Award Number: W81XWH-16-1-0270

Title: Aberrant Tumor Metabolism Enables GR Takeover in Enzalutamide-Resistant Prostate Cancer

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Report Date: July 2017

Type of Report: Annual

Prepared For: U.S. Army Medical Research and Materiel Command
Fort Detrick, Maryland 21702-5012

Distribution Statement: Approved for Public Release; Distribution Unlimited

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Aberrant Tumor Metabolism Enables GR Takeover in Enzalutamide-Resistant Prostate Cancer

Prostate cancer is driven by androgen stimulation of the androgen receptor (AR). The next-generation AR antagonist, enzalutamide, prolongs survival, but resistance and lethal disease eventually prevail. Emerging data suggest that the glucocorticoid receptor (GR) is upregulated in this context, stimulating expression of AR-target genes that permit continued growth despite AR blockade. However, countering this mechanism by administration of GR antagonists is problematic because GR is essential for life. Here, we show that enzalutamide treatment in models of prostate cancer and patient tissues is accompanied by an ubiquitin E3-ligase, AMFR, mediating loss of 11β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase-2 (11β-HSD2), which otherwise inactivates cortisol, sustaining tumor cortisol concentrations to stimulate GR and enzalutamide resistance. Remarkably, reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression, or AMFR loss, reverses enzalutamide resistance in mouse xenograft tumors. Together, these findings reveal a surprising metabolic mechanism of enzalutamide resistance that may be targeted with a strategy that circumvents a requirement for systemic GR ablation. I also investigated 11β-HSD1 in the context of ENZ resistance, and found its expression level was not altered. Due to co-localization with hexose 6 phosphatase dehydrogenase (H6PD), the major generator of endoplasmic reticulum NADPH, 11β-HSD1 is predominantly an oxo-reductase in most intact cells, but in vivo without the supply of NADPH by H6PD, 11β-HSD1 performs the reverse reaction, which results in the inactivation of cortisol. Hence, we hypothesize that long-term ENZ treatment increases H6PD, leading to enhanced 11β-HSD1 oxo-reductase activity and collaboration with the downregulated 11β-HSD2 activity impedes cortisol metabolism and lengthens GR activation to sustain tumor growth despite AR blockade. In my upcoming funding year, I will confirm whether H6PD plays an important role in ENZ-resistant prostate cancer.
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INTRODUCTION:

Prostate cancer (PCa) is the most common malignancy in men and the second leading cause of cancer-related death in men in the United States. At diagnosis, nearly all PCas are sensitive to androgen deprivation therapy (ADT) by way of medical or surgical castration, highlighting the central role of androgen signaling. Targeting androgen signaling via ADT has therefore been the treatment mainstay in PCa. Although ADT is initially effective, the disease inevitably reoccurs as castration resistant prostate cancer (CRPC), which is usually fatal. It is well known that CRPC is still driven by the androgen axis. Therefore, the advent of new AR-targeting drugs, such as enzalutamide (ENZ), has been beneficial for many patients with CRPC. ENZ is a potent FDA-approved AR antagonist that prolongs survival for patients with CRPC, even after docetaxel chemotherapy. Unfortunately, although ENZ has proven effective clinically, treatment resistance eventually arises in nearly all patients with CRPC. Hence, there is an urgent need to define the mechanisms of resistance and develop new treatment strategies that circumvent ENZ resistance.

That glucocorticoid receptor (GR) overexpression confers resistance to ENZ in CRPC has been recently established. Whether glucocorticoid metabolism also contributes to ENZ resistance is unknown. Two isozymes of 11β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase (11β-HSD), which catalyze interconversion of active cortisol and corticosterone with inert cortisone and 11-dehydrocorticosterone, mediate intracellular glucocorticoid metabolism, and ultimately determine intracellular levels of active glucocorticoids. 11β-HSD1, in intact cells and in vivo, is predominantly a reductase, catalyzing NADPH-dependent reduction of cortisone to cortisol. In contrast, 11β-HSD2 catalyzes the NAD-dependent inactivation of cortisol, converting it to cortisone. In the funding year just completed, our published work has thus far revealed that ENZ resistance is marked by sustained cortisol concentrations in the prostate tumor that are attributable to impaired conversion to cortisone via a profound loss of 11β-HSD2, which together enable GR to take over the AR function to promote tumor growth. Mechanistically, 11β-HSD2 loss is mediated by the ubiquitin E3-ligase autocrine mobility factor receptor (AMFR) and one of its adaptors, Erlin-2. Sustained 11β-HSD2 expression or loss of AMFR reversed the metabolic phenotype of ENZ resistance and reinstated the therapeutic response to ENZ in vivo. I also investigated 11β-HSD1 in the context of ENZ resistance, and found its expression level was not altered. Due to co-localization with hexose 6 phosphate dehydrogenase (H6PD), the major generator of endoplasmic reticulum NADPH, 11β-HSD1 is predominantly an oxo-reductase in most intact cells, but in vivo without the supply of NADPH by H6PD, 11β-HSD1 performs the reverse reaction, which results in the inactivation of cortisol. Hence, we hypothesize that long-term ENZ treatment increases H6PD, leading to enhanced 11β-HSD1 oxo-reductase activity and collaboration with the downregulated 11β-HSD2 activity impedes cortisol metabolism and lengthens GR activation to sustain tumor growth despite AR blockade. In my upcoming funding year, I will confirm whether H6PD plays an important role in ENZ-resistant prostate cancer.

KEYWORDS:
CRPC, ENZ resistance, 11β-HSD, AMFR, H6PD

ACCOMPLISHMENTS:

What were the major goals of the project?

Training-Specific Tasks:

Milestone(s) Achieved: Presentation of project data at a national meeting (24 months)

Research-Specific Tasks:
Specific Aim 1: Determine whether ENZ treatment intensifies glucocorticoid activation of GR.

Major Task 1: Evaluate the effect of long-term ENZ treatment on cortisol inactivation in other prostate cancer cell lines.

Milestone(s) Achieved: identification of the sustained cortisol level by long-term ENZ in prostate cancer cell lines via decreasing 11β-HSD2 expression. (3 months)

Major Task 2: Determine whether 11β-HSD1 and 11β-HSD2 expression is associated with resistance to ENZ in human disease.

Milestone(s) Achieved: determination that ENZ increases GR expression and decreases 11β-HSD2 expression (but no change in 11β-HSD1 transcript) in patient samples. (12 months)

Major Task 3: Determine the effect of 11β-HSD2 reinstatement on cortisol inactivation.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination of 11β-HSD2 overexpression reverses the “ENZ-resistant” phenotype in prostate cancer cell lines. (15 months)

Specific Aim 2: Identify therapeutic vulnerabilities by elucidating reversible tumor-specific mechanisms of glucocorticoid receptor activation by tumor glucocorticoid metabolism.

Major Task 4: Determine whether 11β-HSD2 interacts with AMFR.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination of the interaction of 11β-HSD2 and AMFR. (16 months)

Major Task 5: Determine whether AMFR mediates the ubiquitination of 11β-HSD2.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination of the ubiquitination of 11β-HSD2 by AMFR. (18 months)

Major Task 6: Determine whether AMFR knockdown restores the effect of ENZ on xenograft growth inhibition.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Demonstration that knockdown AMFR reverses ENZ-resistant phenotype in xenograft growth; publication of 1-3 peer reviewed papers. (24 months)

What was accomplished under these goals?

Accomplished tasks:

Specific Aim 1: Determine whether ENZ treatment intensifies glucocorticoid activation of GR.

Major Task 1: Evaluate the effect of long-term ENZ treatment on cortisol inactivation in other prostate cancer cell lines.

Milestone(s) Achieved: identification of the sustained cortisol level by long-term ENZ in prostate cancer cell lines via decreasing 11β-HSD2 expression. (3 months)
Results:

As shown in **Fig 1B**, in either LAPC4 or VCaP cells, long-term ENZ treatment accelerates cortisol metabolism both in media and intracellularly. Additionally, we obtained consistent results in both LAPC4 and VCaP xenograft tumor models (**Fig 1C**). In contrast, we also observed that short-term (24 hours) ENZ treatment had no effect on cortisol metabolism in these cells (**Figure 1—figure supplement 1A**); ENZ suppressed LAPC4 viability in vitro (**Figure 1D**) in association with suppression of AR-regulated genes (**Figure 1—figure supplement 1B**). Growth recovers after sustained enzalutamide treatment (**Figure 1—figure supplement 1C**).

Major Task 2: Determine whether 11β-HSD1 and 11β-HSD2 expression is associated with resistance to ENZ in human disease.

Milestone(s) Achieved: determination that ENZ increases GR expression and decreases 11β-HSD2 expression (but no change in 11β-HSD1 transcript) in patient samples. (12 months)

Results:

To determine the mechanism underlying the metabolic phenotype of impeded cortisol inactivation in Major Task 1, we assessed the expression of 11β-HSD1 and 11β-HSD2. The results show that loss of 11β-HSD2 protein in AR-expressing LAPC4, VCaP, and MDA-PCa-2b prostate cancer cell lines (but not an AR-negative prostate cancer cell line [**Figure 2—figure supplement 1A**]) was observed with ENZ treatment, but no consistent effect on 11β-HSD1 was detectable (**Figure 2A–D and Figure 2—figure supplement 1B**). No suppression of HSD11B2 mRNA, which encodes 11β-HSD2, was observed with ENZ treatment, suggesting that 11β-HSD2 protein loss is not attributable to transcriptional suppression (**Figure 2—figure supplement 1C**) and no direct 11β-HSD2 antagonism by enzalutamide was observed (**Figure 2—figure supplement 1D**). Importantly, 11β-HSD2 loss is not attributable to GR stimulation (**Figure 2—figure supplement 1E**). To address the clinical significance of these observations, we analyzed prostate tissues obtained or derived from patients with prostate cancer and treated with enzalutamide (**Figure 2E**). Nine of 11 tissues treated with ENZ obtained from patients (two metastatic CRPC, two local prostate tissues from patients treated with ENZ as a neoadjuvant and seven fresh tissues treated with ENZ _ex vivo_) had a loss of 11β-HSD2 with treatment. All post-treatment biopsies were obtained from patients who were maintained on enzalutamide treatment. Consistent with previously published observations (Arora et al., 2013), GR up-regulation was observed in a subset of clinical tissues (**Figure 2—figure supplement 1F**), all of which had 11β-HSD2 loss in **Figure 2E**.

