Diagnosis:
Micropapillary Bladder Cancer

This case is an unusual variant of bladder cancer called ‘micropapillary’ variant. Typical bladder cancer is known as ‘papillary’ urothelial carcinoma. The ‘micro’ in ‘micropapillary’ refers to the microscopic appearance of this tumour, which is composed of small nests of tumour cells with retracted spaces around them.

Clinical features
- Vast majority are men, aged in their late 60s and early 70s.
- Uncommon (<1% of bladder cancer cases).

Why is it important to recognise?
- Usually high grade and high stage at presentation.
- Commonly extensive lymphovascular invasion and lymph node metastases.
- In women, the microscopic appearance of micropapillary bladder cancer can mimic ovarian cancer and in some cases the latter must be excluded clinically.
- Treatment may differ from typical bladder cancer.

Take home point
If surface micropapillary carcinoma is found in a biopsy but the muscle wall of the bladder is not sampled then a deeper biopsy is recommended.