

Multidisciplinary approach in prostate cancer management: Harmonizing the role of surgery, radiation, and systemic Therapy

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Abstract

Background: Prostate cancer management necessitates a comprehensive multidisciplinary approach, involving specialists such as medical oncologists, urologists, pathologists, radiologist, and radiation oncologists.

Case Illustration: A 68-year-old male underwent interventions for metastatic prostate cancer. Initially diagnosed with localized disease, he received a radical prostatectomy (RP) and subsequently underwent radiation therapy (RT) along with androgen deprivation therapy (ADT). His initial diagnosis categorized him as high-risk localized prostate cancer (stage cT2cN0M0), guided by screening recommendations, leading to a histopathological diagnosis of pT2N0M0. Prognostic factors like Gleason score and PSA level informed treatment decisions. Although PSA levels initially decreased post-prostatectomy, subsequent rises necessitated further intervention.

Discussion: Early postoperative radiotherapy and adjuvant ADT demonstrated efficacy in improving patient outcomes. Metastatic screening and subsequent therapy were guided by evidence-based protocols. Despite the patient's response to treatment, bone metastasis occurred, prompting palliative external radiation and zoledronic acid therapy. After RP, RT, ADT, palliative external RT, and bisphosphonate therapy, imaging revealed no residual lesions or signs of metastasis, with a significantly decreased PSA level.

Conclusion: This case serves as a compelling example of a multidisciplinary team's involvement in maximizing patient care and treatment effectiveness for metastatic prostate cancer.

Keywords: multidisciplinary approach, prostate cancer, radiotherapy, surgery, systemic therapy

Abstrak

Latar belakang:

Latar Belakang: Penatalaksanaan kanker prostat memerlukan pendekatan multidisipliner yang komprehensif, melibatkan berbagai spesialis seperti onkologi medik, urologi, patologi, radiologi, dan onkologi radiasi.

Ilustrasi Kasus: Seorang laki-laki berusia 68 tahun menjalani berbagai intervensi untuk kanker prostat metastatik. Awalnya didiagnosis dengan kanker prostat lokalisata, dan pasien menjalani prostatektomi radikal (RP), kemudian dilanjutkan dengan terapi radiasi (RT) dan terapi deprivasi androgen (ADT). Diagnosis awal menunjukkan kanker prostat lokal risiko tinggi (stadium cT2cN0M0), dan berdasarkan rekomendasi skrining, terkonfirmasi secara histopatologi sebagai pT2N0M0. Faktor prognostik seperti skor Gleason dan kadar PSA menjadi dasar pengambilan keputusan terapi. Meskipun kadar PSA awalnya menurun setelah prostatektomi, namun bila terjadi peningkatan maka memerlukan intervensi tambahan.

Diskusi: Radioterapi pascaoperasi dini dan ADT adjuvan menunjukkan efikasi dalam meningkatkan keberhasilan tata laksana pasien. Skrining metastasis dan terapi selanjutnya dilakukan berdasarkan protokol berbasis bukti. Meskipun pasien menunjukkan respons terhadap terapi, akan tetapi terjadi metastasis tulang, sehingga diberikan radioterapi eksternal paliatif dan terapi asam zoledronat. Setelah diberikan RP, RT, ADT, radioterapi eksternal paliatif, dan terapi bifosfonat, tidak tampak adanya lesi residu atau tanda metastasis pada pencitraan, dengan kadar PSA yang menurun signifikan.

Kesimpulan: Kasus ini merupakan contoh nyata peran tim multidisiplin dalam mengoptimalkan tata laksana dan efektivitas terapi pada kanker prostat metastasis.

Kata kunci: kanker prostat, pembedahan, pendekatan multidisipliner, radioterapi, terapi sistemik

Background

Prostate cancer is a leading malignancy among men worldwide, holding the position as the second most common cancer globally and consistently ranking in the top five in many areas such as Indonesia.¹⁻³ The disease progresses from prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia (PIN) to invasive adenocarcinoma, influenced by proto-oncogene activation and tumor suppressor gene inhibition.⁴ Common symptoms include lower urinary tract issues, erectile dysfunction, and hematuria, though some cases are identified through PSA screening, which can yield both false positives and negatives.⁵