Major Task 3: Determine the effect of 11β-HSD2 reinstatement on cortisol inactivation.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination that 11β-HSD2 overexpression reverses the “ENZ-resistant” phenotype in prostate cancer cell lines. (15 months)

Results:

To investigate the metabolic effects of 11β-HSD2 replacement on cortisol levels, we artificially expressed 11β-HSD2 in the context of ENZ exposure (**Figure 3A–B and Figure 3—figure supplement 1**). 11β-HSD2 reinstatement in both stable expression and transient transfection studies reverted the glucocorticoid
metabolic phenotype of ENZ-treated cells back to rapid cortisol inactivation that is characteristic of ENZ-naive cells. Furthermore, the effects of 11β-HSD2 replacement on transcription of PSA (Figure 3C), which is regulated by AR and GR; KLF9, which is regulated by GR only; and PMEPA1, which is regulated by AR only (Arora et al., 2013), suggest that the effects are indeed specific to glucocorticoid substrates of 11β-HSD2 (i.e., cortisol but not dexamethasone) and GR-responsive genes (i.e., PSA and KLF9).

Additionally, our xenograft study revealed that forced 11β-HSD2 expression significantly reversed ENZ-resistant growth and prolonged progression-free survival in both LAPC4 and VCaP xenograft models of CRPC (Figure 4A–D). In contrast, 11β-HSD2 expression had no significant effect on untreated tumors, supporting a model in which the effect of 11β-HSD2 on tumor growth is specific to the context of resistance to potent AR antagonist therapy. Most importantly, mass spectrometry analysis of corticosterone (active glucocorticoid form in mouse) concentrations in ENZ-treated xenograft tissues and serums (Figure 4E–H) revealed that the inhibition of tumor growth by 11β-HSD2 reinstatement was mediated by the remarkable loss of intratumoral corticosterone but not serum corticosterone.

Specific Aim 2: Identify therapeutic vulnerabilities by elucidating reversible tumor-specific mechanisms of glucocorticoid receptor activation by tumor glucocorticoid metabolism.

Major Task 4: Determine whether 11β-HSD2 interacts with AMFR.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination of the interaction of 11β-HSD2 and AMFR. (16 months)

Results:

We previously described the role of AMFR, a ubiquitin E3-ligase in the endoplasmic reticulum-associated degradation pathway, in the regulation of another steroidogenic enzyme, 3β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase-1 (Chang et al., 2013). As 11β-HSD2 is also located in the endoplasmic reticulum, we hypothesized that AMFR is required for enzalutamide-induced loss of 11β-HSD2 protein. A physical association between 11β-HSD2 and AMFR is supported by immunoprecipitation of AMFR, followed by immunoblot for 11β-HSD2, as well as immunoprecipitation of 11β-HSD2, followed by immunoblot for AMFR (Figure 5A).

Major Task 5: Determine whether AMFR mediates the ubiquitination of 11β-HSD2.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Determination of the ubiquitination of 11β-HSD2 by AMFR. (18 months)

Results:

Expression of 11β-HSD2, Ubiquitin-His, and AMFR-Myc-DDK, followed by Ni-agarose pull-down and anti-11β-HSD2 immunoblot demonstrates that 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination depends on AMFR (Figure 5B). We have also found ENZ treatment did not consistently increase AMFR expression (Figure 5—figure supplement 1A–B). However, Erlin-2, which enables the AMFR-associated endoplasmic reticulum-associated degradation pathway (ERAD), was more consistently up-regulated, including in 8 of 11 patient tissues (Figure 5—figure supplement 1A–C). The functional consequence of 11β-HSD2 / AMFR
interaction and 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination is evidenced by genetically silencing AMFR with stable shRNA expression, which promotes an increase in 11β-HSD2 protein (Figure 5C) but not transcript (Figure 5—figure supplement 1D).

Major Task 6: Determine whether AMFR knockdown restores the effect of ENZ on xenograft growth inhibition.

Milestone(s) Achieved: Demonstration that knockdown AMFR reverses the ENZ-resistant phenotype in xenograft growth; publication of 1-3 peer reviewed papers. (24 months)

Results:

We analyzed the effect of AMFR knockdown on cortisol metabolism in control- and long-term ENZ-treated cells and found that the ENZ-induced metabolic phenotype that sustains cortisol concentrations by way of retarded inactivation of cortisol is reversed with genetic ablation of AMFR (Figure 5D). Silencing both 11β-HSD2 and AMFR combined with ENZ treatment negates the effect of genetically silencing AMFR alone, suggesting that the effect of AMFR is mediated through 11β-HSD2 (Figure 5—figure supplement 1E). Finally, the functional relevance and requirement for AMFR expression for enzalutamide resistance is suggested by suppressed xenograft growth and prolonged progression-free survival in ENZ-treated xenografts with stable AMFR knockdown (Figure 5E–F). Tumors with AMFR knockdown were confirmed to have sustained 11β-HSD2 protein expression, thus impairing ENZ resistance (Figure 5G).

What opportunities for training and professional development has the project provided?

1. Attended Conduct of Research and Human Subjects training.
2. Attended monthly Prostate Cancer Working Group and Seminar Series
3. Attended and presented research at the weekly lab meetings and journal clubs
4. Attended and presented work at the weekly CCF Department of Cancer Biology seminars
5. Upcoming funding year: Attend workshop “Biomedical and Scientific Writing” held by Kenyon Institute, Ohio.

How were the results disseminated to communities of interest?

Nothing to Report.

What do you plan to do during the next reporting period to accomplish the goals?

In my published work, I investigated 11β-HSD1 in the context of ENZ resistance and found its expression level was not altered. Due to co-localization with H6PD, the major generator of endoplasmic reticulum NADPH, 11β-HSD1 is predominantly an oxo-reductase in most intact cells, but in vivo without the supply of NADPH by H6PD, 11β-HSD1 performs the reverse reaction, which results in the inactivation of cortisol. Hence, we hypothesize that long-term ENZ
treatment increases H6PD, leading to enhanced 11β-HSD1 oxo-reductase activity, and collaboration with the downregulated 11β-HSD2 activity impedes cortisol metabolism and lengthens GR activation to sustain tumor growth despite AR blockade. In my upcoming funding year, I will confirm whether H6PD plays an important role in ENZ-resistant prostate cancer. I expect this work to lead to publication of 1-2 peer reviewed papers.

IMPACT:

What was the impact on the development of the principal discipline(s) of the project?
If there is nothing significant to report during this reporting period, state "Nothing to Report."
What was the impact on other disciplines?
Nothing to Report
What was the impact on technology transfer?
Nothing to Report
What was the impact on society beyond science and technology?
Nothing to Report

CHANGES/PROBLEMS:

Changes in approach and reasons for change
Nothing to Report
Actual or anticipated problems or delays and actions or plans to resolve them
Nothing to Report
Changes that had a significant impact on expenditures
Nothing to Report
Significant changes in use or care of human subjects, vertebrate animals, biohazards, and/or select agents
Nothing to Report
Significant changes in use or care of human subjects
Nothing to Report
Significant changes in use or care of vertebrate animals
Nothing to Report
Significant changes in use of biohazards and/or select agents
Nothing to Report

PRODUCTS:

Publications, conference papers, and presentations
Journal publications.
I have published our work to date in eLife, 2017.

Books or other non-periodical, one-time publications.

Nothing to Report

Other publications, conference papers, and presentations.

I gave a poster presentation at the 2017 annual AACR meeting.

Website(s) or other Internet site(s)

Nothing to Report

Technologies or techniques

Nothing to Report

Inventions, patent applications, and/or licenses

Nothing to Report

Other Products

Nothing to Report

PARTICIPANTS & OTHER COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

What individuals have worked on the project?

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<th>Jianneng Li</th>
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<tr>
<td>Project Role</td>
<td>Principle investigator</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Identifier (e.g. ORCID ID):</td>
<td>0000-0001-7642-625X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nearest person month worked:</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contribution to Project:</td>
<td>Jianneng is responsible for design, perform and interpret experiments.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Has there been a change in the active other support of the PD/PI(s) or senior/key personnel since the last reporting period?

No Change.

What other organizations were involved as partners?

Nothing to Report.

SPECIAL REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

COLLABORATIVE AWARDS:
Nothing to Report.

QUAD CHARTS:
Nothing to Report.

