



Research Paper

Performance characteristics of multiparametric-MRI at a non-academic hospital using transperineal template mapping biopsy as a reference standard

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ABSTRACT

Objectives: To evaluate diagnostic accuracy of mpMRI in a non-academic hospital using transperineal template prostate mapping (TPM) biopsy as a reference standard. Secondary objectives included evaluating why mpMRI missed significant cancer.

Materials and methods: 101 men received pre-biopsy mpMRI and TPM-biopsy over 16 months. Disease status was assigned at hemigland level. Primary histological definition of clinical significance was Gleason grade $\geq 4 + 3$ or maximum cancer core length (MCCL) ≥ 6 mm. Positive mpMRI was defined as Prostate Imaging Reporting and Data System (PI-RADS) score ≥ 3 .

Results: Median age 69 (IQR 62–76). Median PSA 7 ng/ml (IQR 4.6–9.8). mpMRI had sensitivity 76.9%, specificity 60.7%, PPV 40.4% and NPV 88.3% at primary definitions. For detecting any Gleason ≥ 7 mpMRI had sensitivity 73.2%, specificity 60.3%, PPV 41.4% and NPV 85.4%. Mean MCCL was lower where significant cancer was missed compared to those correctly identified (5.8 mm versus 7.7 mm respectively, $p = 0.035$).

Conclusion: mpMRI performance characteristics were very encouraging when compared to contemporary clinical trials. In a non-academic hospital setting, negative mpMRI was just as good at ruling-out significant disease, though the ability of positive mpMRI to accurately detect significant disease was lower. An mpMRI-guided diagnostic pathway should be accompanied by appropriate mpMRI protocol optimisation, training, and quality control.

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1. Introduction

Transrectal ultrasound (TRUS) guided prostate biopsy is the standard of care for prostate cancer diagnosis in many countries [1]. It is routinely carried out under local anaesthetic and is relatively easily learnt, taught and applied, making it a practical diagnostic strategy. However, it has several recognised limitations and is prone to random and systematic error [2]. Anterior lesions are

frequently missed, reducing accuracy [3]. Additionally, they can lead to urosepsis in 1–6% [4].

The use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) in the prostate cancer pathway has seen growing interest due to advances in technology using a multiparametric approach (mpMRI). This involves T1 and T2 weighted images (T2W) combined with functional imaging sequences such as diffusion weighted imaging (DWI) and dynamic contrast enhancement (DCE) [5,6]. If biopsy could be avoided in men with negative mpMRI then routine use of pre-biopsy mpMRI could be a cost-effective strategy compared to TRUS-biopsy [7]. However, as a relatively novel modality, routine integration of pre-biopsy mpMRI into national diagnostic cancer pathways has yet to occur.

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Data from experienced academic centres and contemporary clinical trials show the negative predictive value (NPV) for detection of significant cancer for mpMRI ranges from 72 to 92% [8–11] and targeted-only approaches have been shown to detect similar amounts of significant cancer to systematic biopsy [12,13]. Randomised studies have shown that MRI performance may be influenced by whether the centre was a dedicated high volume mpMRI academic centre or a non-academic centre, with better performance of an MRI-guided pathway demonstrated in the academic centre [14] than outside of one [15]. It is thus known that optimisation of MRI scanners and the centre's experience has an important role in mpMRI performance as a diagnostic tool [16]. However, mpMRI has not been validated in non-tertiary referral ("non-academic") centres against a thorough reference standard of transperineal template mapping biopsy (TPM).

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the diagnostic accuracy of mpMRI in a non-tertiary referral centre using TPM biopsy as a reference standard. Secondary objectives were to assess: the additional value of DCE and high b-values on DWI in detecting cancer and to explore reasons why mpMRI missed significant cancer.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Setting

Princess Alexandra Hospital (PAH), a non-academic hospital, receiving the majority of its referrals for men with suspected prostate cancer directly from family doctors.

2.2. Patient cohort

All consecutive men who had a TPM biopsy between January 1st, 2015 and April 30th, 2016 were identified from the histopathology database. The population consisted of a representative cohort of all men indicated for prostate biopsy including: 1) biopsy naïve men with suspicion of prostate cancer, 2) men with previous negative biopsy but continued suspicion of prostate cancer and 3) men with known low risk prostate cancer confirmed on a previous biopsy on active surveillance. All men underwent prostate mpMRI and went on to biopsy regardless of mpMRI findings. Men were excluded if the mpMRI was carried out at a different institution or if it was known in advanced that major MRI artefact would be present (e.g. pelvic metalwork).

