

doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2095-6959.2021.10.036

View this article at: <https://dx.doi.org/10.3978/j.issn.2095-6959.2021.10.036>

超声造影在乳腺癌前哨淋巴结中的应用

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[摘要] 前哨淋巴结(sentinel lymph node, SLN)的评估对于乳腺癌患者的治疗方案及预后具有重要意义。常规超声仅能从淋巴结的形态、回声情况及血流分布情况对腋窝淋巴结进行评估,而超声造影(contrast-enhanced ultrasound, CEUS)克服了传统超声诊断性能不高的局限性,为SLN的成功定位与定性提供了新思路,目前已逐步应用于临床。CEUS可精准定位SLN,为临床医生在术中准确找到SLN提供帮助。CEUS还可根据淋巴结的血流灌注信息来判断SLN的良恶性,有利于制定个性化治疗方案,改善患者预后及减少过度治疗。此外,通过CEUS指导前哨淋巴活检,可显著提高转移性SLN的检出率。值得注意的是,随着临床研究的不断深入,CEUS已被证明可追踪到SLN的多条淋巴引流通道,清晰显示淋巴引流通道与SLN的空间解剖关系,减少SLN诊断的假阴性。

[关键词] 超声造影; 乳腺癌; 前哨淋巴结

Application of sentinel lymph node by contrast-enhanced ultrasound in breast cancer

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Abstract The evaluation of the sentinel lymph node (SLN) is important for the treatment plan and prognosis of breast cancer patients. Conventional ultrasound can only evaluate axillary lymph node based on the morphological structure, echo and blood flow distribution of lymph node, while contrast-enhanced ultrasound (CEUS) can overcome the limitation of low diagnostic performance from traditional ultrasound, and provide a new idea for the successful localization and characterization of SLN. Currently, CEUS has been gradually applied in clinical. CEUS can accurately locate SLN and help clinicians exactly find SLN during surgery. CEUS can also estimate the benign or malignant according to the blood perfusion information of SLN, which is conducive to developing personalized treatment plan, improving prognosis and reducing overtreatment of patients. In addition, CEUS guidance of SLN biopsy will significantly improve the detection rate of metastatic SLN. It is worth noting that, with the continuous development of clinical studies, CEUS has been proved to be able to trace multiple lymphatic drainage channels of

SLN, clearly show the spatial anatomical relationship between lymphatic drainage channels and SLN, and reduce the false negative diagnosis of SLN.

Keywords contrast-enhanced ultrasound; breast cancer; sentinel lymph node

乳腺癌是一种严重威胁女性健康的疾病,是目前中国女性最常见的恶性肿瘤^[1]。前哨淋巴结(sentinel lymph node, SLN)是原发肿瘤引流的第一站淋巴结,其组织学状态可以代表整个腋窝淋巴结的状态。在乳腺癌患者中,SLN转移是复发率和整体生存率的重要预测因素,SLN的状态通常可以决定手术的范围,是否需要全身治疗,以及乳房切除术后是否需要放射治疗^[2]。因此,明确是否发生SLN转移对于指导临床治疗具有重要意义^[3]。随着影像学研究的发展,CEUS作为一种通过显示组织微血流灌注信息以增强超声诊断分辨力、敏感度和特异度的技术,在SLN的应用上也逐渐深入,本文就超声造影(contrast-enhanced ultrasound, CEUS)在乳腺癌SLN的应用进展作一综述。

1 CEUS 的原理

CEUS借助造影剂产生的丰富非线性谐波信号,以增大血液的背向散射,提高血液与周围组织的对比度,从而达到显影目的。由于CEUS技术在近几年飞速发展,CEUS剂也由早年的白蛋白溶液发展为第2代CEUS剂,如SonoVue、Sonazoid和Definity等磷脂壳试剂。这些产品通过使用惰性气体稳定微气泡,可以对淋巴结内增强的动脉期和实质期进行实时高分辨率成像。目前临床常用于淋巴结的CEUS剂是注射用SonoVue和Sonazoid。SonoVue由平均直径约2.5 μm的六氟化硫(SF₆)微气泡组成,通过肺部途径排出,不经过肝或肾。高分子质量气体SF₆可轻易地通过毛细淋巴管,而在水和血液中的溶解度低^[4]。SonoVue通常以静脉推注的方式给药,建议单次注射剂量为34 μL/kg(即对于70 kg的人注射剂量为2.4 mL)^[5]。Sonazoid由平均直径约2.6 μm的全氟丁烷(C₄F₁₀)微气泡组成,通过氯化卵磷脂酰丝氨酸钠(一种磷脂)使其稳定。Sonazoid的药代动力学显示健康成人对0.12 μL/kg的注射剂量具有很好的耐受性^[6]。这两种造影剂的区别在于:SonoVue的外壳成分为中性聚乙二醇,不易被枯否细胞吞噬;而Sonazoid的外壳成分为稳定的脂质,可以模拟细胞膜表面的脂质体,易被枯否细胞吞噬。因此,SonoVue在淋巴结内停留的时间较短,为1~3 min;而

