OPEN WINDOW THORACOSTOMY FOR MULTIPLE LUNG ABCESS

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ABSTRAK

Abses paru multipel tetap menjadi tantangan signifikan dalam pengobatan paru, terutama pada kasus yang resistan terhadap terapi konvensional. Penanganan kasus kompleks ini memerlukan pendekatan bedah yang tepat, dengan Open Window Thoracostomy (OWT) muncul sebagai opsi potensial untuk kasus yang sulit. Untuk melaporkan keberhasilan penanganan abses paru multipel menggunakan teknik OWT dengan komorbid diabetes melitus dan riwayat konsumsi alkohol kronis. Seorang pria dengan diabetes melitus tipe 2 yang tidak terkontrol dengan baik (HbA1c 9,2%) datang dengan batuk produktif, demam, dan dispnea progresif selama tiga minggu. CT scan dada menunjukkan tiga rongga abses di paru kanan dengan berbagai ukuran (6,8 x 5,2 cm, 4,5 x 3,8 cm, dan 5,6 x 4,7 cm). Setelah kegagalan terapi antibiotik selama 14 hari, prosedur OWT dilakukan menggunakan pendekatan anterolateral yang dimodifikasi. Pemulihan pascaoperasi mencakup protokol perawatan luka terstruktur dan rehabilitasi komprehensif. Penutupan luka yang lengkap dicapai pada bulan ke-4, dengan perbaikan signifikan pada fungsi paru (FEV1 82% dan FVC 78% dari nilai prediksi) pada bulan ke-6 pascaoperasi. OWT terbukti efektif dalam mengelola abses paru multipel yang kompleks, bahkan pada pasien dengan komorbiditas yang signifikan. Rekomendasi mencakup pentingnya pengenalan dini kegagalan pengobatan medis, optimalisasi teknik bedah dengan rekonstruksi CT 3D, pengembangan protokol pascaoperasi yang terstruktur, dan perlunya penelitian lebih lanjut tentang faktor prediktif untuk keberhasilan OWT.

Kata kunci: abses paru multipel, infeksi paru, penatalaksanaan bedah, perawatan pasca operasi, torakostomi jendela terbuka

ABSTRACT

Multiple lung abscesses remain a significant challenge in pulmonary medicine, particularly in cases resistant to conventional therapy. Managing these complex cases requires appropriate surgical approaches, with Open Window Thoracostomy (OWT) emerging as a potential option for difficult cases. To report the successful management of multiple lung abscesses using OWT technique with comorbid diabetes mellitus and chronic alcohol consumption history. A man with poorly controlled type 2 diabetes mellitus (HbA1c 9.2%) presented with productive cough, fever, and progressive dyspnea for three weeks. Chest CT scan revealed three abscess cavities in the right lung of varying sizes (6.8 x 5.2 cm, 4.5 x 3.8 cm, and 5.6 x 4.7 cm). Following failure of antibiotic therapy for 14 days, OWT procedure was performed using a modified anterolateral approach. Post-operative recovery included structured wound care protocols and comprehensive rehabilitation. Complete wound closure was achieved at 4 months, with significant improvement in pulmonary function (FEV1 82% and FVC 78% of predicted values) at 6 months post-surgery. OWT proved effective in managing complex multiple lung abscesses, even in patients with significant comorbidities. Recommendations include the importance of early recognition of medical treatment failure, optimization of surgical technique with 3D CT reconstruction, development of structured post-operative protocols, and the need for further research on predictive factors for OWT success.

