

综述

无义介导的mRNA降解在胚胎发育中的作用及机制的研究进展

宣丽娜, 沈细亚, 王鹏, 杜雷雷, 张帆, 徐星星*, 黄智慧*

温州医科大学基础医学院神经科学研究所, 温州 325035

摘要: 无义介导的mRNA降解(nonsense-mediated mRNA decay, NMD)最初被认为是一种广泛存在的mRNA质量监控机制, 可迅速降解含有提前终止密码子的异常mRNA, 避免有害的、截短的蛋白产物积累而对细胞造成损害。最近研究显示, NMD也可以调控执行重要细胞生理功能的正常基因转录物的降解过程, 因此被认为是真核生物中高度保守的转录后调节机制。NMD直接或间接调控从酵母到人的3%~20%的转录组, 对于细胞稳态、应激反应、增殖、分化等多种生理活动都是必不可少的。研究表明, NMD可以调节与发育相关的转录物的水平, NMD因子敲除大多具有胚胎致死效应。NMD在胚胎干细胞的自我更新、分化与胚胎发育的过程中发挥重要作用。本文将对NMD在胚胎发育中的作用及机制的最新研究进展进行综述, 以期对胚胎发育的研究和胚胎发育相关疾病的治疗提供新的思路。

关键词: 无义介导的mRNA降解; 提前终止密码子; 胚胎干细胞; 自我更新; 分化; 胚胎发育

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Advances in the roles and mechanisms of nonsense-mediated mRNA decay in embryonic development

XUAN Li-Na, SHEN Xi-Ya, WANG Peng, DU Lei-Lei, ZHANG Fan, XU Xing-Xing*, HUANG Zhi-Hui*

Institute of Neuroscience, School of Basic Medical Sciences, Wenzhou Medical University, Wenzhou 325035, China

Abstract: Nonsense-mediated mRNA decay (NMD) is originally identified as a widespread mRNA surveillance machinery in degrading ‘aberrant’ mRNA species with premature termination codons (PTCs) rapidly, which protects the cells from the accumulation of truncated proteins. Recent studies show that NMD can also regulate the degradation of normal gene transcripts, which execute important cellular and physiological functions. Therefore, NMD is considered as a highly conserved post-transcriptional regulatory mechanism in eukaryotes. NMD modulates 3% to 20% of the transcriptome from yeast to human directly or indirectly, which is essential for various physiological processes, such as cell homeostasis, stress response, proliferation, and differentiation. NMD can regulate the level of transcripts that involves in development, and single knockout of most NMD factors has an embryonic lethal effect. NMD plays an important role in the self-renewal, differentiation of embryonic stem cells and is critical during embryonic development. In this review, we summarized the latest advances in the roles and mechanisms of NMD in embryonic development, in order to provide new ideas for the research on embryonic development and the treatment of embryonic development related diseases.

Key words: nonsense-mediated mRNA decay; premature termination codons; embryonic stem cells; self-renewal; differentiation; embryonic development

无义介导的 mRNA 降解 (nonsense-mediated mRNA decay, NMD) 是真核生物中高度保守的转录后调节机制^[1-3]。30 多年前, 在酵母和人类细胞中, 人们

发现开放阅读框的无义突变会降低 mRNA 的表达。Peltz 等^[4]将这一现象描述为 NMD。NMD 能特异性识别并降解因无义突变、移码突变、转录错误、

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*Corresponding authors. XU Xing-Xing: Tel: +86-577-88689769; E-mail: xuxingxing627@163.com. HUANG Zhi-Hui: Tel: +86-577-86699117; E-mail: hzhzju021@163.com