APPENDICES:
1. Journal article: Aberrant corticosteroid metabolism in tumor cells enables GR takeover in enzalutamide resistant prostate cancer.
2. Figures
Aberrant corticosteroid metabolism in tumor cells enables GR takeover in enzalutamide resistant prostate cancer

Jianneng Li1, Mohammad Alyamani1,2, Ao Zhang1, Kai-Hsiung Chang1, Michael Berk1, Zhenfei Li1, Ziqi Zhu1, Marianne Petro1, Cristina Magi-Galluzzi3, Mary-Ellen Taplin4, Jorge A Garcia5, Kevin Courtney6, Eric A Klein7, Nima Sharifi1,2,5,7*

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Abstract Prostate cancer is driven by androgen stimulation of the androgen receptor (AR). The next-generation AR antagonist, enzalutamide, prolongs survival, but resistance and lethal disease eventually prevail. Emerging data suggest that the glucocorticoid receptor (GR) is upregulated in this context, stimulating expression of AR-target genes that permit continued growth despite AR blockade. However, countering this mechanism by administration of GR antagonists is problematic because GR is essential for life. We show that enzalutamide treatment in human models of prostate cancer and patient tissues is accompanied by a ubiquitin E3-ligase, AMFR, mediating loss of 11β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase-2 (11β-HSD2), which otherwise inactivates cortisol, sustaining tumor cortisol concentrations to stimulate GR and enzalutamide resistance. Remarkably, reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression, or AMFR loss, reverses enzalutamide resistance in mouse xenograft tumors. Together, these findings reveal a surprising metabolic mechanism of enzalutamide resistance that may be targeted with a strategy that circumvents a requirement for systemic GR ablation.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.001

Introduction Metastatic prostate cancer usually responds initially to medical or surgical castration, then eventually progresses as castration-resistant prostate cancer (CRPC), which is stimulated by intratumoral synthesis of testosterone and/or 5α-dihydrotestosterone (DHT) and activation of the androgen receptor (AR) (Attard et al., 2016; Chang et al., 2013; Mostaghel et al., 2014; Scher and Sawyers, 2005; Hearn et al., 2016). Enzalutamide is a potent next-generation AR antagonist and prolongs survival for patients with metastatic CRPC (Beer et al., 2014; Scher et al., 2012; Tran et al., 2009). Unfortunately, enzalutamide resistance almost always emerges, eventually leading to disease lethality.

Emerging data suggest that potent AR inhibition with enzalutamide leads to a massive up-regulation of GR expression, which then permits the re-expression of about 50% of AR-responsive genes, in turn promoting tumor progression (Arora et al., 2013; Isikbay et al., 2014). A challenge has
been reconciling these findings with the therapeutic effects of glucocorticoids in CRPC (Kach et al., 2015; Montgomery et al., 2014; Sartor et al., 2014). Furthermore, targeting such a mechanism with GR antagonists may be problematic because total and systemic GR blockade is incompatible with life (Sharifi, 2014). Treatment directed at a tumor-specific mechanism that regulates GR would therefore be desirable. We hypothesized that similar to metabolic mechanisms that elicit DHT synthesis, which in turn stimulate AR in CRPC (Chang et al., 2013; Knudsen and Penning, 2010; Sharifi, 2013), a role for GR in enzalutamide resistance would be accompanied by a tumor metabolic switch that provides sustained tissue cortisol concentrations that enable GR activation. Such a scenario and mechanism may furnish a tumor-specific pharmacologic target and thereby avoid adverse effects associated with systemic GR ablation.

GR stimulation by cortisol in peripheral tissues is physiologically tightly regulated by 11β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase-2 (11β-HSD2), which enzymatically converts cortisol to inactive cortisone in humans and corticosterone to 11-dehydrocorticosterone in mice (Figure 1A) (Chapman et al., 2013). For example, fetal and placental 11β-HSD2 expression shields against maternal cortisol, thereby restricting GR stimulation and blocking premature fetal maturation (Chapman et al., 2013). Here, we show that enzalutamide resistance is marked by sustained cortisol concentrations in the prostate tumor that are attributable to a profound loss of 11β-HSD2 and impaired conversion to cortisone, which together de-repress GR and stimulate glucocorticoid-dependent signaling. Mechanistically, 11β-HSD2 loss is mediated by the ubiquitin E3-ligase autocrine mobility factor receptor (AMFR). Finally, sustained 11β-HSD2 expression reverses the metabolic phenotype of enzalutamide resistance and reinstates the therapeutic response to enzalutamide in vivo.

Results

Enzalutamide treatment triggers sustained cortisol levels

We determined the effect of enzalutamide treatment on metabolic conversion of [3H]-cortisol to inactive cortisone in the LAPC4 and VCaP human cell line models of CRPC. Long but not short (i.e., 24 hr) enzalutamide exposure sustains cortisol levels by retarding conversion to cortisone in cells and media (Figure 1B and Figure 1—figure supplement 1A). Similarly, freshly harvested CRPC xenograft tumors grown in orchiectomized mice and treated with enzalutamide (Tran et al., 2009) have an impaired capability of inactivating [3H]-cortisol by conversion to cortisone, when compared to tumors from mice treated with orchiectomy alone (Figure 1C). Enzalutamide suppresses LAPC4 viability in vitro (Figure 1D) in association with suppression of AR-regulated genes (Figure 1—figure supplement 1B). Growth recovers after sustained enzalutamide treatment (Figure 1—figure supplement 1C).

Enzalutamide promotes 11β-HSD2 loss

To determine the mechanism underlying the metabolic phenotype of impeded cortisol inactivation, expression of 11β-HSD2 and 11β-HSD1, which catalyzes the reverse reaction, was assessed. Loss of 11β-HSD2 protein in AR-expressing LAPC4, VCaP and MDA-PCa-2b prostate cancer cell lines (but not an AR-negative prostate cancer cell line [Figure 2—figure supplement 1A]) was observed with enzalutamide treatment, while no consistent effect on 11β-HSD1 was detectable (Figure 2A–D and Figure 2—figure supplement 1B). No suppression of HSD11B2 mRNA, which encodes 11β-HSD2, was observed with enzalutamide treatment, suggesting that 11β-HSD2 protein loss is not attributable to transcriptional suppression (Figure 2—figure supplement 1C) and no direct 11β-HSD2 antagonism by enzalutamide was observed (Figure 2—figure supplement 1D). Importantly, 11β-HSD2 loss is not attributable to GR stimulation (Figure 2—figure supplement 1E). To address the clinical significance of these observations, we interrogated prostate tissues obtained or derived from patients and treated with enzalutamide (Figure 2E). Nine of 11 tissues treated with enzalutamide obtained from patients with prostate cancer (two metastatic CRPC, two local prostate tissues from patients treated neoadjuvantly with enzalutamide and seven fresh tissues treated with enzalutamide ex vivo) had a loss of 11β-HSD2 with treatment. All post-treatment biopsies were obtained from patients who were maintained on enzalutamide treatment. Consistent with previously published observations (Arora et al., 2013), GR up-regulation was observed in a subset of clinical tissues (Figure 2—figure supplement 1F), all of which had 11β-HSD2 loss in Figure 2E. These findings
Figure 1. GR stimulation with enzalutamide resistance in prostate cancer is tightly regulated by glucocorticoid metabolism in target tissues. (A) Glucocorticoid metabolism in target tissues. Stimulation of GR by cortisol in humans is limited by 11β-HSD2, which oxidizes and converts cortisol to inactive cortisone. In mice, 11β-HSD2 converts active corticosterone to inactive 11-dehydrocorticosterone. (B) Enzalutamide (Enz) sustains cortisol levels by retarding inactivation in the LAPC4 and VCaP human prostate cancer cell lines. Cells were treated with the indicated concentrations of Enz or vehicle.
Figure 1 continued

for 36 days (LAPC4) or 40 days (VCaP), and subsequently treated with \( ^{3}H \)-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times, followed by steroid extraction from media (above) and cells (below), steroid separation and quantitation with HPLC. The experiment was done in duplicate and repeated at least three times. (C) Cortisol inactivation is impaired in xenograft tumors treated with Enz. Fresh tumor tissues were harvested from LAPC4 or VCaP xenografts grown in orchietomized mice and treated with Enz or chow alone \( (n = 5 \) tumors per treatment group). Tumors were treated with \( ^{3}H \)-cortisol \( (100 \text{ nM}) \) for the indicated times and steroids were extracted from media and analyzed by HPLC. Error bars represent the SD. (D) Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.003

The following figure supplement is available for figure 1:

**Figure supplement 1.** Effects of Enz on LAPC4 cells.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.002

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**Figure 3—** Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD. (D) Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

**Figure 3A–B** Cortisol inactivation is impaired in xenograft tumors treated with Enz. Fresh tumor tissues were harvested from LAPC4 or VCaP xenografts grown in orchietomized mice and treated with Enz or chow alone \( (n = 5 \) tumors per treatment group). Tumors were treated with \( ^{3}H \)-cortisol \( (100 \text{ nM}) \) for the indicated times and steroids were extracted from media and analyzed by HPLC. Error bars represent the SD.

**Figure 3C** Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

**Figure 3D** Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

**Figure 3E** Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

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**11\(b\)-HSD2 reinstatement reverses the metabolic phenotype of enzalutamide treatment**

In order to investigate the metabolic effects of 11\(b\)-HSD2 replacement on cortisol levels, we artificially expressed 11\(b\)-HSD2 in the context of enzalutamide exposure (Figure 3A–B and Figure 3—figure supplement 1). 11\(b\)-HSD2 reinstatement with both stable expression and transient transfection studies reverted the glucocorticoid metabolic phenotype of enzalutamide treated cells back to rapid cortisol inactivation that is characteristic of enzalutamide-naïve cells. Furthermore, the effects of 11\(b\)-HSD2 replacement on transcription of PSA (Figure 3C), which is regulated by AR and GR, KLF9, which is regulated by GR only and PMEPAA1, which is regulated by AR only (Arora et al., 2013), suggest that the effects are indeed specific to glucocorticoid substrates of 11\(b\)-HSD2 (i.e., cortisol but not dexamethasone) and GR-responsive genes (i.e., PSA and KLF9).