Digital rectal examination (DRE) aids in distinguishing benign from malignant conditions⁶, while histopathological testing and imaging are essential for accurate diagnosis and staging.⁷ Management approaches range from active surveillance in low-risk disease⁸ to aggressive treatments for advanced-stage treatments.^{9,10} Bone metastasis remains a significant challenge, affecting prognosis and quality of life.¹¹ Multimodal treatments, combining surgery, radiation, and systemic therapies, have shown promise in controlling disease progression and improving outcomes.¹² However, identifying predictive factors and tailoring treatments to individual patients remain critical research areas.¹³

A multidisciplinary approach is crucial for the successful management of prostate cancer, encompassing every stage from detection to treatment. This collaborative strategy involves specialists from various fields, including medical oncology, urology, pathology, radiology, and radiation oncology, working together to provide comprehensive care.¹⁴ Early detection and accurate staging are vital, requiring coordinated imaging and biopsy interpretation efforts. Risk stratification and evaluation are enhanced by the diverse expertise within the team, ensuring personalized treatment plans.

This report details a case of advanced metastatic prostate cancer treated with a multidisciplinary approach that included various intervention modalities, demonstrating the complexity and collaborative efforts required for effective management.

Case Illustration

A 68-year-old male visited the hospital for a follow-up appointment regarding his prostate cancer therapy. Thirteen years before admission, he sought help for urinary difficulty, leading to benign prostate

hyperplasia (BPH) diagnosis with elevated prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels, remaining below 10 ng/mL. Despite regular follow-ups, his symptoms worsened over eight years, prompting a prostate biopsy confirming cancer. He experienced radical prostatectomy and pelvic lymph node dissection, resulting in a decrease in PSA levels from 37.2 to 0.54 ng/mL. However, his PSA levels gradually rose again by 2020, necessitating radiation therapy (SIB IMRT) for 25 sessions, Goserelin injections every three months, and Bicalutamide, which lowered PSA levels below the detection threshold.

He is a controlled diabetic with no smoking history. His family has no cancer history, except for his sibling's breast cancer. His Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) performance status is 0, with a Karnofsky performance status of 100, and a body mass index (BMI) of 22.5 kg/m². The digital rectal examination reveals a palpable, mobile tumor confined within the prostate gland, involving both lobes. No tenderness or induration is appreciated in the surrounding tissue. No palpable masses or nodules elsewhere, as well as lymphadenopathies.

The histological analysis of the prostate biopsy initially revealed adenocarcinoma on both sides with a Gleason score of 4+3 (7). Pathology, imaging, and biochemical studies established the diagnosis of pT2N0M0, PSA >20 ng/mL, grade group 3 (stage IIIA) prostate cancer. After radical prostatectomy, there was a notable decrease in the PSA level, which fell significantly to 0.54 ng/mL. One year later, the PSA level gradually increased to 1.51 ng/mL until radiotherapy. A post-treatment MRI of the prostate, after RP+SIB-IMRT+ADT, showed no pathological masses or enhancements within the prostate, with no evidence of lymphadenopathy. PSA post-radiotherapy decreased to 1.07 ng/mL.

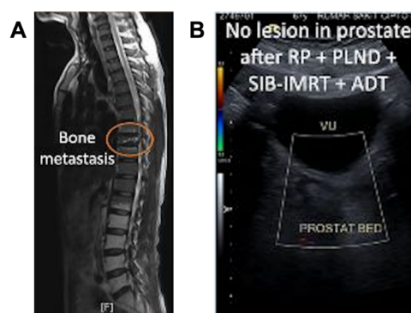


Figure 1. Imaging evaluation. Metastasis in the T9 vertebral body is shown in a contrast-enhanced MRI (A). Abdominal ultrasound examinations conducted after radical prostatectomy (RP), pelvic lymph node dissection (PLND), simultaneous-integrated boost intensity-modulated radiation therapy (SIB-IMRT), and androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) showed no focal pathological lesions in the prostate bed.

Following the patient's complaint of bone pain two months later, an anomaly was observed in a bone scan, suggesting pathological activity on the T9 vertebra's right aspect. Additionally, a thoracolumbar X-ray displayed deterioration of the T9 vertebral body on the right side, encompassing the right pedicle. A contrast-enhanced MRI confirmed metastasis in the T9 vertebral body (Figure 1A). Patient received palliative external radiation and bisphosphonate therapy while continuing ADT.

