

Homeopathic supportive care resources alongside Prostate cancer pharmacological treatments

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In all supportive care situations, homeopathic treatments are possible and can be suggested to patients with prostate cancer at all stages of their cancer care journey.

■ KEY NUMBERS FOR PROSTATE CANCER*

- Most common cancer in men (24 % of cancer in adult males)
- Rare before the age of 60, its incidence (number of new cases per year) increases with age.
- 59,885 new cases and 8,100 deaths per year in France (2018).
- In the past ten years, we observed a slight decrease in incidence (-1.1 %) and mortality (-3.7 %) rates, during the follow up of patients with prostate cancer between 2010 to 2018.

* Sources : National Cancer Institute (INCa) 2013

1 Introduction

For this article, I chose to focus on homeopathic possibilities for managing the side effects of pharmacological treatments for prostate cancer. I often see many of these patients during my homeopathy consultations at the University Hospital of Limoges in the Medical Oncology and Radiotherapy

Department. The main request from patients (and oncologists) concerns treatment-induced hot flashes.

After a brief reminder of the therapeutic strategies, I will focus on the different molecules, their adverse side effects, and the main homeopathic medicines that we can propose to bring relief to our patients.

2 Therapeutic strategies

The therapeutic strategy is adapted to the specific situation of each patient and depends on:

- The cancer site and its histological type;
- Disease stage: localized, locally advanced, metastatic and its grade group (aggressiveness);
- Patient's general state, age (under or over the age of 75), presence or absence of comorbidities;
- Life expectancy estimated to be longer than 10 years or not.

Homeopathic supportive care resources...

AGE UNDER 75 AND LIFE EXPECTANCY GREATER THAN 10 YEARS

THE CARE MANAGEMENT HAS EVOLVED IN RECENT YEARS:

- **IF THE CANCER IS LOCALIZED AND HAS A FAVORABLE PROGNOSIS (GRADE)**, options for discussion include active monitoring, radical prostatectomy, external beam radiotherapy, and brachytherapy.
- **IF THE CANCER IS LOCALIZED BUT HAS AN INTERMEDIATE OR POOR PROGNOSIS**, the treatment strategy includes upfront radical prostatectomy and/or external beam radiotherapy, with hormone therapy that can range from 6 months to 3 years depending on the stage and MRI data
- **FOR METASTATIC CANCER**, the therapeutic strategy will depend on the tumor volume and if the patient is symptomatic or not:
 - Large tumor volume, symptomatic patient: chemotherapy with Docetaxel (TAXOTERE) or Cabazitaxel (JEVTANA), LH RH analogs.
 - Small tumor volume, asymptomatic patient: first-line hormone therapy such as triptorelin (DECAPEPTYL®), leuprorelin (ENANTONE® PROSTAP® or STALADEX®), or even goserelin (ZOLADEX®), second-line hormone therapy: abiraterone acetate (ZYTIGA) or enzalutamide (XTANDI®), apalutamide (ERLEADA®), and darolutamide (NUBEQA®).

PATIENT 75 YEARS OLD OR OVER

The treatment consists of hormone therapy alone or deferred with regular PSA monitoring. It is initiated when the PSA is higher than 15.

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Hormone therapy

It is the most used treatment regardless of the patient's age. It is distinguished between first-line hormone therapy and second-line hormone therapy.

FIRST-LINE HORMONE THERAPY:

IT INCLUDES:

- LH-RH analogs:

- triptorelin (DECAPEPTYL®),
- leuprorelin (ENANTONE® PROSTAP® or STALADEX®),
- goserelin (ZOLADEX®);
- GnRH antagonists:
 - degarelix (FIRMAGON®).

THE MAIN SIDE EFFECTS OF THESE TWO TREATMENTS ARE:

- Hot flashes (very common),
- Profuse sweats often associated with hot flashes (it is the most common complaint and the most debilitating for patients),
- Mood swings,
- Physical, mental, and sexual fatigue that can progress to depression,
- Sleep disorders,
- Digestive disorders (diarrhea, constipation, appetite disorders, weight gain).