**Reestablishing 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression restores sensitivity to enzalutamide therapy by depletion of active intratumoral glucocorticoids**

We wished to determine if enzalutamide resistance is reversible with reinstatement of 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression. LAPC4 cells stably harboring a construct conferring forced 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression or vector alone (Figure 4—figure supplement 1) were injected subcutaneously and xenograft tumors were grown in surgically orchietomized mice that were also implanted with sustained-release DHEA pellets to mimic the human adrenal androgen milieu in CRPC. When tumors reached 100 mm\(^3\), mice in each group were randomized to enzalutamide in chow or chow alone (Figure 4A–B). Tumors appeared to harbor significant resistance to treatment with enzalutamide, as evidenced by the growth of Vector xenografts through enzalutamide therapy. Forced 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression significantly reversed enzalutamide-resistant growth and prolonged progression-free survival. In contrast, 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression had no significant effect on untreated tumors, supporting a model in which the effect of 11\(b\)-HSD2 on tumor growth is specific to the context of resistance to potent AR antagonist therapy. Reinstatement of sensitivity to enzalutamide treatment also occurred in a second (VCaP) xenograft model of CRPC (Figure 4C–D). In contrast to humans, the mouse adrenal does not express 17\(\alpha\)-hydroxylase/17,20 lyase and thus synthesizes corticosterone instead of cortisol as the dominant glucocorticoid (Figure 1A), which is similarly inactivated to 11-dehydrocorticosterone by 11\(b\)-HSD2 (Miller and Auchus, 2011). To validate if reversal of enzalutamide resistance with forced 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression is accompanied by the proposed intratumoral biochemical effect of depleting biologically active tumor glucocorticoids, we assessed corticosterone concentrations in enzalutamide-treated xenograft tissues by mass spectrometry (Figure 4B). 11\(b\)-HSD2 reinstatement depleted corticosterone concentrations by approximately two-thirds in enzalutamide-treated tumors (44.5 pmol/g in vector tumors vs. 15.1 pmol/g in 11\(b\)-HSD2 tumors; \( p=0.002 \)), which otherwise harbor the capacity to metabolically sustain elevated concentrations of biologically active glucocorticoids. Tumor 11\(b\)-HSD2 expression also results in a significant decline in the percentage of tumor corticosterone (59% in vector tumors vs. 33% in 11\(b\)-HSD2 tumors; \( p<0.0001 \)) when compared to...
Enzalutamide promotes 11β-HSD2 protein loss in cell line models and tissues from patients with prostate cancer. (A) Enzalutamide (Enz) treatment results in the loss of 11β-HSD2 protein that occurs concurrently with an increase in GR protein in the LAPC4 model of CRPC as assessed by Western blot. (B) 11β-HSD2 protein expression in Enz treated LAPC4 cells as assessed by immunocytochemistry. (C,D) Loss of 11β-HSD2 and increase in GR protein similarly occur with Enz treatment in the VCaP and MDA-PCa-2b models. (E) Enz induces loss of 11β-HSD2 protein in tissue from patients.
the sum total of corticosterone plus 11-dehydrocorticosterone (Figure 4F). In contrast to the effects of 11β-HSD2 expression on tumor glucocorticoids in enzalutamide treated mice, there is no significant change in serum in the absolute concentration (873 pmol/ml in vector mice vs. 867 pmol/ml in 11β-HSD2 mice; p=0.49; Figure 4G) or percentage of corticosterone (99.87% in vector mice vs. 99.85% in 11β-HSD2 mice; p<0.93; Figure 4H).

AMFR is required for 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination, the metabolic phenotype of retarded glucocorticoid inactivation and enzalutamide resistance

We previously described the role of AMFR, a ubiquitin E3-ligase in the endoplasmic reticulum associated degradation pathway, in regulation of another steroidogenic enzyme, 3β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenase-1 (Chang et al., 2013). As 11β-HSD2 is also located in the endoplasmic reticulum, we hypothesized that AMFR is required for enzalutamide-induced loss of 11β-HSD2 protein. A physical association between 11β-HSD2 and AMFR is supported by immunoprecipitation of AMFR, followed by immunoblot for 11β-HSD2, as well as immunoprecipitation of 11β-HSD2, followed by immunoblot for AMFR (Figure 5A). Expression of 11β-HSD2, Ubiquitin-His, and AMFR-Myc-DDK, followed by Ni-agarose pull-down and anti-11β-HSD2 immunoblot demonstrates the AMFR-dependence of 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination (Figure 5B). Enzalutamide treatment did not consistently increase AMFR expression (Figure 5—figure supplement 1A–B). However, Erlin-2, which enables the AMFR-associated endoplasmic reticulum-associated degradation pathway (ERAD), was more consistently up-regulated, including in 8 of 11 patient tissues (Figure 5—figure supplement 1A–C). The functional consequence of 11β-HSD2 / AMFR interaction and 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination is evidenced by genetically silencing AMFR with stable shRNA expression, which promotes an increase in 11β-HSD2 protein (Figure 5C) but not transcript (Figure 5—figure supplement 1D). Furthermore, the enzalutamide-induced metabolic phenotype that sustains cortisol concentrations by way of retarded inactivation is reversed with genetic ablation of AMFR (Figure 5D). Silencing both 11β-HSD2 and AMFR with enzalutamide treatment negates the effect of genetically silencing AMFR alone, suggesting that the effect of AMFR is mediated through 11β-HSD2 (Figure 5—figure supplement 1E). Finally, the functional relevance and requirement for AMFR expression on enzalutamide resistance is suggested by suppressed xenograft growth and prolonged progression-free survival in enzalutamide-treated xenografts with stable AMFR knockdown (Figure 5E–F). Tumors with AMFR knockdown were confirmed to have sustained 11β-HSD2 protein expression, thus impairing enzalutamide resistance (Figure 5G). Together, these findings suggest a model in which a physical association between AMFR and 11β-HSD2 enables enzalutamide to promote loss of 11β-HSD2, resulting in sustained cortisol concentrations that promote GR stimulation.

Discussion

Our findings reveal a metabolic mechanism that is co-opted along with GR upregulation to stimulate enzalutamide resistance in prostate cancer. These findings indicate that systemic availability of GR agonists represents only one aspect of tumor GR stimulation in the setting of enzalutamide resistance. Local metabolic regulation of ligand availability by the tumor serves as a second critical aspect and can either oppose the effects of systemic glucocorticoids by spurring enzymatic inactivation, or instead allow unimpeded access to the tumor tissue, enabling sustained GR stimulation to promote tumor progression.
Figure 3. 11β-HSD2 expression reverses enzalutamide-sustained cortisol levels and GR-responsive gene expression. (A) Impeded conversion from cortisol to cortisone with Enz treatment is reversible with transient and (B) stable 11β-HSD2 expression. Cells expressing 11β-HSD2 or empty vector (control) were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz for 40 days, followed by treatment with [3H]-cortisol and analysis of steroids in media by HPLC. (C) With Enz treatment, only cortisol-induced GR signaling is specifically reversible with forced stable 11β-HSD2 expression. LAPC4 cells were Figure 3 continued on next page
Glucocorticoid administration has long been recognized to have a therapeutic effect in CRPC. Although the therapeutic effect of glucocorticoids is likely due in part to adrenal androgen suppression, the complete effects of glucocorticoids in prostate cancer have yet to be fully elucidated (Attard et al., 2012). Our observations move us closer to an understanding of the role of glucocorticoid pharmacology and physiology in prostate cancer. It has been recently recognized that GR stimulation may also contribute to prostate cancer progression. Our findings suggest yet another consideration that adds to the complexity of glucocorticoid signaling in prostate cancer, namely susceptibility of the administered glucocorticoid to metabolic inactivation, that is likely relevant to the increased GR expression that may occur alongside enzalutamide resistance and allows direct tumor-promoting effects of glucocorticoids in CRPC. For example, prednisolone is inactivated by 11β-HSD2 to prednisone but dexamethasone is generally thought to be impervious to inactivation by 11β-HSD2. This may be even more important prior to enzalutamide therapy and consequent suppression of 11β-HSD2 loss, because some data suggest that baseline GR expression prior to enzalutamide treatment, where 11β-HSD2 expression is intact, may be associated with enzalutamide resistance (Arora et al., 2013). Furthermore, early results from a neoadjuvant clinical trial of castration plus abiraterone suggest that tissue cortisol may be elevated specifically in prostate cancers that up-regulate GR (Efstathiou et al., 2015). Thus, it is possible that altered tumor glucocorticoid metabolism by way of the mechanism we have elucidated occurs not only with enzalutamide but also with abiraterone therapy.

Metabolic regulation of GR stimulation by the tumor might also be a tumor-specific therapeutic vulnerability. Our data raise the possibility that blocking 11β-HSD2 protein loss, for example by blocking AMFR, or reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression in the tumor may be an appropriate strategy to reverse enzalutamide resistance without affecting the systemic availability of glucocorticoids and resultant associated toxicities. Blocking AMFR may also increase 3βHSD1 protein, sustaining androgen synthesis (Chang et al., 2013). However, in vivo studies with AMFR knockdown suggest that in the context of enzalutamide treatment, the net effect of AMFR ablation is therapeutic, probably because the AR ligand binding domain remains mainly occupied by enzalutamide and glucocorticoid signaling is a major driver of tumor progression.

Finally, our findings may have general relevance to steroid-dependent disease processes that use alternative steroid receptors. For example, in addition to the involvement of GR in prostate cancer, GR and AR have been implicated in a subtype-specific breast cancer progression (Kach et al., 2015; Ni et al., 2011). Our results suggest that a switch in steroid receptors that drives disease processes more broadly may be accompanied by perturbed local metabolic regulation of the availability of ligands that stimulate steroid receptor activation.

