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Metastatic disease

The underlined terms are listed in the glossary.

Prognostic factors and treatment decisions

If your bladder cancer has spread to another body organ (**Fig. 1**), treatment is unlikely to cure you. Treatment options are limited to controlling the spread of disease (metastasis) and reducing symptoms.

Treatment options

Chemotherapy

Platinum containing chemotherapy has been proven most effective against urothelial cancer. Chemotherapy-combinations like MVAC (methotrexate, vinblastine, adriamycin and cisplatin) or Gemcitabine + Cisplatin are most often used. The side effects of these treatments are to be considered wisely when using chemotherapy in a palliative setting. A low performance status, comorbidities and a decreased kidney function might/will make you ineligible for these chemotherapies.

If you have a reduced kidney function and are therefore unfit for Cisplatin containing chemotherapy,

combinations like Gemcitabine + Carboplatin or M-CAVI (methotrexate/carboplatin/vinblastine) are an option with slightly decreased efficacy. Should your disease recur or progress under the above-mentioned therapies, treatment can be shifted to a second line therapy. For this reason chemotherapy with Vinflumine can be advised.

Additional surgery to remove tumor mass can only be seen as symptomatic (for relieving pain or obstruction) rather than curative.

Some types of chemotherapy are quite intensive and can have a lot of side effects. If you are not fit, or if you feel very unwell from the cancer these side effects can be quite severe. Older patients in particular, may benefit from a less intensive type of chemotherapy.

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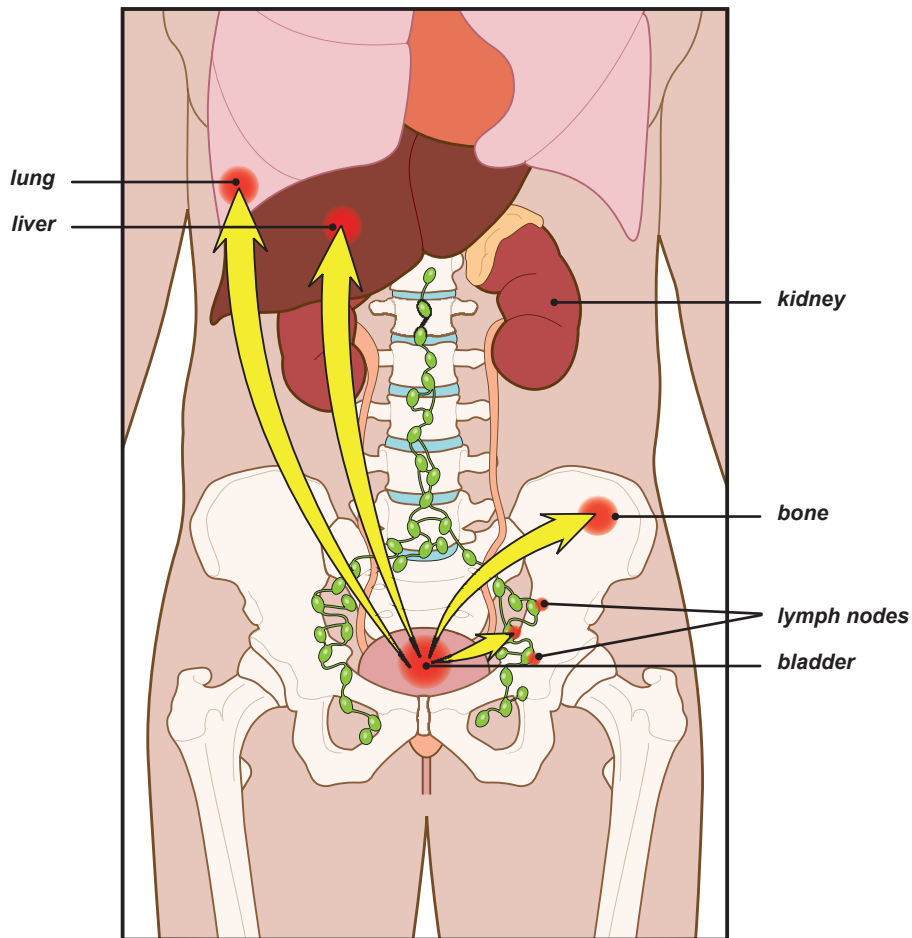


