



· 综述 ·

超声诊断甲状腺乳头状癌颈部转移淋巴结的研究进展

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[摘要] 甲状腺癌的发病率在世界范围内逐渐升高, 其中甲状腺乳头状癌 (papillary carcinoma of the thyroid, PTC) 为最常见的病理学类型。PTC具有进展慢、预后好的特点, 但颈部淋巴结转移率对预后有较大影响, 术前诊断转移淋巴结对于PTC的临床处理具有重要意义。目前超声是诊断颈部转移淋巴结的主要影像学方法之一, 然而其准确度仍有待提升。本文就超声诊断PTC颈部淋巴结的研究进展进行综述。

[关键词] 甲状腺乳头状癌; 淋巴结转移; 超声; 术前诊断

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Advances in ultrasonographic diagnosis of cervical lymph node metastasis in papillary carcinoma of the thyroid

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[Abstract] The incidence of thyroid carcinoma is increasing worldwide. Papillary carcinoma of the thyroid (PTC), which is the most common pathological type, has a feature of slow progress, and good prognosis. Cervical lymph node metastasis has a large impact on prognosis, and preoperative diagnosis of metastatic lymph nodes has a great role in the clinical management of PTC. Ultrasound is the one main imaging method of preoperative diagnosis of lymph node metastasis, but the accuracy still remains to be further improved. Herein, this article reviewed advances in ultrasonographic diagnosis of cervical lymph node metastasis in PTC.

[Key words] Papillary carcinoma of the thyroid; Lymph node metastasis; Ultrasound; Preoperative diagnosis

2020年, 甲状腺癌的发病率占所有癌症发病率的3%^[1]。近30年来, 甲状腺癌的发病率在世界范围内逐渐升高, 其中, 甲状腺乳头状癌 (papillary carcinoma of the thyroid, PTC) 的发病率升高最为显著^[1]。常规病理学检查发现20%~50%的PTC患者伴有颈部淋巴结转移^[2-6]。术前超声评估甲状腺癌淋巴结转移对于制订临床方案具有重要的意义。然而, 文献^[7]报道, 超声诊断术前PTC淋巴结转移的灵敏度为63%, 特异度为93%, 且中央区淋巴结转移的诊断准确度往往低于侧颈部。随着超声及相关技术的发

展, 为了进一步提高超声对颈部淋巴结的诊断效能, 许多研究者从各个方面对此进行了相关研究^[8-10]。本文将介绍目前超声在诊断PTC颈部转移淋巴结中的应用进展。

1 常规超声检查

常规超声检查是诊断PTC颈部淋巴结转移的首要手段。美国甲状腺协会 (American Thyroid Association, ATA) 指南^[11]强烈推荐, 对于所有准备行甲状腺手术的患者进行颈部淋巴结超声检查。转移性淋巴结在常规超声扫查中的特征已得到较为充分的研究和证实。颈部的良性淋巴结

多表现为梭形或卵圆形低回声区, 中心可见稍高回声的淋巴门结构, 可见血管自淋巴门进入淋巴结内^[12]。PTC转移淋巴结的主要超声特征为淋巴结增大、钙化、囊性变、高回声、圆形、淋巴门消失和边缘型血流^[11]。文献^[13]报道淋巴结内囊性变、钙化、高回声、边缘型血流和形态饱满的灵敏度分别为45.8%、43.0%、68.7%、75.1%和65.4%, 而特异度分别为95.8%、100.0%、77.4%、78.5%和59.9%。肿瘤转移的浸润首先发生在淋巴结的外层皮质, 从而导致淋巴结形态的改变; 通常最先发生的超声表现为淋巴门结构消失^[12]; 淋巴结外层皮质的浸润使淋巴结的形态变得饱满^[8, 14]。转移淋巴结内存在甲状腺滤泡结构的浸润, 其中滤泡上皮与滤泡腔内的胶体形成声阻抗差较大的声界面, 超声表现为高回声区^[15]。囊性变被认为是广泛液化或胶体生成的结果^[16]。PTC的转移淋巴结钙化多表现为位于边缘的点状强回声, 这被认为是代表着沙砾体的形成^[14, 17]。此外, 淋巴结内的血流信号混乱, 失去淋巴门结构特征的血流也是提示转移淋巴结的特征之一^[14, 17-18]。

淋巴结的位置也是辅助鉴别淋巴结转移的手段之一。PTC的颈部淋巴结转移最多发生在颈中央区(Ⅵ区)^[3, 19], 但由于颈部中央区淋巴结位置较深、体积较小以及受到气管内气体干扰, 超声的诊断效能通常低于侧颈区^[15]。侧颈区淋巴结转移多发生在Ⅲ区和Ⅳ区, Ⅱ区次之^[19], 但Ⅱ区淋巴结较易因口腔内炎症发生反应性淋巴结肿大, 需仔细进行鉴别。Ⅴ区的淋巴结转移较少发生, 多发生在颈部有广泛转移淋巴结的情况下^[19]。