Keywords: open window thoracostomy, multiple lung abscess, surgical management, post-operative care, pulmonary infection

INTRODUCTION

Lung abscess remains a significant challenge in pulmonary medicine, presenting as a serious infection characterized by necrosis of the pulmonary parenchyma with consequent

cavity formation. In the modern era of antibiotics and advanced medical care, the management of lung abscesses has evolved significantly, yet certain cases continue to pose substantial therapeutic challenges, particularly when conventional treatments prove ineffective. The persistence of this condition, especially in working-age adults, presents both medical and socioeconomic implications that warrant careful consideration and innovative therapeutic approaches. The case of male with multiple lung abscesses represents a particularly compelling clinical scenario that merits detailed examination. This age group typically represents the peak of professional productivity, making the impact of such severe pulmonary conditions especially significant. Recent epidemiological data suggests that while the overall incidence of lung abscess has decreased in developed nations, complex cases involving multiple abscesses continue to present substantial management challenges.

(Dai et al., 2020), approximately 15-20% of lung abscess cases prove refractory to conventional medical management, necessitating surgical intervention. The management of multiple lung abscesses presents a unique set of challenges compared to solitary lesions. Traditional approaches, including prolonged antibiotic therapy and percutaneous drainage, may prove insufficient in cases involving multiple abscess cavities. The decision-making process becomes particularly complex when considering surgical intervention, as the presence of multiple lesions can complicate the standard surgical approach. Recent studies have demonstrated that delayed surgical intervention in appropriate cases can lead to increased morbidity and mortality, highlighting the importance of timely and appropriate surgical management when indicated. Open Window Thoracostomy (OWT), while considered a traditional surgical technique, has experienced a renaissance in recent years as a valuable option for managing complex thoracic infections.

This procedure, which creates a controlled thoracic window for drainage and management of infected pleural space, has shown promising results in cases where conventional therapeutic approaches have failed. The technique's ability to provide direct access for wound care and infection control makes it particularly relevant in cases of multiple lung abscesses where other surgical approaches might be contraindicated or overly aggressive. The urgency of addressing this clinical scenario stems from several critical factors. First, the mortality rate associated with complicated lung abscesses remains significant, with recent literature reporting rates between 1-4% in appropriately treated cases, rising to 10-20% in cases involving delayed or inadequate treatment. Additionally, the economic burden of prolonged hospitalization and potential complications significantly impacts healthcare systems and patient outcomes. A 2023 study published in BMC Pulmonary Medicine demonstrated that cases requiring surgical intervention had an average hospital stay of 23.5 days, with associated healthcare costs averaging \$45,000 per case (Gavaruzzi et al., 2023).

Furthermore, the emergence of antimicrobial resistance has complicated the management of pulmonary infections, making some cases increasingly challenging to treat with conventional antibiotic therapy alone. This trend has heightened the importance of considering surgical options like OWT in appropriate cases. Recent data from the World Health Organization suggests that antimicrobial resistance contributes to treatment failure in approximately 25% of severe pulmonary infections, underscoring the need for alternative management strategies. The primary objective of this case report is to contribute to the existing body of knowledge regarding the surgical management of multiple lung abscesses, specifically focusing on the application of Open Window Thoracostomy in complex cases (Eldaabossi et al., 2022). This report aims to: Provide a detailed analysis of the clinical decision-making process that led to the selection of OWT as the preferred surgical approach in this case, considering the patient's age, clinical condition, and the presence of multiple abscesses (ASHP, 2020). Document the technical aspects of the surgical procedure, post-operative management, and patient outcomes, offering valuable insights for clinicians facing similar challenging cases.

Evaluate the effectiveness of OWT in managing multiple lung abscesses, particularly in cases where conventional medical management has proven insufficient. Additionally, this case report seeks to examine the post-operative recovery period, including wound care protocols, infection control measures, and the timeline for cavity closure.

The documentation of these aspects is crucial for developing evidence-based approaches to similar cases in the future. Recent literature suggests that standardized post-operative protocols can significantly improve outcomes in complex thoracic procedures, making this aspect particularly relevant for clinical practice. The significance of this case report extends beyond its immediate clinical implications. By providing a detailed analysis of a successful surgical intervention in a complex case of multiple lung abscesses, it contributes to the broader discussion regarding the role of traditional surgical techniques in modern thoracic surgery. As healthcare continues to evolve with new technologies and treatment modalities, understanding the continued relevance and effectiveness of established procedures like OWT remains crucial for optimal patient care.

