

脑内ATF4对学习记忆的调节作用

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摘要 转录激活因子4(ATF4)属于碱性亮氨酸拉链结构域蛋白中的ATF/CREB转录因子家族, ATF4在脑内广泛表达, 在应激、痛觉、突触可塑性和神经退行性变等中发挥重要作用。学习与记忆是脑的高级功能之一, 学习是获取新信息的过程, 记忆是将信息进行编码、储存及提取的过程, 二者被认为是认知活动的基础。突触可塑性是突触在形态、结构和功能上的可变性和可修饰性, 与神经系统的发育和学习记忆等脑的高级功能密切相关。突触可塑性的长时程增强和长时程抑制是学习和记忆形成的基础。近年来研究发现, ATF4与突触可塑性和学习记忆密切相关, 其在神经退行性变、脑损伤和药物成瘾等疾病中扮演重要角色, 有必要深入理解ATF4在学习记忆障碍相关疾病中发挥的作用, 为相关疾病的治疗提供新靶点。

关键词 转录激活因子4; 学习记忆; 突触可塑性; 神经

Regulation of ATF4 in the Brain on Learning and Memory

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Abstract The ATF4 (transcription activating factor 4) belongs to the ATF/CREB transcription factor family of alkaline leucine zipper domain proteins. ATF4 is widely expressed in the brain and plays an important role in stress, pain, synaptic plasticity and neurodegenerative diseases. Learning and memory is one of the higher brain functions. Learning is the process of acquiring new information, and memory is the process of encoding, storing and extracting information, which are considered to be the bases of cognitive activities. Synaptic plasticity is the changes and modifications in morphology, structure and function of synapses, which is widespread in central nervous system and closely connected to the development and higher function of the brain, such as learning and memory. Long-term potentiation and long-term depression of synaptic plasticity are considered to be the important foundations on learning and memory formation. Recent studies have shown that ATF4 is bound up with synaptic plasticity and learning and memory, and plays an important role in neurodegenerative diseases, brain injuries and drug addiction and so on. It is necessary that further investigations the role of ATF4 in learning and memory disorders, given it is expected to become a new target for learning and memory related diseases.

Keywords transcriptional activator 4; learning and memory; synaptic plasticity; nerve

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转录激活因子4(activating transcription factor 4, ATF4)又称cAMP反应元件结合蛋白2(cAMP-response element binding protein 2, CREB-2), 属于碱性亮氨酸拉链结构域蛋白中的ATF/CREB转录因子家族^[1]。ATF4在哺乳动物组织中广泛表达, 在应激、痛觉、突触可塑性、神经退行性变等中发挥重要作用^[2-5]。近年研究发现, ATF4以其独特的作用参与学习记忆、药物成瘾、疼痛等多个方面^[4-6]。本文综述了ATF4分子特点、生物学功能及其在学习记忆方面的研究进展。

1 ATF4分子特点及功能

转录激活因子(activating transcription factor, ATF)于1987年被首次命名, 是腺病毒早期启动子E2、E3、E4与具有共同核心序列CGTCA位点结合的蛋白质^[1,7]。cAMP反应元件结合蛋白(cAMP-response element binding protein, CREB)于1987年被命名, 是指与生长抑素启动子上的cAMP反应元件(cAMP response element, CRE)结合的蛋白质, CRE与ATF的共识结合位点被定义为TGACGT(C/A)(G/A)^[1,8-9]。近年来, 已分离到与ATF/CRE位点结合蛋白的同源cDNA, 其前缀是ATF或CREB, 所有这些cDNA都编码具有碱性亮氨酸拉链(basic region-leucine zipper, bZip)的DNA结合区, 根据氨基酸相似性可将其分为CREB/CREM、CRE-BP1、ATF3、ATF4、ATF6和B-ATF亚群(表1)^[10]。

人类的ATF4基因位于22号染色体上, 基因长度约为2 122 bp。ATF4蛋白包含351个氨基酸, 该蛋白由多个结构域组成, 这些结构域对于ATF4的二聚化、DNA结合以及蛋白质的稳定是必不可少的^[11]。人类的ATF4 mRNA结构中位于非编码区(5'UTR)的三个短开放阅读框参与调控内质网应激和缺氧, 并对ATF4的翻译起抑制作用^[12]。ATF4作为转录调控因子, 最早认为是一种转录抑制因子, 通过脑啡肽启动子的CRE负性调节转录, 抑制长期的突触变化, 这种抑制效应是ATF4作为长期记忆的基础^[13-14]。ATF4也可作为一种转录激活因子, 能够诱导骨钙素和血管内皮生长因子等基因的表达^[15-17]。