**Materials and methods**

**Cell lines**

LAPC4 was a generous gift from Dr. Charles Sawyers (Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer, New York, NY), which was maintained in Iscove’s modified Dulbecco’s medium (IMDM) with 10% fetal bovine serum and incubated in a 5% CO₂ humidified incubator. VCaP was purchased from American Type...
Figure 4. Reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression restores sensitivity to enzalutamide therapy by specifically suppressing tumor corticosterone. (A) Expression of 11β-HSD2 reverses enzalutamide (Enz) resistant LAPC4 CRPC xenograft tumor growth. (B) Progression-free survival is prolonged by 11β-HSD2 expression in Enz-treated LAPC4 xenografts. N.S. = not significant. (C) 11β-HSD2 expression reverses Enz resistance in the VCaP xenograft model of CRPC as assessed by decreased tumor volume and (D) prolongation of progression-free survival. For both xenograft studies, cells expressing 11β-HSD2 have a lower corticosterone concentration compared to control cells. (E) Tumor corticosterone concentration in Vector/Enz and 11β-HSD2/Enz xenografts. (F) Serum corticosterone concentration in Vector/Enz and 11β-HSD2/Enz xenografts.
HSD2 or vector (control) were grown in orchiectomized mice supplemented with DHEA and arbitrarily assigned to Enz or chow (Ctrl). For the comparisons in tumor volume, the significance of the difference between 11\(\beta\)-HSD2/Enz and Vector/Enz was calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test on day 24 (LAPC4) or day 23 (VCaP). For the comparisons in progression-free survival, the significance of the difference between 11\(\beta\)-HSD2/Enz and Vector/Enz was calculated with a log-rank test. (E) The absolute concentration of corticosterone is reduced in xenograft tumors expressing 11\(\beta\)-HSD2. (F) The percentage of corticosterone relative to 11-dehydrocorticosterone is reduced in tumors expressing 11\(\beta\)-HSD2. (G) The absolute concentration of corticosterone and (H) percentage of corticosterone relative to 11-dehydrocorticosterone in serum are unaffected in mice harboring tumors with restored 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 expression. P values in E-H were calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.009

The following figure supplement is available for figure 4:

**Figure supplement 1.** Forced 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 expression in Enz-treated LAPC4 xenografts is comparable to endogenous expression in the MDA-PCA-2b prostate cancer cell line and the human placental derived JEG-3 cell line.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.009

Culture Collection (ATCC), which was cultured in Dulbecco’s Modified Eagle Medium (DMEM) containing 10% fetal bovine serum and incubated in an 8% CO\(_2\) humidified incubator. MDA-PCA-2b was purchased from ATCC, which was cultured in BRFF-HPC1 (Athena ES) containing 20% fetal bovine serum and incubated in a 5% CO\(_2\) humidified incubator. FCIV1-11\(\beta\)-HSD2-FLAG (a gift from Moses Chao [Addgene plasmid # 24097]) (Jeanneteau et al., 2008) was used to generate the LAPC4 and VCaP stable cell line expressing 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 by using a lentiviral system. The viral packaging and infection was performed as previously described (Chang et al., 2011, 2013). Briefly, 293T cells (ATCC) were cotransfected with 10 \(\mu\)g each of FCIV1-11\(\beta\)-HSD2-FLAG, pMD2.G, and psPAX2 vector for 48 hr to package the virus. Next, LAPC4 and VCaP cells were infected with the virus for 24 hr with the addition of polybrene (6 mg/ml), followed by selection with 2 \(\mu\)g/ml puromycin for ~2 weeks. The AMFR knockdown LAPC4 stable cell line was established by employing the pGFP-C-shLenti vectors contain AMFR shRNA sequences (5’-ACAAGACACCTCCTCTGGCTGATGAG-3’ and 5’-GGAGCCGCTTCTCAAGTCTGCTGATGAG-3’) (Origen), The viral packaging, infection as well as selection procedures were carried out as described above. Enzalutamide (Enz) was obtained courtesy of Medivation (San Francisco, CA). All Enz and vehicle treated cells were maintained in medium containing 10 nM DHEA. Cell lines are authenticated using short tandem repeat characterization by DDC Medical every six months and routinely (every 1–3 months) screened for mycoplasma contamination as described (Li et al., 2015).

**Cortisol metabolism**

Cell line metabolism. Cells (~10^6 cells per well) were plated and maintained in 12 well plates coated with poly-DL-ornithine (Sigma-Aldrich) for overnight and then treated with [\(^3\)H]-cortisol (1,000,000 counts per minute (c.p.m.) per well; PerkinElmer) and non-radiolabeled cortisol (100 nM final concentration). After incubation for the indicated time points, both media and cells were collected. Briefly, 300 \(\mu\)l media was collected; the cells were scraped and centrifuged at 10,000 x g for 2 min twice to remove all the media, then the cell pellets were resuspended with 300 \(\mu\)l PBS. Collected media and cells were incubated with 300 units of \(\beta\)-glucuronidase (Helix pomatia; Sigma-Aldrich) at 65\(^\circ\)C for at least 2 hr, extracted with 600 \(\mu\)l 1:1 ethyl acetate:isoctane, and concentrated under a nitrogen stream.

Xenograft metabolism. LAPC4 or VCaP cells (~10^7) were injected subcutaneously with Matrigel (Corning) into surgically orchiectomized NSG mice that were implanted with DHEA pellets (5 mg/ pellet, 90-day sustained-release, Innovative Research of America). Fresh xenografts were harvested and ~40 mg xenograft tissues were minced, and cultured in IMEM with 10% FBS at 37\(^\circ\)C with a mixture of [\(^3\)H]-cortisol and non-radiolabeled cortisol. Aliquots of media were collected at the indicated time points, steroids were extracted and concentrated as described above.

For HPLC analysis, the concentrated samples were dissolved in 50% methanol and injected on a Breeze 1525 system equipped with model 717 plus autoinjector (Waters Corp.). Steroid metabolites were separated by a Luna 150-x 4.6 mm, 3 \(\mu\)M C18 reverse-phase column (Phenomenex) using methanol/water gradients at 30\(^\circ\)C. The column effluent was analyzed using a \(\beta\)-RAM model three in-line radioactivity detector (INUS Systems, Inc.) using Liquisint scintillation mixture (National Diagnostics). All metabolism studies were performed in duplicate and repeated in independent experiments.
Figure 5. AMFR is required for 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination and the enzalutamide-induced metabolic phenotype that sustains local cortisol concentrations and enzalutamide-resistance. (A) 11β-HSD2 and AMFR co-immunoprecipitate. Immunoprecipitation (IP) and immunoblot (IB) from endogenously expressed proteins in whole cell protein lysate from LAPC4 cells were performed with the indicated antibodies. The experiment was performed twice. (B) AMFR promotes 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination. Proteins were expressed in 293 cells, proteins tagged with ubiquitin-His, were pulled-down with Ni-

Figure 5 continued on next page
agaro...expression with two independent shRNAs increases 11β-HSD2 protein. LAPC4 cells stably expressed shRNAs against AMFR (shAMFR) or non-silencing control expression vector. The experiment was performed three times. (D) Blockade of Enzalutamide (Enz)-mediated 11β-HSD2 loss by silencing AMFR reverses the metabolic phenotype that confers sustained cortisol concentrations. Cells were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz and subsequently treated with [3H]-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times, followed by steroid extraction from media and cells, and steroid analysis by HPLC. Error bars represent the SD of biological triplicates. The experiment was performed three times. Enz treatment in panel D was for 38–42 days. (E) AMFR is required for tumor growth through enzalutamide therapy. Xenografts from LAPC4 cells expressing shAMFR or non-silencing control vector (shCtrl) were grown in surgically orchiectomized mice supplemented with DHEA and treated with Enz when tumors reached 100 mm3. The significance of the difference between shCtrl and shAMFR groups was determined with a log-rank test. (F) Progression-free survival is increased in tumors lacking AMFR. The significance of the difference between shCtrl and shAMFR groups was calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test on day 20. (G) Xenograft tumors with genetic ablation of AMFR retain 11β-HSD2 protein expression. Xenograft tissues were collected at the end of the xenograft study and immunoblot was performed with the indicated antibodies.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.010

The following figure supplement is available for figure 5:

Figure supplement 1. AMFR and Erlin-2 regulation and cortisol metabolism with Enz treatment.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.011

Gene expression and immunoblot

LAPC4 cells were treated with Enz for 36 days and then seeded into 12 well plates coated with poly-DL-ornithine at 50% confluence. After incubation overnight, the cells were transfected with 11β-HSD2-FLAG plasmid for 48 hr by using the TransIT–2020 Transfection Reagent (Mirus) according to the protocol provided by the manufacturer, then maintained in phenol-red-free medium with 5% Charcoal:Dextran-stripped FBS for 48 hr before being treated with the indicated drugs. Total RNA was extracted with a GenElute Mammalian Total RNA miniprep kit (Sigma-Aldrich) and 1 μg RNA was reverse-transcribed to cDNA with the iScript cDNA Synthesis Kit (Bio-Rad). An ABI 7500 Real-Time PCR machine (Applied Biosystems) was used to perform the qPCR analysis, using iTaq Fast SYBR Green Supermix with ROX (Bio-Rad) in 96-well plates at a final reaction volume of 10 μl. The qPCR analysis was carried out in triplicate with the following primer sets: PSA (Forward: 5’-GGAAGATGGGATGAGAAG-3’; Reverse: 5’-CATCAAATCTGAGGGTTGTCT-3’), FKB5 (Forward: 5’-CCCCCTATTTATATCGGAGTAC-3’; Reverse: 5’-TTTTGAAGAGCACAGAACAC-3’), TMRSS2 (Forward: 5’-TGGCTCCGAGTGAATGGGTTGTT-3’; Reverse: 5’-AGCATACGGGCTCT-3’), GR (Forward: 5’-CTAATGCTATTCAAGCCCCAGCAT-3’; Reverse: 5’-GTGCTGGCCTTCCACGTCT-3’), HSD11B2 (Forward: 5’-TGGATCGCGTTGTCCAG-3’; Reverse: 5’-GTTCGCCAATGTCAG-3’), HSD11B1 (Forward: 5’-GGAGGTCTCCTGTTGTGTCTT-3’; Reverse: 5’-G TAGTGGCCATGAAGGCRC-3’), KLF9 (Forward: 5’-AACACGCTCTCGGAAAGAGG-3’; Reverse: 5’- CGGTCAAGCAGGAGAAGCTT-3’), PMEPA1 (Forward: 5’-GTCGAACTGCAAACGCTCT-3’; Reverse: 5’- AGCTTGTAGTGGCTCAG-3’), the housekeeping gene large ribosomal protein P0 (RPLP0) (Forward: 5’-CGAGGACACCTGGAAC-3’; Reverse: 5’-CACATTCCCCCGGATATGA-3’). Each mRNA transcript was quantitated by normalizing the sample values to RPLP0 and to vehicle treated cells (for steroid treated cells). All gene expression studies were repeated in independent experiments.

