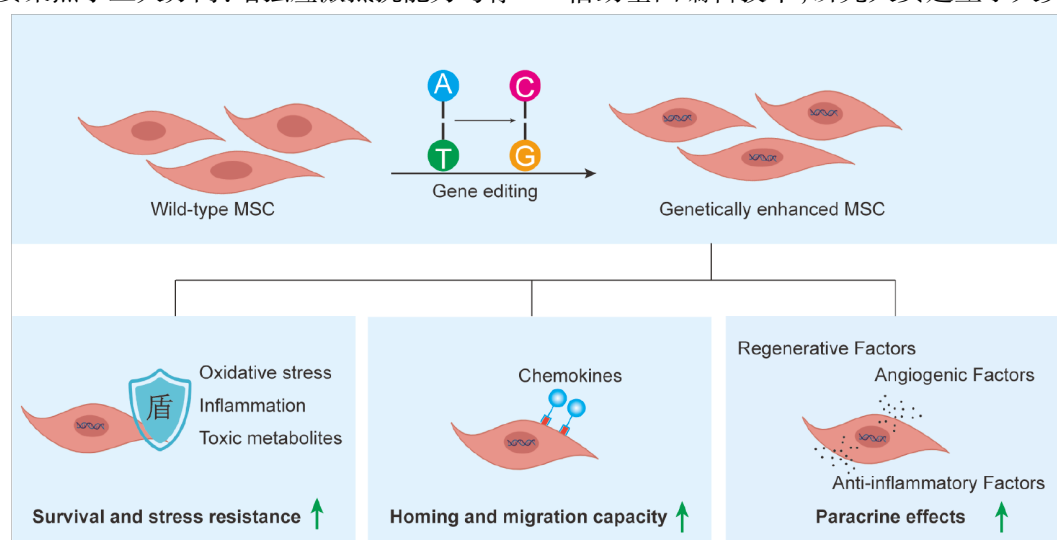


图4 通过基因编辑获得遗传增强型MSCs

Figure 4 Generation of genetically enhanced MSCs via gene editing

FOXO3遗传增强的MSCs,使其具备延缓衰老、抗恶劣微环境、抗恶性转化的能力。在后肢缺血、脑缺血、心肌缺血、脊髓损伤等多种衰老相关疾病动物模型中,该细胞移植后存留时间更长,表现出更好的改善效果^[77-80]。当通过静脉输注到非人灵长类生理性衰老模型体内后,该细胞能够系统性延缓多组织器官衰老^[81],为其应用推广提供了重要的灵长类实验依据。

3.1.2 增强归巢与迁移能力

内源性MSCs及移植的外源MSCs均有向机体损伤部位迁移的能力,这体现出MSCs在多种疾病治疗中的巨大应用潜力。促进全身给药后MSCs向损伤部位的精准靶向募集,有助于提升其治疗效果^[82]。C-X-C趋化因子受体4(C-X-C chemokine receptor type 4, CXCR4)是SDF-1的受体,在MSCs归巢中发挥重要作用。增强CXCR4表达可以促使MSCs更有效地响应损伤部位释放的SDF-1信号,促进其定向迁移。研究者以mRNA递送技术将CXCR4与IL-10共同过表达于MSCs中,发现改造后的MSCs在LPS诱导的局部炎症小鼠模型中归巢能力和抑制炎症的能力均明显增强^[83]。另有研究者发现在肝衰竭患者和小鼠模型中,CCL2的表达均明显增加,他们通过慢病毒感染将CCL2的受体CCR2(C-C motif chemokine receptor 2)过表达于MSCs中,发现其可促进MSCs向肝组织病灶的迁移从而发挥更强的治疗作用^[84]。

3.1.3 增强旁分泌能力

目前研究表明,MSCs的主要治疗作用并非直接分化为功能细胞,而是通过旁分泌作用释放生物活性因子(如生长因子、细胞因子),以此来促进组织修复、免疫调节和血管生成^[85,86]。通过基因修饰过表达关键的治疗性因子,能够显著增强MSCs的旁分泌功能,提升其在衰老相关疾病中的治疗效果。例如,以慢病毒或腺病毒介导HGF、IGF及VEGF过表达的MSCs,在移植到心肌缺血区域后均能明显提高心功能,增加血管密度,缩小缺血损伤范围^[87-89]。在神经系统中,以慢病毒介导方式过表达BDNF、胶质细胞源性神经生长因子(glial cell-derived neurotrophic factor, GDNF)、NGF的MSCs,也表现出优于野生型MSCs的神经保护作用^[90]。

