

综述

肠道微生物代谢产物短链脂肪酸对抑郁症的作用研究进展

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[摘要] 肠道微生物与抑郁症的发病关系密切, 但其具体作用机制尚未完全阐明。短链脂肪酸(SCFA)是膳食纤维和抗性淀粉等植物多糖在肠道微生物介导下发酵产生的代谢产物, 主要由乙酸、丙酸、丁酸组成, 在微生物-肠-脑轴中起着重要的作用。近年来研究发现, SCFA不仅可调节肠道能量代谢, 还可通过血脑屏障、免疫途径、内分泌通路及迷走神经等缓解抑郁症。SCFA是目前研究的重点, 国内SCFA干预抑郁症的报道较少。本文综述了SCFA对抑郁症的作用研究进展, 以期为临床研究提供新的思路。

[关键词] 肠道微生物; 短链脂肪酸; 抑郁症

Research progress in effects of short-chain fatty acids in intestinal microbial metabolites on depressionPeng Gao-Qiang¹, Wen Ying-Juan^{1*}, Tong Wu-Ning¹, Chen Mo¹, Lv Jian-Qin², Teng Fei³¹School of Basic Medicine, Shaanxi University of Traditional Chinese Medicine, Xi'an, Shaanxi 712046, China²Department of Integrated Traditional Chinese and Western Medicine, West China Hospital of Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan 610041, China³State Key Laboratory of Biotherapy, Sichuan University, Chengdu, Sichuan 610041, China

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[Abstract] Intestinal microorganisms are closely related to the pathogenesis of depression, but their specific mechanism of action has not been fully explained. Short-chain fatty acids (SCFA) are metabolites produced by the fermentation of plant polysaccharides, such as dietary fiber and resistant starch mediated by gut microorganisms, which are mainly composed of acetic acid, propionic acid, and butyric acid, and play an important role in the microbiota-intestine-brain axis. Recent studies have found that SCFA can not only regulate intestinal energy metabolism, but also improve depression through blood-brain barrier, immune pathway, endocrine pathway and vagus nerve. SCFA is the focus of scientific research nowadays, and there are few reports on SCFA intervention in depression in China. This article reviews the research progress of SCFA on depression, providing new ideas for clinical research.

[Key words] intestinal microorganisms; short-chain fatty acid; depression

抑郁症是以明显而持久的心境低落为主要临床特征的精神障碍疾病^[1], 而肠道微生物失调是诱发抑郁症的重要原因之一^[2-4]。肠道是一个复杂的生态

系统, 主要由细菌、古菌、病毒、真菌和原生动物等多达100万亿个微生物组成^[5]。近年来研究发现, 肠道微生物参与了神经疾病、免疫及内分泌系统疾

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病、精神性疾病等^[6-11]的发生和发展。短链脂肪酸(short chain fat acids, SCFA)为碳原子小于6个的饱和脂肪酸,是肠道细菌发酵食糜的最终代谢产物,主要包括乙酸、丙酸及丁酸(三者比例为60:20:20)^[12]。目前研究发现,SCFA不仅参与了机体代谢^[13]和免疫性疾病^[14],还可通过血脑屏障、内分泌通路及迷走神经等对宿主产生抗抑郁作用^[12,15]。本文综述了肠道微生物代谢产物SCFA对抑郁症的作用研究进展,以期为临床研究提供新的思路。

