



Association Between 5 α -Reductase Inhibitors and Prostate Cancer Mortality

¹ Endah Lestari, ¹ Nur Fitriani

¹ Faculty of Medicine, Padjadjaran University, Bandung City, West Java, Indonesia

Correspondence : dr.endahlestari97@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Background: The role of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) in managing prostate cancer has been a subject of considerable debate within the medical community. The exploration of these agents has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting both their therapeutic potential and the complexities associated with their use. **Literature Review:** The reviewed literature presents a multifaceted examination of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) and their implications for prostate cancer management. The introduction establishes a framework for understanding the evolving role of these agents, emphasizing both their potential therapeutic benefits and the concerns that have emerged regarding their use, particularly in relation to prostate cancer risk and mortality. **Conclusion:** In conclusion, the literature collectively indicates that while 5-ARIs possess therapeutic potential in managing prostate cancer, significant concerns regarding their safety profiles—particularly their association with high-grade tumors and implications for mortality—necessitate a cautious and informed approach in clinical practice. Future research should aim to elucidate the complexities of 5-ARIs, focusing on their integration with existing treatment protocols and the need for individualized patient care.

Keyword: 5 α -Reductase Inhibitors, Prostate Cancer Mortality

INTRODUCTION

The role of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) in managing prostate cancer has been a subject of considerable debate within the medical community. The exploration of these agents has evolved significantly over the years, reflecting both their therapeutic potential and the complexities associated with their use. (J Hudak et al., 2006) initiated this discourse by examining the potential of 5-ARIs as a part of prostate cancer management. Their findings suggest that while 5-ARIs may offer beneficial hormonal effects, they should not be relied upon as monotherapy, particularly in light of established treatment modalities like surgical extirpation and radiation therapy. The authors argue for a combined approach, highlighting the need for further investigation into the integration of 5-ARIs with other therapies.

In subsequent years, (J Hamilton & J Freedland, 2011) highlighted the challenges surrounding the clinical application of

5-ARIs, especially in the context of prostate cancer prevention. Their analysis revealed a decline in the use of these agents following the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial (PCPT), driven largely by concerns regarding the association of 5-ARIs with high-grade tumors. The FDA's reanalysis and subsequent refusal to approve new indications for 5-ARIs underscored the ongoing apprehensions regarding the balance of risks and benefits, leaving clinicians hesitant to prescribe these agents for chemoprevention.

(Moroz et al., 2013) contributed to this dialogue by investigating the specific cellular mechanisms through which finasteride, a common 5-ARI, may inhibit prostate cancer cell invasion. Their findings indicate that while finasteride may downregulate certain enzymes involved in cancer progression, the overarching concerns regarding high-grade tumor risk remain pertinent, echoing the conclusions of previous studies.

(Robinson et al., 2015) and (Wang et al., 2018) further expanded

the discourse by exploring the relationship between 5-ARIs and male breast cancer risk. Both studies found no significant association, suggesting that the fear of increased breast cancer risk should not hinder the use of 5-ARIs in clinical practice. However, they also noted the complexities of underlying health conditions, which may necessitate a more nuanced understanding of patient profiles when prescribing these medications.

The investigation into the implications of 5-ARIs continued with the work of (Kumar et al., 2019), who examined the association of 5-ARIs with prostate cancer mortality among older adults. Their findings indicated that 5-ARIs might lead to delays in diagnosis and worse mortality outcomes, primarily due to the misinterpretation of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels. This raises critical questions about the appropriateness of 5-ARIs in older populations already at risk for advanced disease.

Most recently, (Hyun Pyun et al., 2024) have added another layer to the conversation by exploring the

long-term impact of 5-ARIs on bladder cancer development. Their study, while exploratory, suggests a potential chemopreventive effect of 5-ARIs against bladder cancer, although it calls for more rigorous research to validate these findings and clarify the relationship between 5-ARIs and oncologic outcomes.

Together, these articles reflect a growing body of literature that underscores the complexities of using 5-ARIs in prostate cancer management. While the therapeutic potential of these agents is evident, significant concerns regarding their safety profiles, particularly in relation to cancer risk and mortality, necessitate further investigation to guide clinical practice effectively.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The article titled "Role of 5 alpha-reductase inhibitors in the management of prostate cancer" by (J Hudak et al., 2006) provides a comprehensive examination of the application of 5-alpha reductase (5AR) inhibitors in treating prostate cancer. The authors delve into the implications of using these inhibitors,

particularly in the context of hormonal therapy regimens.