Abdominal ultrasound examinations conducted post-treatment and six months later showed no focal pathological lesions in the prostate bed or evidence

of metastasis in the intra-abdominal organs (Figure 1B). Furthermore, a CT scan conducted four years after radical prostatectomy and three years into hormonal therapy and radiotherapy showed no residual lesions in the prostatic bed or signs of metastasis in the intrathoracic and intra-abdominal organs, nor any lymphadenopathy. Finally, a bone scan performed after palliative external radiotherapy, continuous monthly bisphosphonate treatment, and intermittent ADT showed no active pathological processes in the T9 vertebra, coupled with a significantly decreased PSA level of <0.008 ng/mL. PSA response to interventions is shown in Figure 2.

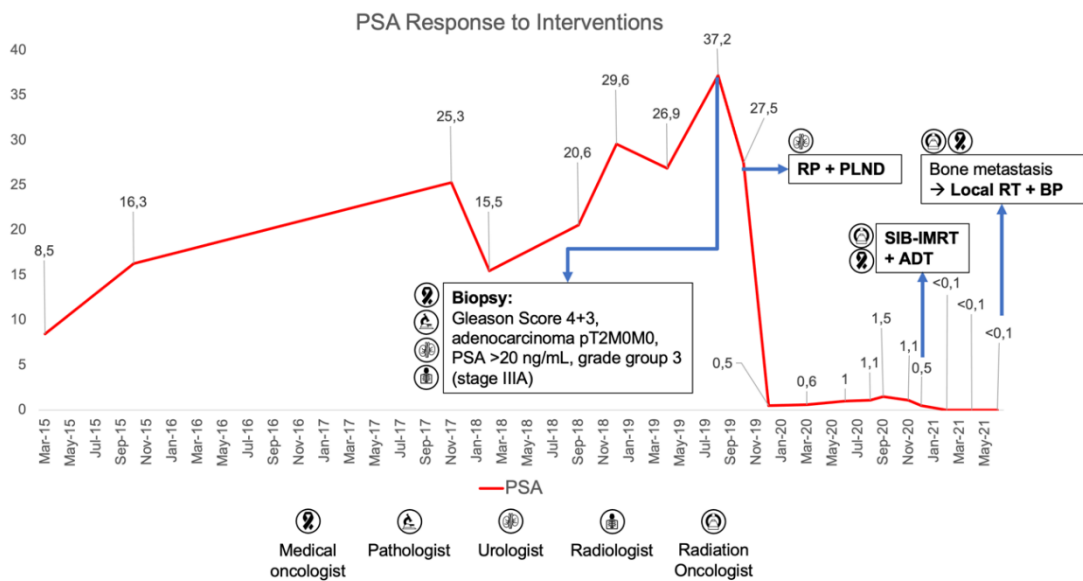


Figure 2. PSA response to interventions, highlighting the multidisciplinary approach of prostate cancer treatment. RP, radical prostatectomy; PLND, pelvic lymph node dissection; RT, radiotherapy; BP, bisphosphonate therapy; SIB-IMRT, simultaneous-integrated boost intensity-modulated radiation therapy; ADT, androgen deprivation therapy

Discussion

Prostate cancer ranks second among male cancers globally and is among the top five cancers affecting males in Indonesia.^{2,3} Its sporadic occurrence accounts for about 85%, while familial cases make up 10 to 15%, and hereditary cases constitute 3-5%.¹⁵ A family history of breast cancer is evident, which, coupled with age and a history of malignancies, poses significant risks for this patient. Prostate cancer typically manifests between the ages of 65 to 68 years.¹⁶ The chances surge as age progresses, with a lifetime likelihood of 12.5%, escalating to 9.0% in males aged 70 years and beyond. Autopsy findings indicate that 40% of men over 60 who have not

undergone screening are found to have prostate cancer, surging to 60% in those over 80.² Additionally, individuals with familial breast cancer exhibit a 21% elevated risk of prostate cancer and a 34% elevated chance of developing a lethal disease.¹⁷

During diagnosis, the patient's PSA level stood at 27.54 ng/mL, and a physical examination revealed a tumor confined within the prostate without evidence of lymphadenopathy or metastasis (stage cT2cN0M0)¹⁸, thereby categorizing it as high-risk localized prostate cancer.¹⁹

The 2024 EAU Guidelines for Prostate Cancer strongly advocate for metastatic screening via PSMA-PET/CT and cross-sectional abdominopelvic imaging,

along with a bone scan, in cases of high-risk localized disease.²⁰ The patient underwent metastatic screening with CT abdominopelvic scan, which showed no abnormalities in the seminal vesicles, perirectal fat, or intraabdominal and pelvic organs. A bone scan was not performed due to facility limitations. Combined with histopathological studies, the initial pathological diagnosis of the patient is pT2N0M0.