1 肠道微生物与SCFA的关系

SCFA是膳食纤维和抗性淀粉等植物多糖在肠道微生物介导下发酵产生的代谢产物,扮演着“肠道菌群的功能性核心类群”的角色,根据日常食物中摄入纤维的含量,肠道中每天产生500~600 mmol SCFA^[16]。其中,乙酸根离子、丙酸根离子和丁酸根离子是人体最丰富的SCFA以及结肠处最丰富的阴离子,并在近结肠处被吸收以换取碳酸氢盐,从而起到降低结肠内pH值的作用^[12]。SCFA的产生主要受肠内厌氧菌的影响,如双歧杆菌、普雷沃菌、链球菌、拟杆菌、粪球菌、梭菌、鼠李糖乳杆菌等^[17]。然而,并非所有的肠道微生物都能促进SCFA的产生,如肠道微生物中的粪球菌、瘤胃球菌、沙门菌属等可促进SCFA的产生,而普氏菌、厌氧支原体属等则抑制SCFA的生成^[18]。由此可见,SCFA的含量变化可间接反映肠道内微生物的变化。肠道微生物种群数量正常则SCFA处于正常水平,若其紊乱势必导致SCFA含量发生改变。另有研究发现,肠腔内SCFA含量偏高会使适合偏酸性环境的杆菌类细菌生长受到限制,进而导致肠道微生物组成发生改变^[19],可见SCFA也可逆向改变肠道微生物种群的数量,从而发挥治疗疾病的作用。例如,老年小鼠移植含有较高含量SCFA的粪便,可观察到其肠道细菌种群丰度明显增加,肠道和大脑炎症减轻及行为障碍有所缓解^[20]。因此,正常情况下体内SCFA水平主要由肠道微生物种群数量决定,但随着科学的进步也可从体外获取SCFA,从而使其参与治疗机体各个部位的疾病。

2 SCFA缓解抑郁症的途径

2.1 血脑屏障

血脑屏障对维持大脑中枢神经系统正常的生理功能起到至关重要的作用,主要参与大脑的离子、营养物质交换及阻止某些有害物质进入大脑。血脑屏障是神经血管单位的一部分,包括脑微血管内皮细胞、周细胞、星形胶质细胞、神经元、小胶质细胞等,这些细胞相互协调外周与神经系统之间的关系,对维持血脑屏障的完整性、通透

性发挥着重要作用^[21]。胶质细胞、内皮细胞、周细胞等的结构及数量发生变化时,可引起血脑屏障功能紊乱,或使中枢神经免疫应答激活,大量炎症因子在大脑内释放,损伤海马组织和前额叶皮质神经突触而造成行为异常;或使谷氨酸通过血脑屏障上的氨基酸转运蛋白从脑中主动运输至脑外,致使大脑谷氨酸含量降低,从而降低精神活动的积极性,进而发展为抑郁症^[22]。最近研究发现,慢性压力(长期应激反应)是导致抑郁症的重要原因,这可能是由构成内皮细胞的紧密连接蛋白claudin-5的表达降低促使血脑屏障通透性增加所致^[23]。然而,血脑屏障作为大脑防御有害物质入侵的重要屏障,除炎症因子、少量细胞因子及小分子蛋白等能直接通过外,其余大分子物质包括大多神经活性化合物几乎不能通过,导致临床治疗抑郁症的效果十分有限。因此,目前学者致力于研究能够穿过血脑屏障的药物或能够帮助药物通过血脑屏障的技术来达到治疗大脑疾病的目的,如通过Organ-Chip技术与人类多能干细胞衍生物结合创建新的神经血管单元^[24]、纳米制剂^[25]等。

SCFA作为一种小分子有机单羧酸,具有调节结肠血流、肠动力、肠道免疫和代谢等作用,故既往对SCFA的研究侧重于结肠炎、结肠癌、糖尿病等疾病,少有对抑郁症的研究报道^[26]。近来有研究指出,SCFA在结肠产生后经单羧酸转运体(monocarboxylate transporter, MCTs)主动运输后被迅速吸收进入血液循环,并在MCTs介导下穿过血脑屏障,从而影响不同受体的神经元表达^[27],如SCFA口服或肠道用药可使下丘脑释放皮质醇减少,并改变脑源性神经营养因子(brain-derived neurotrophic factor, BDNF)的表达,从而起到抗抑郁和抗焦虑的作用^[15,28]。Sun等^[29]研究抑郁症小鼠模型发现,丁酸可通过上调紧密连接蛋白的表达,促进血脑屏障功能恢复,并增加5-羟色胺(5-hydroxytryptamine, 5-HT)的含量及脑中BDNF的浓度,从而缓解小鼠的抑郁行为。SCFA通过血脑屏障还可作用于胶质细胞,增强其神经修复和再生能力,改善神经元的稳态和功能,从而减少神经炎症的发生。值得注意的是,同属SCFA的乙酸、丁酸、丙酸对大脑的调节作用却不一样。乙酸有助于调节下丘脑神经递质、谷氨酸、谷氨酰胺的含量^[30];丁酸可改变海马基因的表达而发挥抗抑郁作用^[31];而丙酸呈双向作用,大剂量可导致小胶质细胞活化、神经毒性增加、基因表达改变、海马组织代谢异常,以及中枢神经递质异常,进而加重抑郁行为,如社交障碍、精神障碍等^[30,32-33],小剂量则可保护血脑屏障的完整性、纠正海马神经递质代谢

