

· 综述 ·

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## 表观遗传学在瘦型非酒精性脂肪性肝病中的作用及临床应用前景

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**摘要:** 表观遗传学机制在非酒精性脂肪性肝病 (NAFLD) 的发生、发展中扮演着至关重要的角色, 尤其是在瘦人群体中, 相关表观遗传学机制的研究为揭示 NAFLD 的潜在病因和治疗策略提供了新的线索和方向。本文介绍了近年表观遗传学在瘦型 NAFLD 发展中的作用, 分析了瘦型 NAFLD 表观遗传学方面的最新研究进展, 简述了表观遗传学的基本概念, 包括 DNA 甲基化、组蛋白修饰和非编码 RNA 调控, 并探讨了表观遗传学改变如何影响瘦型 NAFLD 的发病机制、疾病进展以及治疗策略。

**关键词:** 非酒精性脂肪性肝病; 表观基因组学; 病理过程

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### Role and clinical application prospect of epigenetics in lean nonalcoholic fatty liver disease

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**Abstract:** Epigenetic mechanisms play a crucial role in the development and progression of nonalcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD), especially among lean individuals. The research on related epigenetic mechanisms has provided new clues and directions for revealing the underlying causes and treatment strategies of NAFLD. This article introduces the role of epigenetics in the development and progression of NAFLD among lean individuals in recent years, analyzes the latest research advances in the epigenetics of NAFLD in this population, and briefly describes the basic concepts of epigenetics, including DNA methylation, histone modifications, and non-coding RNA regulation. This article also discusses how epigenetic alterations impact the pathogenesis, disease progression, and treatment strategies of NAFLD in lean individuals.

**Key words:** Non-alcoholic Fatty Liver Disease; Epigenomics; Pathologic Processes

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非酒精性脂肪性肝病(NAFLD)包括非酒精性单纯性肝脂肪变、非酒精性脂肪性肝炎(NASH)、肝硬化和肝细胞癌(HCC)<sup>[1]</sup>,是指排除酒精等明显造成肝损伤的因素之外的一种多系统代谢性疾病<sup>[2]</sup>。截至2021年5月,全球NAFLD总体患病率估算为32.4%<sup>[3]</sup>,并且随着时间的推移,其总体患病率不断升高。目前NASH已成为全球最常见的慢性肝病之一,并迅速成为HCC患者中肝移植的首要适应证<sup>[4]</sup>。据报道,NAFLD患者中有19.2%是瘦人体质<sup>[5]</sup>。相较于非瘦型NAFLD,瘦型NAFLD患者的糖尿病、高血压、高甘油三酯血症、中心性肥胖和代谢综合征的患病率较低<sup>[6]</sup>,具有更好的代谢特征,被认为是相对良性的亚型,但瘦型NAFLD会出现更严重的肝脏疾病进展和不良临床结局<sup>[7]</sup>。瘦型NAFLD的发展具有复杂性和多因素性,其确切机制尚未完全清楚。近年来,越来越多的证据证明在瘦型NAFLD发生发展中表观遗传调控具有关键作用。

关于瘦型NAFLD,一般认为NAFLD患者身体质量指数(BMI)<25 kg/m<sup>2</sup>即可诊断,但在亚洲人群中建议BMI<23 kg/m<sup>2</sup><sup>[8]</sup>。研究显示,与BMI正常者相比,BMI<18.5 kg/m<sup>2</sup>的体质质量不足者,其NAFLD的患病率更低;与非瘦型NAFLD相比,体质质量不足的NAFLD患者可能更年轻,收缩压和舒张压更低<sup>[9]</sup>。根据瘦型NAFLD流行病学、预后和自然病程,可将其分为两种亚型<sup>[10]</sup>:1型以内脏肥胖和胰岛素抵抗为核心,其发病受环境和遗传易感性及表观遗传因素影响更强<sup>[11]</sup>;而2型特指单基因疾病所引发的肝脂肪变性<sup>[12]</sup>,由单基因疾病驱动,无内脏肥胖的瘦型NAFLD个体的鉴别诊断可能会被忽视。两种亚型与非瘦型NAFLD的区别如表1所示。综上,瘦型NAFLD疾病机制复杂,受到多种表观遗传机制的影响。因此,本文就瘦型NAFLD的表观遗传调控相关研究进展进行综述。