2 超声弹性成像

超声弹性成像是一种对组织硬度检测的成像技术, 根据组织软硬度变化辅助鉴别病变组织与正常组织。超声弹性成像主要可分为应变力成像以及剪切波成像(shear wave imaging, SWI), 前者又可分为应变弹性成像和声辐射力脉冲(acoustic radiation force impulse, ARFI)成像^[20]。近年来, 有不少研究^[21-26]利用不同弹性成像技术鉴别诊断PTC颈部淋巴结转移。

2007年, 有研究^[21]通过计算淋巴结与淋巴结周围肌肉组织的应变力弹性比值诊断PTC淋巴结转移, 该研究认为比值大于1.5, 则提示转移淋巴结。2008年, Alam等^[22]运用了实时组织弹性成像鉴别颈部淋巴结良恶性, 研究显示弹性成像灵敏度为83%, 特异度为100%, 准确度为89%, 曲线下面积(area under curve, AUC)为0.873, 联合B型超声及弹性成像评估显示灵敏度为92%, 特异度为94%, 准确度为93%, AUC为0.970。此后, 许多文献^[23-24]报道了ARFI成像在颈部淋巴结良恶性鉴别中的经验。Meng等^[23]提出, 恶性淋巴结的声触诊组织量化技术(virtual touch quantification, VTQ)高于良性淋巴结, 其截断值为2.595 m/s, 此时灵敏度为82.9%, 特异度为93.1%, AUC为0.906。Fujiwara等^[24]则提出, 剪切波速度(shear wave velocity, SWV) > 1.9 m/s可提示转移淋巴结, 具有95.0%的特异度, 81.8%的灵敏度和88.0%的总体准确度, AUC为0.923。

Jung等^[25]研究发现, PTC颈部转移淋巴结的平均杨氏模量(E_{mean})、最小杨氏模量(E_{min})、最大杨氏模量(E_{max})和淋巴结与周围肌肉组织的杨氏模量比值($E_{\text{mean-m}}$)均显著高于良性淋巴结, 截断值分别为29 kPa、24 kPa、57 kPa和1.676, 联合利用 E_{mean} (AUC为0.811)或 E_{min} (AUC为0.812)和二维超声预测颈部转移淋巴结的效能, 高于单独运用二维超声(AUC为0.738), 且转移淋巴结数量占切除淋巴结的比例及转移淋巴结的最大转移淋巴结的大小与弹性指数显著相关。Kim等^[9]同样在研究中得出了转移淋巴结具有更高的 E_{mean} 、 E_{min} 、 E_{max} , 以及更低的杨氏模量标准差(E_{SD})。Chang等^[26]在体外环境中对PTC患者颈中央区淋巴结标本进行SWE评估, 证实了转移淋巴结的 E_{max} 更高, 且 E_{SD} 更低。

各项研究^[9, 25-26]都证实了转移淋巴结表现出比良性淋巴结更高的硬度, 且具有较好的诊断效能。但是, 目前的研究^[9, 25-26]在评估淋巴结良恶性的截断值上无统一标准。因此在临床操作中, 弹性成像仅能结合医师的临床经验, 作为辅

助常规超声进行诊断的手段之一。

3 超声造影 (contrast-enhanced ultrasound, CEUS)

CEUS通过淋巴结血流灌注特征鉴别其良恶性。Slaisova等^[27]提出CEUS对于颈部的转移性淋巴结、淋巴瘤等良恶性鉴别具有辅助作用。有文献^[28-31]指出, CEUS同样具备诊断PTC颈部淋巴结转移的价值, 且CEUS的诊断效能可优于常规超声检查。研究^[28-29]发现, 转移淋巴结的CEUS特征包括不均匀灌注、灌注缺损、向心/混合性灌注、高增强及环形增强。Luo等^[30]在定量CEUS的研究中提出转移淋巴结的峰值减半时间(DT/2)更长, AUC更大。Jiang等^[31]则发现, 转移淋巴结的峰值强度(peak intensity, PI)更高, 同时, 联合弹性成像及CEUS可以使AUC提高至0.936, 显著高于单独运用CEUS。然而由于临床需要进行超声评估的淋巴结通常体积较小, 且难以鉴别淋巴结内的小转移灶, 目前CEUS尚未成为甲状腺癌术前淋巴结评估的常用手段。