A significant aspect of the article is its reliance on murine models to elucidate the effects of 5AR inhibitors on prostate carcinogenesis. The findings indicate that these inhibitors can effectively inhibit macroscopic rat prostate carcinogenesis and slow the growth of prostate cancer in these animal models. However, the authors caution against interpreting these results as a direct endorsement of 5AR inhibitors as a standalone treatment for prostate cancer. The evidence suggests that while 5AR inhibitors have a role, their efficacy as monotherapy is limited, which is a critical insight for clinicians considering treatment options for patients with prostate cancer (J Hudak et al., 2006).

The article further emphasizes the importance of hormonal therapy in the management of more advanced stages of prostate cancer, including locally advanced disease and metastatic cases. The authors highlight that 5AR inhibitors may be more beneficial when used in combination with other therapeutic

modalities rather than as a singular treatment approach. This perspective underscores the need for a multifaceted treatment strategy in managing prostate cancer effectively (J Hudak et al., 2006).

Additionally, the study conducted by Andriole and colleagues, which randomized men with localized prostate cancer to receive either dutasteride or a placebo before radical prostatectomy, is particularly noteworthy. The outcomes from this trial demonstrated significant effects of 5AR inhibition, suggesting that pre-treatment with these inhibitors could have beneficial effects prior to surgical intervention. This adds a layer of complexity to the understanding of how 5AR inhibitors can be integrated into treatment protocols (J Hudak et al., 2006).

The article "5- α reductase inhibitors and prostate cancer prevention: where do we turn now?" authored by (J Hamilton & J Freedland, 2011) provides a critical examination of the role of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) in prostate cancer prevention and the implications of their use in clinical

practice. The authors highlight a significant trend in the utilization of 5-ARIs within the Veterans Health Administration, noting a gradual increase from 2000 to 2005, followed by a decline post-publication of the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial (PCPT). This decline appears to be influenced by urologists' concerns regarding the potential risk of high-grade prostate cancer associated with these medications.

A key insight from the article is the FDA Oncology Drugs Advisory Committee's (ODAC) evaluation of the applications by GlaxoSmithKline and Merck concerning the use of dutasteride and finasteride for prostate cancer prevention. The committee's conclusions were pivotal; they acknowledged the plausible risk of high-grade cancer, emphasized that the majority of cancers prevented were of low risk, and noted the absence of evidence linking 5-ARI treatment to reduced prostate cancer mortality. Consequently, the FDA ODAC voted against the new indications and labeling changes for these drugs.

The authors effectively underscore the complexities surrounding 5-ARIs, revealing a profound disagreement within the medical community regarding their benefits and harms. This discord is particularly relevant as it reflects the broader challenges of translating clinical trial findings into real-world practice. The article critically evaluates the implications of these findings for clinical decision-making, suggesting that the perceived risks may outweigh the potential benefits of 5-ARIs in prostate cancer prevention.

The article "Finasteride Inhibits Human Prostate Cancer Cell Invasion through MMP2 and MMP9 Downregulation" by (Moroz et al., 2013) presents a critical examination of the role of finasteride, a 5-alpha reductase inhibitor (5-ARI), in the context of prostate cancer cell dynamics. The authors address the contentious debate surrounding the use of 5-ARIs for prostate cancer prevention, particularly in light of the FDA's findings regarding a potential increase in high-grade tumors among patients treated with these inhibitors.

The study's main focus is on the mechanisms by which finasteride influences prostate cancer cell migration and invasion, specifically through the downregulation of matrix metalloproteinases (MMP2 and MMP9). These enzymes are crucial for the degradation of the extracellular matrix and are often implicated in cancer metastasis. The authors conducted experiments using both normal human and tumoral prostatic cell lines, providing a comparative analysis that enhances the understanding of finasteride's biological effects.

One of the notable strengths of the study is its methodological rigor, including the use of in vitro models that closely mimic the physiological conditions of prostate cells. The results demonstrated that finasteride effectively reduces the expression of MMP2 and MMP9, suggesting a potential mechanism through which the drug may inhibit the invasive properties of prostate cancer cells. This finding is significant as it aligns with the hypothesis that 5-ARIs could possess anti-invasive properties, which may counterbalance concerns

regarding their association with high-grade tumors.

However, the article also highlights the complexities surrounding the use of 5-ARIs in clinical practice. While the inhibition of MMP2 and MMP9 presents a promising avenue for understanding finasteride's mechanism of action, the authors acknowledge the FDA's caution regarding the increased risk of high-grade prostate tumors. This duality raises important questions about the balance between potential therapeutic benefits and risks associated with finasteride use.