Hot flashes are rarely isolated symptoms, most times, adverse side effects are linked and intertwined. For the homeopathic management this means that we need to treat the patient's terrain, with the prescription of the patient's Sensitive Type, in addition to the symptomatic medicines (according to the IRP).

FIRST-LINE HORMONE THERAPY ALSO INCLUDES:

- Anti-androgen (androgen receptor antagonists): bicalutamide (CASODEX®), associated with LHRH analogs. Main side effects are gynecomastia, breast pain.

“The main symptomatic homeopathic medicines are medicines we use routinely for managing hot flashes.”

HOT FLASHES

They can occur day and night. Patients describe a sensation of congestion in the face and chest, often accompanied by profuse sweating. The frequency varies from 2 or 3 per day to 1 per hour, affecting the patient's quality of life.

It seems interesting to note, at each consultation, the frequency and intensity of hot flashes, using a visual analog scale (VAS) ranging from 0 (no intensity) to 10 (maximum intensity)

THE MAIN SYMPTOMATIC HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES are medicines we use routinely for managing hot flashes, but in this specific context, it is relevant to bring up other medicines, sometimes as first-line treatment:

BELLADONNA

facial flushing (redness of the face, sensation of heat), profuse sweating, pounding headache.

LACHESIS

facial flushing (red face with rosacea) with mood swings (alternation of logorrhea, aggressiveness, muteness), exacerbated by tight clothes, alcohol; we will think of *Lachesis* in a context of high blood pressure, palpitations, chronic alcoholism.

SANGUINARIA

facial flushing with sensation of burning pain (only on the cheeks), skin pain and sensation of burning pain on the mucous membranes.

SEPIA

Hot flashes start from the pelvis and go up to the face, with a sensation of dizziness, pelvic heaviness (associated with a significant decrease in sexual drive).

These characteristics are essential for prescribing *Sepia*.

SULFUR

sensation of heat and unbearable burning pain with sweats (top of the head, palms of the hands, sole of the feet) aggravated by heat, and the heat of the bed.

OTHER HOMEOPATHIC MEDICINES ARE POSSIBLE:

AMYLIIUM NITROSUM 5 to 9 CH

the most characteristic sign is a great sensation of cold occurring right after the hot flashes.

AURUM METALLICUM 9 or 15 CH

congestion with high blood pressure, associated with severe depression.

CALCAREA CARBONICA 9 or 15 CH

hot flashes with important head sweats.

JABORANDI 5 to 15 CH

excessive sweating all over the body. *Jaborandi* can be very useful in some patients with sweating as their dominant symptom; we often find a prescription in

low dilutions, but in my opinion the *15 CH* dilution is very useful in patients in whom the first-line homeopathic treatments only bring a limited improvement.

FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR HOT FLASHES:

- *Belladonna 9 CH* and
- *Sanguinaria 9 CH*,
5 pellets of each daily, 5 pellets during an episode of hot flashes.

USNEA BARBATA 5 CH

medicine with a limited indication, when the hot flashes are associated with dizziness and exacerbated in the evening. I use it successfully in addition to other medicines when the patient presents with numerous debilitating episodes of hot flashes.

→ **These medicines prescribed in the same manner: 5 pellets daily and 5 pellets on demand during the hot flashes.**

FATIGUE, MOOD DISORDERS

Severe fatigue with almost systematically a sensation of exhaustion, associated with apathy, depressive state, sometimes quite severe:

Homeopathic supportive care resources...

AURUM METALLICUM

mood swings, irritability, anger, severe reactional depression with mental and physical slowing (sclerosis).

CONIUM MACULATUM

predominant depressive state, with severe mental fatigue, psychomotor slowing, dizziness, decreased sex drive; interesting in a context of venous disorders, sclerosis.

GRAPHITES

depression, decreased sex drive, erectile dysfunction, in an overweight patient.

We also find two medicines presented before:

PHOSPHORICUM ACIDUM

severe mental and physical fatigue, sensation of exhaustion, indifference to everything, progressing to depression.

SEPIA OFFICINALIS

reactional depression, venous disorders.

→ Considering the mental symptoms, we use high dilutions: 15 CH, from 5 pellets daily to one dose weekly.