经淋巴管CEUS(lymphatic CEUS, LCEUS)是淋巴管显影、追踪前哨淋巴结的CEUS技术, 多被用于乳腺癌前哨淋巴结的探测与鉴别研究^[32-33]。最近, 也有学者^[10, 34-35]通过LCEUS对PTC颈部淋巴结转移的诊断进行了研究。在术前超声检查中, 对肿瘤病灶周围的甲状腺实质注射造影剂, 观察甲状腺周围淋巴管和淋巴结的显影特征, 从而辅助诊断淋巴结的转移情况^[10]。Wei等^[10]研究发现, 由于转移灶对于淋巴结内正常结构的破坏, LCEUS下转移淋巴结可表现为灌注缺损和“亮环征”(目标横切面中与淋巴结边缘窦相匹配的囊下高灌注区域)的缺失, 与常规经静脉CEUS(intravenous CEUS, IVCEUS)联合具有更好的诊断效果(AUC=0.863)。张艳等^[34]在研究中也证实了LCEUS可有效诊断甲状腺癌颈部转移淋巴结, 正常淋巴结表现为均匀高增强, 而转移淋巴结表现为不均匀增强及无增强。Liu等^[35]建立了以常规超声和LCEUS特征为基础的评分系统, AUC可达到0.98, 颈部淋巴结的转移程度也与评分呈正

相关。但是目前关于LCEUS的研究十分有限, 其效能仍有待进一步验证。且由于超声切面的局限性, 难以全面、同步显示颈部淋巴结的引流情况^[34], 对于淋巴结的准确定位仍有待进一步研究。

4 影像组学和深度学习

影像组学是指通过定量提取高通量特征, 提取医学影像中人眼无法识别的可挖掘信息, 多被用于计算机体层成像(computed tomography, CT)、磁共振成像(magnetic resonance imaging, MRI)、正电子发射体层成像(positron emission tomography, PET)/CT等医学影像技术中, 主要运用于疾病诊断和预后预测^[36]。有文献^[37]报道了基于纹理特征的影像组学在辅助诊断甲状腺癌淋巴结转移中的作用。Abbasian Ardakani等^[37]研究对170个转移性淋巴结和170个良性淋巴结进行超声成像, 提取影像学特征和纹理特征, 从而分析两组间的差异。超声影像学特征包括回声、边缘、形态和微钙化。研究应用了小波变换提取纹理特征, 使用支持向量机(support vector machine, SVM)分类器对淋巴结进行分类。在训练集和验证集数据中, 影像学特征和纹理特征的组合表现出了最佳性能。深度学习技术的发展给影像组学的研究带来了新的方向, 利用这种技术自动化提取医学影像图像中的特征, 减少了人工在提取图像特征中可能带来的偏倚, 使得结果更加准确。Lee等^[38]开发了一种基于深度学习的超声诊断系统, 用于甲状腺癌转移淋巴结的定位和鉴别。研究共纳入了804例患者共计812个淋巴结, 分为训练集(263个良性淋巴结和286个转移淋巴结)、验证集(30个良性淋巴结和33个转移淋巴结)和测试集(100个良性淋巴结和100个转移淋巴结)。利用VGG模型, 开发了计算机辅助诊断(computer-aided diagnosis, CAD)系统来定位和鉴别转移淋巴结, 然后在测试集中评估该CAD系统的诊断性能, 其准确度、灵敏度和特异度分别为83.0%、89.0%和77.0%, 表现出了较高的灵敏度和较低的特异度, 提示该CAD系统更适合作为一种筛查工具, 并且其结果需要临床医师的检

验。Liu等^[39]及Li等^[40]也证实了超声影像组学特征在预测PTC颈部淋巴结转移中的价值。Jiang等^[41]则运用甲状腺病灶的剪切波弹性成像 (shear wave elastography, SWE) 和常规超声的组学特征建立了Rad评分, 并在此评分上加入临床危险因素, 开发并证实了基于SWE组学特征的列线图 (nomogram) 在术前预测PTC的颈部淋巴结转移的效能。Yu等^[42]在多中心、多机器、多操作者场景下研究了超声影像组学的诊断价值, 基于甲状腺病变的超声图像, 建立并比较了临床统计模型、传统影像组学模型、非迁移学习模型和迁移学习组学 (transfer learning radiomics, TLR) 模型等4个模型, 以预测PTC患者淋巴结转移的风险, 其中TLR模型在主要和外部队列中表现出最高的灵敏度和特异度, 这进一步证实了超声影像组学在PTC颈部淋巴结转移中的预测价值。

综上所述, 除了常规超声检查外, 超声弹性成像、CEUS、影像组学及深度学习等技术在诊断甲状腺癌的颈部转移淋巴结的应用中具有一定的作用, 可以为甲状腺癌患者的治疗计划提供更多信息。但是许多技术还未广泛运用到临床实践中, 我们期待未来会有更多的研究, 融合各项技术的优点, 为超声诊断甲状腺癌颈部转移淋巴结带来更大的临床价值。

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