基因重排或选择性剪接引入的含有提前终止密码子 (premature termination codons, PTCs) 的 mRNA, 从而阻止有害的截短蛋白质的积聚。因此, NMD 最初被认为是 RNA 的质量控制机制^[5]。随着研究的深入, 人们发现 NMD 也可以降解含有长 3' 非翻译区 (3' untranslated region, 3'UTR) 或上游开放阅读框 (upstream open reading frame, uORF) 的正常 mRNA, 表明 NMD 还可以调控基因的表达。最近研究显示, NMD 能直接或间接地影响哺乳动物细胞中约 10% 的正常 mRNA 的稳态^[6, 7]。NMD 可以调控神经发生^[8]、精子发生^[9]、恶性肿瘤的发生、发展^[10-12] 等多种生理与病理过程。大量研究显示, 大部分 NMD 因子 (如 SMG6、SMG1 和 Rent1 等) 的单独敲除会导致早期胚胎的死亡^[13-15], 这些现象强烈暗示 NMD 在胚胎发育中发挥至关重要的作用, 但其具体机制还知之甚少。众所周知, 胚胎发育取决于 mRNA 精确的时空表达, 这包括 mRNA 的转录与降解。而 NMD 作为一种重要的转录后调节机制, 不仅可以直接降解与胚胎发育相关蛋白质的 mRNA, 还可以通过调控与胚胎发育相关的信号通路中蛋白质的 mRNA 的降解, 间接影响通路调控的 mRNA 转录。因此, 阐明 NMD 在胚胎发育中的作用及其机制对于胚胎发育的研究及胚胎发育相关疾病的治疗具有重要意义。

1 NMD的分子机制

NMD 的关键效应蛋白包括 UPF (up-frameshift suppressor) 蛋白 (UPF1、UPF2 和 UPF3, 在哺乳动物中 UPF3 有两个旁系同源物, UPF3A 和 UPF3B)、SMG (suppressor with morphological effect on genitalia) 蛋白 (SMG1、SMG5、SMG6、SMG7、SMG8 和 SMG9) 和由 SRm160、Y14、Magoh、DEK、RNPS1 及 REF 共同组成的外显子拼接复合体 (exon-junction complex, EJC)^[16]。从酵母到人类, NMD 都有一组 UPF 蛋白 (UPF1、UPF2 和 UPF3), 表明 NMD 的基本机制在真核生物进化过程中比较保守。在哺乳动物细胞中, 研究得较为透彻的 NMD 机制是经典的 EJC 依赖模型 (图 1): EJC 在 RNA 剪接过程中结合在外显子-外显子连接处上游的 20~24 个核苷酸处。蛋白翻译开始于起始密码子, 随着翻译的进行, EJC 因核糖体的移动被取代, 当核糖体识别出终止密码子时, 真核肽链释放因子 1 (eukaryotic translation release factor 1, eRF1) 和真核肽链释放因子 3