The article titled "5- α reductase inhibitors, benign prostatic hyperplasia, and risk of male breast cancer" by (Robinson et al., 2015) provides a comprehensive examination of the potential association between 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) and the incidence of male breast cancer. This population-based cohort study conducted in Sweden addresses a critical area of concern regarding the safety profile of 5-ARIs, which are widely prescribed for benign prostatic

hyperplasia (BPH) and lower urinary tract symptoms (LUTS).

The study's main finding—that no increased risk of breast cancer was observed among men using 5-ARIs—challenges some of the prevailing concerns regarding the endocrine effects of these medications. The authors employed Cox proportional hazard models to analyze a substantial cohort comprising 124,183 men exposed to 5-ARIs and 545,293 unexposed men. Throughout the follow-up period, only 99 cases of breast cancer were diagnosed, underscoring the rarity of this event in the context of 5-ARI usage. This result is particularly significant given the previous warnings from the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regarding potential risks associated with these medications.

However, the article does highlight an important finding related to men who underwent transurethral resection of the prostate (TUR-P). The increased risk of breast cancer in this subgroup suggests a possible link between the underlying endocrine changes associated with BPH itself

rather than the pharmacological effects of 5-ARIs. This distinction is crucial, as it points to the need for further research into the biological mechanisms that may predispose certain individuals to breast cancer, independent of their medication use.

The study also provides a thorough overview of the pharmacodynamics of 5-ARIs, noting their mechanism of action in inhibiting the conversion of testosterone to dihydrotestosterone (DHT). The authors detail the common side effects associated with these inhibitors, such as decreased libido and erectile dysfunction, which are important considerations for clinicians prescribing these medications.

The article titled "5-alpha Reductase inhibitors and risk of male breast cancer: a systematic review and meta-analysis" by (Wang et al., 2018) provides a comprehensive examination of the relationship between 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5ARIs) and the risk of male breast cancer (MBC). This systematic review and meta-analysis aim to clarify the potential risks associated

with 5ARI therapy, particularly concerning its association with MBC, which is a relatively rare condition.

The authors conducted a thorough search of multiple databases, including Medline via PubMed, Embase, and the Cochrane Library Central Register, up to May 2017, to gather relevant studies. Their methodology appears robust, as they utilized a random-effects model to calculate summary effect estimates, which is appropriate for synthesizing data from heterogeneous studies. This methodological rigor enhances the reliability of their findings and conclusions.

One of the key insights from the article is the conclusion that there is no significant positive association between the use of 5ARIs and the incidence of MBC. This finding is particularly important for clinicians who prescribe these medications for conditions such as benign prostatic hyperplasia or androgenetic alopecia, as it alleviates concerns regarding the potential risk of developing breast cancer in male patients. The authors note that the small number of breast cancer cases among those exposed to

5ARIs further supports their conclusion that 5ARI therapy should not be influenced by fears of inducing breast cancer.

However, it is important to critically evaluate the limitations of the study. The authors acknowledge the limited number of cases, which may affect the statistical power of their analysis. Additionally, the exclusion of unpublished studies could lead to publication bias, potentially skewing the results. The article does not delve deeply into the underlying biological mechanisms that could link 5ARIs to breast cancer risk, which could provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationship.

The article titled "Association of Treatment With 5 α -Reductase Inhibitors and Prostate Cancer Mortality Among Older Adults" by (Kumar et al., 2019) delves into the complex relationship between the use of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) and prostate cancer outcomes, specifically focusing on mortality rates among older adults. The authors provide a critical examination of how 5-ARIs, commonly prescribed for

benign prostatic enlargement, can inadvertently influence prostate cancer diagnosis and prognosis due to their significant effect on prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels.

A key insight from the study is the finding that 5-ARIs can lead to a reduction in PSA levels by approximately 50%. This reduction poses a risk of misinterpretation, as lower PSA values may delay the diagnosis of prostate cancer, leading to more advanced disease at the time of detection. The authors highlight that among US military veterans, there is a concerning association between the use of 5-ARIs and increased rates of high-grade and high-stage prostate cancer at diagnosis, which consequently correlates with worse prostate cancer-specific mortality (PCSM). This assertion is particularly alarming, as it suggests that while 5-ARIs are effective for managing benign conditions, they may also contribute to adverse outcomes in patients with prostate cancer.