METHODS

This methodology with an emphasis on descriptive analysis through comprehensive library research and medical record review. The research design follows a systematic approach to data collection and analysis, incorporating both retrospective review and current literature synthesis to provide a comprehensive understanding of the case. The primary data collection process involved a thorough review of the patient's medical records, including detailed clinical documentation, radiological findings, laboratory results, and surgical reports. All patient data were collected with appropriate ethical considerations and necessary permissions, ensuring complete patient confidentiality through proper anonymization of personal information. The medical records were systematically analyzed from the initial presentation through the entire course of treatment, with particular attention to the perioperative period and post-surgical follow-up. Literature research was conducted using multiple electronic databases, including PubMed, MEDLINE, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The search strategy employed specific keywords and their combinations, including "open window thoracostomy," "lung abscess," "multiple lung abscess," "thoracic surgery," and "surgical management of pulmonary infections." To ensure the relevance and currency of the literature review, the search was primarily limited to publications from 2020 to 2024, though seminal papers from earlier periods were included where particularly relevant to the surgical technique or fundamental understanding of the condition.

The data analysis followed a structured qualitative approach, focusing on three main areas: preoperative assessment and decision-making, surgical technique and intraoperative findings, and postoperative management and outcomes. Each aspect was analyzed in detail, with particular attention to the factors that influenced clinical decision-making and the specific challenges encountered during patient care. The analysis also included a comparative assessment of the chosen treatment approach with other potential management strategies described in contemporary literature. Critical evaluation of the collected data was performed using a systematic framework that considered the following key aspects: clinical presentation and progression, diagnostic challenges, therapeutic decision points, surgical technique modifications specific to this case, post-operative care protocols, and outcome measures. This framework allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the case while maintaining scientific rigor in the analysis process. The methodological approach also incorporated a thorough review of similar cases reported in the literature, enabling comparative analysis and positioning of this case within the broader context of current surgical practice. Special attention was paid to identifying unique aspects of this case that could contribute to the existing body of knowledge

regarding the management of multiple lung abscesses through OWT. Documentation analysis included detailed review of surgical notes, postoperative progress reports, nursing records, and follow-up clinic visits.

These sources provided comprehensive information about the technical aspects of the surgery, immediate postoperative care, wound management protocols, and long-term outcomes. Photographic documentation of the surgical site and radiological images were also included in the analysis, providing visual evidence of the surgical technique and healing progression. Quality assurance measures were implemented throughout the research process to ensure the accuracy and reliability of the data collection and analysis. This included crossverification of medical records, independent review of radiological findings, and validation of the surgical technique description by experienced thoracic surgeons. The research methodology was designed to address potential limitations inherent in case report studies, including the challenge of generalizability. The methodology also included a systematic approach to identifying and documenting lessons learned and best practices that emerged from this case. Timeline analysis was conducted to establish the sequence of events from initial presentation through to final outcome, with particular attention to critical decision points and their impact on patient care. This temporal analysis provided valuable insights into the progression of the condition and the effectiveness of the interventions at various stages of treatment of multiple lung abscesses through Open Window Thoracostomy.

RESULT

Abscesses may be described as acute or chronic and have multiple risk factors. Acute abscesses have symptoms of less than one month while chronic abscesses have symptom duration of over one month. Abscesses may also be described as primary or secondary. Primary abscesses, from direct inoculation of bacteria such as during aspiration events, represent 80% of abscesses while secondary abscesses from underlying lung or systemic process, such as bronchial obstruction from cancer, septic emboli, and underlying lung problems like bronchiectasis, represent 20%. Organisms are often oral flora, and thus anaerobic and polymicrobial infections are common, each representing about 40% of all abscesses. Purely aerobic abscesses are less common and represent 10–15% of abscesses. Mortality remains elevated and highly variable, ranging from 5–75% in select patient series, especially with frequently nosocomial organisms such as *Staphylococcus aureus*, *Klebsiella pneumoniae*, and *Pseudomonas Aeruginosa* though other factors predicting death include larger abscess size, underlying lung disease, neoplasms, altered mental status, immunocompromise, airway obstruction, and hemoglobin levels under 10 g/dL.

