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Copy Number Loss of 17q22 Is Associated with Enzalutamide Resistance and Poor Prognosis in Metastatic Castration-Resistant Prostate Cancer

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to measure genomic changes that emerge with enzalutamide treatment using analyses of whole-genome sequencing and RNA sequencing.

Experimental Design: One hundred and one tumors from men with metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (mCRPC) who had not been treated with enzalutamide ($n = 64$) or who had enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC ($n = 37$) underwent whole genome sequencing. Ninety-nine of these tumors also underwent RNA sequencing. We analyzed the genomes and transcriptomes of these mCRPC tumors.

Results: Copy number loss was more common than gain in enzalutamide-resistant tumors. Specially, we identified 124 protein-coding genes that were more commonly lost in enzalutamide-resistant samples. These 124 genes included eight putative tumor suppressors located at nine distinct genomic regions. We demonstrated that focal deletion of the 17q22 locus that includes *RNF43* and *SRSF1* was not present in any patient with enzalutamide-naïve mCRPC but was present in 16% (6/37) of patients with enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC. 17q22 loss was associated with lower *RNF43* and *SRSF1* expression and poor overall survival from time of biopsy [median overall survival of 19.3 months in 17q22 intact vs. 8.9 months in 17q22 loss, HR, 3.44 95% confidence interval (CI), 1.338–8.867, log-rank $P = 0.006$]. Finally, 17q22 loss was linked with activation of several targetable factors, including CDK1/2, Akt, and PLK1, demonstrating the potential therapeutic relevance of 17q22 loss in mCRPC.

Conclusions: Copy number loss is common in enzalutamide-resistant tumors. Focal deletion of chromosome 17q22 defines a previously unappreciated molecular subset of enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC associated with poor clinical outcome.

Introduction

Metastatic castration-resistant prostate cancer (CRPC) is the lethal form of the disease and the second leading cause of cancer-related mortality in men in the United States (1). Due to genomic sequencing efforts, we now know that recurrent genomic alterations in specific genes occur commonly in CRPC. These include mutations in androgen receptor (*AR*), *TP53, PTEN*, and *ETS* fusions (2).

One common form of resistance to androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) is intracrine androgen production, leading to continued AR activation (3). The AR antagonist enzalutamide is one of the principal treatments for patients with mCRPC and has demonstrated improved survival in men with mCRPC in two phase III clinical trials (4–7). The majority of patients benefit from treatment with this agent (4, 6). However, disease progression is inevitable, and little is known about mechanisms that contribute to clinical enzalutamide resistance (8, 9).

Seeking to clarify the molecular mechanisms that underlie enzalutamide resistance, we analyzed whole-genome sequencing (WGS) and RNA sequencing (RNA-seq) of 101 CRPC metastases previously reported by Quigley and colleagues (10), specifically comparing patients whose tumors were enzalutamide naïve versus those whose tumors were enzalutamide resistant. We hypothesized that there would be significant copy number (CN) differences between enzalutamide-resistant and enzalutamide-naïve samples and that specific CN alterations (CNA) would be linked to worse patient outcome. To that end, we examined CN variation among these tumors and compared the CN loss events that were enriched in enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC tumors. Integrating these loci with putative tumor suppressor genes located there identified candidate genes whose loss may contribute to enzalutamide resistance.

Materials and Methods

Tumor specimens and data processing

Tissue biopsy samples were obtained under an Institutional Review Board (IRB)-approved protocol at the participating West Coast

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Translational Relevance

Although enzalutamide prolongs survival of patients with mCRPC, disease progression is nearly universal due to the development of drug resistance. Importantly, treatment options are limited for patients with mCRPC who develop enzalutamide resistance. Thus, understanding mechanisms of resistance and identifying molecularly defined patient subsets may lead to new approaches to overcome resistance. By analyzing the genomes and transcriptomes of enzalutamide-naïve and enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC tumors, we determined that focal deletion of chromosome 17q22 was present in 16% of patients with enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC—but none of the patients with enzalutamide-naïve mCRPC—and was associated with poor overall survival from the time of biopsy. Master regulator analysis nominated several druggable targets including CDK1/2, Akt, and PLK1 that may be activated in tumors with 17q22 loss.

Prostate Cancer Dream Team (WCDT) centers. All participating patients signed written, informed consent forms prior to study participation, and this protocol was conducted in accordance with recognized ethical guidelines under the supervision of the IRB at each center. Details for patient clinicopathologic features, tissue collection, sample preprocessing, WGS, and RNA-seq were described previously (10, 11). WGS was performed on 101 mCRPC samples using the Illumina HiSeq platform. According to Prostate Cancer Clinical Trials Working Group-2 criteria (12), 37 samples were defined as enzalutamide-resistant based on disease progression during treatment with enzalutamide; the other samples ($n = 64$) were from patients not previously exposed to enzalutamide. Among these 101 samples with WGS data, 99 samples (enzalutamide-naive $n = 63$; enzalutamide-resistant $n = 36$) also underwent RNA-seq using Illumina NextSeq500 or Illumina HiSeq2500.