(eukaryotic translation release factor 3, eRF3) 结合于停滞的核糖体。多聚腺苷酸结合蛋白 1 [poly(A) binding protein cytoplasmic 1, PABPC1] 位于终止密码子的下游附近, PABPC1 与 eRF3 的相互作用可以促进多肽链的释放及核糖体的循环。而当核糖体识别出的是 PTC 而非正常的终止密码子时, 就会造成 eRF3 与 PABPC1 之间物理距离变大, 打断它们的相互作用, 促进 UPF1 与 eRF3 的相互作用^[17, 18]。若 mRNA 含有长 3'UTR 时, 翻译终止时也会造成 eRF3 与 PABPC1 之间物理距离变大, 促进 UPF1 与 eRF3 的相互作用, 且含有长 3'UTR mRNA 能增加非特异性结合 UPF1 的概率^[19]。但并不是所有长 3'UTR 都能触发 NMD^[20]。PTC 下游的 EJC 和长 3'UTR 上的 EJC 都可以招募 UPF2 与 UPF3。UPF1 以 EJC 依赖的方式与 UPF2 和 UPF3B 结合, 并与其它 NMD 因子共同参与降解诱导复合物 (decay-inducing complex, DECID) 的形成, 诱导 mRNA 的降解。SMG1 可将 UPF1 磷酸化, 其磷酸化活性由 SMG8 和 SMG9 调节, SMG1、SMG8 和 SMG9 三者共同形成蛋白激酶复合物 SMG1C^[21]。SMG1C 与 eRF1、eRF3 及 UPF1 形成瞬时 SURF 复合物 (SMG1C-UPF1-eRF1-eRF3)^[22]。UPF2 被认为是 UPF1 与 UPF3B 的分子桥梁, SURF 复合物通过 UPF2 和 UPF3B 与下游的 EJC 共同形成 DECID^[23, 24]。DECID 的形成促进 SMG8 和 SMG9 从复合物中脱离, 激活 SMG1 的磷酸化活性, 诱导 UPF1 发生磷酸化^[25]。磷酸化的 UPF1 招募多种引发 mRNA 降解的因子, 但尚不清楚是同时发生还是先后发生招募 SMG6, 介导 mRNA 内切^[7]; 通过 SMG5-SMG7 异二聚体复合物, 招募去腺苷酶复合物 CCR4-NOT (carbon catabolite repressor protein 4-NOT) 和 5'-3' 核糖核酸外切酶 XRN1, 分别介导 mRNA 脱腺苷和 5'-3' 的核酸外切^[26-29]。通过 SMG5-PNRC2 (pro-rich nuclear receptor co-activator 2) 复合体^[30], 招募脱帽酶 DCPC (decapping complex), 介导 mRNA 脱帽, 脱帽的 mRNA 易在 XRN1 的作用下发生降解^[28]。尚不清楚 UPF1 如何招募 3'-5' 核糖核酸外切酶介导 3'-5' 核酸外切, 以及涉及何种蛋白质^[30]。SMG5、SMG6 和 SMG7 可招募蛋白磷酸酶 2A (protein phosphatase 2A, PP2A), 介导 UPF1 脱磷酸, UPF1 去磷酸化和再循环 NMD 因子引发新一轮的 NMD。各种 NMD 因子具有不尽相同的功能^[31, 32], 有研究表明, SMG6 介导的核酸内切和 SMG5-SMG7 介导的核酸外切途径冗余^[29]。