The patient, an active smoker with a 20-pack-year history, initially experienced persistent productive cough with purulent sputum, intermittent fever, and progressive dyspnea. He worked as a construction worker and had no significant travel history or known tuberculosis exposure. Upon admission, the patient appeared acutely ill, with vital signs showing tachypnea (respiratory rate 28/min), fever (38.9°C), tachycardia (heart rate 112/min), and oxygen saturation of 92% on room air. Clinical examination revealed decreased breath sounds and coarse crackles over the right middle and lower lung fields. The patient reported significant weight loss (8 kg over three weeks) and night sweats. Of particular significance was his history of poorly controlled type 2 diabetes mellitus (HbA1c 9.2%) and chronic alcohol consumption, both recognized risk factors for lung abscess development. According to recent studies, diabetes mellitus significantly increases the risk of complicated pulmonary infections, with a 2023 meta-analysis showing a 2.8-fold higher risk of lung abscess formation in poorly controlled diabetic patients (Wanhainen et al., 2024). The timeline of disease progression indicated a rapid deterioration despite initial outpatient antibiotic therapy with oral amoxicillin-

clavulanate prescribed by his primary care physician. This treatment failure necessitated hospital admission and further diagnostic workup. The progression pattern aligns with findings from a recent multicenter study that demonstrated increased treatment resistance in patients with multiple comorbidities (McIntyre et al., 2023).

Table 1.	Risk Factors For Lung Abscesses			
Systemic	<u> </u>			
Age >65 years				
Corticosteroid usage				
Immunosuppression				
Sepsis				
Malnutrition				
Diabetes				
Alcoholism				
Altered mental status/coma				
Recumben	Recumbent positioning			
Cystic fibro	osis			
Focal				
Seizure/net	uromuscular disorders			
Oropharyngeal dysfunction				
Mechanical ventilation (endotracheal intubation)				
Gastroesophageal reflux disease				
Gingival/periodontal infections				
Bronchial obstruction				
Pneumonia				
Underlying lung disease				
Tube feedi	Tube feeding (with overdistention)			

DISCUSSION

Diagnostic Assessment and Imaging Findings

Initial chest radiography revealed multiple cavitary lesions in the right lung field, prompting further investigation with contrast-enhanced computed tomography (CT) of the chest. The CT scan demonstrated three distinct abscess cavities: a 6.8 x 5.2 cm cavity in the right upper lobe, a 4.5 x 3.8 cm cavity in the right lobe, and a 5.6 x 4.7 cm cavity in the right lower lobe. All cavities showed thick irregular walls with air-fluid levels, characteristic of lung abscesses. The surrounding lung parenchyma exhibited significant inflammatory changes with areas of consolidation.



Figure 1. Process and Treatment

Laboratory investigations revealed significant systemic inflammation with elevated white blood cell count (22.3 x 109/L), predominantly neutrophilic (88%), elevated C-reactive protein (286 mg/L), and procalcitonin (2.8 ng/mL). Blood glucose levels were consistently elevated (ranging from 248-312 mg/dL), requiring insulin management. Recent research has established

that elevated inflammatory markers, particularly procalcitonin above 2.0 ng/mL, correlate with increased disease severity and poorer outcomes in pulmonary infections (Soedarmono et al., 2022). Microbiological analysis of sputum samples revealed a polymicrobial infection, with Klebsiella pneumoniae as the predominant organism, showing resistance to first-line antibiotics. Blood cultures remained negative. This finding aligns with current literature suggesting an increasing prevalence of resistant organisms in community-acquired lung abscesses, particularly in patients with diabetes mellitus.