## 1 表观遗传学基础

表观遗传学涉及表型变异性、代谢、疾病、遗传甚至

进化的研究,是指在基本DNA序列不变的情况下,由于环境因素,遗传信息通过某些机制或途径,发生的可遗传给后代并能影响细胞表型的基因表达调控变化<sup>[13]</sup>。表观遗传学可以通过对组蛋白和核酸进行共价修饰,在不改变DNA序列的情况下调节基因序列,协同调节染色质结构<sup>[14]</sup>。本文涉及的瘦型NAFLD表观遗传现象主要包括3种调节机制:DNA甲基化修饰、组蛋白修饰和非编码RNA(ncRNA)。

**1.1 DNA甲基化修饰** DNA甲基化是指将甲基转移到胞嘧啶的C5位上,从而形成5-甲基胞嘧啶,通过募集参与基因抑制的蛋白质或者抑制转录因子与DNA的结合来调节基因的表达<sup>[15]</sup>。其通过甲基化位点的组蛋白标记稳定遗传,且DNA序列不发生变化<sup>[16]</sup>。研究表明,DNA甲基化增加导致长链脂肪酸延伸酶2(elongation of very long chain fatty acids-like protein 2, Elovl2)表达水平下调。Elovl2是一种多不饱和脂肪酸合成的主要控制基因<sup>[17]</sup>,其缺乏会导致肝脏炎症的恶化,若Elovl2功能受损则会干扰脂质合成,加重内质网应激和线粒体障碍<sup>[18]</sup>。Elovl2通过合成肝脏中的二十二碳六烯酸来控制脂肪从头合成途径,并且还能以不依赖于固醇调节元件结合蛋白1的方式,调节脂质储存以及脂肪量的增加<sup>[19]</sup>。综上,DNA甲基化异常模式可能成为瘦型NAFLD诊断和预后的生物学标志及治疗新靶点。

**1.2 组蛋白修饰** 组蛋白是指带正电荷的蛋白质与带负电荷的DNA紧密结合并组装成核小体复合物<sup>[20]</sup>。研究指出,macroH2A1是最大的H2A变体,以两种选择性剪接亚型存在:macroH2A1.1和macroH2A1.2,二者可调节细胞可塑性和增殖<sup>[21]</sup>。在瘦型NAFLD患者血清中观察到macroH2A1.1和macroH2A1.2无论单独存在还是与H2B结合,其水平均明显下降<sup>[22]</sup>。这表明组蛋白修饰参与了瘦型NAFLD的发展机制。

**1.3 ncRNA** ncRNA代表一类不编码蛋白质的RNA分子,被认为是积极参与多种生理和病理过程的重要表观遗传调节因子<sup>[23]</sup>。其中微小RNA(microRNA, miRNA)是

表1 非瘦型NAFLD与瘦型NAFLD两种分型的区别

Table 1 The difference between the two types of non-lean NAFLD and lean NAFLD

| 项目                                  | 非瘦型NAFLD                                                                        | 瘦型NAFLD 1型                                     | 瘦型NAFLD 2型                                |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|
| BMI(亚洲人群标准) >27.5 kg/m <sup>2</sup> |                                                                                 | <23 kg/m <sup>2</sup> ,但以腰围或其他身体成分可能衡量为肥胖      | BMI处于瘦人范畴,且无内脏肥胖                          |
| 主要发病机制                              | 胰岛素抵抗和脂肪代谢紊乱、氧化应激和脂质过氧化、炎症反应和免疫失调、肠道菌群失调                                        | 内脏肥胖和胰岛素抵抗                                     | 单基因疾病导致                                   |
| 主要病理改变                              | 单纯脂肪肝:肝细胞大量脂滴积累,无明显肝细胞损伤;NASH:肝细胞明显损伤和炎细胞浸润;肝纤维化和肝硬化:肝细胞正常结构严重破坏,假小叶形成,伴有广泛肝纤维化 | 脂肪变性、(严重)代谢异常:血脂异常、空腹血糖上升等,易出现炎症和肝纤维化,进而发展为肝硬化 | 脂肪变性(较1型轻)、代谢异常(较1型轻):血脂异常、空腹血糖上升等,遗传基因变异 |

小ncRNA1的一个亚群,在生物过程和表观遗传机制的调控中发挥重要作用,被证明是NAFLD炎症的重要调节因子<sup>[24]</sup>。研究显示,在瘦型NAFLD患者血清中miR-4488表达水平升高,提示miR-4488具有无创和早期检测瘦型NAFLD的潜力<sup>[25]</sup>。综上,miRNA作为小ncRNA的一个子集,已被证实是NAFLD炎症的关键调节因子,凸显了其在代谢性疾病中的重要性,通过靶向miRNA的相关机制,可能为瘦型NAFLD的有效诊断和治疗提供新途径。