紊乱,从而发挥抗抑郁作用^[33]。Hoyle等^[34]发现,SCFA可通过维持血脑屏障的完整性来减轻抑郁症的炎症及氧化应激反应。有研究显示,丁酸可穿过血脑屏障,且可抑制组蛋白去乙酰化酶(histone deacetylase, HDAC)的表达,从而提高海马的组蛋白乙酰化程度,减轻慢性不可预测轻度应激小鼠的行为缺陷,同时增加前额叶皮质(prefrontal cortex, PFC) 5-HT的浓度和BDNF的表达^[35]。由此可见,SCFA可维持血脑屏障的完整性,且可穿过血脑屏障进入大脑参与调节抑郁症。

2.2 免疫途径 免疫系统是机体执行免疫应答及免疫功能的重要系统,能够避免炎症或炎症反应对机体造成感染性损害。抑郁症与免疫反应之间的关系主要与大脑中的小胶质细胞失调及外周的细胞因子表达改变相关^[36]。众多研究发现,肠道菌群紊乱所致机体炎症因子水平升高是诱发抑郁症的主要原因之一^[2,37-40]。SCFA是肠道菌群代谢的最终产物,肠道菌群紊乱可导致SCFA水平下降,因此SCFA与炎症因子的关系密切。丁酸钠作为组蛋白去乙酰化酶抑制剂,不仅能够促进组蛋白乙酰化,还具有免疫调节作用,如下调脂多糖(lipopolysaccharide, LPS)诱导的核因子 κ B(nuclear factor kappa-B, NF- κ B)信号转导以及Toll样受体4(Toll-like receptor 4, TLR4)的表达,并进一步抑制蛋白酶体的活性,抑制胞质内的NF- κ B活化,使炎症因子含量降低,从而起到抗抑郁作用^[41-42]。此外,SCFA对维持肠道黏膜屏障的完整性起着至关重要的作用。研究发现,SCFA可通过抑制HDACs和活化组蛋白乙酰转移酶(histone acetyltransferase, HAT)来保护肠道屏障并抑制炎症反应,从而维持肠道黏膜屏障的完整性和抑制炎症介质的释放^[19,43]。Chait等^[39]发现,肠道微生物紊乱可使肠黏膜屏障发生改变从而触发肠道和周围神经炎症反应,这是导致中枢神经系统(central nervous system, CNS)神经炎症和神经病变的重要原因。研究发现,给小鼠饲喂高果糖饮食8周后,小鼠肠道菌群发生紊乱,肠道屏障完整性被破坏,从而引起海马神经炎症反应[即白细胞介素-1 β (IL-1 β)、肿瘤坏死因子- α (TNF- α)和IL-6 mRNA水平明显升高,以及小胶质细胞数量增加],导致海马齿状回新生神经元明显减少,而口服SCFA可明显减轻高果糖对肠道屏障的损害并刺激炎症小体NLRP6,从而起到减轻海马神经炎症、保护神经元的作用^[44]。另有研究发现,SCFA可激活G蛋白偶联受体GPR43(即游离脂肪酸受体2, FFAR2)和GPR41(FFAR3),促使外周巨噬细胞、树突状细胞、T细胞激活而发挥免疫作用,由此减轻外周炎症因子对大脑的损害,进而起到抗抑郁的作

用^[14,45-47]。Swann等^[48]发现,通过摄入不易被消化的膳食纤维来提高SCFA含量,可诱使体内C反应蛋白(C-reactive protein, CRP)、IL-6等细胞因子分泌增加,从而减轻炎症反应及缓解抑郁症症状。由此可见,SCFA主要通过保护肠道屏障的完整性及刺激相应的免疫因子来减轻炎症因子对大脑神经、海马等组织的侵害,进而减轻抑郁行为。