For WGS data analysis, reads were first aligned to hg38-decoy reference using the Isaac aligner (version 04.17.06.15; ref. 13). We used Strelka (version 2.8.0; ref. 14) for somatic mutations calling and Annovar (15) and snpEff (16) for the annotation of the mutations. CNs were derived from Canvas (version 1.28.0-O01073; ref. 17) and CopyCat (https://github.com/chrisamiller/copyCat) with the CN ratios being calculated by Circular Binary Segmentation (18). For RNA-seq data analysis, alignment to hg38-decoy reference was performed using STAR aligner (version 2.5.0b) with per-gene counts quantification on the basis of Illumina RNA-seq alignment app (version 1.1.0; ref. 19). Expression of *AR* variant 7 (*AR-V7*) was measured from RNA-seq as described previously (20).

Mutation and CN calling

Mutations were events that fulfilled the Strelka "PASS" designation and snpEff annotation of nonsilent, splicing, or exonic region. CN was defined as following: CN ≥ 3 (gain), 0.6 < CN ≤ 1.6 (shallow loss, i.e., mono-allelic), or CN ≤ 0.6 (deep loss, i.e., bi-allelic).

Curation of differential CNAs

To determine differential gene CN variation between enzalutamide-naïve and -resistant samples, contingency table testing for each gene was performed using the Fisher exact test. More specifically, for each gene we built a contingency table accounting for CN loss cases in enzalutamide-naïve and -resistant groups and hypothesized that the proportion of gene loss was equal in the two groups. Applying multiple hypothesis correction did not yield differentially altered genes. As such, the genes meeting the uncorrected Fisher exact test P value ≤0.01 were further analyzed for the enrichment of tumor suppressors. Differential CN gains were tested and filtered in the same way. Cytobands were assigned to differentially altered CN genes on the basis of hg38-decoy reference and hg38 cytoband annotation for standard chromosomes.

Clinical endpoints and survival analysis

Overall survival (OS) was measured from the time of biopsy. The median duration of follow-up for survival was approximately 14.5 months. The Kaplan–Meier method with log-rank testing and Cox proportional hazard (Cph) model was used to characterize the relationship between OS and cytobands containing putative tumor suppressors that showed differential loss between enzalutamide-naive and -resistant groups. Multivariable survival analysis with Cph model was performed to account for genomic and clinicopathologic factors. For genomic factors, *RB1* 2-hits, *TP53* 2-hits, *PTEN* 2-hits, and *AR* functional gain, as defined in the previous report (11), were selected. *AR-V7* was recently shown as a prognostic factor in mCRPC and was also included (21). In addition, six of the eight clinicopathologic factors previously reported to be prognostic for OS were also examined (opioid analgesic use and serum albumin were not available in our cohort and thus excluded; ref. 22). Genomic and clinicopathologic factors found to be prognostic in univariate Cph model at a significance level of <0.05 were included in the subsequent multivariable survival analysis to evaluate the HR for each variable.

Gene set enrichment analysis

GSEAPreranked tool was used to perform gene set enrichment analysis. Candidate gene sets were defined in C2 canonical pathway reactome from the MSigDB database (version 6.2). We used DESeq2 to identify the genes that were differentially expressed in patients with 17q22-loss tumors (all enzalutamide resistant) relative to patients who had enzalutamide-resistant tumors but no 17q22 loss (23). Before DEseq2 analysis, low expression genes were excluded if they had fewer than 20 counts in all samples. We then ranked genes from highest confidence enrichment in patients with 17q22-loss tumors to highest confidence enrichment in patients who had enzalutamide-resistant tumors but no 17q22 loss. This ranked gene list was used as input for pathways analysis using GSEAPreranked tool with the number of permutation as 2,000.

Master regulator analysis

Kinase activity was inferred using the master regulator (MR) inference algorithm (MARINa; ref. 24) compiled in the *viper* R package (25). Gene expression signatures and a regulatory network (regulome) are the two sources of data required as input for *viper* analysis. For each gene, we first used DESeq2 to calculate the Wald test statistics that quantified gene expression differences between samples with and without focal 17q22 deletion (23). The Wald test statistics from DESeq2 output were used as the gene expression signature input to MARINa. Each kinase regulator is composed of positive (activated by the regulator) and negative (repressed by the regulator) targets. The kinase regulome used in this study was curated from several kinase databases as described previously (26).

Data visualization and statistical analysis

The OncoPrint plot was generated using the *ComplexHeatmap* R package (27). All statistical analyses were performed using R (v3.5.1).

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P values were adjusted with a Benjamini–Hochberg (BH) correction to account for multiple comparisons.

Results

Enzalutamide-resistance is associated with high CN loss

Men with mCRPC were enrolled on the WCDT biopsy protocol, and WGS and RNA-seq were performed on samples with sufficient tumor present in the sample. Specifically, WGS data were available for 101 samples (enzalutamide-resistant, $n = 37$; enzalutamide-naïve, $n = 64$) and RNA-seq for 99 samples (enzalutamide-resistant, $n = 36$; enzalutamide-naïve, $n = 63$). The clinical characteristics and sequencing results have been reported previously (10, 11). In this study, we sought to identify CNAs that were associated with enzalutamide resistance.

To identify CNA events—either amplification or deletion—that were enriched in enzalutamide-resistant samples, Fisher exact test was performed for each gene that was altered between the two groups (**Fig. 1**). From this analysis, we determined that CN loss events in enzalutamide-resistant samples were more common than those in enzalutamide-naïve samples. Loss of loci with classical tumor suppressor genes, including *TP53, RB1*, and *PTEN,* were reported to be more common in mCRPC than hormone-naive cancers (2). However, only *PTEN* showed a trend toward greater frequency of loss in enzalutamide-resistant versus enzalutamide-naïve samples ($P = 0.04$; Supplementary Fig. S1).