ATF4在许多组织中广泛表达并发挥重要作用。KASSETTI等^[18]应用地塞米松诱导小鼠青光眼模型, 发现在动物模型和人青光眼供体眼组织细胞模型中ATF4蛋白水平均显著升高。HU等^[19]在药物葡聚糖硫酸钠诱导小鼠结肠炎模型的结肠上皮及结肠炎患者活检的肠黏膜中发现ATF4 mRNA和蛋白表达水平均下调。另有研究表明, 慢性酒精饲料喂养小鼠会引起肝组织脂滴堆积和炎症细胞浸润, 而在酒精喂养的肝细胞特异性ATF4基因敲除小鼠中, 可以显著减少这种病理改变^[20]。LIANG等^[21]通过腹腔注射药物链脲佐菌素构建小鼠糖尿病肾病模型发现肾组织中ATF4蛋白表达水平和mRNA水平均显著上调。以上研究表明, ATF4对于维持多种组织器官的正常生理功能至关重要。

表1 哺乳动物ATF/CREB转录因子家族(根据参考文献[10]修改)

Table 1 Mammalian ATF/CREB transcription factor family (modified from the reference [10])

| 分组 Group | 成员 Members | 别称 Alternative names |
|-------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| CREB | CREB | ATF-47 |
| | CREM | - |
| | ATF1 | TREB36, ATF-43 |
| CRE-BP1 | CRE-BP1 | ATF2, TREB |
| | ATFa | - |
| | CRE-BPa | - |
| ATF3 | ATF3 | LRF-1, CRG-5 |
| | JDP-2 | - |
| ATF4 | ATF4 | CREB2, mATF4, C/ATF |
| | ATFx | hATF5 |
| ATF6 | ATF6 | ATF6 α |
| | CREB-RP | G13, ATF6 β |
| B-ATF | B-ATF | - |
| | JDP-1 | - |

-: 没有别称。

-: no other name.

2 ATF4与学习记忆

学习与记忆是脑的高级功能之一,学习是人和动物从外界环境获取新信息的过程,记忆是脑将获取的信息进行编码、储存及提取的过程,二者被认为是认知活动的基础^[22-23]。突触可塑性是突触的形态和功能可发生较持久改变的特性,在中枢神经系统普遍存在,与神经系统的发育以及学习记忆等脑的高级功能活动密切相关^[24-25]。突触可塑性主要是突触效能的改变,突触效能的短时程改变包括突触易化、突触抑制、强直后增强、增高等形式,长时程改变包括长时程增强(long-term potentiation, LTP)和长时程抑制(long-term depression, LTD)两种形式,而LTP和LTD被认为是各种形式的学习和记忆形成的基础^[26-27]。

在哺乳动物神经系统中,ATF4与突触可塑性和记忆形成密切相关。PASINI等^[4]使用慢病毒特异性下调小鼠海马ATF4的表达,发现小鼠空间记忆受损;同时发现,给予电生理刺激(100 Hz/1s)后,海马Schaffer侧支——CA1通路中的LTP的幅度显著降低,而刺激CA3神经元(1 Hz/15min),发现CA1神经元LTD显著减少。此外,在AMAR等^[28]研究的大鼠海马神经元中,使用化学试剂50 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ 谷氨酸/1 $\mu\text{mol/L}$ 甘氨酸在无镁台氏液中暴露30 s来诱导LTP,发现海马中ATF4蛋白水平显著下降。综上所述,ATF4是正常突触可塑性和记忆所必需的。

脑源性神经营养因子(brain-derived neurotrophic factor, BDNF)是神经系统中重要的生长因子,具有神经保护作用,在学习与记忆方面发挥关键功能^[29-30]。LIU等^[31]在大鼠脑皮层和海马的神经元培养过程中加入外源性BDNF,发现皮层和海马中ATF4的蛋白水平显著升高,在该神经元中加入原肌球蛋白受体激酶B(tropomyosin receptor kinase B, TrkB)抑制剂K252a后发现ATF4蛋白表达恢复正常,这表明在大鼠皮层和海马神经元细胞中BDNF通过激活TrkB促进ATF4 mRNA和蛋白水平的快速增加,从而维持ATF4的神经保护功能,进而降低神经退行性变发生的风险。

蛋白激酶R样内质网激酶(protein kinase R-like endoplasmic reticulum kinase, PERK)作为未折叠蛋白反应的一部分,通过内质网应激被激活,已被证明与多种神经退行性疾病密切相关^[32]。WOLZAK等^[33]利用PERK缺失的神经元和星形胶质细胞来研究在缺