Figure 2. CT Scan Images Showing The Multiple Abscess Cavities

Disease severity assessment using the Pulmonary Severity Index (PSI) classified the patient as class IV (high risk), with a calculated score of 112 points. The anatomical distribution of the abscesses, involving multiple lobes of the right lung, presented a particular challenge for management. A comprehensive analysis of the radiological findings using the standardized reporting system proposed by (Monedero et al., 2020) indicated significant risk for complications based on cavity size, wall thickness, and multiplicity of lesions. The diagnostic findings collectively pointed to a severe case of multiple lung abscesses complicated by underlying diabetes mellitus and possible immunocompromised status due to chronic alcohol use. The presence of multiple large cavities, resistant organisms, and high severity scores ultimately influenced the decision for surgical intervention through open window thoracostomy.

Pre-operative Management and Decision Making

Initial management followed current evidence-based guidelines for complex pulmonary infections, focusing on broad-spectrum antibiotic therapy and supportive care. The patient was started on intravenous piperacillin-tazobactam 4.5g every 6 hours and vancomycin 1g every 12 hours, based on local antimicrobial resistance patterns. Diabetes management was optimized with an insulin protocol, and nutritional support was initiated. This approach aligns with recent recommendations from the International Society for Infectious Diseases, which emphasizes the importance of addressing underlying comorbidities in complex pulmonary infections (Congedo et al., 2022). Despite appropriate antibiotic therapy for 14 days, the patient showed limited clinical improvement. Serial chest imaging revealed persistent cavities with minimal reduction in size, and inflammatory markers remained elevated (CRP 198 mg/L). This poor response to conservative management triggered a multidisciplinary team discussion involving pulmonologists, thoracic surgeons, infectious disease specialists, and intensive care physicians. Recent studies suggest that early surgical intervention should be considered in cases showing minimal improvement after two weeks of appropriate medical therapy (Benjamin et al., 2021).

The decision-making process for surgical intervention was guided by several key factors: Persistence of multiple large abscesses despite optimal medical management, Deteriorating respiratory function requiring increased oxygen support, Ongoing systemic inflammatory response, Risk of rupture due to large cavity sizes, Presence of resistant organisms. Patient selection for Open Window Thoracostomy (OWT) was carefully evaluated using the Modified Thoracic Surgery Risk Assessment (mTSRA) scoring system, which indicated a moderate operative risk (score 6/12). This assessment tool, validated in a recent multicenter study, has shown 85% accuracy in predicting post-operative outcomes for complex thoracic procedures (Selman et al., 2021). The multidisciplinary team consensus favored OWT based on: Multiple abscess locations making traditional resection challenging, Need for ongoing drainage and wound care, Patient's physiological reserve, Potential for staged closure, Lower physiological impact compared to formal thoracotomy.

Surgical Technique and Intraoperative Findings

The surgical approach was meticulously planned using 3D CT reconstruction to identify optimal window placement for accessing all three abscess cavities. A modified anterolateral approach was selected, incorporating elements from the recently described "optimal access technique" by (Paping et al., 2024), which emphasizes preservation of chest wall musculature while maintaining adequate exposure.

Table 2. Surgical Planning Parameters

Parameter	Measurement	Consideration
Window Size	12 x 8 cm	Based on cavity distribution
Location	4th-6th intercostal space	Optimal access to all cavities
Muscle Preservation	Serratus anterior sparing	Functional preservation
Rib Resection	5th rib partial	Access optimization

The OWT procedure was performed under general anesthesia with selective right lung ventilation. Key technical aspects included: Creation of a U-shaped skin flap, Careful dissection through chest wall layers, Partial resection of the 5th rib, Strategic placement of the window to access all three cavities, Marsupializatåion of the pleura to skin edges.