2.3 内分泌通路 SCFA可通过激活GPR刺激肠内分泌细胞产生厌食性胰高血糖素样肽1(glucagon-like peptide-1, GLP-1)和肽YY(PYY),进而控制摄食行为^[49]。GLP-1是一种在肠道和大脑中合成的葡萄糖调节激素,近年来研究发现其除了具有调节摄食的作用外,还具有抗抑郁作用,如Anderberg等^[50]发现,给予(慢性给药)大鼠GLP-1R(GLP-1激动剂)能够提升杏仁核多巴胺的活性、减轻抑郁行为。因此有学者指出,GLP-1发挥治疗抑郁症的作用与增高海马组织GLP-1水平、减轻海马突触损伤、增加脑内BDNF的表达、提高下丘脑5-HT水平、改善大脑神经元线粒体紊乱,以及激活下丘脑-垂体-肾上腺轴(hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenal axis, HPA)等相关^[51]。SCFA也可通过HPA轴参与神经内分泌的调节,如长期慢性压力会激活杏仁核,杏仁核将信号通过丘脑传递至神经元,然后将神经元与脑垂体连接起来再经脑垂体向肾上腺发出刺激信号,导致皮质醇、肾上腺素和去甲肾上腺素等激素分泌失调,进而诱发抑郁症^[52]。Misiak等^[53]发现,HPA轴失调促使皮质醇激素水平升高是导致抑郁症的主要原因之一。Dalile等^[28]为了评估SCFA对社会心理压力应激下HPA轴引起的皮质醇反应的影响,通过胶囊的形式将SCFA运送至结肠以保证SCFA在结肠上皮细胞中吸收,结果表明,SCFA可通过调节HPA轴来减轻社会心理压力应激下的皮质醇反应。朱慧越等^[54]发现,SCFA是调节精神类疾病的重要信号分子,通过给雄性CS7BL/6J小鼠(构建慢性应激抑郁模型)饲喂SCFA-酰化淀粉(目的是实现SCFA在大肠的定点释放)来研究其缓解抑郁症的机制,结果发现,经SCFA-酰化淀粉干预后,小鼠的抑郁行为明显好转,体内促肾上腺皮质激素(adreno-corticotrophic-hormone, ACTH)、皮质酮(corticosterone, CS)含量明显降低且趋近空白对照组,提示SCFA可通过调节神经-内分泌系统使ACTH、CS恢复到正常水平。由此可见,SCFA可通过HPA轴来调节神经内分泌失衡。由于HPA轴与多巴胺系统、去甲肾上腺素存在相互调节作用,因此SCFA还可通过HPA轴来影响伏隔核酪氨酸羟化酶的活性,进而影响多巴胺的合成^[55-56]。总之,SCFA可通过GLP-1、HPA轴来调节内分泌失衡,从而发挥抗抑郁作用。

2.4 迷走神经 迷走神经是肠道微生物与大脑功能相互作用的重要途径,但肠道微生物并不能直接与迷走神经接触传递信息,而是通过自身合成的化合物或代谢产物于肠上皮细胞(胃肠道屏障)刺激迷走神经而实现信息传递的^[57],如与抑郁症相关的 γ -氨基丁酸(γ -aminobutyric acid, GABA)、5-HT、GLP-1、胆囊收缩素(cholecystokinin, CCK)甚至胃肠道内的促炎性因子等都可通过肠上皮细胞刺激迷走神经向大脑传递信号^[47,58]。除促炎性因子刺激迷走神经而加重抑郁症状外,其余大多数神经介质或激素通过刺激迷走神经向大脑传递信息有助于减轻抑郁行为^[59],甚至具有治疗难治性抑郁症的作用^[60]。研究发现,SCFA除参与免疫、内分泌调节外,还可直接刺激迷走神经^[12]。例如,Onyszkiewicz等^[61]观察到小鼠迷走神经切断前丁酸的治疗效果明显优于切断后;Bruning等^[62]发现SCFA不仅是肠道代谢的产物,还是肠神经系统的生理调节因子,并且能够通过肠道直接刺激迷走神经,使其作用于相应的大脑区域,进而对机体产生