Fig. 1 Metastatic disease

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Treatment of bone metastases

When bladder cancer has spread to the bone, skeletal complications can occur, such as weakening of the bones. This causes pain and can have a detrimental effect on your quality of life. Your doctor may suggest drug treatment to help strengthen your bones and control the pain.

Access to clinical trials

All patients with a diagnosis of recurrent or metastatic bladder cancer, and particularly those whose pri-

or chemotherapy has been unsuccessful, should be referred to centres where clinical trials are available.

An increasing number of studies are available in various settings for patients who have never had chemotherapy as well as pre-treated patients. In addition, the recent experimental use of drugs called 'immune checkpoint inhibitors' in advanced bladder cancer is revolutionizing treatment for this disease.

Access to clinical trials should be the first option to discuss with your physician. The therapeutic decision is made after reviewing thorough information on the pros and cons of each option and depending on the individual patient and disease characteristics.

Support

Preparing for a consultation

Preparing for a consultation can be very useful. It will help you and your doctor better address your questions and concerns. It can also help you prepare for treatment and the possible side effects.

Here are some ways to prepare:

- Write down the questions you would like to ask the doctor. This will help you remember things that you want to ask. Writing down questions can also help organize your thoughts.
- If you can, take someone with you to the visit. It is good to have someone to discuss what the doctor said, and you'll probably remember different things.
- Ask for information about your specific type of bladder cancer.
- If the doctor uses words you do not understand, ask for an explanation.
- Tell your doctor what medicines you take, including any nonprescription medicine and supplements. Some of these medicines can affect your treatment.

After the consultation:

- Search the Internet or go to the library for more information about your type of cancer. Be aware that not all information online is of good quality.

Your doctor or health care team can point you to reliable websites.

- Patient organizations can offer support and information.
- Discuss the possible financial consequences of your treatment with your health care team. They might be able to direct you to people or places where you can get advice about your economic situation or even financial help.
- If you would like a second opinion from another specialist, you can ask your health care team for a referral.

Deciding on treatment

If treatment is intended to slow down the cancer and control the symptoms, deciding what treatment is best for you—or whether to have treatment at all—can be very difficult.

You will need a clear understanding of what drug treatment can do for you at this stage and how it will affect your quality of life.

Talk to family or friends and people who are close to you. It can help to discuss things with someone outside your inner circle. Your doctor may be able to refer you to a counsellor or specialist nurse.

Efforts are being made to promote patient advocacy for bladder cancer. Ask your oncologist if a bladder cancer patient representative is available near you.

This information was last updated in March 2016 and is subject to change following review by the European Cancer Patient Coalition (ECPC) and EAU Guidelines Office.

This leaflet is part of a series of EAU Patient Information on Bladder Cancer. It contains general information about bladder cancer. If you have any specific questions about your individual medical situation you should consult your doctor or other professional healthcare provider.

This information was produced by the European Association of Urology (EAU) in collaboration with the EAU Section of Oncological Urology (ESOU), the Young Academic Urologists (YAU) the European Society of Residents in Urology (ESRU), and the European Association of Urology Nurses (EAUN).

The content of this leaflet is in line with the EAU Guidelines.

Contributors:

| | |
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| Dr. Mark Behrendt | Basel, Switzerland |
| Dr. Juan Luís Vasquez | Herlev, Denmark |
| Ms. Sharon Holroyd | Halifax, United Kingdom |
| Dr. Andrea Necchi | Milan, Italy |
| Dr. Evangelos Xylinas | Paris, France |

Illustrations by: Mark Miller Art
Missouri, United States of America

Edited by: Jeni Crockett-Holme
Virginia, United States of America