

干细胞治疗肝衰竭研究进展*

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摘要 肝衰竭是一种严重的肝脏疾病,其临床治疗面临极大挑战。多种因素,如慢性肝病、病毒性肝炎感染和药物滥用等,均可诱发肝衰竭,对数以千计患者的生命安全造成威胁。近年来,干细胞治疗作为一种新兴的治疗方法,通过促进肝细胞修复与再生、调节免疫反应、抑制肝纤维化和炎症反应等机制,为肝衰竭治疗提供了新思路。多项临床研究已经证明,干细胞移植治疗可以显著提高肝衰竭患者的存活率,并有效改善肝功能和凝血功能。然而,关于其长期疗效和安全性仍需进一步研究来确认。通过总结干细胞治疗肝衰竭的研究进展,并探讨其潜在的治疗机制和临床应用前景,有望为未来的研究和临床实践提供参考。

关键词 干细胞 肝衰竭 治疗机制 肝细胞 修复与再生

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肝脏作为人体最大的实体器官,具有合成、解毒、代谢、分泌、生物转化及免疫防御等多重功能。大面积肝脏损伤可能导致多器官功能障碍,严重时甚至危及生命^[1]。当肝功能障碍发展至晚期,即肝衰竭状态时,患者会出现凝血机制障碍、黄疸、肝性脑病、腹水等一系列典型临床症状^[2]。肝衰竭病程短、发病急,若未能及时获得有效治疗,患者可能在8~26周内病情迅速发展至死亡^[3]。目前,内科综合治疗和肝细胞移植是治疗肝衰竭的主要手段,能够提供暂时性肝功能支持^[4]。内科综合治疗主要通过药物手段调节患者的生理状态,减轻肝脏炎症,以改善肝功能。然而,这种方法无法完全治愈肝衰竭,且长期使用药物可能会引发严重的免疫抑制,进一步伤害患者身体^[5,6]。肝细胞移植能够提供长期肝功能支持,但移植的肝细胞在体内存活能力较弱,患者主要组织相容性复合体可能引发免疫排斥等因素,严重限制治疗效果^[7]。另外,接受肝细胞移植的患者还需要长期使用免疫抑制剂,可能会增加感染和癌症的风险^[4,8]。随着科技进步和对肝脏生理机制认知的加深,研究重点转向新型免疫调节与肝保护疗法。这些新疗法旨在建立受损肝脏中的免疫

抑制微环境,减轻肝脏炎症,促进肝细胞增殖,而不引发严重的全身免疫抑制,有助于肝衰竭患者恢复健康和提高生活质量。

干细胞具有自我更新和多向分化的特性,在促进损伤组织修复和再生方面具有显著作用,已成为许多疾病治疗中的重要候选细胞^[9]。在自身免疫性疾病方面,干细胞可以通过调节免疫反应来缓解炎症和自身免疫反应,从而有效治疗自身免疫性疾病^[10-11]。对于神经退行性疾病,干细胞可以分化成神经元或神经胶质细胞,为治疗阿尔茨海默病、帕金森病等神经退行性疾病提供了新途径^[12-13]。此外,干细胞还可以用于移植抗宿主病^[14-15]、缺血性损伤^[16-17]、造血功能障碍^[18]、衰老性疾病^[19]、糖尿病及其并发症^[20-21]等多种疾病的治疗。在肝脏疾病治疗领域,干细胞也展现出了其独特优势,为肝衰竭治疗提供了新的策略和希望^[22-23]。本文旨在综述干细胞治疗肝衰竭的发病机制和治疗现状,为肝衰竭治疗领域提供新思路 and 可能性。

1 肝衰竭的发病机制及治疗现状

1.1 肝衰竭诱因及分类

肝衰竭是多种因素(病毒、药物、肝毒性物质、酒精、遗传代谢性疾病等)引起的严重肝脏损害,导致其合成、解毒、排泄和生物转化等功能发生严重障碍或失

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代偿,出现以凝血功能障碍、黄疸、肝性脑病、腹水等为主要表现的一组临床症候群^[24]。根据组织病理学特征和疾病发展速度,肝衰竭可进一步分为急性肝衰竭(acute liver failure, ALF)、亚急性肝衰竭(subacute liver

failure, SALF)、慢加急性(亚急性)肝衰竭[acute (subacute)-on-chronic liver failure, ACLF 或 SACLF]和慢性肝衰竭(chronic liver failure, CLF)^[25]。具体分类详情可参考表1。