2.3. Transperineal biopsy

TPM biopsy was performed under general anaesthesia using a modified Barzell technique, reported previously [17]. Biopsy cores were taken approximately every 5 mm on the transperineal grid, aiming for a sampling density of 1 biopsy per ml of tissue. Biopsy cores were potted separately into one of 12 pots. Where mpMRI identified a suspicious lesion, additional targeted biopsies were taken using visual registration technique [12]. One of three experienced surgeons with three to six years of experience in transperineal prostate biopsy carried out the procedures.

2.4. Magnetic resonance imaging

mpMRI was performed with one of two scanners (1.5T Siemens Avanto and 1.5T Siemens Essenza). Sequences included T2W and DWI imaging for all patients, DCE was introduced after January 2015. Contrast used was 15 ml Dotarem® (gadoterate meglumine) administered at 3 mls/sec (concentration 279.32 mg/ml). All cases used a pelvic phased array coil without endorectal coils.

mpMRIs were reported by one of three consultant radiologists with experience in prostate mpMRI ranging from five to twelve years. Prostate lesions were scored using five-level PI-RADS scale (1–cancer highly unlikely, 2–cancer unlikely, 3–equivocal, 4–cancer likely, 5–cancer highly likely) and scores allocated into 27 sectors. Scoring prior to October 2015 was performed using PI-RADSV1 [18]. After this, PI-RADSV2 guidelines were adopted [5]. Dedicated high b-values ($>/ = 1000$) were introduced from August 2015. Detailed sequence parameters are shown in [Supplementary Table 1](#).

2.5. Prostate specimens

Specimens were analysed according to guidelines set by the Royal College of Pathologists, UK [19].

2.6. Clinical significance

Our primary objective was based on using the validated UCL definition 1 (maximum cancer core length [MCCL] $>/ = 6$ mm of any grade or any amount of Gleason grade $>/ = 4 + 3$) and PI-RADS score $>/ = 3$ on mpMRI [10,20]. As there is no accepted universal definition of clinically significant cancer results were reported secondarily according to UCL definition 2 (MCCL $>/ = 4$ mm or Gleason grade $>/ = 3 + 4$) and any amount of Gleason grade $>/ = 7$.

2.7. Re-review of mpMRI

False negative (FN) mpMRIs were re-reviewed by a senior consultant radiologist with pathology results to explore reasons why the initial report was deemed PI-RADS 1–2. Differences in characteristics (PSA level, PSA density, gland volume, total cancer core length (TCCL), and MCCL) between patients with FN and true positive (TP) mpMRIs were compared to identify features that might predict missing cancer.

2.8. Analysis

Prostates were analysed on hemigland level as consistent with previous studies in this field [10].

Statistical analysis was conducted using Microsoft Excel and SPSS version 22 (release 22.0.0.0). 2×2 tables to compare presence or absence of clinically significant cancer were created. Sensitivity, specificity, positive predictive value (PPV), NPV, and difference between proportions with 95% CI were calculated where appropriate. Independent T-tests were performed between TP and FN mpMRI results.

2.9. Ethics

This project was deemed exempt from ethics committee approval by the research and development department at PAH.

3. Results

3.1. Study population details

122 men were identified who underwent TPM within the study period. 21 were excluded (1 had mpMRI from another site, 5 had major artefacts from metalwork, and 15 did not have a pre-biopsy mpMRI). Median age was 69, median PSA was 7.0 ng/ml and median prostate volume was 42 ml 24/101 (24%) had no mpMRI lesion; 76/101 (75%) had a PI-RADS score of $>/ = 3$ ([Table 1](#)).

Overall detection of all cancer on TPM biopsy was 78/101 (77%). 41/101 (41%) had cancer diagnosed with UCL definition 1; 57/101

Table 1
Study population details.