Sonazoid在淋巴结内的停留可长达2 h。但根据造影剂注射到SLN显影所需时间,使用SonoVue需要15~45 s,使用Sonazoid需要5 min^[7]。与增强CT和增强MRI相比,CEUS无创,易于操作,更具成本效益,并且对于淋巴结转移的评估更具准确性^[8],已广泛用于检查乳腺癌的腋窝淋巴结。

2 CEUS 辅助检出 SLN

利用CEUS可详细标记SLN的位置,例如SLN的大小、形状、距皮肤的深度及距胸大肌外侧缘的距离。CEUS定位检测SLN的方法主要有经肘静脉团注、经肿瘤周围皮下注射和经乳晕周围皮下注射。经肘静脉团注可以显示淋巴结微循环状态及灌注方式,经静脉CEUS可以区分肿瘤引起的淋巴结肿大和炎症引起的淋巴结肿大,但由于造影剂经过血液循环系统,淋巴管未显像,所以此方法对SLN的检出率较低^[9]。

目前认为经皮下注射造影剂检测SLN更具优势,且经乳晕周围皮下注射造影剂对淋巴结的检出率和准确率均高于其他方式^[10]。因为造影剂在毛细淋巴管中的通透性大于在微血管中的通透性,且乳腺被覆皮肤的浅表淋巴管密度大,造影剂更容易进入毛细淋巴管以进行淋巴循环,所以在皮下注射造影剂后,可清楚地显示淋巴管和淋巴结,并且不受血管显示的影响^[11]。樊云清等^[12]将SLN CEUS结果与术中注射蓝色染料的观察结果进行统计与分析,发现57例乳腺癌患者在肿瘤周围皮下注入CEUS剂后,沿显影淋巴管均追踪到增强淋巴结,这57例患者术中注入蓝染后也均观察到蓝染淋巴结,证实经皮CEUS发现SLN的敏感度高达100.0%。最新的一项乳腺癌患者SLN活检(sentinel lymph node biopsy, SLNB)技术网络荟萃分析^[13]也证实了CEUS定位检测SLN技术的可行性和可重复性。

乳腺癌患者SLN的数目存在较大的个体间差异,这在一定程度上解释了SLNB的准确率与SLN数目间的正相关性。缺乏手术经验的外科医生在进行SLNB时可能会漏检部分转移SLN,而导致假阴性的发生,因此,对乳腺癌患者SLN的数量检测具有重要的临床意义。一项研究^[14]

将术前CEUS追踪的SLN数目与术中注射蓝色染料的结果比较,通过CEUS平均每位患者发现(1.50 ± 0.92)枚,与术中沿蓝染淋巴管追踪染色淋巴结平均每位患者发现(2.42 ± 0.93)枚的结果有差异。在王莹等^[15]的研究中,26例患者有4例患者探及到3~4个SLN,其原因可能是患者存在多条淋巴引流通道,分叉的淋巴引流通道可对应多个SLN。提高CEUS对SLN数量的诊断性能,有望通过超声引导下对SLN进行穿刺活检来替代术中SLNB以简化手术过程,帮助临床医生术前确定是否行腋窝淋巴结清扫。

3 CEUS 定性评估 SLN

美国肿瘤外科学会^[16]已经证实:有1个或2个SLN转移的早期乳腺癌患者可以避免不必要的腋窝淋巴结清扫术(axillary lymph node dissection, ALND),因此,对SLN状态的定性评估对于患者预后至关重要。CEUS对SLN的定性评估有很高的诊断价值,研究者^[17]主要根据SLN增强模式与病理金标准对照来判定SLN是否转移。有研究^[18]将SLN的增强模式归纳为均匀增强、不均匀增强和无增强3种。Cox等^[19]报道CEUS预测SLN转移的敏感度、特异度、阳性预测值和阴性预测值分别为81.8%、86.2%、75.0%和90.3%。Zhao等^[20]还报道了通过CEUS增强模式预测SLN转移的敏感度、特异度、阳性预测值和阴性预测值分别为100.0%、52.0%、43.4%和100.0%。而在一项对116例SLN行CEUS的研究^[15]中,研究者将SLN增强模式分为以下4种类型:1型SLN呈整体均匀增强;2型SLN呈高和低混合的不均匀增强;3型SLN呈外周完全或不完全的环形增强,中心低或无增强;4型SLN呈与淋巴管相连的无增强或弱增强。该研究与胥桐等^[21]的研究结论一致,为SLN临床分期提供了很多有价值的信息。

上述研究^[17-21]认为淋巴结的充盈缺损即不均匀增强与肿瘤浸润程度相关,癌细胞在SLN内堆积、破坏细小淋巴管,使主淋巴管被阻塞,造影剂无法到达SLN而表现为不均匀增强。因此,有研究者^[17-18,20]将均匀增强淋巴结诊断为良性,不均匀及无增强淋巴结诊断为恶性,这种诊断的敏感度较高(81.8%~100.0%),但特异性较低(49.2%~86.2%),其原因可能是一些良性病变(如淋巴滤泡增生和慢性炎症)也可能阻塞淋巴引流,造影剂滞留在淋巴实质内,导致特征上表现为不均匀增强。此外,也有研究^[22]表明:使用CEUS定性