影响。SCFA除直接作用于迷走神经外,还可通过其他途径间接刺激迷走神经,如通过调节肠嗜铬细胞分泌5-HT以及L-细胞分泌GLP-1与迷走神经形成联系,将肠道内信息通过完整的肠道屏障传递到大脑中枢系统,从而使大脑内神经递质、能量代谢、神经炎症等发生变化以缓解抑郁症症状^[51,63]。此外,SCFA也可通过GPR41直接作用于迷走神经并将CCK、GLP-1、瘦素、神经肽等肠内激素信息传递至大脑,从而起到调节饮食、机体能量代谢、肠道激素及胃肠运动的作用^[64]。Cook等^[65]研究发现,迷走神经GPR41基因缺失可使小鼠对GLP-1、CCK的敏感性降低,并出现多饮多食、肥胖及能量消耗降低的现象,而SCFA处理后可明显缓解上述表现。GPR41在迷走神经中表达降低能够对GLP-1、CCK等肠道激素产生影响,表明肠道激素与神经系统存在密切的相互作用。总之,SCFA可通过直接或间接的方式刺激迷走神经,使大脑做出相应的应答,进而缓解抑郁症。SCFA对抑郁症的作用机制如表1、图1所示。

表1 SCFA通过血脑屏障、免疫途径、内分泌通路及迷走神经对抑郁症的作用机制

Tab.1 Mechanism action of SCFA on depression through blood-brain barrier, immune pathway, endocrine pathway and vagus nerve

作用途径	作用机制
血脑屏障	能够修复、保护、穿过血脑屏障,以此来减轻血脑屏障的氧化应激 ^[34] ,上调大脑5-HT、BDNF的表达 ^[29] ,以及调节海马、下丘脑神经递质代谢紊乱问题 ^[30]
免疫途径	通过抑制组蛋白去乙酰化酶来降低NF- κ B、TLR4的表达 ^[41-42] ,维持肠道屏障的完整性,减轻炎症因子对机体的侵害 ^[19,43] ,激活G蛋白偶联受体GPR43、GPR41 ^[14,45-47] 、C反应蛋白、白细胞介素等参与免疫调节 ^[48]
内分泌通路	刺激GLP-1的分泌,减轻海马突触、神经元线粒体损伤,提高BDNF、5-HT的表达及多巴胺活性 ^[51] ;调节HPA轴使ACTH、CS等激素恢复平衡 ^[28,54]
迷走神经	可直接通过迷走神经向大脑传递信息,使大脑做出相应的调整 ^[61-62] ;也可通过调节5-HT、GLP-1、GPR41等间接刺激迷走神经向大脑传递信息 ^[63-64]

SCFA. 短链脂肪酸; 5-HT. 5-羟色胺; BDNF. 脑源性神经营养因子; NF- κ B. 核因子 κ B; TLR4. Toll样受体4; GPR43. 游离脂肪酸受体2; GPR41. 游离脂肪酸受体3; HPA轴. 下丘脑-垂体-肾上腺轴; GLP-1. 胰高血糖素样肽; ACTH. 促肾上腺皮质激素; CS. 皮质酮

3 总结与展望

肠道微生物影响大脑导致抑郁症是近年来的研究热点,其机制与单胺类神经递质、免疫内分泌、HPA轴失调及神经调节有关^[66]。临床一般使用选择性5-HT再摄取抑制剂、三环类抗抑郁药、单胺氧化酶抑制剂等药物治疗抑郁症^[67],然而这些药物大多不能通过血脑屏障而导致治疗效果不明显,或只能通过调节神经递质而不兼备其他途径发挥抗抑郁的作用。抑郁症是多因素、多重机制参与形成的一种复杂疾病,临床上治疗抑郁症单一用药效果不如联合用药。值得注意的是,抗抑郁药物大多可引起不良反应,特别是胃肠道相关的便秘、腹泻、消化不良等^[68],而这些不良反应是否会导致新的肠道微生物种群数量紊乱,抑或若无肠道不良反应是否可缩短治疗进程仍需更多研究深入探讨。

SCFA是经肠道微生物代谢产生的,肠道微生物直接影响SCFA的水平,SCFA也可反向影响肠道微生物,二者相互作用。相较于传统的抗抑郁药物,SCFA在干预抑郁症方面具有很大优势,如能穿过血脑屏障直接作用于大脑,促进肠道屏障完整性,减轻炎症因子对大脑的损害,还能通过调节内分泌、迷走神经等多个途径缓解抑郁症。虽然SCFA对抑郁症的作用机制研究取得了一定的进展,但以SCFA为基础的药物临床研究甚少,因此本文梳理了SCFA对抑郁症的作用机制,以期对抑郁症的治疗及新药研发提供新的思路。