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Total number of patients | 101 |
| Median age (IQR) | 69 (62–76) |
| Median ml prostate volume (IQR) | 42 (30–54) |
| Median ng/ml PSA (IQR) | 7.0 (4.6–9.8) |
| Median sampling density - number of biopsy cores taken/ml prostate tissue (IQR) | 0.94 (0.77–1.3) |
| Number of mpMRI with contrast enhanced sequences (%) | 47 (46.5) |
| Prior biopsy status (%) | |
| - Previous positive | 64 (63.4) |
| - Previous negative | 12 (11.9) |
| - Biopsy naive | 25 (24.8) |
| MRI result (%) | |
| - PI-RADS score 1 - 2 | 25 (24.8) |
| - PI-RADS score 3 | 32 (31.7) |
| - PI-RADS score 4 | 23 (22.8) |
| - PI-RADS score 5 | 21 (20.8) |

(56%) with UCL definition 2; and 43/101 (43%) with any Gleason ≥ 7 . Breakdown of cancer detected is given in Table 2.

3.2. mpMRI validity

At primary definitions of clinical significance, mpMRI achieved sensitivity 76.9% (95% CI 66–88), specificity 60.7% (95% CI 53–69), PPV 40.4% (95% CI 31–50) and NPV 88.3% (95% CI 82–95). The performance characteristics of mpMRI according to varied histological thresholds for clinically significant disease is summarised in Table 3.

3.3. Sub-group analysis: dynamic contrast enhancement

No difference in performance characteristics were shown between scans with and without DCE (Table 4).

3.4. Subgroup analysis: sequence parameters

46 men had mpMRI scans with dedicated high b-value as part of the DWI sequences and 55 men had scans prior to use of high b-values. Addition of high b-values demonstrated a higher specificity but lower sensitivity (summarised in Table 5).

3.5. False negative mpMRI

10/12 (83%) hemiglands with significant cancer (UCL definition 1) missed by mpMRI had lesions located in the apex only and 2/12 (17%) had lesions extending through both apex and base of the prostate. No missed cancer was found isolated to the base only. 4/12 (33%) lesions were visible on re-review and were missed on initial reporting (all scoring PI-RADS 1 initially); 6/12 (50%) were difficult to accurately visualise on re-review due to heterogeneous gland appearance; 1/12 was not visible at all (8%); and 1/12 (8%) was due

to coding of a midline TPM sector as bilateral disease, therefore no lesion was actually missed.

The key difference in men who had significant disease missed by mpMRIs compared to those who had correctly identified lesions (Table 6) was mean MCCL, which was significantly lower in those cancers missed on mpMRI (means 5.8 mm versus 7.7 mm, difference 1.9 mm, $p = 0.035$).

4. Discussion

4.1. Summary of main findings

In summary, our study demonstrates that in the context of a non-academic hospital, mpMRI has good performance characteristics for the detection of clinically significant cancer with high sensitivity 76.9% and NPV 88.3%. This is encouraging for the adoption of an MRI-influenced diagnostic pathway outside of academic centres. As with other studies, specificity 60.7% and PPV 40.4% were low indicating the need for histological verification of a suspicious area on mpMRI. We also explored possible reasons for mpMRI missing clinically significant cancer and showed that when mpMRI missed cancer, it tended to be low volume disease, with low maximum cancer core length.

4.2. Clinical implications

mpMRI has been proposed as a triage test for men with suspected prostate cancer, suggesting that men with negative mpMRIs could avoid biopsy altogether [10,12]. Whilst results seen from the literature are primarily from tertiary referral centres or clinical trial settings, there is a distinct lack of results from centres outside these settings. It is in these pragmatic settings that the validity of mpMRI needs to be proven to consider widespread adoption of this strategy as a primary diagnostic approach for suspected cancer.

Table 2
Cancer detection results of transperineal template biopsy.

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Number of men with clinically significant cancer (%) | |
| - UCL definition 1 (Gleason grade $\geq 4 + 3$ and/or maximum cancer core length ≥ 6 mm) | 41 (40.6) |
| - UCL definition 2 (Gleason grade $\geq 3 + 4$ and/or maximum cancer core length ≥ 4 mm) | 57 (56.4) |
| Biopsy result (%) | |
| - Gleason grade 3 + 3 | 35 (34.7) |
| - Gleason grade 3 + 4 | 31 (30.7) |
| - Gleason grade 4 + 3 | 6 (5.9) |
| - Gleason grade 4 + 4 | 6 (5.9) |
| - Benign | 15 (14.9) |
| - ASAP or PIN ^a | 8 (7.9) |

^a ASAP—atypical small acinar proliferation, PIN—prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia.