## 2 瘦型NAFLD的表观遗传学特征

2.1 瘦型NAFLD与非瘦型NAFLD的表观遗传学差异 研究表明,瘦型NAFLD与非瘦型NAFLD在甲基化模式方面不同,如在苓桂术甘汤干预后,非瘦型NAFLD患者蛋白磷酸酶1调节亚基3A和自噬相关3的DNA N6甲基腺嘌呤修饰水平明显增高,而瘦型NAFLD患者中没有明显变化<sup>[26]</sup>。在HCC的相关研究中,瘦型与非瘦型NAFLD差异甲基化区域(differentially methylated region, DMR)不存在重叠,且甲基化差异巨大,非瘦型NASH-HCC中参与Wnt信号通路的基因在低甲基化DMR中富集,而瘦型NASH-HCC由包括脂质代谢的其他信号通路驱动<sup>[27]</sup>。此外,在瘦型NAFLD中组蛋白修饰也表现出独特的模式。如组蛋白水平可以区分脂肪变性的程度,瘦型NAFLD组蛋白变体macroH2A1.2的下调几乎是macroH2A1.1的两倍<sup>[22]</sup>。macroH2A1.2在瘦型NAFLD患者中呈现出不同的分布特征,这种分布差异可能对染色质结构和基因表达产生深远影响。上述表观遗传学上的差异进一步揭示了瘦型NAFLD独特的病理机制。

2.2 瘦型NAFLD中特异性表观遗传标记的识别 针对瘦型NAFLD的检测极其困难且容易被忽视,特异性表观遗传标记的识别具有重要意义。有研究人员通过高通量测序技术发现了一些特异性DNA甲基化位点,这些位点在瘦型NAFLD患者中显著不同于健康对照组。如PNPLA6和LDLRAP1在脂质代谢中存在甲基化差异<sup>[27]</sup>。这些与脂质代谢相关的基因在瘦型NAFLD患者中会影响疾病的进展,并可以为新兴的治疗方案提供靶点。组蛋白变体macroH2A1.1和macroH2A1.2的有关变化亦可以作为瘦型NAFLD患者的非侵入性标记位点<sup>[22]</sup>。另有研究表明,在ncRNA中,miR-367不仅在肥胖小鼠中表达上调,其过表达也会导致瘦型小鼠甘油三酯累积<sup>[28]</sup>。因此,评估循环miRNA谱有可能成为未来检测肝病严重程度的无创方法,并且对miRNA领域的研究可能会促进

开发瘦型NAFLD的新型诊断和治疗方式。综上,这些特异性表观遗传标记有助于理解瘦型NAFLD的发病机制,并为早期诊断和个性化治疗提供新的思路。

## 3 表观遗传学在瘦型NAFLD发病机制中的作用

3.1 表观遗传学改变影响脂质代谢和炎症反应 表观遗传学改变在瘦型NAFLD的发病机制中扮演了重要角色,特别是在脂质代谢和炎症反应方面。DNA甲基化、组蛋白修饰和ncRNA等机制均能够显著影响基因表达,从而调控脂质代谢途径(图1)。

DNA甲基化的相关变化会导致脂质代谢相关基因的表达异常,从而促进肝脏脂肪堆积。磷脂酰胆碱代谢与NAFLD有关,而肝脏中大约30%的磷脂酰胆碱通过磷脂酰乙醇胺N-甲基转移酶(phosphatidylethanolamine n-methyltransferase, PEMT)途径产生,即将甲基转移到胞嘧啶上,并将磷脂酰乙醇胺催化为磷脂酰胆碱<sup>[29]</sup>。研究表明,相比非瘦型NAFLD,瘦型NAFLD中PEMT RS7946变异的风险提高3倍<sup>[30]</sup>。这可能会损害PEMT活性和瘦人NASH表型的发展。而肝脏X受体能够增强脂肪生成,促进脂肪和肝组织中大多数产脂和成脂基因的表达<sup>[31]</sup>。这些修饰能够改变染色质结构,使得基因更易于或更难以被转录。此外,组蛋白修饰也在调控脂质代谢基因的表达中起到了关键作用,如沉默信息调节因子2相关酶1能够影响脂质和肝脏葡萄糖代谢<sup>[32]</sup>。而核受体亚家族2F组成员6(nuclear receptor subfamily 2 group F member 6, NR2F6)是甘油三酯稳态的重要调节因子和NAFLD发展的致病因素, NR2F6上调可以促进脂肪酸转运蛋白CD36的表达,从而增强肝脏中脂肪酸的摄取和甘油三酯积累,与肝脂肪变性密切相关。并且NR2F6过表达可以增强乙酰化组蛋白H3在CD36启动子上NR2F6结合区域的富集,从而促进NR2F6转录<sup>[33]</sup>。ncRNA,特别是miRNA,可通过与mRNA结合并抑制其翻译,进一步调控脂质代谢基因的表达。如N6-甲基腺苷(N6-methyladenosine, m6A)是真核生物体内最为丰富的内部RNA修饰之一<sup>[34]</sup>,这种甲基化修饰在脂质代谢中发挥独特作用,涉及肝细胞炎症和血管重建<sup>[35]</sup>,从而可以推测,通过靶向特定的m6A调节因子,可能为NAFLD提供潜在的治疗方法。而通过抑制FTO(脂肪量与肥胖)相关蛋白的功能,可以增加m6A水平或者阻止油酸诱导的甘油三酯的产生<sup>[36-37]</sup>。