In men taking hormone therapy, the symptoms are intertwined; to achieve good results, it is important to prescribe a symptomatic medicine for hot flashes and one for fatigue, in addition to the Sensitive Type medicine of the patient. We often find the following Sensitive Types: *Aurum muriaticum*, *Calcareo carbonica*, *Graphites*, *Sepia officinalis*, *Sulfur*.

GYNECOMASTIA, BREAST PAIN

APIS MELLIFICA 15 CH

pinkish-red breast edema, tender, improved by cold applications.

BRYONIA ALBA 9 CH

inflammatory breast tension, throbbing pain improved by applying strong pressure, aggravated by movement, at the slightest touch.

CONIUM MACULATUM 9 CH

not very painful breast induration.

PHYTOLACCA DECANDRA 9 CH

very painful breast congestion and tension, aggravated by movement and cold, improved by rest, moderate heat.

→ For the symptomatic patient we can prescribe: 5 pellets (of the selected medicine) morning and evening and 5 pellets on demand according to the symptoms.

SECOND-LINE HORMONE THERAPY

These antiandrogens have different modes of action: androgen synthesis inhibitors or androgen receptor inhibitors.

HORMONE THERAPY WITH ANDROGEN SYNTHESIS INHIBITORS

Abiraterone acetate (ZYTIGA®), is prescribed after the first-line hormone therapy or chemotherapy failed.

- Daily take via oral administration.
- Toxicity for the cardiovascular system, liver, urinary tract, locomotor system.
- Potential side effects are swelling of the extremities (water retention), high blood pressure, hypokalemia, urinary tract infections, osteoporosis.

■ Phosphoricum acidum

For a "booster effect" It can be prescribed in increasing dilutions over a 4-day period:

- D1: 1 dose 5 CH,
- D2: 1 dose 9 CH,
- D3: 1 dose 15 CH,
- D4: 1 dose 30 CH

■ FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT TREATED WITH DECAPEPTYL :

- *Belladonna 9CH* and
- *Sanguinaria canadensis 9 CH* : 5 pellets of each daily, 5 pellets on demand during hot flashes
- *Conium maculatum 15 CH* : 5 pellets daily
- *Sepia officinalis 15 CH* : 5 pellets daily

Medicine of the Sensitive Type: one dose weekly.

PHOSPHORUS 15 CH

systematically prescribed to prevent

...alongside prostate cancer pharmacological treatments



■ We will need to adapt our homeopathic supportive care to new adverse side effects, to better support, relieve and help our patients.

the general toxicity of the product: damage to the kidneys, heart, liver, and hemorrhages.

→ 5 pellets daily during treatment duration.

URINARY TOXICITY, WATER RETENTION, EDEMA

APIS MELLIFICA 15 CH

edema, nephropathy, kidney failure, absence of thirst ++.

BERBERIS VULGARIS 5 CH

elective action on the urinary tract.

NATRUM MURIATICUM 15 CH

in a context of dehydration, with weight loss, fatigue, sensation of thirst.

NATRUM SULFURICUM 15 CH

water retention, weight gain, depression.

CARDIOVASCULAR TOXICITY

CRATAEGUS OXYACANTHA

the dilution is essential and depends

on the patient' symptoms: **5 CH** for low blood pressure, fainting, and **15 CH** for high blood pressure. It is possible to use vials of

CARDINE 8 DH

medicine of organotherapy; in my practice I hardly use it, I prefer the prescription of *Phosphorus* and *Crataegus*.

■ FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT TREATED WITH ZYTIGA

- **Phosphorus 15 CH**,
5 pellets daily
- **Apis mellifica 15 CH**,
5 pellets daily
- **Chelidonium majus 5 CH**,
5 pellets daily

DIGESTIVE TOXICITY

CHELIDONIUM MAJUS 5 CH

action on the liver, complementary medicine of *Phosphorus*.

LYCOPodium CLAVATUM 9 CH

hepatitis, difficult digestion, food intolerance.

TOXICITY OF THE LOCOMOTOR SYSTEM

CALCAREA CARBONICA

CALCAREA FLUORICA

CALCAREA PHOSPHORICA and **SILICEA**

(see above).

