

慢性疼痛合并认知异常的研究进展

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摘要: 慢性疼痛(CP)是一种持续超过正常愈合时间的疼痛综合征,其与认知异常的共病现象严重损害患者生活质量及社会功能。研究表明,约半数慢性疼痛患者伴随注意力下降、记忆减退等认知障碍,其机制涉及大脑结构重塑(如前额叶皮质、海马灰质萎缩)、神经炎症(促炎因子如IL-6、TNF- α 介导突触损伤)及神经递质失衡(GABA能抑制减弱、LC-NE系统功能障碍)。评估方法包括主观量表(如MoCA)、生物标志物(炎症因子水平)和神经影像技术(fMRI、脑电图),但客观定量指标仍待开发。因此,本文旨在总结慢性疼痛合并认知障碍的最新进展,为相关研究者以及临床医师提供系统认识,也为未来研究应聚焦神经环路机制与生物标志物开发提供思路,为临床诊疗提供精准依据。

关键词: 慢性疼痛; 认知异常; 神经炎症反应; 静息脑电图; MoCA量表

Research Progress on Chronic Pain Combined with Cognitive Abnormalities

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Abstract: Chronic pain (CP) is a pain syndrome that persists beyond normal healing time, and its comorbidity with cognitive abnormalities seriously impairs the quality of life and social function of patients. Research has shown that about half of chronic pain patients suffer from cognitive impairments such as decreased attention and memory, which involve brain structural remodeling (such as prefrontal cortex and hippocampal gray matter atrophy), neuroinflammation (pro-inflammatory factors such as IL-6 and TNF - α mediate synaptic damage), and neurotransmitter imbalance (reduced GABAergic inhibition, LC-NE system dysfunction). The evaluation methods include subjective scales (such as MoCA), biomarkers (levels of inflammatory factors), and neuroimaging techniques (fMRI, electroencephalography), but objective quantitative indicators still need to be developed. Therefore, this article aims to summarize the latest progress in chronic pain combined with cognitive impairment, provide systematic understanding for relevant researchers and clinical physicians, and also provide ideas for future research to focus on neural circuit mechanisms and biomarker development, providing accurate basis for clinical diagnosis and treatment.

Keywords: chronic pain; cognitive abnormalities; neuroinflammatory response; resting EEG ; MoCA scale

慢性疼痛(Chronic Pain, CP)被认为是超过正常愈合时间而持续存在的疼痛,当疼痛持续或复发超过3至6个月时,被视为慢性疼痛^[1]。长期以来,各种原因所致慢性疼痛是侵害人类健康的严重疾患之一。有研究表明,我国慢性疼痛患病率高达31.54%,其中约1/3的患者认为疼痛会导致睡眠障碍、焦虑、抑郁和肠易激^[2],这严重影响患者的生活质量和心理状态,甚至影响社会经济的发展。慢性疼痛患者中约半数以上伴有认知行为异常,表现为注意力下降、学习记忆减退、信息处理速度和精神运动能力的下降、执行功能受阻、睡眠障碍和抑郁等^[3-7]。慢性疼痛合并认知异常不但增加认知障碍(包括痴呆)的发病率,认知异常还会影响慢性疼痛的治疗效果,降低慢性疼痛病人的生活质量。目前,对慢性疼痛不仅缺乏有效的治疗措施,对其严重程度和行为认知异常的诊断和评估也缺乏客观依据。因此,阐明慢性疼痛及其行为认知异常的神经环路机制和分子机制,鉴定其客观神经生物标记物,并据此研究开发客观有效、针对性强的临床诊断和疗效评估方法具有重要的临床意义和社会价值。