For protein analysis, immunoblots were performed as described previously (Li et al., 2013). Briefly, total cellular protein was extracted with ice cold RIPA lysis buffer (Sigma-Aldrich) containing protease inhibitors (Roche). 30–50 μg protein was separated by 8% SDS-PAGE gel and then transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane (Millipore). After incubating with the anti-11β-HSD2 antibody (Santa Cruz; 1:3000), anti-11β-HSD1 antibody (Santa Cruz; 1:1000), GR antibody (BD Biosciences; 1:1000), anti-Erlin-2 antibody (Cell Signaling Technology; 1:1000) or anti-AMFR antibody (ProteinTech; 1:1000) overnight at 4°C, the appropriate secondary antibody was incubated for 1 hr at room temperature. The chemiluminescent detection system (Thermo Scientific) was used to detect the bands with peroxidase activity. An anti-β-actin antibody (Sigma-Aldrich; 1:5000) was used as a control for sample loading.
Gene expression and knockdown

Gene expression. The day before transfection, cells were plated into 12 well plates coated with poly-DL-ornithine (~7 x 10^5 cells/well), then an Erlin-2 expressing plasmid, Erlin-2-Myc-DDK-tagged (OriGene) or 11β-HSD2 expressing plasmid FCIV1-11β-HSD2-FLAG was introduced into the cells with Lipofectamine 3000 Reagent (ThermoFisher, Waltham, MA). After 48 hr transfection, the cells were collected and used for the detection of 11β-HSD2 and Erlin-2 by immunoblot, or treated with Enz for 24 hr to determine the cortisol metabolism by HPLC as described above.

Gene knockdown. Cells were seeded into 12 well plates coated with poly-DL-ornithine at 60–80% confluence. After incubation overnight, the cells were transfected with siRNA following the Lipofectamine RNAiMAX Reagent (ThermoFisher, Waltham, MA) protocol provided by the manufacturer for 48 hr. Cells were then used for qPCR and immunoblot analysis or cortisol metabolism analysis, as described previously. For 11β-HSD2 knockdown, the experiments were performed with Dharmacon SMARTpool: ON-TARGETplus HSD11B2 siRNA, L-008983-00-0005 or ON-TARGET plus Non-targeting Pool, #D-001810–10-05 with a final concentration of 25 nM siRNA. For Erlin-2 knockdown, the siRNA sequence: 5’-GCCTCTCCGTACTAACAT-3’ (Huber et al., 2013) was used.

Cell viability assay

LAPC4 cells or the long-term Enz treated LAPC4 cells were plated in triplicate in 96 well plates coated with poly-DL-ornithine and incubated overnight, then treated with Enz and assayed in triplicate at the time points indicated using CellTiter-Glo (Promega). Viability is normalized to day 0.

Co-immunoprecipitation

The interaction between 11β-HSD2 and AMFR was analyzed using the Pierce Classic Magnetic IP/Co-IP Kit (Thermo Scientific) following the protocol provided by the manufacturer. Briefly, ~10^7 LAPC4 cells were lysed in 1 ml Pierce IP Lysis/Wash Buffer with protease inhibitors added fresh, on ice for 1 hr. The cell lysates were centrifuged at 12,000 x g for 15 min at 4°C. 1–2 mg of protein was pre-cleaned with 30 μl pre-cleaned Protein A/G PLUS-Agarose (Santa Cruz) and 1 μg rabbit IgG (Millipore) for 1 hr and then incubated with rabbit IgG (3 μg), 11β-HSD2 antibody (4 μg) or AMFR antibody (3 μg) overnight at 4°C. The antibody/antigen/bead complex was washed with ice-cold Pierce IP Lysis/Wash Buffer containing protease inhibitors adequately and denatured in 40 μl freshly prepared 1x Lane Marker Sample Buffer at room temperature for 30 min with mixing. 20 μl IP products were used for the subsequent protein separation and detection of 11β-HSD2 or AMFR using their antibodies by immunoblot.

Mouse xenograft studies

All mouse studies were performed under a protocol approved by the Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (IACUC) of the Cleveland Clinic Lerner Research Institute. All NSG male mice (6–8 weeks old) were purchased from the Jackson Laboratory and the number of mice used in this study was based on previously published mouse xenograft studies by our lab that determined effects of steroid pathway inhibition/augmentation on xenograft growth (Chang et al., 2011, 2013; Li et al., 2015). Mice were surgically orchietomized and implanted with DHEA pellets to mimic human adrenal DHEA production in patients with CRPC. one week later, mice were prepared for cell injections.

For the evaluation of the 11β-HSD2 role in reversing enzalutamide resistance, either 10^7 vector control or 10^7 11β-HSD2 overexpressing LAPC4 cells (100 μl in 50% matrigel and 50% growth media) were subcutaneously injected into mice. When tumors reached 100 or 150 mm^3 (length x width x height x 0.52), for LAPC4 and VCaP xenografts, respectively, the mice were arbitrarily divided into two groups each for vector and 11β-HSD2 overexpressing cells: Enz diet 62.5 mg/kg and (as described in (Tran et al., 2009) or chow alone groups. Based on the daily chow consumption, approximately 0.3125 mg Enz was consumed per mouse per day. Enz in chow and chow alone were obtained from Medivation. Tumor volume was measured every other day, and progression-free survival was assessed as time to 3-fold (LAPC4) or 1.5-fold (VCaP) increase in tumor volume (from 100 or 150 mm^3) from the time Enz or chow alone was initiated. The number of mice in the LAPC4 Vector/Ctrl, Vector/Enz, 11β-HSD2/Ctrl and 11β-HSD2/Enz groups were 9, 9, 10, and 11, respectively. The number of mice in the VCaP Vector/Ctrl, Vector/Enz, 11β-HSD2/Ctrl and 11β-HSD2/Enz groups were 6, 6, 5, and 8, respectively. Numbers of mice in each treatment group were
determined by those that survived surgical procedures and had reached a tumor volume to initiate treatment.

For evaluation of the role of AMFR in reversing enzalutamide resistance, either $10^7$ control or $10^7$ AMFR knockdown LAPC4 cells (100 μl in 50% matrigel and 50%growth media) were subcutaneously injected into mice. The remaining procedures were performed as described above. The number of mice in the LAPC4 shCtrl/Enz and shAMFR/Enz groups were 6, and 10, respectively. AMFR and 11β-HSD2 protein in the shCtrl and control or shAMFR LAPC4 xenografts were analyzed by immunoblot.

Briefly, ~40–50 mg xenograft tissue was minced into pieces and then added into soft tissue homogenizing CK14 tubes (Betin Technologies) with 150 μl RIPA buffer containing protease inhibitors. Xenograft tissues were homogenized with a homogenizer (Minilys, Betin Technologies) six times (40 s each time) at the highest speed. Tubes were incubated on the ice for 5–10 min between each homogenization to cool lysates. The lysates were then centrifuged for 30 min at 15,000 x g and the supernatants were used for immunoblot analysis.

Immunofluorescence staining

LAPC4 cells treated with Enz or vehicle for 23 days were seeded into chamber slides (BD Biosciences) coated with poly-DL-ornithine at 60% confluence. After overnight culture, cells were washed with PBS and fixed with ice cold methanol for 15 min and the methanol was washed with PBS. Before applying primary antibodies, nonspecific binding sites were blocked with blocking buffer (Protein Block Serum Free, Dako). Anti-11β-HSD2 antibody (Santa Cruz), diluted at 1:300 with Antibody Diluent (Dako), was applied for incubation overnight at 4°C. After being rinsed with PBS, the slides were probed with Alexa Fluor 594 conjugated secondary antibody (goat anti-rabbit, Thermo Scientific) for 45 min at room temperature. VECTASHIELD HardSet Mounting Medium (Vector Laboratories) was used to mount the slides and counterstain the nucleus with DAPI.

Human tissue studies

All deidentified human tissues were obtained with informed consent using institutional review board (IRB)-approved protocols at each institution (Cleveland Clinic, UT Southwestern and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute). Pre- and post-Enz lymph node tissues were obtained from CT-guided biopsy of metastatic CRPC from Cleveland Clinic (Patient #3) and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute (Patient #4). Pathologic identification of tumor was done by an expert prostate cancer pathologist. Staining of tissues from Patient #4 was done with frozen section slides that were air dried at room temperature for 5 min, followed by rehydration with PBS. Immunofluorescence staining was performed as described above. H and E staining was completed by the imagine core of Biomedical Engineering Department in Lerner Research Institute of Cleveland Clinic.

Paired pre-Enz treatment and post-Enz treatment tissues from Patient #1 and Patient #2 were obtained from patients with localized prostate cancer treated with Enz plus ADT for two months prior to the second biopsy in a clinical trial (NCT02064582) at the University of Texas Southwestern Medical Center. Biopsies were obtained using image-guidance with a Koelis Urostation. The biopsy cores were minced into pieces and then added into Soft tissue homogenizing CK14 tubes (Betin Technologies) with 100 μl 6M Urea buffer containing protease inhibitors (Sigma Aldrich). Tissue homogenization and immunoblot analysis were performed as described previously.