表 1 肝衰竭分类及特点
Table 1 Classification and characteristics of liver failure

分类	定义	组织病理学特征	病因
急性肝衰竭	以短期内出现严重肝功能失常为特征,可能导致多器官功能衰竭。通常在数周内出现黄疸、凝血异常、肝性脑病和腹水等症状	广泛的肝细胞坏死、炎症细胞浸润、肝小叶结构破坏,伴有肝细胞严重变形和肝窦网状支架部分塌陷	药物(如酮康唑、乙酰胺基酚等)中毒、病毒(如乙型肝炎病毒、丙型肝炎病毒)感染、自身免疫性肝炎等
亚急性肝衰竭	介于急性和慢性之间的一种状态,表现为逐渐恶化的肝功能失调,但并非如急性肝衰竭那样迅速发展	肝细胞桥接坏死、胶原纤维沉积,以及可能伴有的肝细胞再生迹象和胆汁淤积	药物(如酮康唑、乙酰胺基酚等)中毒、病毒(如乙型肝炎病毒、丙型肝炎病毒)感染、自身免疫性肝炎等
慢加急性(亚急性)肝衰竭	是在慢性肝病基础上急性恶化的一种状态,常伴随肝功能急速下降	在慢性肝病病理损害基础上,发生新的程度不等的肝细胞坏死性病变	长期酒精滥用、慢性病毒性肝炎、脂肪肝等
慢性肝衰竭	是长期肝病持续性的肝功能失常状态。表现为肝功能逐渐减退导致腹水、门静脉高压、凝血功能障碍和肝性脑病等典型表现的慢性肝功能失代偿	广泛的肝细胞坏死、桥接纤维化、再生结节形成和肝小叶结构紊乱	慢性病毒性肝炎、酒精性肝病、脂肪肝等

1.2 肝衰竭发病机制

1.2.1 细胞死亡 肝细胞的广泛丧失是肝衰竭的主要诱因,其中肝细胞坏死和凋亡是关键机制^[26]。酒精性肝病、病毒性肝炎及毒性物质是引发细胞死亡的主要因素^[27]。酒精代谢产物如乙醛和自由基通过直接损伤细胞膜和线粒体诱发细胞死亡。病毒性肝炎通过病毒蛋白和免疫反应攻击肝细胞,导致细胞凋亡和坏死。毒性物质如对乙酰氨基酚(acetaminophen, APAP)代谢生成的N-乙酰基-对苯醌亚胺(N-acetyl-4-benzoquinone imine, NAPQI)是一种强氧化剂,这种强氧化剂会直接损伤细胞,引发细胞坏死和凋亡。

1.2.2 氧化应激 肝脏在遭受损伤(如药物、毒素、病毒感染等)时,肝细胞产生大量活性氧(reactive oxygen, ROS)和活性氮。这些自由基攻击细胞成分,特别是脂质、蛋白质和DNA,导致细胞功能障碍和损伤。尽管肝细胞内的抗氧化防御系统(如谷胱甘肽和超氧化物歧化酶)通常能中和这些自由基,但在严重损伤时,抗氧化防御失衡,不足以对抗过量的自由基,从而进一步导致细胞损伤和肝功能衰竭^[28]。

1.2.3 炎症反应 肝脏损伤后,促炎细胞因子(如IL-1 β 、IL-6、TNF- α 等)过度释放,诱发肝脏炎症反应,导致进一步的细胞损伤和肝功能衰竭。同时,肝内的巨噬细胞(如Kupffer细胞)和浸润的单核细胞/巨噬细胞

