Machine Learning-Based Integration Develops a Robust Mitophagy-Related Multigene Model to Predict Patient Prognosis and Immune Microenvironment in Head and Neck Squamous Cell Carcinoma

Qin Ding 1, Wei Liu 1, Lihua Wang 1, Sufang Qiu 2

1. Radiation Oncology, Clinical Oncology School of Fujian Medical University, Fujian Cancer Hospital, Fuzhou, China, Fuzhou, CHN
2. Radiation Oncology, Clinical Oncology School of Fujian Medical University, Fujian Cancer Hospital, Fujian, CHN

Corresponding author: Qin Ding, dingqin1124@163.com

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Abstract

Objectives:

Head and neck squamous cell carcinoma (HNSCC) is a clinical challenge. Mitophagy in cancer cells is related to the tumor’s high energetic metabolism. The tumor immune microenvironment (TME) has a profound impact on clinical outcomes and treatment effectiveness. However, the correlation of mitophagy and TME remains unknown in HNSCC.

Methods:

Based on machine learning, a prognostic multigene signature was built with mitophagy-related differentially expressed genes (MPGs) in TCGA cohort. Moreover, we systematically correlated risk signature with immunological characteristics in TME, which included immune checkpoints, tumor-infiltrating immune cells (TIICs), immunomodulators. To further invalidate CSNK2A2, we employed immunohistochemistry to examine its expression.

Results:

MPGs-related prognostic model showed good prediction performance. Patients who had high-risk scores had significantly shorter progression-free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS) than those with low-risk scores, according to the results of the survival analysis (p < 0.0001). The CD8+ T cells infiltrated less in samples with higher risk scores. The immunological characteristic markers were expressed at higher levels in the low-risk group. Furthermore, immune therapy might be effective for the low-risk subtype of HNSCC patients (p < 0.001). Samples with higher risk scores were more sensitive to chemotherapy. CSNK2A2 was validated to be higher expressed in HNSCC tissues, according to immunohistochemistry.

Conclusion(s):

We have constructed a prognostic signature and provided innovative insights that may improve HNSCC management, which might give a more precise prognostic prediction. CSNK2A2 might be a novel biomarker to predict immune efficacy.