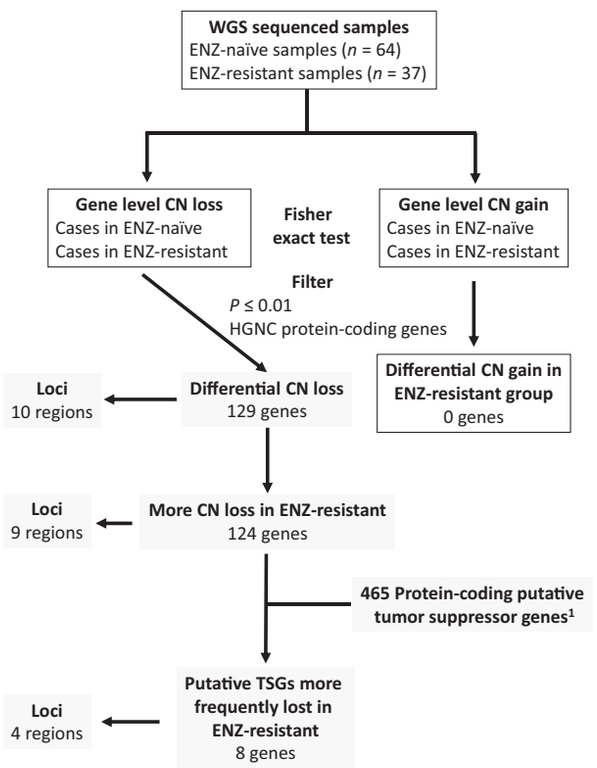

Figure 1.

Identification of differential CNA events between enzalutamide-naïve and enzalutamide-resistant samples. Gene-level CN gain and loss were analyzed separately. After Fisher exact test, differentially altered genes were defined through filtering according to unadjusted *P* value and HGNC protein-coding genes. The list of genes was then intersected with previously annotated putative tumor suppressor genes by Davoli and colleagues (29). Locus was assigned on the basis of standard hg38 cytoband annotation. ENZ, enzalutamide; HGNC, HUGO Gene Nomenclature Committee.

To identify other genomic loci that were different between enzalutamide-resistant versus enzalutamide-naïve tumors, we examined CN data and aimed to find changes in CN linked with protein-coding genes that were statistically significant between these two groups (**Fig. 1**). No CN gain events with significant differences were found between the two groups (Dataset S1). We hypothesized that CN loss of specific genes, especially tumor suppressors, may contribute to enzalutamide resistance. Therefore, we focused on CN loss events and identified 129 protein-coding genes that exhibited a differential CN loss profile in enzalutamide-resistant tumors versus enzalutamide-naïve tumors (unadjusted Fisher exact test *P* value ≤0.01, **Fig. 2A** and Dataset S2). These differential loss genes were located on ten different chromosome regions (**Fig. 2A**). More specifically, 124 of these 129 protein-coding genes (located on nine regions) were more frequently lost in enzalutamide-resistant tumors versus enzalutamide-naïve tumors (**Fig. 2A**). All of the nine loci that showed higher loss frequency in enzalutamide-resistant tumors were monoallelic (shadow loss, Supplementary Fig. S2).

Loss of tumor suppressor genes may confer enzalutamide resistance

We investigated our list of 124 protein-coding genes from loci that that were more frequently lost in enzalutamide-resistant versus enzalutamide-naïve samples and determined which of these genes were putative tumor suppressors by comparing with a list of previously curated putative tumor suppressors. The HUGO Gene Nomenclature Committee (HGNC; ref. 28) examined a total of 19,198 protein-coding genes and 465 putative tumor suppressors were identified by Davoli and colleagues (TUSON *P* value ≤0.01; **Fig. 2B**; ref. 29). We compared our list of 124 protein-coding genes with this list of 465 putative tumor suppressor genes. Using these 465 putative tumor suppressor genes among all 19,198 protein-coding genes as the background for the prevalence of tumor suppressors, we determined that these putative tumor suppressor genes were overrepresented in our list of protein-coding genes that had undergone CN loss in enzalutamide-resistant tumors (Fisher exact test $P = 0.011$; odds ratio = 2.78, **Fig. 2B**).

In total, we identified eight genes that were present in both our list of 124 protein-coding genes and the list of 465 putative tumor suppressor genes from Davoli and colleagues (29). These genes were located on four cytobands: 17q22 *(SRSF1* and *RNF43*), 17q24 (*PRKAR1A* and *ABCA10*), 2q24 (*BAZ2B*), and 4q35 (*WWC2, IRF2*, and *FAT1*; **Figs. 2B** and **3A**). Among these eight genes, *FAT1* loss was the most common in enzalutamide-resistant samples [12 cases in enzalutamide-resistant samples (12/37, 32.4%) vs. only five cases in enzalutamide-naïve samples (5/64, 7.8%)]. More intriguing was the loss of *RNF43* and *SRSF1* on 17q22 because this loss was only identified in patients resistant to enzalutamide (6/37, **Fig. 3A**). Of our six patients whose tumors harbored 17q22 loss, two patients had received only enzalutamide whereas four others had received both enzalutamide and abiraterone. Importantly, none of the tumors from patients who had received abiraterone alone harbored 17q22 loss. In most cases, these genes along with other protein-coding genes on the same cytobands were lost concomitantly (Supplementary Fig. S2).