乏PERK的情况下神经元特异性调控内质网应激的机制,发现在内质网应激时,小鼠的神经元和星形胶质细胞中ATF4增加;在星形胶质细胞中敲除PERK,ATF4降低且恢复正常,但是在神经元中敲除PERK后,ATF4虽有降低但仍高于正常值。以上研究表明,PERK功能障碍在不同类型神经细胞中对ATF4的调节具有差异性。ATF4在PERK功能障碍中的作用机制可能为激活神经元内质网应激,通过PERK-ATF4通路,进而影响学习记忆。

真核翻译起始因子2 α (eukaryotic initiation factor 2 α , eIF2 α)作为整合应激反应的重要成分,它的磷酸化会影响ATF4的表达进而影响学习记忆功能^[34]。SHARMA等^[35]研究认为,在生长抑素能神经元中p-eIF2 α 表达减少引起ATF4表达降低,进而通过两种机制促进记忆形成:第一种是通过去抑制提高锥体神经元对Schaffer侧支输入的反应,从而增加LTP的幅度;第二种是抑制TA通路(temporoammonic pathway, CA1区锥体细胞直接接受内嗅皮层的投射)的LTP,从而调节来自内嗅皮层的的感觉输入进而促进记忆形成。

众所周知,蛋白激酶C- δ (PKC- δ)神经元参与学习记忆过程^[36-37]。高脂饮食导致的肥胖可引起学习记忆功能受损,白色脂肪的褐变可改善饮食引起的肥胖^[38-39]。YUAN等^[40]研究表明,亮氨酸缺乏会引起皮下白色脂肪褐变,诱导杏仁核中ATF4表达增加,且交感神经被激活;而抑制杏仁核中PKC- δ 神经元可阻断白色脂肪的褐变,抑制ATF4的异常表达,且交感神经的激活被阻断,而对杏仁核中的ATF4进行抑制或过表达后,也阻断或诱发了白色脂肪的褐变;为进一步研究环路机制,在亮氨酸缺乏的情况下对交感神经进行抑制,发现白色脂肪褐变显著减少,而在抑制的杏仁核PKC- δ 神经元中使用激活剂将交感神经激活,发现可诱发白色脂肪褐变。我们认为,白色脂肪褐变可改善饮食引起的肥胖及学习记忆功能障碍,其机制可能为亮氨酸剥夺刺激杏仁核中PKC- δ 神经元,诱导杏仁核中ATF4表达增加,进而提高PKC- δ 神经元活性,刺激交感神经活性增加从而导致白色脂肪褐变,进而改善肥胖及学习记忆功能障碍。

3 ATF4在学习记忆相关疾病中的作用

3.1 阿尔茨海默病

阿尔茨海默病(Alzheimer's disease, AD)是以学习、记忆功能障碍为主要症状的神经退行性疾

病, 目前认为, AD患者脑内主要病理改变为神经元纤维缠结和 β -淀粉样蛋白沉积。DEVI等^[41]在AD小鼠模型情景恐惧实验中发现小鼠恐惧潜伏期明显缩短, 记忆提取失败, 记忆受损, 且小鼠海马中ATF4蛋白表达显著增加。在AD大鼠模型中, 通过海马内注射 $A\beta_{1-42}$ 构建AD模型, 运用Morris水迷宫实验发现大鼠逃避潜伏期明显增加, 目标象限停留时间减少, 表明大鼠的空间记忆受损, 且发现海马区ATF4蛋白表达水平显著增加, 腹腔注射整合应激反应抑制剂(integrated stress response inhibitor, ISRIB)后, 发现大鼠受损的空间记忆明显改善, 且ATF4蛋白水平恢复正常^[42]。

目前, AD的发病机制被认为是 Ca^{2+} 稳态失调、线粒体功能障碍和蛋白质平衡失调等多种因素共同作用的结果^[43-45]。星形胶质细胞, 作为一种神经胶质细胞, 对中枢神经系统中离子平衡及神经元的正常发育起着重要作用^[46-47]。DEMATTEIS等^[48]在3xTg-AD小鼠的海马星形胶质细胞中发现, ATP合成和线粒体功能受损, 活性氧产生增多, Ca^{2+} 稳态失调, 线粒体-内质网距离缩短, 且ATF4 mRNA表达上调, 总蛋白合成速率降低; 该研究认为, 在AD的发病过程中, 线粒体-内质网相互改变, 破坏了星形胶质细胞的能量合成、钙稳态和蛋白稳态, 这些因素相互作用, 形成一种致病循环, 损害星形胶质细胞的稳态和防御功能, 从而使神经元出现功能障碍。