SLN存在一定的假阴性率,即使使用相同的超声设备,SLN的识别也不一致,这可能归因于观察者之间的差异性。综上,CEUS可以有效地定性SLN来指导乳腺癌患者的SLNB,也可以根据淋巴结的增强方式评估其对肿瘤的侵袭程度。但是,CEUS对SLN转移的诊断特异性较低,SLN特征的增强模式需要进一步研究以提高特异性。

4 CEUS 评估 SLN 引流通道

Goldberg等^[23]首次在动物模型上应用淋巴引流通道清扫SLN。Wang等^[24]报道了3种不同的淋巴引流模式,包括浅层前哨淋巴通道、深层前哨淋巴通道及穿支前哨淋巴通道。2017年,一项研究^[25]应用CEUS探究了SLN的引流通道,他们发现59.7%患者的SLN只有1条引流通道,其余41.3%患者的SLN有多条引流通道。Shimazu等^[26]将CEUS与蓝色染料结合使用以明确SLN引流通道,并将75例乳腺癌患者的92例SLN引流方式分为4类:A型,1枚SLN有1条引流通道;B型,1枚SLN有多条引流通道;C型,多枚SLN共用1条引流通道;D型,多枚SLN有多条引流通道。此外,该研究^[26]还表明:常规术前使用美兰染料追踪到1枚SLN后便停止追踪其他SLN,而对于多枚SLN分别对应多条引流通道的患者,此种情况下很可能出现假阴性结果。应用CEUS显现淋巴管的引流通道,使得SLNB可以在实时观察淋巴管的引流情况下进行,有助于减少SLNB的假阴性结果。在最近的一项研究中,Hu等^[27]应用三维对比增强超声(3D-CEUS)显示了SLN与引流通道的空间解剖关系,这是第1个用3D-CEUS评估SLN引流通道的研究。因此,CEUS不仅可以显示淋巴引流通道和SLN的立体结构,而且可以估计是否存在转移性淋巴结,这有利于外科医生选择最佳的手术类型并可结合身体标记在手术过程中找到SLN。

5 CEUS 指导 SLNB

SLNB已成为对早期乳腺癌腋窝淋巴结分期的金标准,准确识别和定位SLN是SLNB成功的前提条件。目前常用于SLNB的定位方法是将放射性核素与蓝色染料结合使用的双重示踪法,但这种方法具有以下几个缺点^[28-29]:1)核素示踪剂的滞留时间较长,一般在术前12~24 h注射,这需要对患者进行特殊的日程管理;2)患者和医护人员难免会受到放射性核素的辐射;3)放射性核素的使用

在某些国家受到限制，无法在全球范围内得到广泛应用。有研究^[30]仍将蓝色染料用作单独的示踪剂，然而与双重示踪法相比，仅带有蓝色染料的SLNB已显示出更高的假阴性率。CEUS作为另一种示踪法，对于SLNB是安全可靠的。在Sever等^[31]的研究中，CEUS用于SLNB的敏感度高达89%。Cox等^[19]报道用CEUS对347名乳腺癌患者行SLNB，发现SLN检出率为87.7%。Zhou等^[11]将淋巴结CEUS与蓝色染料结合应用于术前SLNB的识别，结果显示：在127例浸润性乳腺癌患者中，有125例(98.4%)成功检测到SLN，该方法无辐射、SLN检出率高，有望引入临床实践。

6 结语

SLN CEUS易于操作，且可重复性好，对SLN的定位监测及定性评估有较高的应用价值。CEUS可有效评估淋巴引流通道，实时追踪SLN以指导SLNB，也可根据淋巴结的增强方式评估肿瘤的侵犯程度，在一定程度上能避免不必要的活检，提高患者生存质量。但SLN CEUS技术在一些方面仍然面临挑战，如对SLN转移的诊断特异性较低、存在假阴性、造影剂微泡性能待优化^[4,15,20]；且目前CEUS诊断SLN的研究多为回顾性研究，如真正想实现“预测”，则需要进行更深层次和更广泛的前瞻性研究，以期更好地指导临床治疗。

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本文引用: 李邵跃, 孙佳威, 周显礼. 超声造影在乳腺癌前哨淋巴结中的应用[J]. 临床与病理杂志, 2021, 41(10): 2476-2480. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2095-6959.2021.10.036

Cite this article as: LI Shaoyue, SUN Jiawei, ZHOU Xianli. Application of sentinel lymph node by contrast-enhanced ultrasound in breast cancer[J]. Journal of Clinical and Pathological Research, 2021, 41(10): 2476-2480. doi: 10.3978/j.issn.2095-6959.2021.10.036