With the transcriptomic data available for 99 samples, we next examined the expression of these eight putative tumor suppressor genes in samples with CN loss versus samples without CN loss. As shown in **Fig. 3B**, there was a statistically significant reduction in gene

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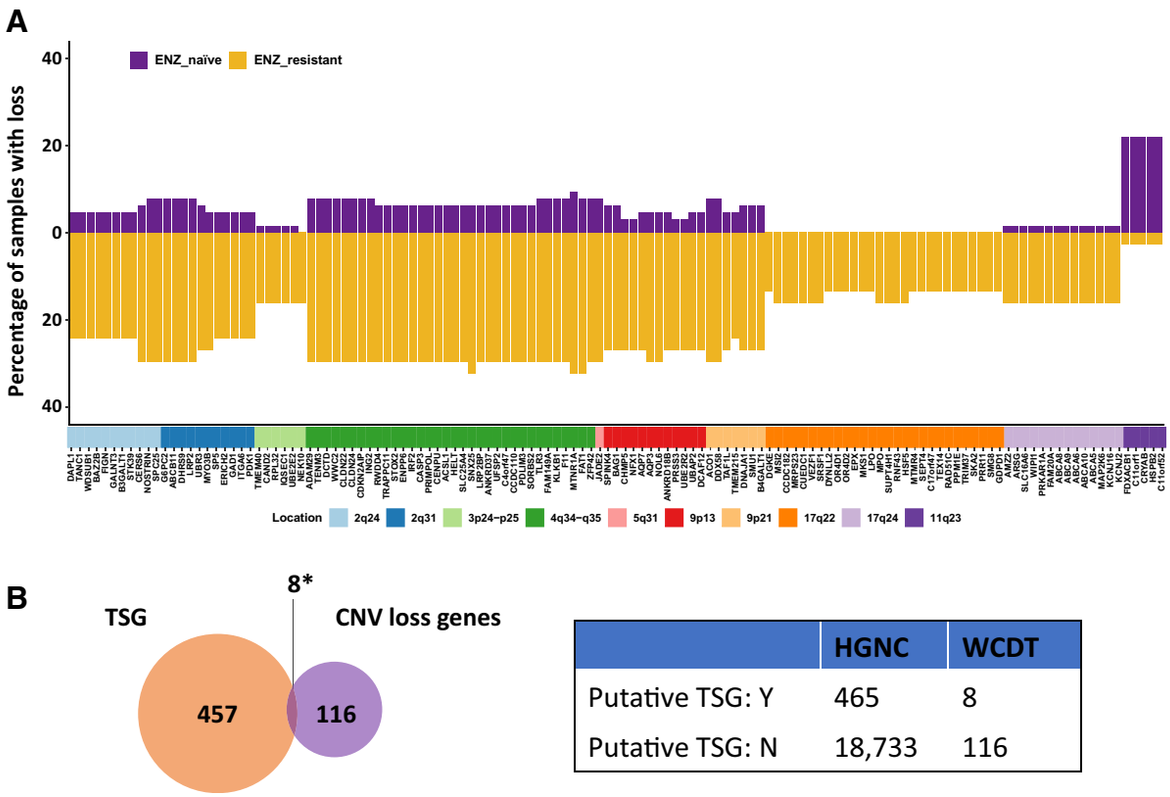

	HGNC	WCDT
Putative TSG: Y	465	8
Putative TSG: N	18,733	116

Figure 2.

Enzalutamide-resistant samples contain more CN losses than gains, and lost loci are enriched for putative tumor suppressor genes (TSG). **A,** Waterfall plot showing the percentage of samples with CN loss in enzalutamide-naïve and enzalutamide-resistant groups. The genes are ordered according to location on the genome. **B,** Left, Venn diagram showing the enrichment of putative TSG from Davoli and colleagues (29). Right, contingency table for Fisher exact test. *, *P* value = 0.011. ENZ, Enzalutamide; Y, yes; N, no.

expression for six of the eight putative tumor suppressor genes whose loci were more frequently lost in enzalutamide-resistant versus enzalutamide-naïve tumor samples (*SRSF1, RNF43, PRKAR1A, BAZ2B, IRF2*, and *FAT1*). A trend toward a statistically significant reduction in expression was observed for the other two genes—*ABCA10* (adjusted $P = 0.072$) and *WWC2* (adjusted $P = 0.054$).

Focal deletion of 17q22 containing *SRSF1* and *RNF43* is linked to poor OS

Next, we sought to determine if loss of any of the four cytobands harboring the eight putative tumor suppressor genes identified in our analysis was prognostic for OS. To determine if loss of these loci was linked to poor outcomes, we performed survival analysis stratified by deletion of these four specific cytobands containing the putative tumor suppressors of interest. This analysis revealed that focal deletion of 17q22 that contains *SRSF1* and *RNF43* was associated with a significantly lower OS (**Fig. 4**; Supplementary Fig. S3). Median OS of patients whose tumors did not harbor 17q22 loss was 19.3 months versus 8.9 months for patients whose tumors harbored 17q22 loss (log-rank $P = 0.0064$, **Fig. 4**).

