

Advancing Health

A CASE STUDY from MedStar Health

Transoral Robotic Surgery (TORS) for Tongue Base Tumor

Stanley Chia, MD, FACS

Chairman, Department of Otolaryngology, MedStar Washington Hospital Center
Associate Professor, Department of Otolaryngology, MedStar Georgetown
University Hospital

Abstract

An otherwise healthy 55-year-old male was found to have a lymph node in his left neck, and an ulcerated lesion at the left base of the tongue that was found to be squamous cell carcinoma. The base of tongue mass was successfully removed using transoral robotic surgery (TORS), and the diseased lymph node removed concurrently through a neck dissection. The use of TORS helped expedite the patient's recovery, with no need for post-operative radiation treatment.



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CASE STUDY

Transoral Robotic Surgery (TORS) for Tongue Base Tumor

Patient Presentation

- A 55-year old male presented with a painless mass on the left side of his neck. The patient had no other health issues, and was a non-smoker.
- Patient discovered the mass five months earlier, and consulted his primary physician. Imaging proved inconclusive. No other symptoms (e.g. throat pain, difficulty swallowing) were evident.
- A referral to an otolaryngologist resulted in a needle biopsy of the neck mass, which revealed the presence of cancer. The patient was then referred to MedStar Washington Hospital Center.

Assessment

- A physical exam identified a 2-cm lymph node in the patient's left neck. In addition, a flexible endoscopy revealed a 1-cm ulcerated lesion at the left base of the tongue.
- A PET/CT scan confirmed uptake in both the neck mass and the base of tongue.

Preoperative Surgical Planning and Considerations

- Treatment options included surgical resection of the tongue lesion using a transoral robotic surgery (TORS) approach along with neck dissection to remove the lymph nodes in the neck, or radiation treatment with chemotherapy.
- Case was brought before MWHC's Multidisciplinary Head & Neck Tumor Board, which assessed the patient's history, current condition, and treatment options. Surgery was the unanimous choice, as the

patient would potentially require no additional treatment if negative resection margins were obtained.

- Patient agreed with the decision and consented to the surgery.

Treatment

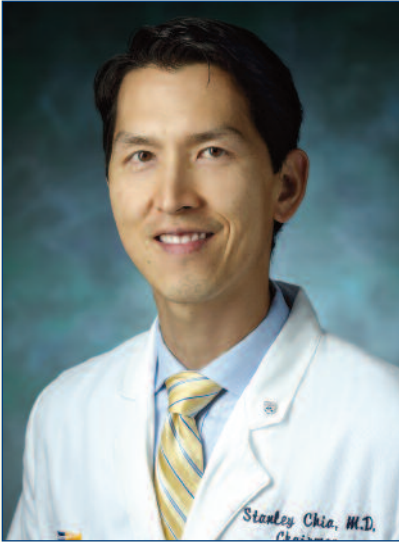
- Resection of the base of tongue mass and neck dissection were performed in a single 5-hour surgery session with no complications.

Outcome

- Pathology revealed an HPV-positive squamous cell carcinoma which was completely resected with negative margins. No perineural invasion was found.
- No extracapsular extension was seen in the affected lymph node.
- Patient was able to swallow well within two days, and was able to speak immediately after surgery. He was discharged home on postoperative day #2.
- No postoperative radiation treatment was required, and there is no indication of cancer recurrence five months after surgery. Routine surveillance monitoring will continue indefinitely.

Conclusion

- Minimally invasive transoral robotic surgery (TORS) is an attractive option for the removal of malignant and benign oropharynx (e.g. tonsil, base of tongue) tumors.
- Use of this option has recently become particularly important, given the rise of human papillomavirus (HPV) associated tumors.



Stanley Chia, MD, FACS

“While oropharyngeal tumors were typically caused by smoking and alcohol in the past, incidences of HPV-associated cancers are increasing dramatically among younger adults. Transoral robotic surgery [TORS] is a valuable tool useful in treating these conditions and helping accelerate the patient’s recovery. These procedures have also been found to minimize or even eliminate the need for subsequent treatment.”

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For a consultation or to refer a patient, call patient referral liaison Jane Hanna at **202-444-5209**.

[MedStarGeorgetownCancer.org/HeadandNeck](https://www.MedStarGeorgetownCancer.org/HeadandNeck)

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