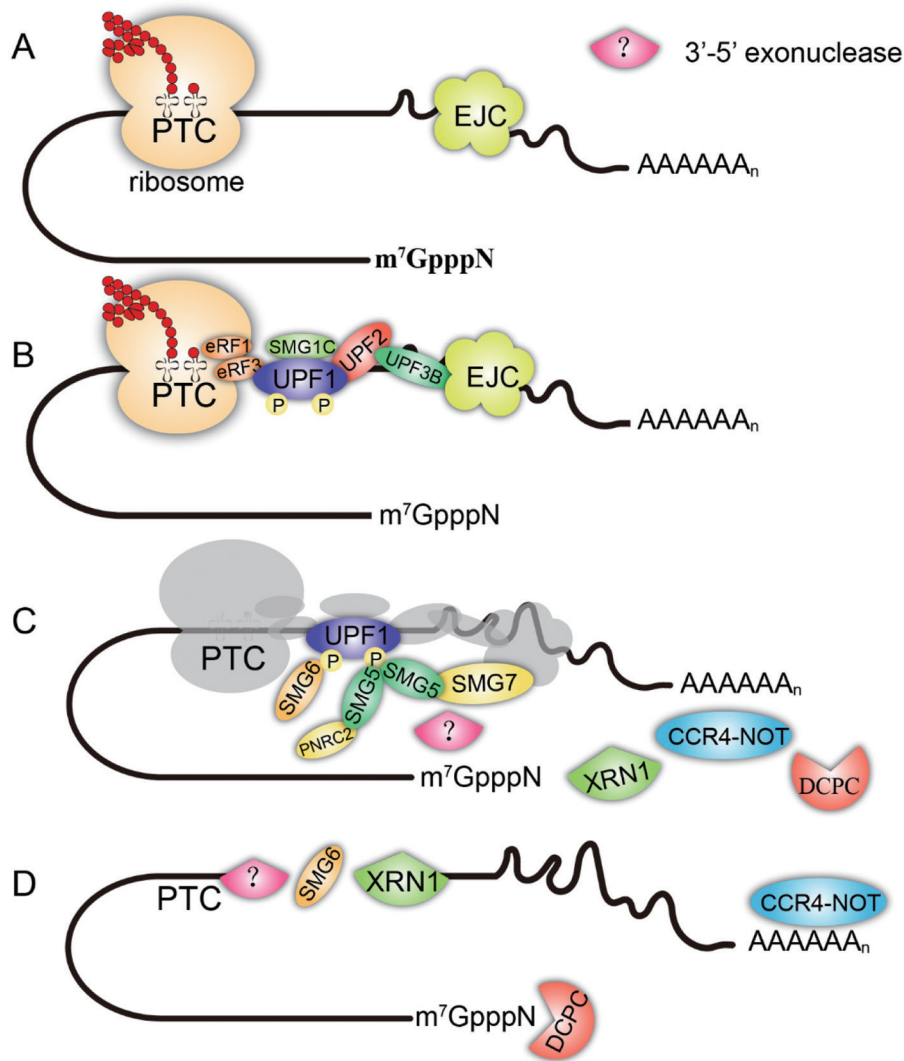


图 1. 经典的无义介导的mRNA降解(NMD)模型

Fig. 1. The model of classical nonsense-mediated mRNA decay (NMD). *A*: The ribosomes recognize premature termination codons (PTC), leading to abnormal termination of translation. *B*: Eukaryotic translation release factor 1 (eRF1), eRF3, SMG1C, and UPF1 are recruited to form the SURF complex. The SURF complex then interacts with downstream exon-junction complex (EJC) to form the decay-inducing complex (DECID) through interplaying with UPF2 and UPF3B. The DECID complex induces SMG1-mediated phosphorylation of UPF1. *C*: SMG6, SMG5-SMG7, and SMG5-PNRC2 bind to p-UPF1 through their 14-3-3-like domains. *D*: mRNA degradation: SMG6 mediates endonucleolytic cleavage, DCPC mediates decapping (via SMG5-PNRC2 dimer), CCR4-NOT mediates deadenylation, and XRN1 mediates 5'-3' exonucleolytic cleavage (via SMG5-SMG7 dimer). The 3'-5' exonuclease is also recruited and mediates 3'-5' exonucleolytic decay (3'-5' exonuclease is indicated by "?" in this figure).

此外,大多数 NMD 因子的 mRNA 具有长的 3'UTR, 部分 NMD 因子具有 uORF, 所以 NMD 因子也受到 NMD 机制的自动调控^[33,34]。从目前的研究来看,单独敲减任何一个 NMD 因子,均会造成 NMD 的活性受到抑制。

2 NMD因子缺陷具有胚胎致死性

小鼠受精卵形成后不断分裂,在 E4.5 (embryonic

stage 4.5) 形成由三种细胞(原始外胚层细胞、滋养层细胞和原始内胚层细胞)组成的胚胎。在 E5.5~E8 (原肠胚期),原始外胚层细胞分化为三胚层(外胚层、中胚层和内胚层)。E8 后,小鼠的各种器官开始形成^[35,36]:外胚层分化为脑和脊髓;中胚层产生骨骼、心脏、血管组织、肌肉和肾脏;而内胚层发展成肺、肝、胰腺、胃和肠。

大量研究表明,NMD 因子在胚胎发育中至关

重要。单独敲减 NMD 的关键因子 UPF1、UPF2、SMG5、SMG6 和 SMG7 都会导致斑马鱼胚胎期发生死亡^[37]，表明 UPF1、UPF2、SMG5、SMG6 和 SMG7 是斑马鱼胚胎发育所必需。且单独敲减 UPF1、UPF2、SMG5 和 SMG6 引起类似的胚胎发育表型^[37]，表明这些蛋白很可能通过相同的途径——NMD 发挥作用。而单独敲减 SMG7 还表现出其特有的胚胎发育表型，提示 SMG7 可能还涉及除 NMD 以外的其它途径^[37]。在小鼠中单独敲除 SMG1、UPF1、UPF2、SMG6、UPF3A 及 EJC 组件 Y14 和 Magoh 都会引起胚胎早期发生死亡^[13, 14] (表 1)。SMG1 敲除的小鼠在 E10.5 之前正常，但在 E12.5 前死亡^[14]。UPF1 敲除小鼠在 E3.5 能存活，但在 E7.5 前死亡^[38]。SMG6 敲除小鼠在 E3.5 时可存活，大多数在 E7.5~E9.5 死亡，而 E12.5 前全部死亡^[13]。尽管各个 NMD 因子的作用有所不同，但各因子敲除造成的小鼠死亡都发生在胚层形成期与器官发生早期阶段。