Prognostic factors for this patient include Gleason score, age >60 years, tumor stage, and PSA level. A Gleason score of 4+3 is linked with a heightened risk of mortality in overall survival and cancer-specific survival when compared to a score of 3+4.²¹ Using the life expectancy estimation tool recommended by the NCCN guidelines, this patient has a 77% chance of survival in 10 years and a 57% chance in 15 years if untreated.²²

Radical prostatectomy (RP) with pelvic lymph node dissection (PLND) was selected given the patient's symptomatic presentation and favorable life expectancy.^{10,23} According to the NCCN guidelines, radical prostatectomy is advised for localized disease in individuals with a projected lifespan of at least 10 years, provided that their tumor can be fully removed surgically and they do not have significant comorbidities that would make surgery inappropriate.¹⁰ The limited PLND involved dissection of the obturator lymph nodes (left and right) and the external iliac (right) nodes. Limited PLND is preferred over extended PLND because, despite the higher detection rate of positive lymph nodes with extended PLND, it does not enhance the rate of biochemical recurrence-free survival and is linked to a greater likelihood of complications, notably lymphocele.^{24,25}

The patient's likelihood of progression-free status following radical prostatectomy stands at 18% over 5 years and 10% over 10 years. The probability of remaining recurrence-free after surgery is 74% in 2 years, 52% in 5 years, 43% in 7 years, and 35% in 10 years. The 15-year prostate cancer-specific survival is 92%.²⁶

Although RP+PLND reduced PSA levels from 37.2 to 0.54 ng/mL, PSA remained detectable and gradually rose again months later, which is considered a post-RP adverse feature. In principle, radical prostatectomy should result in a PSA level that cannot be detected within 21-30 days after surgery, given the 3.15-day half-life of PSA.²⁷ If PSA levels fail to drop to undetectable levels after RP, it's termed PSA persistence, which significantly raises the risks of

cancer-related death, biochemical recurrence, and disease recurrence.²⁸ Given the patient's short PSA doubling time of 5.7 months and extended life expectancy, adjuvant therapy was initiated, comprising EBRT + intermittent ADT. Intermittent ADT was preferred over continuous ADT due to its potential for comparable survival outcomes with superior quality-of-life benefits.²⁹⁻³¹ The patient concurrently received Goserelin (a luteinizing hormone-releasing hormone [LHRH] agonist) injections every three months for one year and Bicalutamide (a first-generation antiandrogen), alongside SIB-IMRT for 25 sessions.

Adjuvant radiation therapy following RP extends the duration of biochemical progression-free survival, metastasis-free survival, and overall survival compared to simply observing the patient's condition, as demonstrated in several key randomized clinical trials (RCTs).³² However, early postoperative radiotherapy is preferred over ART post-RP to reduce overtreatment and risk of toxicity, as there was no notable disparity in results between the two approaches in a meta-analysis.³³ In this patient, early postoperative radiotherapy was chosen over ART, with radiotherapy initiated only after one year of observation confirming a continuous increase in PSA following RP, rather than administering radiotherapy immediately after RP as in ART.

Adding ADT to radiotherapy after radical prostatectomy significantly improves patient outcomes. Two RCTs demonstrated that adding 4-6 months of ADT, either comprising LHRH agonist alone or combined with an antiandrogen, to radiotherapy after radical prostatectomy significantly improves 5-year biochemical or clinical progression rates and freedom from progression.^{34,35} Comparison between RP alone versus RP combined with adjuvant ADT reveals a statistically significant improvement in 10-year cancer-specific survival (CSS) rates in the RP + ADT group (94% vs 87%), highlighting the potential benefits of adjuvant hormonal therapy in enhancing long-term outcomes.³⁶ Additionally, ADT and radiation therapy (RT) combination demonstrates superior metastases-free survival compared to ADT monotherapy.³⁷ Notably, the integration of RP, RT, and ADT yields favorable outcomes across multiple prognostic indicators observed within the initial five years post-treatment, including biochemical relapse-free survival (90.5%), metastases-free survival (95.5%), disease-specific survival (100%), and overall survival (90.6%) rates.³⁸

After radiation therapy, four rounds of goserelin injections, and bicalutamide treatment, the patient's PSA level dropped below the detection threshold (<0.008 ng/mL). A decrease in PSA levels following ADT indicates a response to endocrine therapy and suggests continued sensitivity to androgens. However, two months later, the patient reported experiencing mild pain in the lower right back region. Subsequent imaging studies, including a bone scan, thoracolumbar X-ray, and contrast-enhanced MRI, confirmed the presence of metastasis in the T9 vertebral body. Approximately 85% of prostate cancer cases are initially localized, yet nearly 40% advance to metastatic disease, with over 90% of advanced cases involving bone metastases.³⁹

