

哺乳动物原始生殖细胞中X染色体活性研究进展

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摘要 原始生殖细胞(primordial germ cells, PGCs)起源于原肠胚, 是胚胎发育过程中首先产生的生殖细胞群体。PGCs发育会经历特化、迁移、增殖和分化四个阶段, 最终产生两性生殖细胞。在真兽亚纲哺乳动物中, 由于雌性(XX)与雄性(XY)之间性染色体差异, 雌性细胞中一条X染色体会发生失活(X chromosome inactivation, XCI), 从而实现两性间的剂量补偿。在哺乳动物的生命周期中, PGCs中的X染色体活性是处于动态变化的, 特化后失活的X染色体会发生重激活(X chromosome reactivation, XCR)。XCR过程涉及一系列的表观遗传重编程, 如抑制性组蛋白修饰的擦除、DNA去甲基化以及染色质空间结构的重塑等。X染色体重激活对于PGCs的分化非常重要, 是产生具有功能性的配子的必要条件, 如果PGCs发育过程中X染色体活性出现异常, 将严重影响PGCs的分化。该文重点综述了PGCs发育过程中X染色体活性变化模式、X染色体活性调控的表观调控因素以及XCR发生的机制, 并进一步比较了不同物种间PGCs的X染色体活性变化差异。

关键词 原始生殖细胞; X染色体重激活; *XIST*; 组蛋白修饰; DNA甲基化

Research Progress in the Activity of X Chromosome in Mammalian Primordial Germ Cells

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Abstract PGCs (primordial germ cells) are the first germ cell populations produced during embryonic development, originating from gastrula stage. PGCs undergo four stages of development: specialization, migration, proliferation and differentiation, ultimately giving rise to either sperm or oocytes. In female Eutheria, XCI (X chromosome inactivation) occurs to compensate for the sex chromosome difference between females (XX) and males (XY). During mammalian development, the X chromosome activity in PGCs is dynamically regulated, with the inactivated XCR (X chromosome reactivation) after specialization. This process involves a series of epigenetic reprogramming events, such as the histone modifications erasure, DNA demethylation, and chromatin structure remodeling. X chromosome reactivation is crucial for PGCs differentiation and the production of functional gametes. Abnormal X chromosome activity will seriously affect the differentiation of PGCs. This review focuses on the changing pattern of X chromosome activity during PGCs development, the regulatory factors of X chromosome activity, the mechanism of XCR, and compare the differences of PGCs X chromosome activity changes across various species.

Keywords primordial germ cells; X chromosome reactivation; *XIST*; histone modifications; DNA methylation

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原始生殖细胞(primordial germ cells, PGCs)是胚胎发育过程中最先产生的生殖细胞群体,是两性生殖细胞的前体^[1-2]。在形态上,PGCs比周围体细胞略大,碱性磷酸酶染色呈阳性^[3-4]。特化的PGCs增殖并迁移到生殖嵴,持续增殖后进入减数分裂。在雌性哺乳动物着床前胚胎发育过程中,几乎所有细胞都会发生X染色体失活(X chromosome inactivation, XCI),从而实现两性间的基因表达剂量补偿^[5]。而对于PGCs来说,在其特化及迁移过程又会发生X染色体重激活(X chromosome reactivation, XCR),这是一种特殊的表观遗传重编程现象^[6-7]。本文重点探讨PGCs中XCR表观遗传现象及调控机制,并介绍小鼠、人、食蟹猴、猪等物种PGCs中XCR时期及表观遗传重编程的异同。

1 X染色体失活

为了维持雌、雄个体间以及X染色体与常染色体之间的基因表达平衡,哺乳动物通过XCI方式实现剂量补偿^[8-9]。XCI有印记失活和随机失活两种方式^[10]。小鼠的胚胎发育中存在两次XCI:早期胚胎和胚外组织中采用印记失活的方式特异性失活父源X染色体;发育到囊胚阶段时,内细胞团(inner cell mass, ICM)中部分细胞将分化为上胚层,这些细胞中X染色体发生重激活,随后又会发生随机失活。