另外，某些 NMD 因子还具有一些不依赖 NMD 的功能。SMG1、UPF1、UPF2 和 SMG6 还参与端粒的维持。UPF1 也是另一种 mRNA 降解途径——Staufen-1 介导的 mRNA 降解的核心因子^[45, 46]。因此，部分 NMD 因子的敲除造成的高胚胎致死率，可能不仅归因于 NMD 缺陷，还包括 Staufen-1 介导的

mRNA 降解或端粒维持的缺陷等其它原因^[5, 47, 48]。

3 NMD在胚胎发育中的作用及机制

胚胎干细胞 (embryonic stem cells, ESCs) 是从早期胚胎或原始性腺中分离出来的一类细胞，具有分化成三胚层的潜能，即分化为机体所有类型细胞的能力。因此 ESCs 是研究干细胞自我更新、分化与胚胎发育的一个理想的模型。

3.1 NMD对ESCs自我更新的影响

NMD 对 ESCs 自我更新的影响目前存在争议。Lou 等已经证明，NMD 可通过促进细胞 G1/S 期的转变刺激小鼠神经干细胞的自我更新^[49]。进一步在人 ESCs (human ESCs, hESCs) 中敲减 UPF1 或 UPF3B, Lou 等^[50]发现，NMD 活性降低，细胞周期停滞于 G1 期或消失。这表明 NMD 可以通过促进 G1/S 期的转变来促进 hESCs 的自我更新。然而，Li 等^[13]在敲除 SMG6 的小鼠 ESCs (mouse ESCs, mESCs) 系中，发现 NMD 的内源性靶标表达量显著上升，表明 SMG6 在 mESCs 中调控 NMD 的活性。有趣的是，SMG6 敲除的 mESCs 在细胞增殖、细胞凋亡指数等方面与野生型 mESCs 并不存在显著差异。因此，NMD 在 ESCs 自我更新中的作用还需要进一步的研究。

表1. 无义介导的mRNA降解(NMD)因子缺陷对胚胎的致死作用

Table 1. The deficiency of nonsense-mediated mRNA decay (NMD) factors causes embryonic lethality

| NMD factors | Survival state of embryos | Reference |
|-------------|--|--------------|
| SMG1 | SMG1 gene-trapped mouse embryos have normal Mendelian ratios before E10.5, but all die before E12.5 | [13, 14] |
| UPF1 | UPF1 knockout mouse embryos are viable at E3.5, but die before E7.5; | [13, 37, 38] |
| | Knockdown of UPF1 in zebrafish causes embryonic lethality | |
| UPF2 | The relative frequency of UPF2 knockout mouse embryos shows a great reduction at E3.5, and no UPF2 knockout embryos could be detected at E9.5; Knockdown of UPF2 in zebrafish causes embryonic lethality | [37, 39] |
| UPF3A | UPF3A (an NMD repressor) knockout mice die between E4.5 and E8.5 | [40] |
| UPF3B | UPF3B-mutant mice survive with behavioral and neurogenesis defects | [41, 42] |
| SMG5 | Knockdown of SMG5 in zebrafish causes embryonic lethality | [13, 37] |
| SMG6 | SMG6 knockout mouse embryos are viable at E3.5, but no viable mutant embryos could be isolated around E12.5. Most of Smg6 knockout embryos die around E7.5–E9.5; | [13, 37] |
| | Knockdown of SMG6 in zebrafish causes embryonic lethality | |
| SMG7 | Knockdown of SMG7 in zebrafish causes embryonic lethality | [37] |
| SMG8 | SMG8 mutants resemble wild-type <i>C. elegans</i> | [43] |
| SMG9 | Deficiency of SMG9, although compatible with mice embryonic viability, is associated with a number of major malformations | [44] |

E: embryonic stage.