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一、慢性疼痛认知异常的相关机制

(一) 大脑结构与功能分区的异常重塑

慢性疼痛通过长期刺激诱发大脑关键区域的结构萎缩与功能连接紊乱,直接导致认知功能损伤。Hans-Christian Fritz等人对111名慢性疼痛患者进行磁共振成像检查显示,相比健康对照组,慢性疼痛患者的灰质体积显著减少,尤其以前额叶皮质(Prefrontal Cortex, PFC)最为明显,该区域在认知和情绪调节、预期和感知疼痛中起着至关重要的作用^[8]。除此之外,还有研究证明,前扣带皮层(anterior cingulate cortex, ACC)在情绪、自主调节、疼痛处理、注意力、记忆和决策方面起着关键作用^[9]。功能磁共振成像数据显示,纤维肌痛患者患有与前扣带回局部脑形态相关的神经认知缺陷,这表明疼痛诱导的前扣带皮层活动可能影响认知过程^[10]。另外研究动物模型以及人类中海马的变化有助于进一步探索慢性疼痛对认知关键脑区的影响。例如,神经影像学研究显示,慢性疼痛患者海马灰质体积减少,这与在啮齿动物慢性疼痛模型中报道的结果相似^[11]。有研究表明,成功治疗慢性疼痛后可以使萎缩的海马体积恢复正常,它们主要由CA2/3、CA4和齿状回驱动,这与学习和记忆等认知功能密切相关^[12]。因此以ACC、海马、PFC为代表的脑区在慢性疼痛过程中发生的结构与功能变化,可能是慢性疼痛合并认知异常的结构基础。

(二) 神经炎症

神经炎症是慢性疼痛与认知异常共病机制的核心枢纽。现有证据证明,神经炎症的发生发展负责产生和维持伤害性神经元的敏化,导致了慢性疼痛^[13]。除了在慢性疼痛的发展中发挥关键作用外,越来越多的证据表明,神经炎症是几种中枢神经系统疾病的潜在原因,包括阿尔茨海默病、帕金森病(Parkinson's disease, PD)、多发性硬化症(multiple sclerosis)和精神疾病^[14]。值得一提的是,有研究表明,慢性疼痛可能会通过诱导神经炎症反应,进而使AD加重^[15]。

在慢性疼痛状态下,外周组织损伤或神经损伤激活外周免疫细胞(如巨噬细胞),释放促炎因子(IL-1 β 、TNF- α 、IL-6),这些信号通过血脑屏障或迷走神经传入通路,进入到中枢神经系统,引发中枢神经炎症^[16]。

(一) 神经递质

神经递质是神经元间信息传递的核心介质,其动态平衡对维持疼痛感知与认知功能至关重要。慢性疼痛与认知障碍的共病状态常伴随谷氨酸、 γ -氨基丁酸(GABA)、单胺类(5-羟色胺、去甲肾上腺素)及内源性阿片系统等多递质系统的协同失调。

GABA是中枢主要的抑制性递质,对中枢神经系统的功能至关重要,特别是在学习和记忆过程中,其功能减退在慢性疼痛与认知障碍中表现为脊髓抑制性调控减弱和皮层信息过滤功能受损^[17]。在慢性疼痛模型中,GABA能系统的改变可导致海马和mPFC的兴奋/抑制失衡,从而导致认知障碍^[18]。此外,Cai等发现SNI大鼠海马小白蛋白和生长抑素中间神经元上G-ABAA- α 5受体的表达显著增加,拮抗这些受体可改善认知功能障碍,突出了神经传递失衡在疼痛性认知功能障碍中的作用^[19]。

蓝斑(locus coeruleus, LC)与多种生理功能有关,包括注意力、记忆、情绪、应激反应和疼痛调控^[20]。LC位于脑桥背核中,广泛投射到大脑的大多数区域,特别是额叶皮质和边缘系统,并且是大脑中神经递质去甲肾上腺素(norepinephrine, NE)的主要来源。慢性疼痛可导致LC-NE系统功能障碍。有研究证实,在慢性神经病理性疼痛大鼠中发现PFC中去甲肾上腺素能神经元兴奋性增加,同时也导致了大鼠海马依赖性记忆缺陷^[21]。LC的损伤常伴有认知障碍,在AD病人中,LC的功能和结构受到破坏,LC是AD发生和进展过程中最早受影响的大脑区域之一,且与AD病人的认知障碍相关^[22]。

二、慢性疼痛认知异常的评估方法

(一) 量表评估

目前临幊上对于慢性疼痛及其认知行为异常的评估,主要包括以患者主诉和客观症状为基础的各种量表检查和问卷,如麦吉尔疼痛问卷(The McGill Pain Questionnaire, MPQ)、健康问卷-9(Patient Health Questionnaire-9, PHQ-9)、焦虑自评量表(Self-rating anxiety scale, SAS)、蒙特利尔认知功能评估量表(Montreal cognitive assessment, MoCA)等^[23-26]。与没有疼痛的老年人相比,患有慢性疼痛的老年人在执行功能、注意力、记忆和语言领域的MoCA得分较低^[27]。然而,这些量表对严重程度评估的客观性和定量较差,还可能受到评分者经验的影响,是临幊实践和临幊试验的主要障碍。有研究表明,认知障碍的存在很可能会降低主观量表的敏感度和特异度,以及增加认知功能测量的系统性偏差^[28]。