非编码RNA X染色体失活特异性转录本(X-inactive specific transcript, *Xist*)是XCI启动的开关,*Xist*顺式结合在X染色体上,招募与染色质修饰、核小体重塑相关的蛋白复合物,建立抑制性的组蛋白修饰和DNA甲基化,并维持XCI状态^[11-13]。根据XCI发生的详细过程,可以将其分为三个阶段:起始、建立和维持^[14]。起始阶段:*Xist*呈现单等位上调并顺式结合在X染色体上^[15];建立阶段:活性染色质修饰的擦除与抑制性染色质修饰添加,X染色体形成异染色质^[16];维持阶段:多种抑制性修饰联合维持Xi状态^[17]。*Xist* RNA具有7个外显子和6个不同特征的重复域(A、B、C、D、E、F)^[18]。在XCI建立与维持过程中,*Xist* RNA可以结合不同的RNA结合蛋白,行使不同功能,在抑制性修饰方面发挥了关键作用。*Xist* RNA重复域A区域直接与SHARP(SMRT/HDAC1 associated repressor protein)蛋白相互作用,募集SMRT,激活组蛋白去乙酰化酶3(histone

deacetylase 3, HDAC3)并使组蛋白去乙酰化,来排斥RNA聚合酶Pol II抑制转录^[19]。随后还需要抑制性组蛋白修饰维持Xi状态,此过程主要由*Xist*重复域B与异质核核糖核蛋白K(heterogeneous nuclear ribonucleoprotein K, hnRNPK)结合多梳抑制复合物1(polycomb repressive complexes 1, PRC1)和多梳抑制复合物2(polycomb repressive complexes 2, PRC2)。PRC1和PRC2分别在X染色体上建立组蛋白H2A第119位赖氨酸单泛素化(monoubiquitylated histone H2A lysine 119, H2AK119ub)和组蛋白H3第27位赖氨酸三甲基化(trimethylation of H3 on lysine 27, H3K27me3)修饰实现X染色体失活^[20]。具体来说,*Xist*首先通过hnRNPK蛋白招募非典型的PRC1在X染色体上建立H2AK119ub修饰,然后H2AK119ub修饰进一步招募PRC1和PRC2结合在X染色体上,分别建立更多修饰^[21]。组蛋白H3第9位赖氨酸三甲基化(trimethylation of H3 on lysine 9, H3K9me3)修饰和DNA甲基化也参与维持Xi状态。

2 PGCs中影响X染色体活性的表观遗传因素

影响PGCs X染色体活性的因素主要包括*Xist*表达与招募、抑制性组蛋白修饰及DNA甲基化等。而XCR的本质是擦除这些抑制性表观修饰及重塑X染色体高级结构的过程,从而使得两条X染色体均具有活性。

2.1 *Xist*与*Tsix*

哺乳动物X染色体失活中心^[10](X-inactivation center, Xic)产生多种非编码RNA,其中包含*Xist*和*Tsix*(*Xist*反义非编码RNA),对XCI整体调节^[22]。XCI早期*Xist*可以顺式结合并从转录位点处,沿着整条的X染色体上积累^[23]。*Xist*可以招募上百种RNA结合蛋白和蛋白复合体到X染色体上,最后形成异染色质状态^[17,24]。因此,*Xist*对XCI的启动和维持至关重要。生殖嵴中少部分雌性PGCs在Xi上丢失*Xist* RNA,这些细胞的*Xist*数量会随着XCR进行而逐渐减少,进入减数分裂前几乎消失,表明它们已经发生XCR。*Tsix*位于*Xist*基因下游,与*Xist*共同调节XCI^[25]。在小鼠胚胎发育早期,XCI之前,*Tsix*覆盖在活化X染色体上,呈双等位表达,抑制*Xist*转录,维持X染色体可及性。但在PGCs整个发育过程中,*Tsix* RNA不转录或处于低水平转录,表明*Xist*的丢失与

*Tsix*无关^[26-27]。因此,PGCs XCR并不完全是XCI的逆转过程。

2.2 组蛋白修饰

2.2.1 H3K9me2 由常染色体组蛋白赖氨酸甲基转移酶2(euchromatic histone lysine methyltransferase 2, EHMT2)介导组蛋白H3第9位赖氨酸的双甲基化(dimethylation of histone H3 on lysine 9, H3K9me2)与常染色质中抑制的基因/区域有关^[28-29]。H3K9me2与DNA甲基化相耦合,建立抑制性染色质状态^[30]。小鼠PGCs在E8.0左右去除了全基因组范围内大部分H3K9me2修饰和DNA甲基化,直至E12.5保持低水平^[30]。在某些情况下,DNA甲基化也可以作为H3K9me2的上游因素起作用。