Therapy for M1 prostate cancer is divided into treatment for M1 castration-sensitive and castration-resistant prostate cancer.¹⁰ Following ADT, the patient's testosterone level was assessed, revealing a measurement of 16.1 nmol/L, indicating the recovery of testicular function. Combined with the patient's PSA response to previous ADT treatment, this categorizes prostate cancer as castration-sensitive (CSPC). The next step involves determining whether the cancer is of high or low volume. According to CHARTED criteria, this patient has low-volume disease. Standard treatment for low-volume metachronous metastases typically involves ADT combined with one of the preferred regimens: Abiraterone, apalutamide, or enzalutamide.¹⁰ However, these three medications were not listed in the national health insurance formulary at treatment time.⁴⁰ Additionally, the patient underwent EBRT, which has demonstrated efficacy in increasing overall survival, especially in patients with a low metastasis burden.⁴¹ EBRT may be applied to bone metastases, particularly in weight-bearing bones or when a patient exhibits symptoms, both of which apply to this patient's case. If EBRT is administered with ADT, one option for ADT includes LHRH agonist either alone or given concurrently with abiraterone or docetaxel.¹⁰ The patient received intermittent ADT (goserelin), with reintroduction of ADT if PSA levels rose above 20 ng/mL or exceeded 10 ng/mL with accompanying symptoms.⁴² Bicalutamide was administered concurrently with goserelin to prevent initial testosterone flare in weight-bearing bone metastases.⁴³ Adding bicalutamide to LHRH agonist therapy also leads to a 22% decrease in the risk of death ($P=0.0498$), significantly improves overall survival rates (75.3% vs 63.4%), and markedly increases the proportion of patients accomplishing

PSA nadir concentrations ≤ 1 ng/mL (81.4% vs 33.7%; $P<0.001$), while also prolonging PSA progression-free survival compared to LHRH agonist monotherapy.^{44,45} Docetaxel was not prescribed due to insufficient evidence supporting its efficacy in patients with metachronous, low-volume disease.⁴⁶

ADT poses a risk of bone loss^{47,48}, particularly concerning in bone metastatic prostate cancer due to elevated fracture risk. While bone antiresorptive therapy isn't indicated for reducing symptomatic skeletal-related events (SREs) and does not significantly increase survival in CSPC^{49,50}, it's recommended for managing heightened fracture risk.¹⁰ According to the Fracture Risk Assessment Tool (FRAX; <https://www.fraxplus.org/calculation-tool/>), this patient has a 3.0% probability of experiencing major osteoporotic events and a 1.5% probability of hip fracture over the next ten years. Considering the fracture risk alongside the patient's bone metastasis, continuous monthly zoledronic acid was administered. In castration-resistant prostate cancer (CRPC), denosumab demonstrates superior efficacy in halting SREs compared to zoledronic acid. However, it is associated with a higher incidence of hypocalcemia and osteonecrosis of the jaw.⁵¹ There are no direct comparative studies of bone antiresorptive drugs in metastatic castration-sensitive prostate cancer (CSPC).

Zoledronic acid is associated with hypocalcemia⁵² and may worsen kidney function in patients with mild to moderate kidney disease (defined as baseline CrCl 30-60 mL/min).⁵³ Calcium ion and blood as well as kidney function were checked before each zoledronic acid administration for dose adjustment. The patient underwent follow-up every 1-2 months, including PSA and testosterone level checks, assessment of ADT side effects, and laboratory tests including complete peripheral blood count, serum urea and creatinine, lipid profile, blood glucose, and calcium levels. Thrombosis risk assessment was also conducted. Routine thromboprophylaxis for outpatients receiving systemic therapy for cancer is not recommended.⁵⁴

Conclusion

This case exemplifies the efficacy of a multidisciplinary team approach in managing metastatic prostate cancer, highlighting the critical roles of urologists, pathologists, radiologists, radiation oncologists, and medical oncologists from diagnosis through ongoing treatment. The collaborative efforts of these specialists were pivotal to the successful management and

improved outcomes of the patient. Additionally, this case underscores the significance of timely identification of prostate cancer, particularly during the follow-up of BPH, to enhance early intervention and treatment effectiveness.

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None.

Conflict of Interests

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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