3.2 NMD对ESCs分化的影响

NMD影响ESCs的分化。Li等^[13]发现SMG6敲除的mESCs存在严重的分化障碍，并且在SMG6敲除的mESCs中稳定表达具备NMD活性的SMG6截短蛋白可以完全逆转SMG6敲除的mESCs的分化缺陷。这一结果提示SMG6介导的NMD是mESCs分化所必须的。他们通过对SMG6敲除的mESCs与对照组基因转录产物的测序分析，发现了266个在SMG6敲除的mESCs中高表达，且与mESCs自我更新、分化相关的基因，其中之一为*c-Myc*。NMD靶向*c-Myc* mRNA的3'UTR，介导*c-Myc* mRNA的降解。NMD的缺陷导致*c-Myc*在mESCs中异常积累，从而阻断了mESCs的分化^[13]。最近有人通过深度学习推测，*BARD1* (BRCA1 associated RING domain 1) mRNA通过NMD机制被降解，*BARD1*表达的减少可以促进hESCs分化^[51]。Lou等人采用siRNA或shRNA基因敲减的方法，也研究了NMD在ESCs分化中的作用^[34, 49, 50]，他们利用H9、Hue6、Cyt49三种不同的hESCs细胞系以及P19胚胎肿瘤细胞系，发现这四种细胞系在分化成内胚层时，大多数NMD因子基因表达水平下降；而分化成中胚层或外胚层时，大多数NMD因子表达水平上升（其中*UPF1*的表达在胚层中的变化显著）。Lou等^[50]通过分析H9 hESCs的PTC⁻/PTC⁺判断NMD活性，发现hESCs在向内胚层分化的过程中，NMD活性下降；而在向中胚层和外胚层的分化过程中，NMD活性升高。Lou等^[52]在H19 hESCs中敲减或过表达*UPF1*，观察内胚层标志物SOX17和CXCR4的表达，发现敲减*UPF1*足以触发hESCs分化为内胚层的起始阶段，而过表达*UPF1*抑制hESCs分化为内胚层。研究表明，*GADD45B*和*ATF3*的转录物是NMD的直接靶标，可作为NMD活性的指标^[53]。Lou等^[49]通过分析*GADD45B*和*ATF3*的表达情况，发现在人神经祖细胞、人表皮角质形成细胞及人胰腺祖细胞的分化过程中，NMD活性下调。他们又对452个人类多能干细胞系和254个非多能干细胞系的转录组进行比对，发现MAGOH、RNPS1和*UPF3B*这3个NMD因子在多能干细胞中的表达量明显高于非多能干细胞。这表明，NMD在人类多能干细胞中活性上调，且其活性随着分化的进行逐渐降低^[50]。

3.3 NMD影响多种调节胚胎发育的信号通路

研究表明，转化生长因子- β (transforming growth

factor- β , TGF- β) 信号通路促进内胚层的形成，骨形态发生蛋白 (bone morphogenetic protein, BMP) 和WNT信号通路促进中胚层的形成^[54-57]。Lou等^[50]通过胚层标志物分析，发现NMD促进hESCs分化为中胚层，抑制其分化为内胚层。进一步的发生机制研究显示，在hESCs中敲减*UPF1*，大多数NMD的底物表达水平上调，TGF- β 信号通路的促进因子*Smad2*和*Smad3*的表达上升，抑制因子*Smad7*、*LEFTY1*和*LEFTY2*表达下降。通过转录组测序技术，Lou等^[50]发现*UPF1*负向调控大部分TGF- β 信号通路的促进因子，表明NMD可以抑制TGF- β 信号通路，从而抑制内胚层的形成。相反地，在hESCs中敲减*UPF1*，BMP信号通路的靶基因*Brachyury*和*Hand1*表达下调，大部分WNT信号通路的正调控因子*DAAM2*、*WNT3*和*FZD5*等表达下调。而*UPF1*过表达时，BMP信号通路的靶基因*Brachyury*和*Hand1*与WNT信号通路的靶基因*CCND1*和*NR0B1*表达上调，表明NMD可以促进BMP信号通路和WNT信号通路，诱导中胚层的形成^[50]。敲减或过表达*UPF3B*也得到与*UPF1*敲减或过表达相似的结果^[50] (图2)。此外，也有证据表明，NMD通过调节成纤维细胞生长因子 (fibroblast growth factor, FGF) 和NOTCH信号通路影响胚胎发育^[50]。