Homeopathic supportive care resources...

HORMONE THERAPY WITH ANDROGEN RECEPTOR INHIBITORS

• Enzalutamide (XTANDI®), apalutamide (ERLEADA®), darolutamide (NUBEQA®): these three new molecules belonging to the “new generation hormone therapy” are generally very well tolerated, they are administered orally daily or twice daily (darolutamide).

• **Possible side effects:** headaches, hot flashes, fatigue, cognitive impairment, restless leg syndrome, dry skin, musculoskeletal pain, risk of falls and fractures.

NEUROLOGICAL TOXICITY

Headaches, cognitive disorders, restless leg syndrome:

BARYTA IODATA 9 CH

cognitive impairments, mental slowing, fatigue.

CONIUM MACULATUM 9 CH

sclerosis, psychomotor slowing, dizziness.

GELSEMIUM 9 CH

headaches, tremors, confusion.

PHOSPHORUS 15 CH

neurological toxicity of the medicines, headaches, dizziness.

ZINCUM METAL 15 CH

paresthesia, cognitive impairment (slowing), restless leg syndrome.

HOT FLASHES

We find the classic medicines for hot flashes:

BELLADONNA

SEPIA **SULFUR**

SANGUINARIA

CALCAREA CARBONICA

FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT WITH SECOND-LINE “NEW GENERATION” HORMONE THERAPY

- **Phosphorus 15 CH:**
5 pellets daily
- **Conium maculatum 15 CH :**
5 pellets daily
- **Belladonna 9 CH** and **Sanguinaria canadensis 9 CH :**
5 pellets daily and
5 pellets during hot flashes

FATIGUE, DEPRESSION

BARYTA IODATA 15 CH

fatigue, weight loss.

CONIUM MACULATUM 15CH

sclerosis, fatigue, depression.

GRAPHITES 15 CH

fatigue, depression, weight gain.

PHOSPHORICUM ACIDUM 15 CH

physical, mental, and sexual fatigue, exhaustion.

LOCOMOTOR SYSTEM

RHUS TOX 9 CH and **RUTA 5 CH**

muscle and joint pain.

SYMPHYTUM OFF 5 CH

osteoporosis, bone fracture.

4 Chemotherapy

DOCETAXEL (TAXOTERE)

This chemotherapy belongs to the taxanes family.

- **ADMINISTRATION:** 1-hour intravenous infusion every 3 weeks.
- **TOXICITY:** hematologic, digestive, cutaneous, neurological, osteoarticular.
- **POSSIBLE ADVERSE SIDE EFFECTS:** hematological disorders (leukoneutropenia), digestive disorders (nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, stomatitis), fatigue, skin disorders (hand, foot and mouth

disease, nail damages), neurological disorders (paresthesia, peripheral neuropathies), muscle and joint pain.

FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT TREATED WITH DOCETAXEL

- **NERFS 8 DH:** 1 vial daily
- **Phosphorus 15 CH :**
5 pellets daily
- **Mercurius corrosivus 9 CH** and **Kalium bichromicum 9 CH:**
5 pellets of each daily

...alongside prostate cancer pharmacological treatments

HEMATOLOGICAL TOXICITY

MEDULLOSS 8 DH

organotherapy with hematological action, 1 vial daily.

NEUROLOGICAL TOXICITY

CAUSTICUM 15 CH

paralysis, paresis, neuropathy.

NERFS 8 DH

organotherapy with a neurological action, 1 vial daily.

PHOSPHORUS 15 CH

neurological toxicity of the treatments.

DIGESTIVE TOXICITY

KALIUM BICHROMICUM 9 CH

canker sores, ulcerations.

MERCURIUS CORROSIVUS 9 CH

gingivitis, stomatitis.

NUX VOMICA 5 CH

nausea, vomiting.

PHOSPHORUS 15 CH

nausea, vomiting, hepatitis.

CABAZITAXEL (JEVTANA®)

This chemotherapy protocol (from the taxanes family) is proposed when there is a progression of the disease with Docetaxel AND in the absence of a cumulative toxic effect of the taxanes.