Univariate survival analysis showed that clinicopathologic features including serum hemoglobin, serum lactate dehydrogenase, serum alkaline phosphatase, prostate-specific antigen (PSA), ECOG performance status and absence of visceral metastasis, and genomic factors such as *RB1* 2-hits were associated with poor OS (Supplementary Table S1). To determine whether 17q22 loss was predictive of worse OS after accounting for these clinicopathologic features and well-characterized genomic factor in mCRPC tumors, we performed multivariable survival analysis using Cph model. 17q22 loss was prognostic (HR, 4.634; 95% CI, 1.698–12.643; $P = 0.0028$) after adjusting for these factors (**Table 1**).

To identify potentially targetable factors that were differentially activated in tumors with 17q22 loss, we performed MR analysis—an algorithm that allows one to identify differentially activated regulators in a given comparison based on the enrichment of each regulator's gene targets (24, 25). This analysis predicted several kinases to be differentially activated in samples with 17q22 loss (**Fig. 5**). Among these were polo-like kinase 1 (PLK1), AKT1, and cyclin-dependent kinases (CDK1 and CDK2), all of which are targetable with small molecule inhibitors that are currently being investigated in clinical trials (**Fig. 5**).

Discussion

Enzalutamide is commonly used as the first-line treatment for men with mCRPC whose tumors are progressing despite ADT (4). Clinical benefit is seen in the majority of patients, but resistance is nearly universal (4). Although several enzalutamide resistance mechanisms have been described in preclinical models, there are

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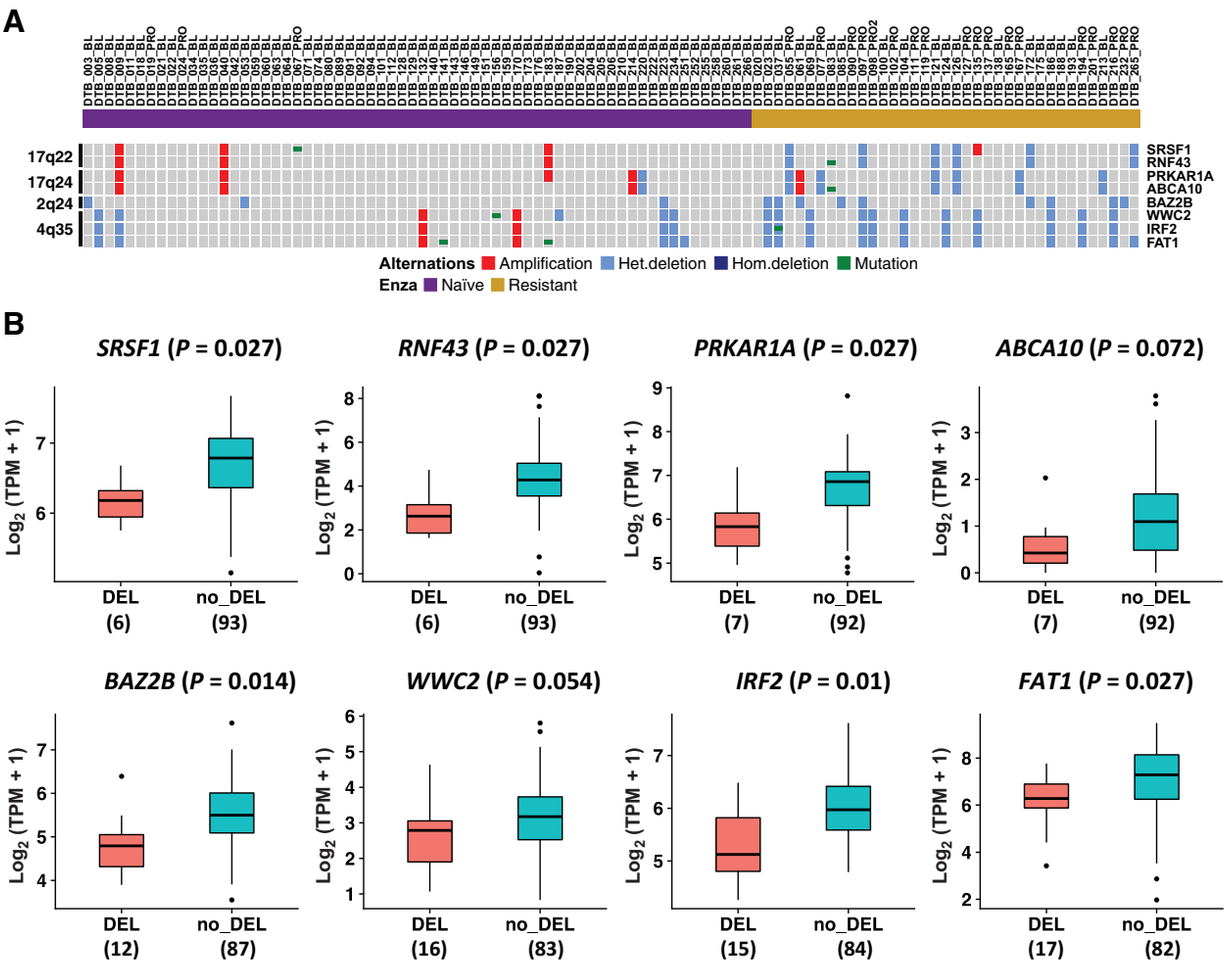

Figure 3.