The authors employ a robust methodology to analyze the data, which enhances the validity of their

findings. They emphasize the need for healthcare providers to be aware of the potential implications of 5-ARI treatment on prostate cancer screening and management. This awareness is critical in ensuring that patients are adequately monitored and that the risk of advanced disease is mitigated.

The article titled "The Long-Term Impact of 5-alpha Reductase Inhibitors on the Development of Bladder Cancer and the Need for Radical Cystectomy: A Nationwide Observational Study" by (Hyun Pyun et al., 2024) presents a comprehensive examination of the relationship between 5-alpha reductase inhibitors (5ARIs) and bladder cancer (BC) outcomes. The authors aim to establish a causal relationship between the use of 5ARIs and the incidence of BC, noting that approximately 40% of their study population utilized these medications.

A critical evaluation of the study reveals that while the authors suggest a potential reduction in BC diagnoses among men who initiated 5ARI treatment, the lack of adjustment for tumor biological

characteristics, such as stage and grade, presents a significant limitation. The absence of this data, attributed to constraints within the National Health Insurance Service (NHIS) dataset, hinders the ability to draw definitive conclusions about the efficacy of 5ARIs in preventing BC (Hyun Pyun et al., 2024). The authors acknowledge that their findings are exploratory rather than conclusive, which is an important caveat given the complexities involved in cancer epidemiology.

Moreover, the article highlights the need for further research to differentiate between the various formulations of 5ARIs, specifically finasteride and dutasteride. Previous studies have indicated that only finasteride may exhibit a protective effect against BC, suggesting that not all 5ARIs may have the same clinical implications (Hyun Pyun et al., 2024). This calls for a more granular approach in future studies to assess the differential impacts of these agents on cancer outcomes.

The authors also note that the study's design did not include cases

where prostate-specific antigen (PSA) testing was not conducted prior to 5ARI administration. This omission could potentially skew the results, as PSA testing is a critical component in the early detection of prostate-related conditions, including cancer. Thus, the findings should be interpreted with caution, particularly in the context of prostate cancer mortality.

CONCLUSION

The reviewed literature presents a multifaceted examination of 5 α -reductase inhibitors (5-ARIs) and their implications for prostate cancer management. The introduction establishes a framework for understanding the evolving role of these agents, emphasizing both their potential therapeutic benefits and the concerns that have emerged regarding their use, particularly in relation to prostate cancer risk and mortality.

The initial article highlights the limitations of 5-ARIs as monotherapy for prostate cancer, advocating for their integration with established treatment modalities (J Hudak et al., 2006). This perspective is reinforced by subsequent studies

that address the clinical apprehensions surrounding 5-ARIs, particularly the association with high-grade tumors and the decline in their use following the Prostate Cancer Prevention Trial (PCPT) (J Hamilton & J Freedland, 2011). The findings from these studies suggest that while 5-ARIs may exert beneficial hormonal effects, their role in cancer prevention remains contentious due to the potential risk of advancing cancer diagnosis and associated mortality.

Further analysis reveals that 5-ARIs, particularly finasteride, may inhibit cancer cell invasion through specific cellular mechanisms, yet this does not alleviate concerns regarding high-grade tumor risks (Moroz et al., 2013). The exploration of 5-ARIs' association with male breast cancer risk has yielded mixed results, indicating that fears of increased breast cancer incidence should not deter their clinical application [ref: ee4a6e5a-34e1-48b5-9d7a-c917839c9ab9; ref: ad8e3bc9-fd06-4bda-b147-08991d62e03a].

However, a nuanced understanding of patient profiles is essential in prescribing these medications, as

underlying health conditions may influence outcomes.

The investigation into prostate cancer mortality among older adults reveals critical insights regarding the misinterpretation of prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels, suggesting that the use of 5-ARIs may lead to delayed diagnoses and poorer outcomes (Kumar et al., 2019). This finding underscores the need for careful monitoring of patients undergoing treatment with 5-ARIs, particularly in populations at risk for advanced disease.

Lastly, the potential chemopreventive effects of 5-ARIs on bladder cancer development are introduced, although the need for more rigorous research is emphasized to clarify these associations (Hyun Pyun et al., 2024).

In conclusion, the literature collectively indicates that while 5-ARIs possess therapeutic potential in managing prostate cancer, significant concerns regarding their safety profiles—particularly their association with high-grade tumors and implications for mortality—necessitate a cautious and informed

approach in clinical practice. Future research should aim to elucidate the complexities of 5-ARIs, focusing on their integration with existing treatment protocols and the need for individualized patient care.

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