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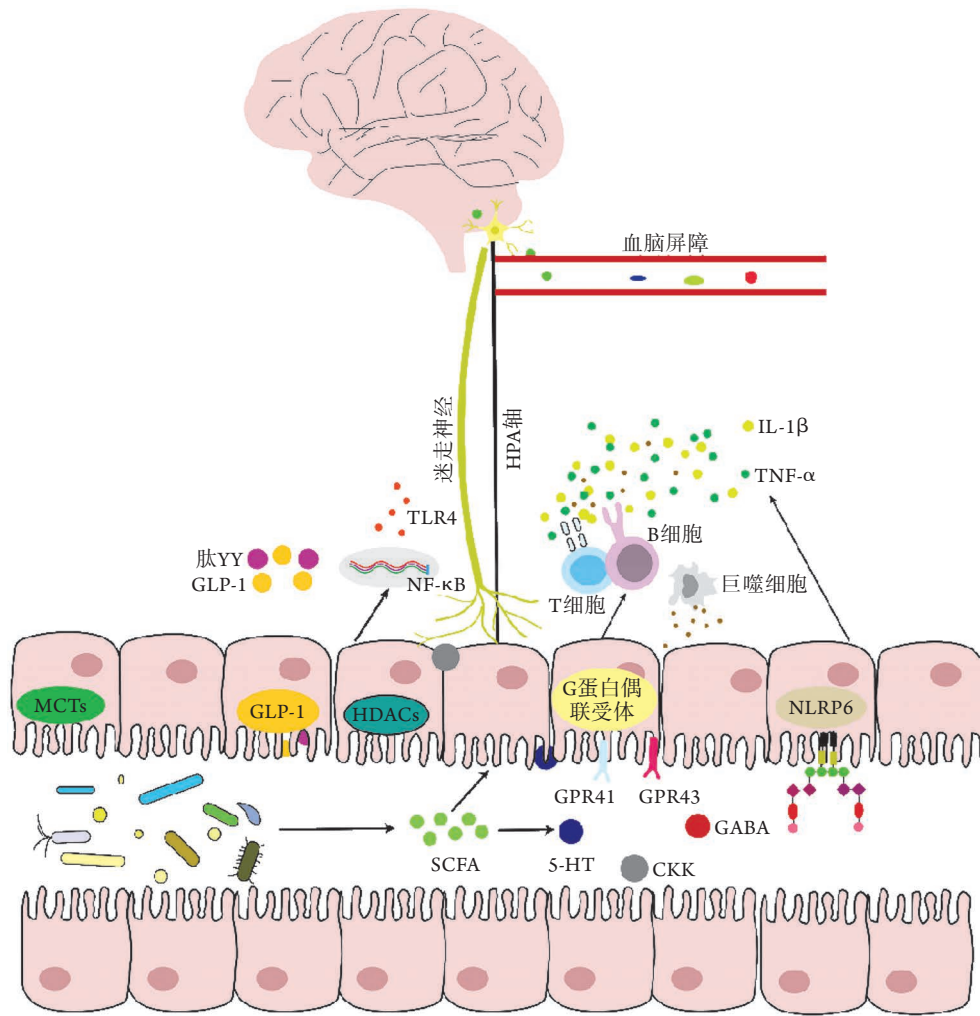


图1 SCFA对抑郁症的作用机制

Fig.1 Mechanism of action of SCFAs on depression

SCFA. 短链脂肪酸; HPA轴. 下丘脑-垂体-肾上腺轴; IL-1 β . 白细胞介素-1 β ; TNF- α . 肿瘤坏死因子- α ; TLR4. Toll样受体4; GLP-1. 胰高血糖素样肽1; NF- κ B. 核因子 κ B; MCTs. 单羧酸转运体; HDACs. 组蛋白去乙酰化酶; GPR41. 游离脂肪酸受体3; GPR43. 游离脂肪酸受体2; 5-HT. 5-羟色胺; CKK. 胆囊收缩素; GABA. γ -氨基丁酸

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