Genetic alterations and gene expression of eight putative tumor suppressor genes from loci more frequently lost in enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC. **A,** An OncoPrint indicating the CNAs and mutation status of tumor suppressor genes in each sample. **B,** Expression levels of tumor suppressor genes in samples with CN loss versus samples without CN loss reported as $\log_2(\text{TPM} + 1)$. *P* value was determined by two-tailed Student *t* test and adjusted with BH method.

limited analyses examining acquired resistance mechanisms in tissue biopsies from patients treated with enzalutamide, and those reports were limited in scope (8, 9). To our knowledge, our report represents one of the largest collection of patient metastases from those with known enzalutamide-naïve and enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC and sheds new light on alterations in genomic loci that may contribute to enzalutamide resistance and that are associated with poor outcomes.

When examining CN gains in this cohort, we found no significant differences between patients who were enzalutamide-naïve compared with those who were enzalutamide-resistant, including for the *AR* locus on chromosome X and the *MYC* locus on chromosome 8 (Dataset S1). In contrast, when examining CN loss in this cohort, we identified 124 protein-coding genes located on nine loci that that were more frequently lost in enzalutamide-resistant vs. enzalutamide-naïve tumors (unadjusted Fisher exact test *P* value ≤ 0.01, **Fig. 2A**; Supplementary Fig. S2). By comparing this list of 124 protein-coding genes with a collection of putative tumor suppressor genes (29), we determined that eight of these 124 genes were putative tumor suppressors: *SRSF1, RNF43, PRKAR1A, ABCA10, BAZ2B, WWC2, IRF2,* and *FAT1* (**Figs. 2B** and **3A**). Importantly, there was a significant association between CN loss and reduced expression for six of these putative tumor suppressor genes (**Fig. 3B**), demonstrating that loss of these loci may contribute to functional changes in gene expression that may lead to enzalutamide resistance.

In accordance with the two-hit model proposed by Knudson, alterations in two alleles are required to cause a phenotypic change (30). In our cohort, monoallelic loss occurred in the four loci containing the eight putative tumor suppressor genes. In addition, inactivation of the second allele through mutation was uncommon for the eight putative tumor suppressors (**Fig. 3A**). We cannot rule out the possibility that posttranscriptional mechanisms may lead to loss of function of the remaining intact allele. Another possible explanation for our findings is haploinsufficiency, where loss of only a single copy is required for cancer development, as exemplified by $p27^{KIP1}$ (31). Alternatively, hemizygous deletion of multiple genes, as we saw in several samples, may collectively contribute to the enzalutamide-resistant phenotype (Supplementary Fig. S2).

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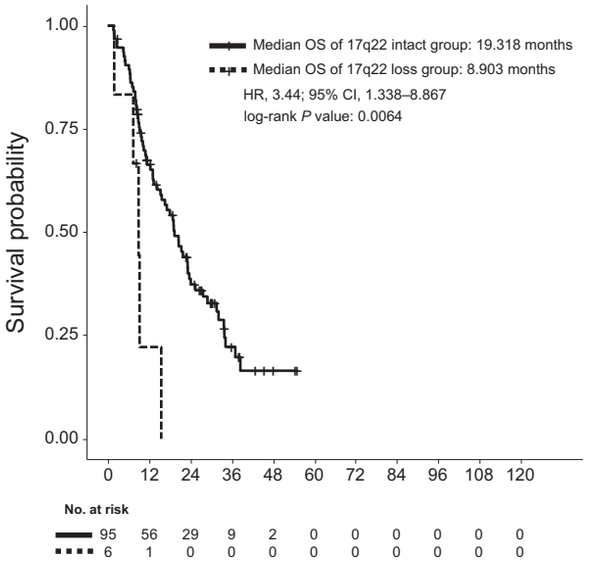

Figure 4.

Focal deletion of 17q22 containing *RNF43* and *SRSF1* is associated with poor OS. OS of patients harboring 17q22 loss compared with all other patients. OS is calculated from the date when biopsy was taken.