被激活,释放大炎症介质(如细胞因子、趋化因子),进一步促进肝脏炎症反应和纤维化过程^[29]。当肝脏受到损伤或感染时,细胞表面和内部的受体感知到危险信号,随后激活NF- κ B、JAK-STAT和MAPK等信号转导途径,诱导促炎因子表达,促进炎症细胞募集和激活,扩大炎症反应^[30]。

1.2.4 免疫损伤与线粒体功能障碍 线粒体是肝细胞能量代谢的中心,其功能障碍会导致ATP生成减少,细胞能量代谢紊乱,影响肝脏正常功能^[31]。线粒体膜通透性的改变可能导致线粒体内外物质的不正常流动,引发细胞凋亡和坏死。免疫细胞的过度活化产生大量ROS,对线粒体造成氧化应激损伤,进一步加剧肝细胞的损伤和功能失调。

1.2.5 纤维化与细胞外基质重塑 肝脏慢性损伤激活肝星状细胞(hepatic stellate cell, HSC),这些细胞产生大量胶原蛋白和其他细胞外基质成分,导致肝脏纤维化,严重影响肝脏结构和功能^[32]。基质金属蛋白酶(matrix metalloproteinase, MMPs)和组织金属蛋白酶抑制剂(tissue inhibitor of matrix metalloproteinases, TIMPs)之间的失衡,导致细胞外基质过度积累,进一步加剧肝纤维化过程,影响肝脏正常功能^[33]。这些过程共同作用,导致肝脏结构和功能严重受损,最终可能发展为肝衰竭(图1)。

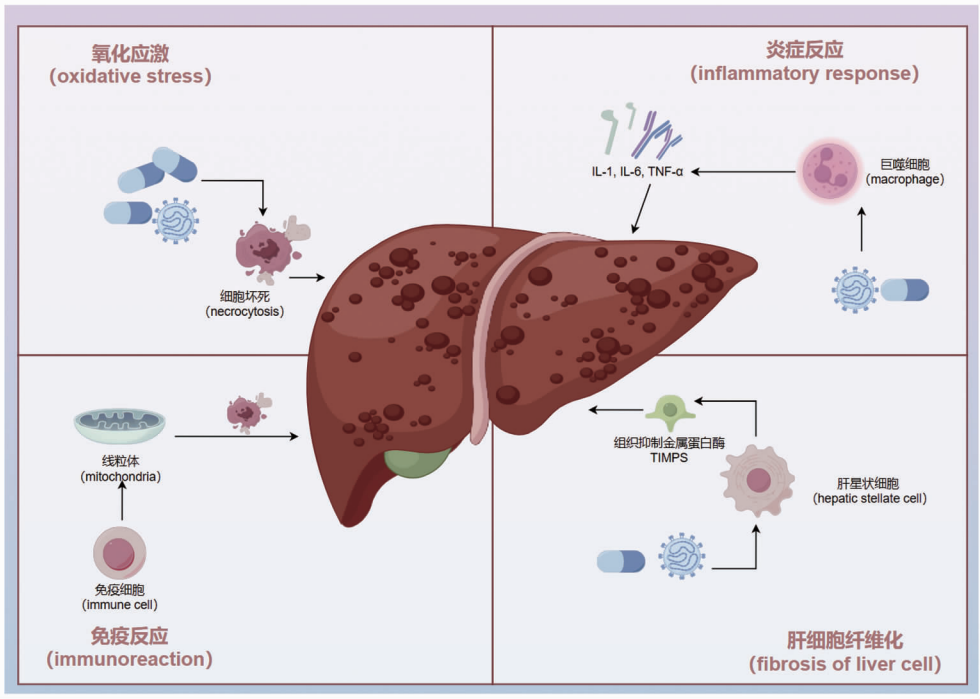


图1 肝衰竭发病机制

Fig.1 Pathogenesis of liver failure

1.3 肝衰竭的治疗方法及其局限性

肝衰竭是肝病中致死率最高的一种类型,其临床演变迅速,尚缺乏特异性治疗方法,严重威胁人类健康。“三早一体系”的全程管理模式是目前肝衰竭治疗的基本策略:“三早”即早期预警、早期诊断、早期治疗;“一体系”即预警-内科-人工肝/脏器支持-肝移植一体化的救治体系(表2)。内科综合治疗是维持肝衰竭患者病情稳定的重要基础,通过护肝、退黄、对症支持手段,控制原发病、维持水电解质平衡、补充凝血因子、降低氨基酸血症等,缓解病情。当患者出现 ALF 的迅速恶化,内科治疗无法控制时,肝移植被视为最佳治疗选择^[34-35]。但由于供体数量有限、等待时间长、成本高及多重并发症(如排斥反应、手术期发病率和死亡率)等