3.2 MSCs功能增强的基因修饰工具

早期的MSCs功能增强研究多采用外源基因过

表达的方式,即将目的基因导入细胞并驱动其表达,从而激活MSCs的特定信号通路,实现功能增强^[90,91]。该方式通常依赖瞬时表达或随机整合,可能存在表达不稳定及致癌等安全性隐患。随着基因编辑技术的发展,锌指核酸酶(zinc finger nuclease, ZFN)、转录激活样效应核酸酶(transcription activator-like effector nuclease, TALEN)和CRISPR-Cas(clustered regularly interspaced short palindromic repeat (CRISPR)-CRISPR-associated protein)等工具逐步应用于MSCs的精确遗传修饰。这类技术可在基因组特定位点进行基因的插入、删除、突变或校正,从而实现目的基因的内源组成型激活和对MSCs功能的精准增强^[14,90]。与传统病毒载体介导的随机整合相比,精准基因编辑工具具有显著优势:其一,能够实现基因的定点修饰,大幅降低因随机插入带来的基因突变和致癌风险,显著提升基因编辑的安全性^[92];其二,通过基因编辑技术获得的基因修饰可稳定嵌入宿主基因组中,其功能增强特性能够随细胞分裂稳定遗传。因此,此类经过精准基因编辑的MSCs被称为“遗传增强MSCs”。遗传增强MSCs可在体外稳定传代和扩增,能够实现标准化、规模化制备,为建立“货架式”通用型细胞移植材料奠定了基础,大幅降低了细胞治疗的成本,为细胞治疗的临床推广创造了有利条件。

近年来,基于CRISPR-Cas的治疗手段已在多种人类疾病中开展研究,包括晚期胶质瘤、遗传性视网膜变性、 β -地中海贫血等^[93-96]。临床试验数据已初步提示,利用体内CRISPR-Cas9递送或体外CRISPR-Cas9修饰细胞的方法具有较好的安全性,这为遗传增强MSCs的临床转化提供了重要的技术参考。可以预见,安全高效的基因编辑工具的迭代升级将为遗传增强MSCs的建立提供关键支撑,从而进一步推动该领域的研究与转化进程。

3.3 基因编辑递送系统的类型与比较

基因编辑技术为MSCs实现“遗传增强”提供了高效工具,然而其本身并不具备自主进入细胞的能力,其功能的实现必须依赖合适的递送载体将相关元件转运至细胞内,因此,递送系统的选择与优化是遗传增强MSCs制备的另一核心环节。目前,递送方式主要包括非病毒依赖递送系统和病毒依赖递送系统。不同策略和递送系统在实际应用中各具优势与局限,有待进一步开发和优化。非病毒依赖递送

系统主要包括显微注射、电穿孔、脂质体、无机阳离子聚合物、纳米粒子等。其核心优势在于承载量大、免疫原性低,然而其效率不稳定,且高度依赖于细胞类型,同时可造成细胞存活率受损,这些均限制了其实际应用^[90,97,98]。病毒依赖递送系统需要借助改造后复制缺陷的病毒载体,主要包括慢病毒、腺病毒、腺相关病毒等。相较于非病毒依赖递送系统,病毒递送系统效率更高,且具有适用范围广、细胞毒性低、可长时间表达等特点。但其局限性在于载体容量有限、成本较高、可能诱发明显的宿主免疫反应,以及存在潜在的致癌风险,这些也制约了其临床转化与推广^[90,97,98]。未来亟待发展兼具高效、安全、低免疫原性的新型递送系统,以突破当前遗传增强MSCs制备的技术瓶颈,推动其临床转化进程。

4 总结和展望

本文系统阐述了成体干细胞耗竭与机体衰老之间的内在联系,指出尽管MSCs移植在延缓衰老方面展现出广阔前景,但其临床应用仍受限于移植后细胞存活率低、驻留时间短等核心瓶颈。传统的细胞预处理与共移植策略虽能在一定程度上改善细胞存活率,但存在诸多局限性,难以实现临床转化。随着基因工程技术的进步以及对MSCs基因表达调控机制理解的不断深入,通过精准基因编辑获得的遗传增强型MSCs,成为突破上述临床瓶颈的关键方向。该策略赋予遗传增强细胞在衰老及多种衰老相关疾病模型中优于野生型MSCs的治疗潜力。然而,当前基因编辑技术仍存在一定局限:ZFN和TALEN在蛋白质设计、构建、筛选及验证过程中操作复杂、成本高昂,限制了其广泛应用;CRISPR/Cas系统虽操作相对简便,但仍存在一定的脱靶效应风险,可能导致非预期的基因突变^[98]。因此,优化基因编辑策略,开发更精准、高效、低脱靶的基因编辑工具,同时建立大样本、长周期的安全性检测体系,全面评估遗传增强型MSCs的长期安全性,是当前亟待解决的核心科学问题。此外,基因编辑的递送系统仍有待进一步优化。开发高效、低毒、低成本的新型递送系统,是推动遗传增强型MSCs规模化制备与临床应用的关键。除技术层面的挑战外,基于遗传增强的干细胞移植策略还伴随复杂的伦理争议,需在研究与转化过程中予以充

分重视与审慎应对。

展望未来,随着衰老调控机制、长寿相关信号通路及细胞应激应答网络的进一步解析,基因编辑手段的持续优化,以及伦理监管体系的不断完善,遗传增强型MSCs有望发展成为干预衰老及相关疾病的一类高效、可靠的细胞资源。这一策略不仅为再生医学提供了新的突破口,也为实现“健康衰老”这一重大科学目标奠定了坚实的转化基础。

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