DOSE: One-hour intravenous infusion every 3 weeks.

POSSIBLE SIDE EFFECTS: hematological toxicity (neutropenia, anemia, thrombopenia), neurological, digestive (diarrhea), cardiac, renal, with fatigue (loss of appetite, alteration of the general state).

HEMATOLOGICAL TOXICITY

CROTALUS HORRIDUS 9 CH

thrombocytopenia.

MEDULLOSS 8 DH

leukopenia, anemia.

NEUROLOGICAL TOXICITY

CAUSTICUM 15 CH

paralysis, paresis, neuropathy.

NERFS 8 DH

organotherapy with neurological action, 1 vial per day.

PHOSPHORUS 15 CH

neurological toxicity of the treatments.

DIGESTIVE TOXICITY

ARSENICUM ALBUM 15 CH

vomiting, burning diarrhea.

NUX VOMICA 5 CH

nausea, vomiting.

ALTERATION OF THE GENERAL STATE

ACETICUM ACIDUM 15 CH

severe alteration of the general state, weight loss, edemas.

NATRUM MURIATICUM 15 CH

dehydration, weight loss.

PHOSPHORIC ACIDUM 15 CH

fatigue, exhaustion.

CARDIAC TOXICITY

ARSENICUM IODATUM 9 CH

arrhythmia, sclerosis, high blood pressure.

CARDINE 8 DH

organotherapy with action on the cardiovascular system, 1 vial daily.

FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT TREATED WITH CARBAZITAXEL

- **NERFS 8 DH**: 1 vial per day
- **Phosphorus 15 CH**
- **Phosphoric acidum 15 CH**
- **Arsenicum iodatum 9 CH**: 5 pellets of each daily

Homeopathic supportive care resources...

DENOSUMAB (XGEVA®, PROLIA®)

Denosumab is used when there are bone metastases.

- Either XGEVA®: 120 mg in subcutaneous injections every 4 weeks,
 - or PROLIA®: 60 mg in injections, once every 6 months.
- Possible side effects are: digestive disorders (diarrhea), metabolic disorders (hypocalcemia), musculoskeletal disorders (pain, osteonecrosis of the jaw, atypical femoral fractures), skin disorders.

DIGESTIVE DISORDERS

ARSENICUM ALBUM 9 CH

burning diarrhea, alteration of the general state.

- Or any other symptomatic homeopathic medicine for diarrhea justified by the IRP.

METABOLIC DISORDERS

CALCAREA CARBONICA

stocky morphology, vertebral compression fractures.

CALCAREA FLUORICA

alteration of the bone structure, various deformities.

CALCAREA PHOSPHORICA

tall and lanky morphology, femoral neck fractures.

MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

We find the three *Calcarea* medicines, but more specifically *Calcarea fluorica* due to the important laxity of the supportive connective tissue.

CALCAREA FLUORICA

alteration of the bone tissues and elastic tissues, dental alterations (enamel, tooth pain, dentition disorders).

CALCAREA PHOSPHORICA or CALCAREA CARBONICA

LUESINUM

severe and persistent bone pain, pain of the long bones, exacerbated at night.

SILICEA

bone demineralization, weight loss, alteration of the general state.

SYMPHYTUM 9 CH

sharp bone pain, aggravated by touch, delayed bone healing.

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Conclusion

In recent years, changes in the management of prostate cancer have emerged, along with the advent of new molecules, although the prescription of first-line hormone therapy remains very common in our patients. Adverse side effects can sometimes impede treatment continuation in some patients. This is why, it is important to propose homeopathic treatments to our patients to bring relief and improve their quality of life.

In the next months or years, other therapeutics will emerge, research is under way regarding the HIF-1 alpha protein, involved in hormone therapy resistance; we might see some associations of hormone therapy + HIF-1 alpha inhibitors. We will need to adapt our homeopathic supportive care to new adverse side effects, to better support, relieve and help our patients. ■

FIRST PRESCRIPTION FOR A PATIENT TREATED WITH DENOSUMAB

- *Arsenicum album 9 CH*
 - *Calcarea fluorica 9 CH*
 - *Silicea 15 CH*
- 5 pellets of each daily

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