Seven fresh prostate tissue cores (60–80 mg) from Patients #5-#11 were obtained from the peripheral zone of radical prostatectomy specimens at Cleveland Clinic, confirmed to have tumor in or in close proximity to cores by an expert prostate cancer pathologist, minced and aliquoted to two parts. One was treated with 10 nM DHEA plus vehicle, and the other was treated with 10 nM DHEA plus 10 μM Enz. Both tissues were maintained in 3 ml DMEM containing 10% fetal bovine serum and incubated in a 5% CO₂ humidified incubator. After four days of culture, two more ml medium with DHEA plus either vehicle or Enz was added into each part. The tissues were collected after 7–8 days treatment. The same procedures were performed as described above for protein extraction and immunoblot.

Mass spectrometry

Xenograft analysis. At least 24 mg tumor tissue (n = 18) was homogenized with 1 ml LC-MS grade water (Fisher) by using homogenizer. The mixture was then centrifuged. 800 μl of the supernatant
was transferred to a glass tube, followed by the addition of 80 µl of 10 ng/ml internal standard (cortico-
sterone-d8) (Steraloids). The steroids and the internal standard were extracted with methyl tert
butyl ether (Across) evaporated to dryness under N₂ then reconstituted with 500 µl of 50% methanol.

Mouse serum analysis. At the endpoint of the xenograft study, mouse serum was collected. 20 µl of
mouse serum and internal standard (corticosterone-d8) were precipitated with 200 µl methanol.
After centrifugation, the supernatant was transferred to HPLC vials prior to mass spectrometry
analysis.

The LC-MS/MS system contains an ultra-pressure liquid chromatography system (Shimadzu Cor-
poration, Japan) which is consisted of two LC-30AD pumps, a DGU-20ASR degasser, a CTO-30A col-
umn oven, SIL-30AC autosampler, and a system controller CBM-20A and coupled with a Qtrap 5500
mass spectrometer (AB Sciex). Data acquisition and processing were performed using Analyst soft-
ware (version 1.6.2) from ABSciex.

Steroids were ionized using electrospray ionization in positive mode. Quantification of analytes
was performed using multiple reaction monitoring. The mass transitions for corticosterone, 11-dehy-
drocorticosterone, and internal standard are 347.3/121.0, 345.3/121.0, and 355.3/125.0, respec-
tively. Separation of steroids was achieved using a Zorbax Eclipse plus C18 column (Agilent) using
a mobile phase consisting of (A) 0.2% formic acid in water and (B) 0.2% formic acid in (methanol:ace-
tonitrile, 60:40) with a gradient program at a flow rate of 0.2 ml/min. Sample injection volume was
10 µl.

Ubiquitination assay

Experiments were conducted as previously described (Chang et al., 2013), with minor modifications.
Briefly, HEK293T were transfected with the following plasmids: FCIV1-11b-HSD2-FLAG, pcDNA3-
6xHis-ubiquitin and pLenti-AMFR-Myc-DDK (OriGene) for 36 hr. Transfected cells were collected by
scraping with ice-cold PBS. Cell pellets were suspended in 200 µl PBS. For input analysis, 20 µl of
cell suspension was pelleted and lysed with RIPA lysis buffer, followed by immunoblot analyses with
anti-DDK (OriGene, 1:1000), anti-FLAG (Sigma-Aldrich, 1:1000) and anti-β-actin antibodies. The
remaining cells were lysed with 4 ml lysis buffer (6 M guanidine-HCl, 0.1M Na₂HPO₄/NaH₂PO₄,
0.01M Tris/HCl, pH 8.0, 10 mM imidazole, and 10 mM β-mercaptoethanol) and sonicated to reduce
the viscosity. Protein complexes were pulled down by incubation with 30 µl Ni NTA magnetic agar-
ose beads (QIAGEN) at room temperature for 2 hr and then successively washed with the buffer
series: (1) 6 M guanidine-HCl, 0.1M Na₂HPO₄/NaH₂PO₄, 0.01M Tris/HCl, pH 8.0, 10 mM imidazole,
and 10 mM β-mercaptoethanol; (2) 8 M Urea, 0.1 M Na₂HPO₄/NaH₂PO₄, 0.01 M Tris/HCl, pH 8.0,
20 mM imidazole, 10 mM β-mercaptoethanol plus 0.2% Triton X-100; (3) 8 M Urea, 0.1 M Na₂HPO₄/
NaH₂PO₄, 0.01 M Tris/HCl, pH 6.3, 10 mM β-mercaptoethanol (buffer A), 40 mM imidazole plus
0.4% Triton X-100, twice; (4) buffer A with 20 mM imidazole plus 0.2% Triton X-100; (5) buffer A with
10 mM imidazole plus 0.1% Triton X-100. After the washes, the protein complexes were eluted with
30 µl 2X SDS sample buffer containing 400 mM imidazole and 20 µl elution was then used for immu-
noblot analysis with anti-11β-HSD2 antibody (Santa Cruz; 1:3000).

Acknowledgements

We thank David Schumick for help with the illustration in Figure 1. We thank Mike Brown for helpful
comments. This work has been supported in part by funding to NS from a Howard Hughes Medical
Institute Physician-Scientist Early Career Award, a Prostate Cancer Foundation Challenge Award, an
American Cancer Society Research Scholar Award (12-038-01-CCE), grants from the National Cancer
Institute (R01CA168899, R01CA172382, and R01CA190289).

Additional information

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<td>W81XWH-16-1-0270</td>
<td>Jianneng Li</td>
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The funders had no role in study design, data collection and interpretation, or the decision to submit the work for publication.

**Author contributions**

JL, MA, AZ, NS, Conception and design, Acquisition of data, Analysis and interpretation of data, Drafting or revising the article; K-HC, ZL, ZZ, MP, Acquisition of data, Drafting or revising the article; MB, CM-G, Acquisition of data, Analysis and interpretation of data, Drafting or revising the article; M-ET, JAG, KC, EAK, Conception and design, Acquisition of data, Drafting or revising the article

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**Ethics**

Human subjects: All deidentified human tissues were obtained with informed consent using institutional review board (IRB)-approved protocols at each institution (Cleveland Clinic, UT Southwestern and Dana-Farber Cancer Institute).

Animal experimentation: All animal work was done under Cleveland Clinic IACUC protocol number 2015-1549.

**References**


Figures and figure supplements

Aberrant corticosteroid metabolism in tumor cells enables GR takeover in enzalutamide resistant prostate cancer

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Figure 1. GR stimulation with enzalutamide resistance in prostate cancer is tightly regulated by glucocorticoid metabolism in target tissues. (A) Glucocorticoid metabolism in target tissues. Stimulation of GR by cortisol in humans is limited by 11β-HSD2, which oxidizes and converts cortisol to cortisone.

Figure 1 continued on next page...
inactive cortisone. In mice, 11β-HSD2 converts active corticosterone to inactive 11-dehydrocorticosterone. (B) Enzalutamide (Enz) sustains cortisol levels by retarding inactivation in the LAPC4 and VCaP human prostate cancer cell lines. Cells were treated with the indicated concentrations of Enz or vehicle for 36 days (LAPC4) or 40 days (VCaP), and subsequently treated with [3H]-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times, followed by steroid extraction from media (above) and cells (below), steroid separation and quantitation with HPLC. The experiment was done in duplicate and repeated at least three times. (C) Cortisol inactivation is impaired in xenograft tumors treated with Enz. Fresh tumor tissues were harvested from LAPC4 or VCaP xenografts grown in orchiectomized mice and treated with Enz or chow alone (n = 5 tumors per treatment group). Tumors were treated with [3H]-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times and steroids were extracted from media and analyzed by HPLC. Error bars represent the SD. (D) Enz suppresses LAPC4 cell line proliferation. LAPC4 cells were treated with vehicle (Ctrl) or the indicated concentration of Enz for the designated number of days and cell viability was assessed using CellTiter-Glo. Cell viability was normalized to day 0, experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.002
Figure 1—figure supplement 1. Effects of Enz on LAPC4 cells. (A) Short term Enz treatment does not affect cortisol metabolism. Previously untreated cells were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz or Vehicle and concomitantly with [³H]-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times and steroids.
were separated and quantitated by HPLC. (B) Enz suppresses expression of AR-regulated transcripts and has no acute effect on expression of GR, HSD11B2 or HSD11B1. LAPC4 cells were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz or Vehicle for 24 hr and the indicated transcripts were assessed by qPCR. Expression is normalized to Vehicle control and RPLP0. (C) The viability of LAPC4 cells recovers with long-term Enz treatment. The cells were treated with long-term (Enz D56), short-term (Ctrl + Enz) Enz (10 μM), or no treatment (Ctrl) for the indicated number of days and cell viability was assessed relative to day 0. Experiments were performed in triplicate and error bars represent the SD.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.003
**Figure 2.** Enzalutamide promotes 11β-HSD2 protein loss in cell line models and tissues from patients with prostate cancer. (A) Enzalutamide (Enz) treatment results in the loss of 11β-HSD2 protein that occurs concurrently with an increase in GR protein in the LAPC4 model of CRPC as assessed by Western blot. (B) 11β-HSD2 protein expression in Enz treated LAPC4 cells as assessed by immunocytochemistry. (C,D) Loss of 11β-HSD2 and increase in GR expression in VCaP and MDA-Pca-2b cell lines treated with Enz. (E) Patient samples showing loss of 11β-HSD2 and increase in GR protein in tissue samples from patients treated with Enz.