上述表观遗传学改变不仅会影响NAFLD的脂质代谢,还能通过调控炎症相关基因的表达,促进炎症反应的



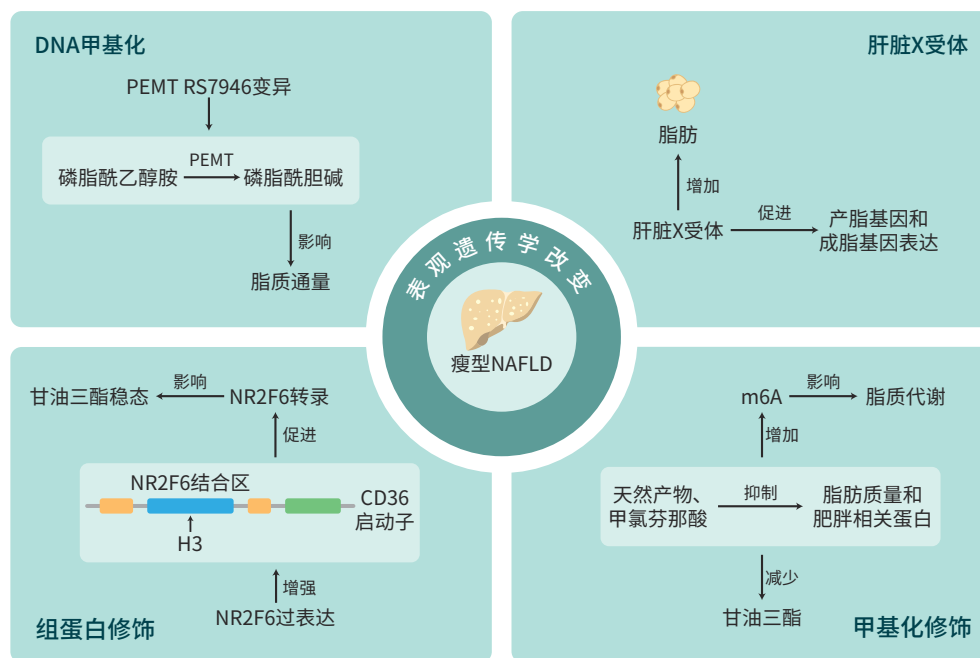


图1 表观遗传学改变脂质代谢和炎症反应的机制

Figure 1 Epigenetic changes in lipid metabolism and inflammatory response mechanisms diagram

发生和维持。然而,针对瘦型NAFLD疾病中这些表观遗传学改变的具体作用及发展机制还需要进一步探究。

3.2 表观遗传学在瘦型NAFLD中胰岛素抵抗中的作用 胰岛素抵抗是瘦型NAFLD 1型发展的关键因素之一,表观遗传学改变在其中发挥了重要作用。在生理条件下,胰岛素与受体结合会激活固醇调节元件结合蛋白1,可以促进肝脏从头脂肪生成。因此胰岛素抵抗对于减轻NAFLD的进展和改善患者健康状况极其重要。表观遗传机制能够通过调控胰岛素信号通路相关基因的表达,从而影响胰岛素敏感性。其中组蛋白去乙酰化酶(如组蛋白去乙酰化酶3和组蛋白去乙酰化酶8)可以促进甘油三酯代谢并增强胰岛素敏感性<sup>[38]</sup>。研究表明,利用支链酮酸脱氢酶激酶的小分子变构抑制剂BT2后,在瘦型小鼠中能够观察到胰岛素敏感性快速改善,且BT2治疗可减少脂肪变性和炎症<sup>[39]</sup>。综上所述,表观遗传学改变可以通过多种机制影响胰岛素抵抗,从而在瘦型NAFLD的发病机制中发挥重要作用。