问题,肝移植难以广泛应用^[36-37]。人工肝支持系统是目前治疗肝衰竭不可或缺的重要手段之一,通过一个体外理化或生物装置暂时性替代肝脏功能,清除体内有毒物质,代偿肝脏生理功能,从而使肝细胞得以再生直至自体肝脏恢复或等待机会进行肝移植^[38-39]。其他疗法如抗病毒治疗、免疫调节治疗等也在肝衰竭的管理中起着重要作用。抗病毒治疗通过抑制病毒复制,减轻肝细胞损伤,但可能引起药物副作用和耐药性^[40]。免疫调节治疗通过调节免疫反应减轻炎症损伤,但疗效因人而异,且可能引起感染风险^[41]。相比之下,干细胞治疗作为一种新兴策略,因其低免疫排斥风险和通过分泌生长因子及细胞因子改善肝脏微环境、抑制炎症和纤维化的特性,为肝衰竭治疗带来了新希望^[42]。

表2 肝衰竭治疗方法及其局限性

Table 2 Treatment methods and limitations of liver failure

治疗方法	优点	局限性
肝移植	挽救严重肝衰竭患者生命,同时改善其生活质量	供体短缺,手术风险高且伴随术后并发症,费用高昂
内科综合治疗	可以在等待肝移植时维持患者的稳定状态,控制潜在的病因和并发症	内科治疗无法治愈肝衰竭,只能暂时缓解症状,且治疗时机非常关键
人工肝支持系统	可以帮助稳定患者病情,清除有害物质和废物	是一种临时性治疗手段,不能替代真正的肝功能;费用较高
干细胞治疗	避免供体匹配问题、减少排斥反应的风险等	干细胞治疗仍处于研究和临床试验阶段,安全性和有效性需要进一步验证

2 干细胞概述

干细胞是具有自我更新和多向分化潜能的细胞,能长期维持自身群体并在特定条件下分化为多种功能细胞。根据发育阶段不同,干细胞可分为胚胎干细胞(embryonic stem cell, ESC)和成体干细胞(adult stem cell, ASC)^[43]。根据分化潜能不同,干细胞包括与早期胚胎发育相关的全能干细胞(totipotent stem cell, TSC)和多潜能干细胞(pluripotent stem cell, PSC),以及成人组织中普遍存在的多能干细胞(multipotent stem cell, MSC)、寡能干细胞(oligopotent stem cell, OSC)和单能干细胞(unipotent stem cell, USC)^[44]。在再生医学、疾病模型、药物筛选、基因治疗和细胞治疗等领域,干细胞都展现出广泛的应用前景^[45-49]。

3 干细胞治疗肝衰竭的研究进展

3.1 干细胞治疗肝衰竭的机制

3.1.1 细胞再生和修复 干细胞不仅可能替换已受损的肝细胞,还可能刺激宿主原有肝细胞的再生^[50]。在一项模拟人体内肝脏发生过程的研究中观察到,ESC可以逐步诱导分化形成具有一定肝细胞功能的肝样细胞^[51-52]。Luo等^[53]的研究发现,当给肝硬化行门静脉栓塞术后的受试者注射外源性干细胞后,观察到部分干细胞在肝脏处分化为肝样细胞。细胞因子参与调节肝衰竭的损伤与修复机制。肝细胞生长因子(hepatocyte growth factor, HGF)、表皮生长因子(epidermal growth factor, EGF)与肝细胞的增殖分化密切相关^[54];神经生长因子(nerve growth factor, NGF)和血管内皮生长因子(vascular endothelial growth factor, VEGF)可改善肝脏微循环和增强血管生成^[55]。Zhang等^[56]研究发现,干细胞可以分泌各类生长因子,如HGF、NGF、EGF等,激活肝祖细胞的分化增殖,修复已受损的肝细胞。