Table 3

Performance characteristics of multiparametric-MRI in detecting prostate cancer at radiological threshold of PI-RADS score ≥ 3 and varied histological thresholds (95% CI given in parentheses).

| | Sensitivity | Specificity | PPV | NPV |
|----------------------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| UCL definition 1 | 76.9 (66–88) | 60.7 (53–69) | 40.4 (31–50) | 88.3 (82–95) |
| UCL definition 2 | 73.1 (63–83) | 66.1 (58–75) | 57.6 (48–67) | 79.6 (72–87) |
| Gleason grade $\geq 3 + 4$ | 73.2 (62–85) | 60.3 (52–68) | 41.4 (32–51) | 85.4 (79–92) |

Table 4

Performance of multiparametric-MRI with and without contrast in detecting prostate cancer using clinically significant thresholds of UCL definition 1 and PI-RADS score ≥ 3 (95% CI given in parentheses).

| | Without contrast | With contrast | Difference between proportions |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Sensitivity | 86.2 (74–99) | 65.2 (46–85) | 21 (–2–44) |
| Specificity | 60.8 (50–72) | 60.6 (49–72) | 0.2 (–15–16) |
| PPV | 44.6 (32–58) | 34.9 (21–49) | 9.8 (–10–29) |
| NPV | 92.3 (85–100) | 84.3 (74–94) | 8 (–4–20) |
| Mean age | 68.09 | 69 | 0.91 |
| Mean PSA, ng/ml | 9.01 | 7.14 | 1.87 |
| Mean prostate volume, ml | 42.9 | 45.0 | 2.1 |

Table 5

Performance of multiparametric-MRI in detecting prostate cancer according to sequence parameters at clinically significant thresholds of PI-RADS score ≥ 3 and UCL definition 1 (95% CI given in parentheses).

| | No high b-values | High b-values | Difference between proportions |
|--------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|
| Sensitivity | 87.1 (75–99) | 61.9 (41–83) | 25.2 (1.3–49) |
| Specificity | 51.9 (41–63) | 70.4 (60–81) | 18.5 (3.2–34) |
| PPV | 41.5 (30–54) | 38.2 (30–55) | 3.3 (–17–24) |
| NPV | 91.1 (83–99) | 86.2 (77–95) | 4.9 (–7.3–17) |
| Mean age | 67.3 | 70 | 2.7 |
| Mean PSA, ng/ml | 8.7 | 7.5 | 1.2 |
| Mean prostate volume, ml | 45.5 | 41.9 | 3.6 |

Table 6

Comparison between true positive and false negative multiparametric-MRI results at clinically significant thresholds of PI-RADS score ≥ 3 and UCL definition 1.

| | True positive | False negative | Difference |
|-----------------------------|---------------|----------------|------------------------|
| Mean PSA level (ng/ml) | 9.4 | 6.9 | 2.5 (p = 0.282) |
| Mean PSA density (ng/ml/cc) | 0.24 | 0.22 | 0.02 (p = 0.694) |
| Mean Gland volume (cc) | 41.7 | 35.4 | 6.3 (p = 0.299) |
| Mean TCCL (mm) | 23.7 | 11.6 | 12.1 (p = 0.152) |
| Mean MCCL (mm) | 7.7 | 5.8 | 1.9 (p = 0.035) |

Bold signifies significant result.

Our results show that approximately 12% of clinically significant cancers (UCL definition 1) would be missed if decisions to avoid biopsy were based on negative mpMRI alone. The value of a negative mpMRI is similar to the PROMIS trial which demonstrated a NPV 89%. The value of a negative mpMRI to rule out significant cancer at the less stringent UCL definition 2 is also similar to PROMIS, with NPV 80%, compared to PROMIS which demonstrated NPV 72%. These results are very encouraging as they demonstrate that mpMRI can have good performance characteristics in a pragmatic setting outside of a tightly regulated clinical trial.