**References:**

Li et al. eLife 2017;6:e20183. DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183
Figure 2 continued

in GR protein similarly occur with Enz treatment in the VCaP and MDA-PCa-2b models. (E) Enz induces loss of 11β-HSD2 protein in tissue from patients with prostate cancer. Local prostate biopsies were obtained from Patients #1 and #2 with image guidance in a neoadjuvant study before (Pre) and after (Post) two months of treatment with Enz and medical castration. Patients #3 and #4 had biopsies of metastatic CRPC from lymph nodes before and after three months (Patient #3) and 11 months (Patient #4) of treatment with Enz. Fresh tissues from Patients #5-#11 were obtained from surgical prostatectomy specimens and incubated with vehicle or Enz (10 µM) for 7–8 days prior to protein extraction and Western blot.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.004
Figure 2—figure supplement 1. Response to Enz in prostate cancer cell lines and human tissues. (A) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD2 protein expression in the AR-negative DU145 prostate cancer cell line. (B) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in AR-negative LAPC4 prostate cancer cell line. (C) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative VCaP prostate cancer cell line. (D) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative MDA-Pca-2b prostate cancer cell line. (E) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative LAPC4 prostate cancer cell line. (F) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative VCaP prostate cancer cell line. (G) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative MDA-Pca-2b prostate cancer cell line. (H) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative DU145 prostate cancer cell line. (I) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative LAPC4 prostate cancer cell line. (J) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative VCaP prostate cancer cell line. (K) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative MDA-Pca-2b prostate cancer cell line. (L) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative DU145 prostate cancer cell line. (M) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative LAPC4 prostate cancer cell line. (N) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative VCaP prostate cancer cell line. (O) Enz treatment does not change 11β-HSD1 protein expression in the AR-negative MDA-Pca-2b prostate cancer cell line.
expressing prostate cancer cell lines. Cells were treated with the indicated concentrations of Enz, whole cell protein lysates were obtained, separated
and assessed with anti-11β-HSD1 and anti-β-actin antibodies. (C) GR transcript increases and HSD11B2 is unchanged with long-term Enz treatment of
LAPC4 and VCaP cells. Expression is normalized to vehicle treated cells and RPLP0. (D) Enz does not directly antagonize 11β-HSD2. LAPC4 cells were
transfected with a vector encoding 11β-HSD2, in the presence of the indicated concentration of Enz or Vehicle, and conversion from [3H]-cortisol (100
nM) to cortisol was assessed by HPLC. Experiments performed in biological duplicate. (E) 11β-HSD2 loss is not attributable to GR stimulation. LAPC4
cells were treated with dexamethasone (DEX; 100 nM) for the indicated durations, whole cell protein lysates were obtained and assessed with anti-11β-
HSD2 and anti-β-actin antibodies. (F) GR protein expression is induced in a subset of the patient tissues from Figure 2E. All six tissues that have
induction of GR expression exhibit loss of 11β-HSD2 in Figure 2.
Figure 3. 11β-HSD2 expression reverses enzalutamide-sustained cortisol levels and GR-responsive gene expression. (A) Impeded conversion from cortisol to cortisone with Enz treatment is reversible with transient and (B) stable 11β-HSD2 expression. Cells expressing 11β-HSD2 or empty vector
Figure 3 continued

(control) were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz for 40 days, followed by treatment with [\(^{3}\text{H}\)]-cortisol and analysis of steroids in media by HPLC. (C) With Enz treatment, only cortisol-induced GR signaling is specifically reversible with forced stable 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 expression. LAPC4 cells were treated with Enz for 36 days, starved with phenol-red-free medium containing 5% Charcoal Dextran-stripped FBS for 48 hr and transfected with a plasmid expressing 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 and treated with the indicated conditions for 24 hr. Only cortisol induction of PSA expression, which is GR- and metabolism-dependent, is reversible by 11\(\beta\)-HSD2. Expression of KLF9, which is regulated only by GR, is induced by cortisol and dexamethasone, but only cortisol induction is reversible by 11\(\beta\)-HSD2. Expression of PMEPA1, which is regulated only by AR, is induced with DHT only and not reversible by 11\(\beta\)-HSD2. Expression is normalized to vehicle-treated cells (not shown) and RPLP0 expression. The experiment was performed four times. Error bars represent the SD of a representative experiment performed in triplicate.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.006
Figure 3—figure supplement 1. 11β-HSD2 overexpression (OE) in the long-term Enz-treated LAPC4 cells is comparable to endogenous expression in the human placental derived JEG-3 cell line.
DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.007
Figure 4. Reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression restores sensitivity to enzalutamide therapy by specifically suppressing tumor corticosterone. (A) Expression of 11β-HSD2 reverses enzalutamide (Enz) resistant LAPC4 CRPC xenograft tumor growth. (B) Progression-free survival is prolonged by 11β-HSD2 expression. (C) Reinstatement of 11β-HSD2 expression restores sensitivity to enzalutamide therapy by specifically suppressing tumor corticosterone. (D) Progression-free survival is prolonged by 11β-HSD2 expression.
HSD2 expression in Enz-treated LAPC4 xenografts. N.S. = not significant. (C) 11β-HSD2 expression reverses Enz resistance in the VCaP xenograft model of CRPC as assessed by decreased tumor volume and (D) prolongation of progression-free survival. For both xenograft studies, cells expressing 11β-HSD2 or vector (control) were grown in orchiectomized mice supplemented with DHEA and arbitrarily assigned to Enz or chow (Ctrl). For the comparisons in tumor volume, the significance of the difference between 11β-HSD2/Enz and Vector/Enz was calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test on day 24 (LAPC4) or day 23 (VCaP). For the comparisons in progression-free survival, the significance of the difference between 11β-HSD2/Enz and Vector/Enz was calculated with a log-rank test. (E) The absolute concentration of corticosterone is reduced in xenograft tumors expressing 11β-HSD2. (F) The percentage of corticosterone relative to 11-dehydrocorticosterone is reduced in tumors expressing 11β-HSD2. (G) The absolute concentration of corticosterone and (H) percentage of corticosterone relative to 11-dehydrocorticosterone in serum are unaffected in mice harboring tumors with restored 11β-HSD2 expression. P values in E-H were calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.008
Forced 11\(\beta\)-HSD2 expression in Enz-treated LAPC4 xenografts is comparable to endogenous expression in the MDA-PCa-2b prostate cancer cell line and the human placental derived JEG-3 cell line.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.009
Figure 5. AMFR is required for 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination and the enzalutamide-induced metabolic phenotype that sustains local cortisol concentrations and enzalutamide-resistance. (A) 11β-HSD2 and AMFR co-immunoprecipitate. Immunoprecipitation (IP) and immunoblot (IB) from endogenously
Figure 5 continued

expressed proteins in whole cell protein lysate from LAPC4 cells were performed with the indicated antibodies. The experiment was performed twice. (B) AMFR promotes 11β-HSD2 ubiquitination. Proteins were expressed in 293 cells, proteins tagged with ubiquitin-His, were pulled-down with Ni-agarose beads, and immunoblot was performed with the indicated antibodies. The experiment was performed twice. (C) Silencing AMFR expression with two independent shRNAs increases 11β-HSD2 protein. LAPC4 cells stably expressed shRNAs against AMFR (shAMFR) or non-silencing control expression vector. The experiment was performed three times. (D) Blockade of Enzalutamide (Enz)-mediated 11β-HSD2 loss by silencing AMFR reverses the metabolic phenotype that confers sustained cortisol concentrations. Cells were treated with the indicated concentration of Enz and subsequently were treated with [3H]-cortisol (100 nM) for the indicated times, followed by steroid extraction from media and cells, and steroid analysis by HPLC. Error bars represent the SD of biological triplicates. The experiment was performed three times. Enz treatment in panel D was for 38–42 days. (E) AMFR is required for tumor growth through enzalutamide therapy. Xenografts from LAPC4 cells expressing shAMFR or non-silencing control vector (shCtrl) were grown in surgically orchiectomized mice supplemented with DHEA and treated with Enz when tumors reached 100 mm$^3$. The significance of the difference between shCtrl and shAMFR groups was calculated with an unpaired and two-tailed t-test on day 20. (F) Progression-free survival is increased in tumors lacking AMFR. The significance of the difference between shCtrl and shAMFR groups was determined with a log-rank test. (G) Xenograft tumors with genetic ablation of AMFR retain 11β-HSD2 protein expression. Xenograft tissues were collected at the end of the xenograft study and immunoblot was performed with the indicated antibodies.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.010
Figure 5—figure supplement 1. AMFR and Erlin-2 regulation and cortisol metabolism with Enz treatment. (A) Erlin-2 but not AMFR is consistently up-regulated with Enz treatment of LAPC4 cells. (B) Erlin-2 is up-regulated in 8 of 11 human prostate tissues. Immunoblots were performed as described Figure 5—figure supplement 1 continued on next page.
Figure 5—figure supplement 1 continued

previously. (C) Erlin-2 overexpression (OE) suppresses expression of 11β-HSD2 protein in LAPC4 cells and Erlin-2 knockdown by siRNA increases 11β-HSD2 expression and activity in the long-term Enz-treated LAPC4 cells. (D) AMFR silencing does not regulate HSD11B2 transcript. qPCR was performed in triplicate and expression is normalized to shControl-expressing cells and RPLP0. (E) Reversal of the metabolic phenotype that sustains cortisol with Enz treatment by AMFR knockdown is reversed again by 11β-HSD2 knockdown (compare cortisol at 24 hr in shAMFR groups between siCTRL and siHSD11B2). The specificity of siHSD11B2 is shown by qPCR and immunoblot. LAPC4 cells stably expressing stably shCTRL or an shAMFR construct were treated with Enz as described for Figure 5, transiently transfected with siHSD11B2 or siCTRL and treated with [3H]-cortisol (100 nM). Experiments were performed in duplicate.

DOI: 10.7554/eLife.20183.011