3.1.2 旁分泌作用 在肝衰竭的病情进展中,过度的炎症反应和免疫失衡都可能导致疾病恶化^[57]。干细胞通过分泌免疫抑制因子和抗炎因子,有效抑制炎症反应,从而减轻肝脏损伤。研究表明,骨髓间充质干细胞(bone marrow mesenchymal stem cell, BMSC)可有效抑制肝内促炎细胞因子(如TNF- α 、IFN- γ 和IL-4)的生成,同时增加血清中抗炎细胞因子IL-10的水平,从而改善ALF^[58]。巨噬细胞是肝衰竭免疫失衡中的最重要参与者,BMSC通过调节巨噬细胞由促炎M1型转化

为极性转化抗炎M2型,促进肝脏的组织修复^[59]。在肝受损时,肝星状细胞激活是导致肝纤维化的关键步骤,这一过程可导致大量胶原和其他纤维化相关蛋白质分泌,最终导致纤维组织沉积,增加患者肝衰竭的风险^[60]。TGF- β 1/Smad通路是组织纤维化的关键致病途径^[61]。BMSC可通过分泌VEGF和HGF,有效抑制TGF- β 1信号通路活化,减轻由TGF- β 1诱导的肝星状细胞激活及相关纤维化基因表达^[62]。此外,干细胞分泌的胰岛素样生长因子1(insulin-like growth factor, IGF-1)发挥重要的抗凋亡作用。IGF-1与受体IGF-1R结合后,可抑制凋亡信号传递,保护肝细胞免受损伤。

3.1.3 细胞间通信 外泌体是一类内含蛋白质、脂类、核酸、miRNA等多种生物活性物质的胞外囊泡,通过包括胞吞、质膜融合等多种机制进入受体细胞实现细胞间通信^[63]。研究发现,脂肪间充质干细胞(adipose-derived mesenchymal stem cell, ADSC)分泌的外泌体参与组织修复与再生、血管生成、炎症反应调节等生物学过程,可有效改善肝损伤^[64]。Sun等^[65]对急性肝缺血再灌注导致的急性肝损伤大鼠静脉注射ADSC外泌体,结果显示肝实质中CD3⁺T细胞的数量显著减少,炎症细胞浸润比例降低,抗凋亡蛋白和抗氧化应激蛋白的表达增加,进而保护肝细胞DNA和线粒体免受损伤。H19是一个长度为2.3 kb的非编码RNA,在肝组织再生和增殖中起重要作用^[66]。Jin等^[67]运用基因沉默和过表达技术证实ADSC外泌体中包含的H19可以促进肝细胞增殖,提高肝衰竭小鼠的存活率。此外,ADSC外泌体富含的miR-17也可通过减少炎症小体激活来修复肝损伤^[68]。Piao等^[69]研究发现移植ADSC外泌体和ADSC均可以通过激活Wnt/ β -catenin途径促进肝脏再生,但是与移植ADSC外泌体不同,移植ADSC反而增加了可促使细胞死亡的GSDMD-N的释放,间接证实移植ADSC外泌体比直接移植ADSC更有优势(图2)。

3.2 干细胞治疗肝衰竭的临床试验

Shi等^[70]研究评估了脐带间充质干细胞(umbilical cord-derived mesenchymal stem cell, UC-MSC)输注对乙型肝炎病毒(hepatitis B virus, HBV)相关性ACLF患者的安全性和初步疗效。共有43例ACLF患者参加了这项研究,其中24例患者接受了UC-MSC治疗,19例患者接受了生理盐水治疗作为对照。试验期间未观察到明显的不良反应,输注UC-MSC显著提高了HBV相关性ACLF