It is noteworthy that our list of 124 protein-coding genes more commonly deleted from enzalutamide-resistant versus enzalutamide-naïve tumors were located on nine recurrent loss regions (**Fig. 2A**; Supplementary Fig. S2). Of these nine regions, 17q22 and 4q34-35 contain a large number of protein-coding genes (**Fig. 2A**; Supplementary Fig. S2). Importantly, previous genome-wide linkage analysis found an association between 17q22 and 4q35 and prostate cancer susceptibility genes among hereditary prostate cancer families (32). In our cohort, we found that focal deletion of 17q22 represented a previously underappreciated molecular subset of enzalutamide-resistant mCRPC. This subset was only found in enzalutamide-resistant patients (6/37) and was associated with poor overall survival (HR, 3.44; 95% CI, 1.338–8.867; $P = 0.0064$; **Fig. 4**). We hypothesized that poor prognosis of patients with tumors with 17q22 loss may be due to the putative tumor suppressors located there—*RNF43* and *SRSF1*. *RNF43* is an E3 ubiquitin ligase that is thought to negatively regulate the canonical Wnt signaling pathway, and loss of function in this gene has been well-described in multiple tumor types (33). In prostate cancer, comprehensive analysis of large datasets (680 primary tumors and 330 metastatic CRPC) revealed that *RNF43* deep CN loss is present in both primary and metastatic tumors (8/680 and 8/333, respectively; ref. 34). Additional cases of monoallelic loss were found in both 48 of 680 primary tumors and 56 of 333 metastatic tumors. Importantly, the enzalutamide treatment status was not reported for patients included in that analysis (34). In our cohort, we did not find deep loss of *RNF43,* and monoallelic loss was present exclusively in enzalutamide-resistant tumors (6/37). This lack of *RNF43* monoallelic loss in enzalutamide-naïve mCRPC appears to differ from the previous report by Armenia and colleagues (34), but the enzalutamide treatment status for patients included in that report was not reported. Differences in the CNA analysis methods may also explain the differences seen between that report and our own. The splicing factor *SRSF1* is also present on chromosome 17q22. The majority of the literature points to an oncogenic role for SRSF1 in numerous solid tumors (35–38). In patients with focal 17q22 deletion, *SRSF1* was one of the 28 genes from that locus that was deleted (monoallelic loss; **Fig. 2A**; Supplementary Fig. S2). Thus, it is possible that loss of other genes from 17q22, including *RNF43*, may contribute to enzalutamide-resistance and poor survival in this subset (39). Alternatively, *SRSF1* may play a different role in enzalutamide-resistant tumors than that previously described in prior studies. Further studies will be necessary to confirm this hypothesis.

Table 1. Multivariable survival analysis.

	HR	Lower_0.95	Upper_0.95	*P* value
Hemoglobin (g/dL)	0.0326	0.0038	0.2772	0.0017
Lactate dehydrogenase (IU/L)	1.8081	0.8389	3.8971	0.1306
Alkaline phosphatase (U/L)	1.791	1.2043	2.6636	0.004
Prostate-specific antigen (ng/mL)	1.1044	0.923	1.3213	0.2781
ECOG performance status >0	1.4309	0.8918	2.2959	0.1375
Absence of visceral metastasis	0.4272	0.2482	0.7354	0.0022
RB1 2-hits	1.4681	0.6826	3.1575	0.3257
17q22 focal loss	4.634	1.6984	12.643	0.0028

Note: Laboratory values were measured at time of biopsy and modeled as log values for multivariable survival analysis. OS was measured from the time of biopsy.

A recent prospective study evaluated the genomic and transcriptomic features associated with primary resistance to abiraterone. The authors showed that nonresponders had more frequent mutations/deletions in Wnt/β-catenin pathway and higher Wnt pathway activation scores (40). Another retrospective study found that Wnt-pathway activation, through mutations in *CTNNB1* (activating mutations) and *APC* and *RNF43* (inactivating mutations), was prognostic of PSA progression-free survival on first-line abiraterone/enzalutamide and OS (41). Specifically, a low frequency (3/137) of *RNF43* mutations was found in that study. *RNF43* is located at 17q22, and in our cohort, only enzalutamide-resistant patients had 17q22 loss (6/37). Compared with the prior two studies, enzalutamide-resistant samples in our cohort were all taken post treatment. With the transcriptomic data available, we determined that enzalutamide-resistant patients with 17q22 loss had higher Wnt-pathway activation compared with those without 17q22 loss (Supplementary Fig. S4). These data suggest that 17q22 loss could be a strong driver of enzalutamide resistance, possibly through Wnt-activation. This is of particular interest given that the Wnt-pathway was shown to be more active in enzalutamide-resistant samples relative to enzalutamide-naïve samples (11).

There are limited treatment options for patients with prostate cancer after progression on enzalutamide. MR analysis of RNA-seq data identified several druggable kinases that were predicted to be differentially active in the subset of enzalutamide-resistant samples with focal 17q22 deletion, including polo-like kinase 1 (PLK1), Akt1, and cyclin-dependent kinases (CDK1 and CDK2; **Fig. 5**). Preclinical experiments suggest that PLK1 inhibition can block CRPC tumor growth and that this may be explained in part by suppression of AR function (42, 43). Given that PLK1 inhibitors have now entered clinical testing (44), our results suggest that PLK1 inhibitors warrant further examination in enzalutamide-resistant patients. Akt1 was also implicated in our MR analysis. Importantly, the combination of the AKT