2.2.2 H3K9me3 H3K9me3由组蛋白赖氨酸甲基转移酶SUV39H1(suppressor of variegation 3-9 homolog 1)、组蛋白赖氨酸甲基转移酶SUV39H2(suppressor of variegation 3-9 homolog 2)或组蛋白甲基化酶SET结构域分支型1(SET domain bifurcated histone lysine methyltransferase 1, SETDB1)建立,是着丝粒异染色质的标志,与基因转录抑制相关^[31-33]。PGCs在整个发育过程中保持着H3K9me3和异染色质蛋白1(heterochromatin protein 1, HP1)共定位,并且在整个发育阶段维持相对稳定^[31]。但PGCs H3K9me3整体修饰水平要低于相邻的体细胞修饰水平^[30]。当然,该修饰在PGCs中X染色体上的变化模式及功能还需进一步研究。

2.2.3 H3K27me3 H3K27me3由PRC2复合物催化建立,可以抑制发育过程中谱系特异性表达的基因。高可塑性的H3K27me3是调控X染色体活性的关键抑制性组蛋白修饰^[34]。其修饰本身不足以沉默整条染色体^[35]。H3K27me3修饰水平在小鼠E8.5-E9.0阶段的PGCs中显著增加,这种状态至少维持到E12.5,并且PGCs中整体H3K27me3水平显著高于体细胞。在PGCs发生XCR的过程中H3K27me3从Xi中擦除,而在常染色体上其水平显著增加,这种染色体特异H3K27me3调控模式及其机制与功能还需要深入研究。

2.2.4 H3K4me3和H3K9ac 组蛋白H3第4位赖氨酸三甲基化(trimethylation of histone H3 on lysine 4, H3K4me3)和组蛋白H3第9位赖氨酸乙酰化(acetylated lysine 9 of histone H3, H3K9ac)是两种激活性组蛋白修饰^[36]。其中H3K4me3修饰由催化亚基SET1/

MLL家族、核心亚基以及其他复合物亚基组成的复合体建立,H3K9ac由KAT2B(lysine acetyltransferase 2B)组蛋白乙酰转移酶建立^[32,37]。H3K4me3、H3K9ac修饰在转录起始位点附近的活性启动子中高度富集^[39],同时H3K4me3和H3K9ac可以竞争H3K9me3修饰^[38]。在迁移时,PGCs中H3K4me3和H3K9ac两种修饰水平与周围体细胞相当,但PGCs在到达生殖嵴时会急剧上调这两种修饰水平,建立一种短暂的超活性的染色质状态^[30]。

2.2.5 H2AK119ub 在XCI过程中,PRC1和PRC2相互招募建立广泛的H2AK119ub与H3K27me3修饰。有研究表明,雌性小鼠PGCs XCR过程中H2AK119ub修饰存在于性腺早期PGCs中,H2AK119ub丢失主要抑制减数分裂过程^[39]。H2AK119ub修饰在小鼠PGCs XCR过程中富集形式是否与H3K27me3修饰具有一致性,还需要具体深入研究。

2.3 DNA甲基化

基因启动子或增强子区域的DNA甲基化通常抑制相应基因的表达。PGCs会发生两个阶段的DNA去甲基化:第一阶段(E8.5~E9.5)主要是被动的全局去甲基化;第二阶段(E9.5~E13.5)是主动的去甲基化过程,主要影响失活X连锁基因在内的特定位点^[40-42]。这两阶段的全局DNA去甲基化与XCR过程大致吻合。虽然几乎所有染色体上启动子和调节元件DNA甲基化丢失,但没有普遍发生转录^[43],而大量的种系重编程响应基因(germline reprogramming responsive genes, *GRR*)^[43-44],由于启动子DNA去甲基化发生上调,说明DNA甲基化的丢失与某些特定的谱系特异性基因的激活有关。

2.4 黏连蛋白(Cohesin)

Cohesin是高度保守的环形复合物,能够包围染色质并将染色质挤压成环,它是由核心成分SMC1a、SMC3和RAD21与一个STAG1或STAG2蛋白组成的^[45-46]。在小鼠成纤维细胞中,Cohesin优先富集在活跃状态染色体(Xa)上,而在Xi染色体结构中*Xist*特异性地阻止Cohesin复合物与其结合^[47-48],因此Cohesin是导致Xi和Xa之间的结构差异的重要因素。有研究报道*Smc1a*敲除后,两条X染色体之间的面积差异消失,Xa面积变小,与Xi面积更加相似,因此SMC1a在塑造Xa结构中具有重要作用^[49]。PGCs XCR中Cohesin是否发挥关键作用,还需进一步探究。