研究表明, β -淀粉样蛋白沉积介导神经元毒性, 导致神经元丢失和变性, 同时可诱发神经元内质网应激, 引发未折叠蛋白反应^[49-50]。中脑星形胶质细胞源性神经营养因子(mesencephalic astrocyte-derived neurotrophic factor, MАНF)是调控神经元发育的重要分泌蛋白群, 内质网应激时可上调其表达^[51-52]。XU等^[53]研究发现, 在APP/PS1转基因小鼠皮层和 $A\beta_{1-42}$ 处理的神经元中MANF和内质网应激相关蛋白ATF4表达均增加, 且神经元凋亡增加, 将MANF过表达或敲低后, ATF4表达降低或升高, 凋亡蛋白也相应的降低或升高, 表明MANF通过调控内质网应激引起ATF4的表达变化, 缓解 $A\beta$ 诱导的神经毒性, 从而发挥神经元保护作用。

因此, 在AD中, 学习记忆功能受损, 星形胶质细胞和神经元发挥重要作用, 诱发内质网应激, 引发未折叠蛋白反应, 进而引起ATF4升高, 最终导致神经细胞凋亡; 通过对升高的ATF4进行干预, 降低其

表达, AD引起的学习记忆功能障碍有所改善, 凋亡减少, 表明ATF4在AD发病中占据重要角色, 有望以ATF4作为AD治疗的新靶点。

3.2 帕金森病

帕金森病(Parkinson disease, PD)是以运动、认知功能障碍为主要特征的神经系统退行性疾病, 其主要病理学改变为中脑黑质多巴胺能神经元的变性坏死。PARK2是PD的一种致病基因, 其编码Parkin蛋白。SUN等^[54]认为, Parkin功能降低是PD发生发展过程中的一种潜在致病机制; 在PC12细胞构建的PD细胞模型中发现Parkin蛋白下降, 且ATF4蛋白表达降低; 在给予乙酸胍(一种 α_2 肾上腺素能受体激动剂)后, Parkin蛋白表达增加, ATF4蛋白表达也随之增加, 表明ATF4在PD发病过程中发挥了重要的作用。SHAH等^[55]研究显示, 采用多巴胺能神经元细胞(Mes23.5细胞)构建PD细胞模型, 发现模型组显著的细胞毒性和内质网应激相关蛋白ATF4 mRNA水平显著增加; 给予氧化白藜芦醇(比白藜芦醇具有更强的抗氧化作用)后细胞毒性减弱, 内质网应激相关蛋白ATF4 mRNA水平恢复, 该研究表明氧化白藜芦醇通过抑制ATF4的转录水平来调控内质网应激, 进而起到神经保护作用。

以上研究表明, ATF4与PD息息相关, 在PD发病过程中, PD致病基因所编码的Parkin蛋白发生改变, 进而影响ATF4的表达, 或是通过诱发细胞毒性引起内质网应激导致ATF4发生改变; 当对改变的ATF4进行干预后, PD症状有所改善, 进一步证实了ATF4在PD中发挥的关键作用。

3.3 衰老

随着年龄的增长, 学习与记忆的能力会逐渐下降。KRUKOWSKI等^[56]运用放射臂水迷宫实验和巴恩斯迷宫实验检测老年小鼠和年轻小鼠空间学习记忆和情景记忆能力, 发现老年小鼠空间学习记忆和情景记忆能力均受损; 同时发现老年小鼠海马区ATF4蛋白水平显著高于年轻小鼠, 而给予ISRIB后, 老年小鼠受损的空间学习记忆和情景记忆能力明显改善, 且海马内ATF4蛋白表达恢复正常。另有研究发现, 在Morris水迷宫中, 老年鼠空间学习记忆能力下降, 而且发现海马和皮层区ATF4蛋白水平显著增加, 磷酸化CREB(p-CREB)蛋白水平显著下降, 给予 α -亚麻酸12个月后, 其受损的学习记忆能力有所改善, 海马和皮层内ATF4和p-CREB蛋白水平均

恢复正常,表明 α -亚麻酸可能是通过下调ATF4增强CREB功能进而改善年龄相关的认知障碍的^[57]。以上研究表明,在衰老过程中,ATF4的蛋白表达发生显著改变,衰老引起的认知障碍与ATF4表达水平异常升高密切相关。