(二) 生物标志物分析

炎症细胞因子是由免疫细胞(如巨噬细胞、T细胞等)或非免疫细胞(如内皮细胞、成纤维细胞)分泌的一类小分子蛋白,通过调节免疫反应和炎症过程,在宿主防御、组织修复和病理损伤中发挥核心作用。细胞因子最初在外周免疫细胞中被检测到(如淋巴细胞和单核细胞),而新出现的实验证据表明,TNF- α 、IL-1 β 等细胞因子在神经系统中也存在表达,包括背根神经节(dorsal root ganglion, DRG)、脊椎背角、海马体等^[29]。临幊研究证实,在患有多种形式的慢性疼痛病人中可检测到促炎细胞因子的增加,例如慢性原发性腰痛、慢性纤维肌痛、类风湿性关节炎病人的血浆TNF- α 升高^[30]。近年来,炎症细胞因子(inflammatory cytokines)的水平变化为各种疾病的诊断、分期和预后提供了有价值的信息,包括癌症、抑郁症等慢性疾病。这为炎症细胞因子作为慢性疼痛病人早期认知功能损害筛查的定量生物标志物提供一定的可能性^[31-34]。

(三) 神经影像学技术

神经影像技术为揭示慢性疼痛与认知异常共病的神经机制提供了无创、多维度的研究手段。慢性疼痛患者常表现为前额叶皮层(PFC)、前扣带回(ACC)、岛叶及海马的灰质萎缩,这些区域与疼痛情感加工和认知调控密切相关。例如,Wenhui Zhao等人分析了26,407名个体的脑磁共振数据,发现多部位疼痛患者的痴呆风险

显著增加,认知障碍范围更广、速度更快,海马萎缩更严重^[35]。然而结构改变多为慢性病程的继发表现,难以区分病因特异性(如神经炎症与退行性病变)。而功能磁共振成像(fMRI)有助于分析静息态功能连接(如默认模式网络、突显网络)与任务态激活模式,揭示疼痛与认知任务间的资源竞争机制。有研究表明,慢性疼痛患者DMN(后扣带回/内侧前额叶)与SN(岛叶/前扣带回)连接增强,可能反映疼痛对自发认知活动的持续干扰^[36]。

近年来静息态脑电图(resting-state electroencephalography, rsEEG)因具有客观、简便、无创、价格低廉等优点,此外还具有毫秒级的时间分辨率,比其他神经影像学检查,如fMRI精细几个数量级,从而为慢性疼痛病人早期认知功能损害筛查提供一定的可能性^[37-40]。其中脑电图功率谱比值(power spectral ratios, PSR)通过对复杂的脑电图波形频谱进行快速傅里叶变换(fast Fourier transform, FFT)后,得出客观、易于理解的数据,现被广泛应用于认知领域的研究,目前较多的是作为潜在的生物标志物应用于抑

郁症、轻度认知障碍(mild cognitive impairment,MCI)、阿尔茨海默氏症(Alzheimer's dementia,AD)^[41-43]。另外,有研究认为静息脑电图可以作为客观生物标志物指导以及监测慢性神经病变疼痛的治疗效果,这也具有重要的临床意义^[44]。

三、小结

本文总结了慢性疼痛与认知异常的共病机制复杂,涉及大脑结构重塑(如前额叶皮质、海马灰质萎缩)、神经炎症(IL-6、TNF- α 介导突触损伤及血脑屏障破坏)及神经递质失衡(GABA抑制减弱、NE系统紊乱)。评估方面,传统量表(如MoCA)存在主观局限性,需结合炎症因子检测(TNF- α 、IL-1 β)及神经影像技术(fMRI、脑电图)提升客观性。未来研究应聚焦神经环路机制解析、特异性生物标志物开发及精准诊疗策略优化,以提升患者生活质量并降低社会负担。

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