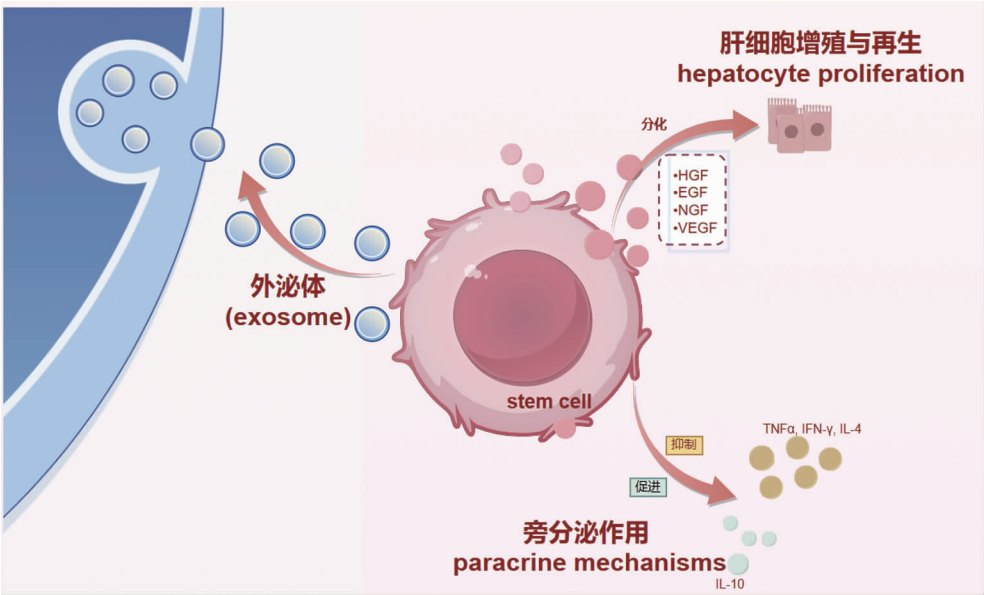


图2 干细胞治疗肝衰竭的机制

Fig.2 Mechanisms of stem cell therapy for liver failure

患者的存活率,降低了终末期肝病模型(model for end-stage liver disease, MELD)评分,增加了血清白蛋白(albumin, ALB)、胆碱酯酶、凝血酶原活性和血小板数,并且显著降低了血清总胆红素(total bilirubin, TBIL)和丙氨酸氨基转移酶(alanine aminotransferase, ALT)。另外, BMSC 也被用于临床治疗肝衰竭。Schacher 等^[71]招募9名 ACLF 患者,其中5名对照组患者接受标准医疗治疗(standard medical therapy, SMT)和生理盐水安慰剂注射,另外4名实验组患者接受静脉注射自体 BMSC,证实外周输注自体 BMSC 安全、方便,并且可通过改善肝功能、降低严重感染发生率从而显著提高24周生存率。另一项研究纳入了110例肝衰竭患者,采用每周静脉注射异体 BMSC 治疗,患者肝功能得到明显改善。治疗期间,未观察到因异体干细胞引起的免疫排斥反应或免疫抑制,表明异体 BMSC 在治疗肝衰竭中具有潜在的安全性和有效性^[42]。除静脉输注外, Peng 等^[72]通过肝动脉途径移植 BMSC 到 HBV 相关性 ACLF 患者体内,发现患者肝功能明显改善, TBIL 及 MELD 评分降低,证明 BMSC 在治疗肝衰竭时具有多种可行的输注途径。静脉输注技术成熟、简便,但通过全身循环进入肝脏,剂量可能受影响。肝动脉输注可高效递送干细胞至肝脏,提高浓度,操作较复杂,需专业支持,应根据实际情况选择合适方式。

4 干细胞治疗肝衰竭的前景和挑战

干细胞疗法在肝衰竭治疗中展现出了巨大潜力。通过梳理临床试验数据集(<http://www.clinicaltrials.gov>)发现,间充质干细胞(mesenchymal stem cell, MSC)是首选治疗方案,且大多数研究倾向于选用骨髓或脐带来源的 MSC^[73-74]。这一选择策略很可能基于以下几个关键因素:(1)这两种类型的 MSC 能相对容易地获取,无须复杂的采集程序;(2)它们表现出较低的免疫原性,移植到患者体内时不太可能引发免疫排斥反应;(3)这些 MSC 的安全性档案相对良好,临床试验中严重不良事件比较罕见,增强了它们在临床应用中的吸引力;(4)已有的临床研究成果为这些 MSC 的有效性提供了明确支持,强化了它们作为治疗选择的合理性。