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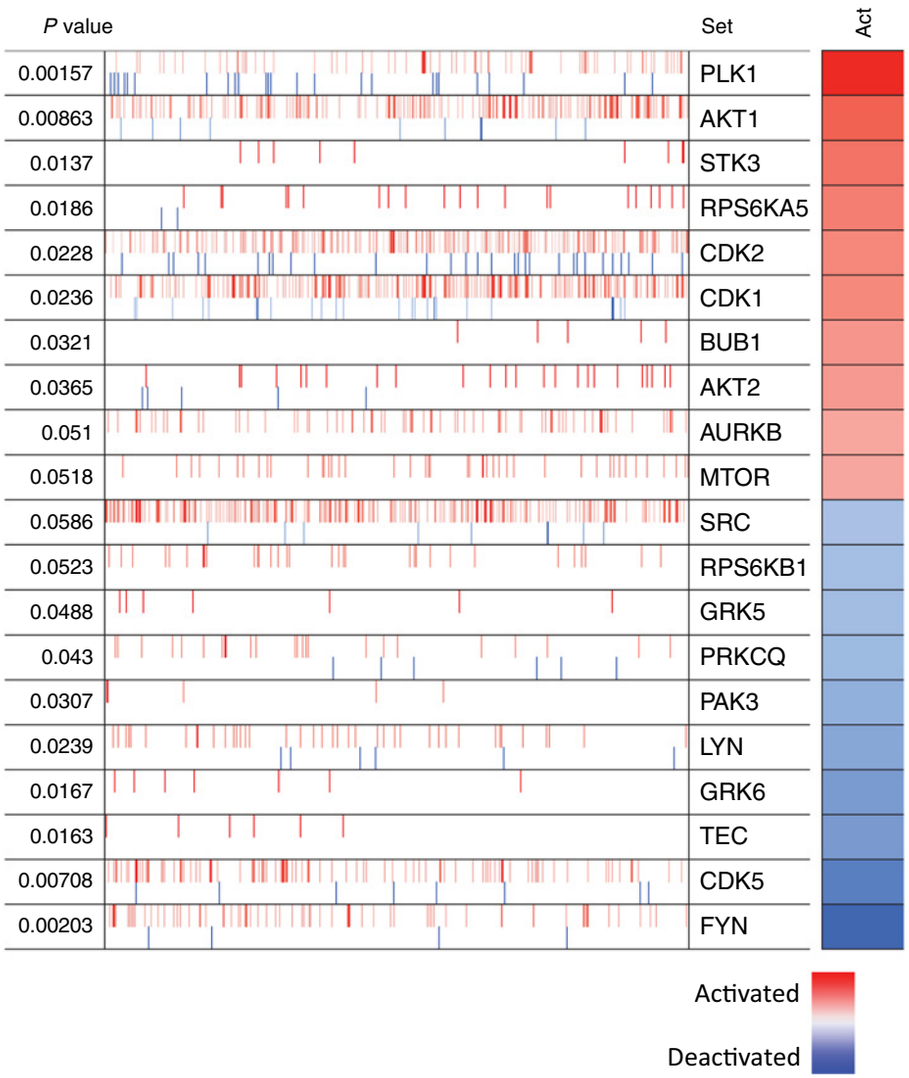

Figure 5.
Kinase protein activities inferred using MARINa. The top 10 kinases predicted to be most activated (red) or deactivated (blue) in the 17q22 loss group compared with all other samples are shown. The targets of each kinase are shown as tick marks with red vertical lines representing positive targets and blue vertical lines negative targets of a given kinase. Each row also illustrates the *P* value and inferred differential activity (Act) for each kinase.

inhibitor AZD5363 plus enzalutamide was shown to delay the development of enzalutamide-resistant prostate cancer in preclinical models (45). Further, the Akt inhibitor ipatasertib plus abiraterone was recently shown to improve progression-free survival versus abiraterone alone in a phase II study (46). A phase III study of this combination recently closed to accrual, and it will be important to determine if tumors harboring 17q22 loss may be particularly susceptible to this combination. Finally, proper cell division depends on CDKs, and these proteins are frequently activated in cancer. In the subset of samples with focal 17q22 deletion, we also found higher activities of CDK1 and CDK2. Prior work demonstrates that inhibition of CDK1 and CDK2 with NU2058 reduced cell proliferation in androgen-independent prostate cell lines (47), and CDK inhibitor trials are currently ongoing in mCRPC.

In summary, our study demonstrates that focal deletion of 17q22, including the region with the genes *RNF43* and *SRSF1*, defines a subset of mCRPC patients with poor prognosis. Our results also suggest that specific kinases may be activated in tumors with 17q22 loss. Importantly, drugs that block these kinases are in clinical testing in CRPC, and it will be important to correlate 17q22 loss with drug sensitivity. Finally, we did not identify any enzalutamide-naïve patients with 17q22 loss. However, because we did not have baseline tumor biopsies prior to enzalutamide for any of the patients whose enzalutamide-resistant tumor harbored 17q22 loss, our findings do not establish whether the loss of 17q22 emerges with enzalutamide treatment. Deeper sequencing, including single cell approaches, in tumor biopsies prior to enzalutamide will be necessary to answer that question. Finally, although *RNF43* is a well-known tumor suppressor that negatively regulates the Wnt pathway, the role of *SRSF1* remains less well defined. Further studies are thus necessary to establish the causal relationship between loss of the 17q22 locus—and all the genes that reside there—and enzalutamide resistance.

Disclosure of Potential Conflicts of Interest

M.B. Rettig reports personal fees from Janssen, Bayer, Amgen, Ambryx, Clovis, and Pfizer; grants from Novartis and Progenics, as well as nonfinancial support from Merck and Astellas outside the submitted work; and is listed as a co-inventor on a provisional patent application on small molecule inhibitors of the androgen receptor that is owned by UCLA and the Department of Veterans Affairs and is not yet licensed. T.M. Beer reports grants from Alliance Foundation Trials (research funding), Corcept Therapeutics (research funding), Endocyte Inc. (research funding), Harpoon Therapeutics (research funding), Janssen Research & Development (research funding), Medivation, Inc. (research funding), Sotio (research funding),

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Authors' Contributions

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Clinical Cancer Research

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