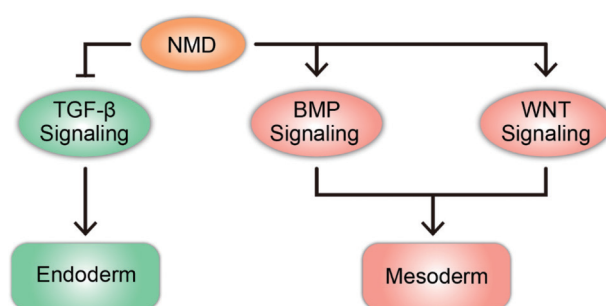


图 2. 无义介导的mRNA降解(NMD)通过骨形态发生蛋白(BMP)、WNT和转化生长因子- β (TGF- β)信号通路参与胚胎发育过程

Fig. 2. Nonsense-mediated mRNA decay (NMD) participates in embryonic development through bone morphogenetic protein (BMP), WNT, and transforming growth factor- β (TGF- β) signaling pathways. NMD promotes mesoderm formation by BMP and WNT signaling pathways. Conversely, NMD suppresses the formation of endoderm by inhibiting the TGF- β signaling pathway.

4 总结和展望

NMD 作为真核生物内广泛存在的转录后调节机制, 通过降解含有 PTC 的 mRNA 控制 RNA 的质量, 降解含有 3'UTR、uORF 等特征结构的 mRNA 来调节基因的表达^[3]。虽然, NMD 早在 30 多年前就被发现, 但直至近些年, NMD 在哺乳动物的生物学功能才被发现。目前, 科学界对 NMD 缺陷导致小鼠胚胎致死的认知已经比较统一, 但是 NMD 在胚胎发育中的作用和功能仍然知之甚少。相关的研究寥寥, 仍需要更多的实验证据。目前, NMD 对胚胎发育的调控机制的研究存在以下几个争议及挑战: (1) NMD 在胚胎发育、干细胞分化过程中的强度的变化; (2) NMD 调控胚胎发育和分化的分子靶标; (3) NMD 因子依赖 NMD 的功能和不依赖 NMD 的功能是否能够剥离, 并且可以单独验证其功能。尽管目前对 NMD 调控胚胎发育的具体机制仍未完全明了, 但 NMD 在临床应用方面已经显示出了巨大的应用前景^[58]。使用 NMD 抑制剂与允许终止密码子通读的药物联用, 抑制 NMD 的活性, 已经成为恢复全长功能性蛋白质表达, 从而达到疾病治疗的重要手段。例如, 该方法已成功用于恢复 Hurler's 综合征模型中全长功能蛋白 α -L 艾杜糖苷酶的表达, 以及含有 p53 无义突变的癌细胞中 p53 全长蛋白的表达^[59–61]。此外, 有研究表明, NMD 可以影响内质网(endoplasmic reticulum, ER) 应激^[62–64]。蛋白质的折叠发生在 ER, 未折叠或错误折叠的蛋白质在 ER 中积累产生应激。例如在哺乳动物细胞中敲减 SMG6 后, 产生 ER 应激^[62]。慢性 ER 应激发生于癌症、糖尿病以及与神经变性相关的疾病^[65], 所以, 利用 NMD 抑制 ER 应激具有潜在的生物学价值。

目前人们对 NMD 的认识尚未深入, 尤其是 NMD 在胚胎发育中的作用。未来的研究需要进一步阐明 NMD 在调控 ESCs 增殖与分化中的具体作用机制, 从而为胚胎发育的研究和胚胎发育相关疾病的治疗提供新的思路。

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