干细胞治疗肝衰竭的输注方式有多种,其中静脉注射是最为简便易行的途径,通常不需要进行复杂的手术或介入操作。研究显示,干细胞静脉回输是一个“动态”过程,会先前往肺部,再经趋化因子(尤其是 CXCL4)的调节,顺着血液逐渐查找到损伤部位进行修复^[75]。例如,受损肝组织会分泌趋化因子(如 SDF-1、CXCL12 等),吸引干细胞自动归巢到受损部位,发挥治疗作用^[76]。干细胞注射剂量是影响治疗效果的重要因素。在现有临床研究中,干细胞的使用剂量范围非常广泛,每名患者使用的干细胞数目从 4×10^7 个到 $9 \times$

10^8 个不等。确定干细胞的最佳剂量是一个复杂过程,取决于目标疾病性质、病理严重程度及干细胞的给药途径。对于静脉注射,已有研究确定了一个较为稳定的剂量范围,即每公斤体重 $(1 \sim 10) \times 10^6$ 个细胞。在此范围内,更高的细胞数通常与更好的治疗效果相关联。然而,一旦达某个饱和点,继续增加细胞剂量可能会引发一些不良反应。这可能与过量干细胞在体内的分布、存活和功能发挥受限有关。

静脉注射 MSC 无法避免其固有的肺首过效应,降低了 MSC 的药效学作用^[75]。相比之下,动脉注射的 MSC 几乎不会进入肺部,可高效递送干细胞至肝脏^[72]。然而,动脉注射是一个复杂的过程,操作人员需要具有专业的医疗知识来避免其存在的健康风险,因此静脉注射 MSC 仍常用于临床前和临床试验。

随着科学技术和生物学研究不断进步,如新的细胞工程技术和 CRISPR 基因编辑技术的出现,使研究人员能够更精确地修改干细胞,以提高其治疗潜力并减少潜在风险^[77-78]。合适的生物材料可以为干细胞提供理想的生长环境^[79]。这些材料可以模拟体内的微环境,促进干细胞的存活和分化,还可协助干细胞更好地归巢到受损的肝脏部位,从而提高移植的成功率和治疗效果。这些进展不仅提高了治疗的有效性和安全性,还为未来的研究和临床应用提供了坚实基础。

5 总 结

综上所述,干细胞作为一种具有多向分化潜能的细胞类型,在肝衰竭治疗中展现出了巨大潜力。通过分泌多种细胞因子,干细胞可以改善患者的肝内微环境,有效减少肝细胞的凋亡,抑制肝纤维化进程,从而显著改善患者病情和预后。这些发现不仅对肝衰竭的治疗具有重要意义,同时也为其他疾病的治疗策略提供了新思路。未来的研究还需进一步验证干细胞治疗的效果和安全性,确保其在临床治疗中的广泛应用。

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Research Progress in Stem Cell Therapy for Liver Failure

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Abstract As a serious liver disease, the clinical treatment of liver failure faces significant challenges. Chronic liver disease, viral hepatitis infection, drug poisoning, and other factors can lead to liver failure, threatening the lives of thousands of patients. In recent years, stem cell therapy has emerged as a novel treatment method, offering a new approach to the treatment of liver failure. It works by promoting the repair and regeneration of liver cells, regulating the immune response, and inhibiting liver fibrosis and inflammation. Several clinical trials have demonstrated that stem cell transplantation therapy can significantly improve the survival rate of patients with liver failure. It also effectively improves liver function and blood clotting function. However, further studies are needed to confirm its long-term effectiveness and safety. This paper summarizes the research progress of stem cell therapy for liver failure, discusses its potential therapeutic mechanism, and explores its prospects for clinical application. The aim is to provide a reference for future research and clinical practice.

Key words Stem cell Liver failure Mechanisms of treatment Hepatocyte Repair and regeneration