#### 4 表观遗传学在瘦型NAFLD疾病进展及预后治疗中的作用

4.1 表观遗传学改变与肝纤维化和肝硬化的关系 表观遗传机制在肝纤维化的发生和发展中具有重要影响。研究表明,EZH2(组蛋白甲基转移酶)通过调节炎症因子和纤维化标志物的表达水平,加速肝纤维化的进程,提示

EZH2抑制剂可能成为治疗NASH的一种创新疗法<sup>[40]</sup>。此外,ncRNA如miRNA和lncRNA(长链非编码RNA)也被发现参与了NAFLD的肝纤维化过程,通过调控基因表达和信号通路,影响肝细胞的增殖和凋亡。例如,miR-4488可以通过多种通路影响NAFLD的进展<sup>[25]</sup>。此外,Xin等<sup>[41]</sup>通过msRNA(miRNA-sized small RNA)测序发现埃希氏-志贺氏菌属在瘦型NAFLD的疾病进展中具有重要作用,msRNA 23487能够下调肝脏过氧化物酶体增殖物激活受体 $\alpha$ 表达,并有助于肝脏中的脂质积累。这些ncRNA通过调控与脂质代谢和炎症反应相关的基因表达来发挥作用。综上,表观遗传学改变在瘦型NAFLD的肝纤维化和肝硬化进展中起着重要作用,影响疾病进展。

4.2 表观遗传学在瘦型NAFLD患者预后评估中的潜在应用 特定的DNA甲基化模式和组蛋白修饰状态可以作为瘦型NAFLD进展和预后的生物标志物。如PEMT基因的变异Val175Met在瘦型NASH患者中更常见,可能作为NASH易感性的预后生物标志物<sup>[42]</sup>。另外,随着ncRNA在瘦型NAFLD中的调控作用逐渐被揭示,miRNA也被确定为无创诊断和疾病严重程度分级的可靠循环生物标志物<sup>[43]</sup>。这些表观遗传学标志物不仅可以帮助识别高风险患者,还可以用于监测治疗效果和疾病进展,从而为个体化治疗提供依据。

4.3 表观遗传学在瘦型NAFLD治疗中的应用前景 表观遗传调控机制是可逆的,并且具有动态调节的潜力,其

改变可能作为未来临床的治疗策略。甾醇调节元件结合蛋白裂解激活蛋白(sterol regulatory element-binding protein cleavage-activating protein, SCAP)可以通过激活 STING-NF- $\kappa$ B 信号通路,调节巨噬细胞炎症反应,在瘦型 NAFLD 的发病机理中发挥重要作用。因此,巨噬细胞中 SCAP 的抑制策略,可能为瘦型 NAFLD 治疗开辟新的途径<sup>[44]</sup>。

另有研究显示,肝纤维化和脂肪变性的严重程度与肌肉减少症有关<sup>[45]</sup>。而瘦型 NAFLD 患者肌肉减少症的患病率显著高于非瘦型 NAFLD 患者<sup>[46]</sup>。研究显示,miR-486 在调节肌肉生长中发挥着重要作用,而规律的体育活动可以显著提升 miR-486 的表达水平<sup>[47]</sup>。综上,目前对于瘦型 NAFLD 的治疗依然是维持体育锻炼,其标准治疗包括饮食改变和身体活动,从而减少内脏肥胖。

## 5 小结与展望

本文综述了表观遗传学在瘦型 NAFLD 发展中的作用机制,通过分析瘦型 NAFLD 与非瘦型 NAFLD 在表观遗传学方面的差异,强调了表观遗传学改变在 NAFLD 发病、进展和治疗中的重要性。同时,介绍了表观遗传学标志物在瘦型 NAFLD 无创检测应用中展现出的显著优势,但目前研究尚且不足,特别是有关组蛋白变异方面,值得进一步探索。目前,对于瘦型 NAFLD 的表观遗传学治疗仍处于理论探索的早期阶段,但已显现出巨大潜力和优势,未来需要进一步研究表观遗传学在瘦型 NAFLD 中的具体作用机制及在临床上的检测,以便于开发针对表观遗传学改变的新型治疗策略。

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