3.4 脑损伤

脑损伤会引起多种神经功能障碍,患者常伴有记忆受损。创伤性脑损伤,作为一种外力性脑损伤,损伤程度与神经功能密切相关。LI等^[58]构建创伤性脑损伤大鼠模型,运用Morris水迷宫评估大鼠空间认知能力,发现大鼠空间学习记忆能力受损,且胼胝体内ATF4蛋白表达水平升高;腹腔注射大麻素受体2激动剂JWH133后,大鼠空间学习记忆能力显著改善,胼胝体区ATF4蛋白水平降低但仍高于对照组。丙烯酰胺是一种化学毒物,常可引起动物神经系统损害^[59-60]。YAN等^[34]通过构建亚慢性丙烯酰胺暴露大鼠模型,发现大鼠空间学习记忆能力受损,海马内ATF4蛋白水平升高,p-CREB和BDNF蛋白水平降低,认为ATF4通过抑制CREB的活性和BDNF的表达水平来负向调节记忆过程。砷具有神经毒性,长期接触可导致严重中枢神经系统认知功能损伤^[61]。研究表明,在SD大鼠慢性暴露亚砷酸钠6个月后,运用水迷宫实验发现亚砷酸钠导致大鼠空间学习与记忆能力下降,且海马内ATF4蛋白表达水平升高,凋亡阳性细胞显著增加,其机制可能为亚砷酸钠通过引起内质网应激和未折叠蛋白反应来诱导ATF4的表达,引起海马区细胞凋亡,进而影响学习与记忆能力^[62]。因此,我们认为,在脑损伤中,ATF4在创伤性脑损伤和化学毒物引起的脑损伤中发挥可能的机制为脑损伤诱发内质网应激,引起ATF4表达增加,进而影响脑内学习记忆相关分子如CREB、BDNF等的表达,引起神经细胞凋亡,最终导致学习记忆功能受损。

3.5 药物成瘾

药物成瘾是由成瘾性药物与大脑奖赏系统相互作用引起的慢性复发性脑病,在药物奖赏和线索环境相联系后,形成的顽固性的病理性的学习记忆,主要表现为强迫性用药和对药物的持续性渴求状态^[63-64]。JIAN等^[6]使用大鼠条件性位置偏爱(conditioned place preference, CPP)模型研究药物成瘾记忆的再巩固过程,在基底外侧杏仁核中发现ATF4蛋白水平显著降低,给基底外侧杏仁核注射真核翻译起

始因子2 α 去磷酸化抑制剂Sal003,可阻断吗啡或可卡因诱导的CPP的记忆巩固,且ATF4蛋白表达增高;使用慢病毒介导的短发夹RNA干扰基底外侧杏仁核中ATF4的表达,可阻断Sal003引起的行为效应和蛋白表达变化,表明基底外侧杏仁核内ATF4参与线索记忆的提取与巩固依赖于真核翻译起始因子2 α 去磷酸化水平。有研究表明,酒精长期暴露可导致脑的结构和生理功能异常,体外神经元酒精暴露模型中,发现酒精单独暴露对ATF4的蛋白表达影响不明显,但在应激诱导药物衣霉素作用下,酒精显著增加ATF4蛋白的表达^[65]。目前研究已初步证实了ATF4在成瘾中的作用,其具体机制尚不清楚,今后有必要以ATF4为切入点,深入探讨其在成瘾记忆中的作用及分子机制,为成瘾相关疾病的干预治疗提供潜在靶点。

综上所述,ATF4在神经退行性疾病(AD、PD、衰老等)、脑损伤和药物成瘾中发挥重要作用,在这些疾病中,均出现学习记忆的功能障碍,如空间学习记忆障碍、情景恐惧记忆障碍和药物线索记忆障碍等,在出现学习记忆功能障碍时,通过诱发内质网应激引起相关蛋白(如PERK、p-eIF2 α 等)表达量增加,诱发未折叠蛋白反应,引起ATF4表达水平升高,进而影响ATF4下游分子CREB、BDNF等的表达水平,最终影响神经细胞凋亡,而对ATF4进行干预后,这些疾病的学习记忆功能障碍均有显著改善,证明了ATF4在这些学习记忆相关疾病中的重要作用。

4 展望

ATF4作为一种转录激活因子,目前被认为在多种与学习记忆相关疾病中发挥关键作用。在学习记忆障碍疾病模型中,发现ATF4的表达异常,给予相关药物干预后学习记忆明显改善,且ATF4表达水平趋于正常,表明ATF4在学习记忆相关疾病中发挥重要作用。因此,针对ATF4在学习记忆相关疾病中的机制有必要进一步的研究,全面深入探讨ATF4在学习记忆中的作用机制,有望以ATF4为靶点,为学习记忆障碍相关疾病的治疗提供新的理论依据。

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