Whilst missing 12–20% (depending on the definition used) of clinically significant disease may seem high, one should consider this in the context of what men would otherwise get. The standard of care for suspected prostate cancer in many countries is TRUS-guided biopsy, which commonly has an NPV lower than that seen for mpMRI in this study, ranging from 36 to 74% for all cancer detected [11,21–23]. In this context, provided that men with negative mpMRIs are kept under PSA surveillance it would appear that mpMRI could have a role in triaging for biopsy. That too, interpreting a negative MRI in conjunction with a low PSA density

may further help reassure clinicians that avoiding biopsy is safe and reasonable [24].

However, when comparing the ability of mpMRI to detect clinically significant disease (UCL definition 1) and the value of a positive test result, the results from this study are not as good as those seen in the PROMIS Trial which demonstrated a sensitivity of 93%. Learning from the re-review of mpMRIs where significant cancer was missed, 33% of the FN hemiglans had lesions missed initially, which were then visible on re-review. This confirms the known inter-rater variability [25] and might support the concept of non-suspicious mpMRIs getting a double read if decision about avoiding biopsy is going to be made.

It should also be emphasised that the current study results reflect an on-going optimisation of mpMRI conduct during the study period. The PROMIS trial on the other hand had dedicated quality control of mpMRI conduct and training in mpMRI reporting built in to the study prior to the commencement of the study. So perhaps this difference is to be expected. This suggests that in order to obtain the mpMRI sensitivity seen in contemporary clinical trials, appropriate quality control, optimisation of protocols and training is necessary. Results observed in the PROMIS trial cannot be immediately expected by centres developing an mpMRI service and a period of optimisation should be expected. Future work should focus on establishing what this training and quality control should be and how it should be delivered.

In light of the on-going optimisation of mpMRI conduct during the study we carried out subgroup analyses to explore the effect that this had. The use of long-b values in mpMRI has been shown to improve diagnostic performance and dedicated high-b values are recommended in PI-RADsv2 [5,26]. The benefit of DCE, however, is not as clear in the literature, with some studies showing no

advantage [27,28] and others showing that the combination of sequences improves the performance of the mpMRI [29]. Our data did not show improved performance of mpMRI with DCE and whilst the use of high b-values did show higher specificity, in line with the literature, their use did result in decreased sensitivity.

4.3. Limitations

Radical prostatectomy (RP) specimens would be an alternative reference standard for diagnostic validity of mpMRI. This however would be an imperfect reference standard [11] because it could only be carried out in men who have RP. This would represent selection bias as one could only assess the validity of mpMRI in men with high risk features of prostate cancer that are recommended for RP.

Instead, TPM was chosen as the reference standard as it has been shown to have high diagnostic accuracy and can be applied to all men at risk of prostate cancer, thus reducing selection bias [20,30,31]. Furthermore, TPM was carried out at a high sampling density of almost 1 biopsy per ml of tissue in this study.

We acknowledge that the mpMRI protocols in the study were modified over time, but this reflects continuing development and optimisation of mpMRI at our centre, which is an essential process to optimize cancer detection for any centre wishing to adopt mpMRI. For readers considering adopting their own mpMRI services this shows them progressive steps taken. Further, the influence of changing protocols on the diagnostic performance of mpMRI was explored and shown to have negligible effect.

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, mpMRI performance characteristics in the non-academic setting were very encouraging when compared to contemporary clinical trials. A negative mpMRI was just as good at ruling-out clinically significant disease, though the ability of a positive mpMRI to accurately detect clinically significant disease was lower. This supports the adoption of a mpMRI-driven diagnostic prostate cancer pathway outside of academic centres, though this should be accompanied by appropriate mpMRI protocol optimisation, training and quality control.

Ethical approval

This project was deemed exempt from ethics committee approval by the research and development department at PAH.

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Conflicts of interest statement

Hashim Ahmed receives funding from Sonacare Medical, Sophiris, and Trod Medical for other trials. Travel allowance was previously provided from Sonacare. Mark Emberton has stock interest in Nuada Medical Ltd. He is also a consultant to Steba Biotech and GSK. He receives travel funding from Sanofi Aventis, Astellas, GSK, and Sonacare. He previously received trial funding or resources from GSK, Steba Biotech and Angiodynamics and receives funding for trials from Sonacare Inc, Sophiris Inc, and Trod Medical. The other authors declare no competing interests.

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Appendix A. Supplementary data

Supplementary data related to this article can be found at <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijso.2018.01.002>.

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