3 PGCs中XCR机制

目前PGCs中XCR具体机制还不清楚,但是可以确定的是这个过程会发生*XIST/Xist*表达量降低及抑制性修饰被擦除。*XIST/Xist*表达被抑制可能有六种机制:(1)在*XIST*启动子上建立了DNA甲基化;(2)在*XIST/Xist*启动子上建立了抑制性的组蛋白修饰如H3K9me3与H3K27me3;(3)抑制性转录因子结合在*XIST*启动子,阻断其转录;(4)抑制性组蛋白甲基转移酶与多能性转录因子(Nanog、OCT4、PRDM14)结合失去功能,使抑制性组蛋白修饰擦除;(5)非编码RNA招募抑制性组蛋白去甲基化酶定位于Xi,擦除抑制性组蛋白修饰;(6)蛋白质降解系统将RNA结合蛋白降解,在空间上Xi凝缩状态转化为开放状态。目前对XCR过程中抑制性修饰擦除机制不清楚。但是有研究表明,正性调节区锌指蛋白14(PR domain zinc finger protein 14, PRDM14)对维持PGCs多能性以及表观遗传重编程起重要作用^[50-51]。小鼠PGCs中PRDM14可以与*Zeste*基因抑制子12(suppressor of zeste 12, SUZ12)相互作用,使其X染色体上H3K27me3修饰无法维持。PRDM14还可以通过抑制DNA甲基转移酶3b(DNA methyltransferase 3b, DNMT3b)和招募TET家族的DNA去甲基化酶来降低PGCs全基因组范围的DNA甲基化水平^[52]。

4 不同物种PGCs的X染色体活性变化差异

在小鼠发育循环中,会发生两次XCR,第一次发生在ICM细胞中,第二次发生在PGCs中。在灵长类动物发育过程中,XCR仅发生在植入后胚胎阶段的PGCs中^[26,53-54]。另外,不同物种的XCI建立及Xi维

持过程也存在一定物种差异。不同物种PGCs中X染色体活性动态变化的比较见图1^[26,55-56]。

4.1 小鼠PGC X染色体活性变化

从特化到生殖嵴期间,雌性小鼠PGCs Xi逐渐发生*Xist*表达下调与H3K27me3修饰丢失,导致少数沉默的基因重新双等位表达。在到达生殖嵴时X染色体存在两种状态:活跃状态(XaXa)和失活状态(XaXi)^[41]。随后生殖嵴特化成性腺过程中X连锁基因重新被激活并且速度显著加快(图1),此时大多数X连锁基因呈现双等位表达,*Xist*在Xi上的积累几乎完全消失,伴随着DNA去甲基化与整体染色质修饰重塑。在雌性小鼠PGCs发育过程中,H3K27me3修饰在常染色体上富集,H3K9me3主要保留在异染色质部分,H3K9me2修饰被擦除。而雄性PGCs整个发育周期X染色体都有活性^[30]。整体来看,小鼠PGCs XCR是一个渐进的过程,经过迁移、增殖,甚至进入减数分裂时XCR仍然不完全。

4.2 食蟹猴PGC X染色体活性变化

食蟹猴与小鼠XCR的模式差异较大。食蟹猴PGCs Xi的比例从特化阶段逐渐降低^[55]。在雌性食蟹猴PGCs中,特化早期处于Xi状态,此时Xi *XIST*包裹并富集H3K27me3修饰,而Xa上无*XIST*包裹,但富集H3K27me3修饰(图1)。在特化中期(E15)后,食蟹猴PGCs中大多数X染色体上*XIST*表达受到抑制,X连锁基因呈双等位表达的比率逐渐增加。随后在迁移过程中Xi上*XIST*完全丢失,而H3K27me3仍富集在Xi上,X染色体从无活性状态转变为活性状态;而Xa中H3K27me3修饰被擦除。在性腺定植的食蟹猴PGCs通过一种未知的机制使*XIST*重新表达,然而*XIST*以一种高度分散的方式包裹着X染色

