Partial ablation versus radical prostatectomy in intermediate-risk prostate cancer: the PART feasibility RCT

Freddie C Hamdy,[1]* Daisy Elliott,[2] Steffi le Conte,[1] Lucy C Davies,[3] Richéal M Burns,[3] Claire Thomson,[1] Richard Gray,[3] Jane Wolstenholme,[3] Jenny L Donovan,[2,4] Ray Fitzpatrick,[3] Clare Verrill,[1] Fergus Gleeson,[5] Surjeet Singh,[1] Derek Rosario,[6] James WF Catto,[5] Simon Brewster,[7] Tim Dudderidge,[8] Richard Hindley,[9] Amr Emara,[9] Prasanna Sooriakumaran,[10] Hashim U Ahmed[11] and Tom A Leslie[1]

[1]Nuffield Department of Surgical Sciences, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
[2]Population Health Sciences, Bristol Medical School, University of Bristol, Bristol, UK
[3]Nuffield Department of Population Health, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
[4]National Institute for Health Research Collaboration for Leadership in Applied Health Research and Care West at University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust, Bristol, UK
[5]Department of Oncology, University of Oxford, Oxford, UK
[6]Department of Oncology and Metabolism, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, UK
[7]Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Oxford, UK
[8]University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust, Southampton, UK
[9]Hampshire Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Basingstoke, UK
[10]University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, London, UK
[11]Department of Surgery and Cancer, Imperial College London, London, UK

*Corresponding author freddie.hamdy@nds.ox.ac.uk

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Plain English summary

The PART feasibility RCT

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Plain English summary

Men with prostate cancer that is thought to significantly affect only one area of the prostate gland may be offered treatment of the whole gland, including surgery to remove the prostate, or radiotherapy. These treatments have side effects, including leaking urine and difficulty getting an erection, so another option is repeat investigations at regular intervals (active surveillance), with surgery or radiotherapy undertaken only if the cancer progresses.

High-intensity focused ultrasound (HIFU) is a new treatment that targets only the areas of cancer using sound waves directed at the tissues containing significant cancer, causing them to heat up and die. HIFU may be just as good at preventing progression as treating the whole prostate, with fewer side effects, but research is needed to be sure of this.

Partial prostate Ablation versus Radical prosTatectomy (PART) is a feasibility study comparing HIFU (treating only part of the prostate) with surgery (removing the whole prostate) in men with cancer in only one area of their prostate gland that has a medium risk of spreading elsewhere over the next few years, and so treatment is recommended.

The PART trial aimed to find out if men would be willing to take part in such a study. If they were, the same research could be done with a large number of men to find out whether or not HIFU is as good as surgery in preventing prostate cancer from spreading, and what the short-, medium- and long-term side effects of each treatment are.

The feasibility study was conducted successfully and reached its target of recruiting 80 participants. Men filled out questionnaires about side effects and their quality of life before treatment and a further eight times over the following 3 years to help the research team understand how the different treatments affected them. We have therefore shown that a large trial to provide definitive evidence is possible, and essential, before practice can change for the benefit of patients.

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