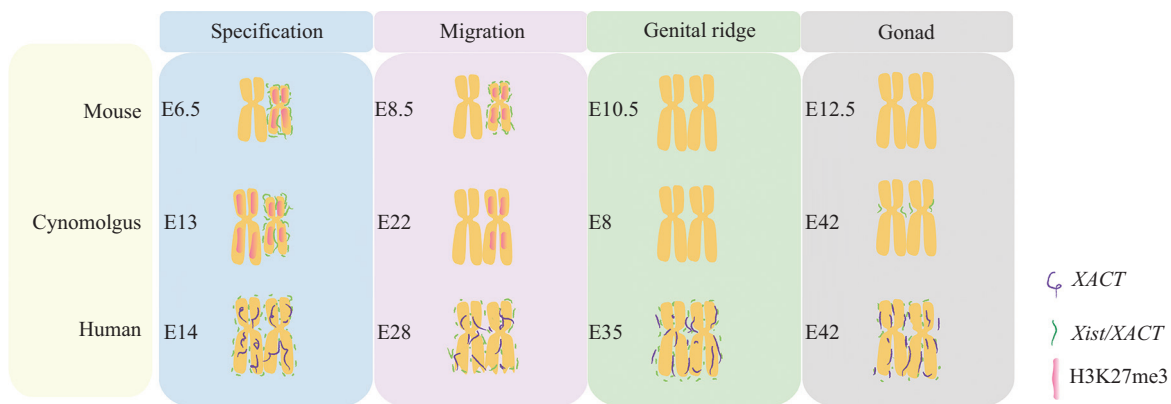


图1 不同物种PGCs的X染色体活性动态变化(根据参考文献[26,55-56]修改)

Fig.1 Dynamic changes of X chromosome activity of PGCs in different species (modified from references [26,55-56])

体, 并且未发生H3K27me3修饰富集(图1)。因此, 食蟹猴PGCs具有不同于小鼠的Xa^{Xist+}状态, 可能代表了一种非典型的X剂量补偿状态^[55]。而雄性食蟹猴PGCs在特化、迁移、定植生殖嵴阶段, X染色体上H3K27me3修饰被擦除且无XIST表达, 但在性腺阶段X染色体会少量XIST表达。

4.3 人PGC X染色体活性变化

几乎所有雌性胎盘哺乳动物植入前胚胎X染色体剂量补偿是通过XCI实现的, 但是人类植入前的胚胎是一个例外, 其剂量补偿是通过X染色体下调(X-chromosome dampening, XCD)实现的^[56]。在人PGCs中, 两条X染色体都是活性的, 并同时表达长链非编码RNA XACT(X active coating transcript)和XIST。XACT影响XIST在X染色体上的积累, 防止X染色体沉默, 可被看作一种剂量补偿的替代策略^[57]。人PGCs在植入后的上胚层中有更多的XIST包裹X染色体, 而性腺阶段人PGC XIST以更加松散的结构富集在X染色体上(图1)。在PGCs整个发育时期, 由于XIST与XACT两者的拮抗作用形成XCD状态^[57-58]。雌性PGCs细胞核中几乎缺乏H3K27me3积累(图1)。而在雄性PGCs中只表达XACT, 所以人PGCs整个时期X染色体都有活性。整体来看, 人PGCs在特化、迁移、定植生殖嵴阶段还缺乏对X染色体的活性的具体研究。

5 展望

研究PGCs为建立体外配子生产技术提供理论参考, 在人类生殖医学、动物育种、表观遗传研究模型等领域有着广泛的应用前景。通过在小鼠上的研究, 目前对PGCs的X染色体活性状态已经有了一定的认知, 但是仍然存在很多未知之处, 主要包括以下几个方面。(1) 在迁移前或迁移过程中PGCs发生XCR的具体时间未知。(2) 特化阶段的X染色体与体细胞的Xi状态具体差异未知。(3) 不同物种PGCs的XCR具体表观修饰变化过程及机制还不清楚。(4) 在发生XCR过程中, 被激活的种系特异性基因在性别分化后的作用还未知。另外, PGCs发育过程中X染色体活性变化模式在不同物种间存在较大的差异, 我们对小鼠以外物种(包括人类、猪、牛等) PGCs X染色体活性状态及其调控机制的认知还远远不够, 需要针对各物种分别进行深入探究。但是人类植入后胚胎的获取具有伦理、道德约束, 因

此研究人类PGCs XCR受到限制, 比较物种间XCR过程中X染色体活性动态变化, 有利于对人类PGC XCR研究获得理论支持。

目前研究PGCs中X染色体活性存在很多技术与伦理上的限制和困难。一方面, 对X染色体的活性研究需同时标记染色体并检测多种表观修饰因子, 技术上较为困难; 另一方面, PGCs特化、迁移阶段所处位置不同, 细胞数量较少, 缺乏高特异性表面标记分子, 导致细胞纯化难度较大。当然, 随着单细胞转录组、表观组学技术的发展, 少量细胞多角度同时分析技术将来可以实现; 另外, 利用胚胎干细胞向PGCs的定向诱导分化建立体外模型也将极大促进我们对其X染色体活性的研究与认知。

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