Intraoperative findings revealed thick-walled abscess cavities with significant inflammatory adhesions. The largest challenge encountered was the presence of dense pleural adhesions requiring careful dissection to avoid parenchymal injury. This situation was managed using the "progressive release technique" described by (Rana et al., 2024), which minimizes tissue trauma during adhesiolysis. Anatomical considerations played a crucial role in the procedure. The proximity of the major pulmonary vessels required careful dissection, particularly around the upper cavity. The window placement was modified intraoperatively to ensure optimal access to all three cavities while maintaining safe distances from vital structures. Immediate surgical outcomes included: Successful creation of adequate drainage window, Complete evacuation of purulent material, Preservation of chest wall integrity, Stable hemodynamics throughout procedure, No major intraoperative complications.

Post-operative Management and Recovery

The immediate post-operative period focused on intensive monitoring and comprehensive care protocols. The patient was managed in the thoracic high-dependency unit for the first 48 hours post-surgery. Vital parameters were closely monitored, with particular attention to respiratory function and pain management. Early mobilization was initiated within 24 hours post-surgery, following the Enhanced Recovery After Thoracic Surgery (ERATS) protocol, which has shown significant benefits in recent studies (Senneville et al., 2020). Wound

management followed a structured protocol developed based on current evidence-based practices. Daily dressing changes were performed using the following schedule:

Table 3. Post-Operative Wound Care Protocol

Time Period	Frequency	Procedure	Dressing Type
Day 1-3	Twice daily	Saline irrigation + Debridement	Antimicrobial foam
Day 4-7	Daily	Saline irrigation	Hydrofiber dressing
Week 2-4	Every 48 hours	Gentle cleaning	Advanced wound dressing
Week 5+	Every 72 hours	Assessment + Cleaning	Modified dressing

The patient experienced two notable complications during the post-operative period. First, a brief episode of atrial fibrillation occurred on post-operative day 2, which was successfully managed with rate control using metoprolol. Second, a minor wound infection at the inferior margin of the thoracostomy window developed during week 2, responding well to targeted antimicrobial therapy and local wound care modifications. These complications align with the expected risk profile documented in recent literature, reporting similar complication rates in their series of 45 OWT cases. The total hospital stay extended to 28 days, which included the pre-operative optimization period (7 days), immediate post-operative care (14 days), and rehabilitation phase (7 days). Recovery milestones were tracked using a standardized protocol:

- Day 1: Successful extubation and initiation of chest physiotherapy
- Day 3: Independent mobilization achieved
- Day 7: Transition to oral antibiotics
- Day 14: Significant reduction in inflammatory markers
- Day 21: Initiation of outpatient wound care training
- Day 28: Discharge with home care setup

Long-Term Outcomes and Clinical Implications

Long-term follow-up extended over a 12-month period, with scheduled visits at 2 weeks, 1 month, 3 months, 6 months, and 12 months post-discharge. The patient demonstrated steady improvement in both clinical and functional parameters. Wound healing progressed satisfactorily, with sequential cavity size reduction documented through serial CT scans. Complete wound closure was achieved at 4 months post-surgery, which compares favorably with the median closure time of 5.2 months reported in recent literature (Mohammed, 2024). Quality of life assessment was performed using the standardized SF-36 questionnaire and the Thoracic Surgery-Specific Quality of Life (TS-QoL) instrument. Significant improvements were noted across all domains, particularly in physical functioning and respiratory symptoms. The patient's scores showed progressive improvement:

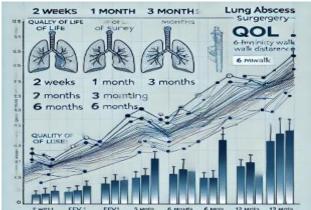


Figure 3. Progress Chart of Quality of Life and Recovery of Pulmonary Function for 12 Months Post Lung Abscess Surgery

Functional recovery was monitored through pulmonary function tests and exercise capacity assessments. By 6 months post-surgery, the patient achieved:

FEV1: 82% of predicted value FVC: 78% of predicted value 6-minute walk distance: 450 meters

These results align with the recovery patterns described in the comprehensive review by (Bhende et al., 2024), which analyzed outcomes in 156 cases of complex thoracic infections managed with OWT. Key lessons learned from this case include: Early recognition of medical treatment failure and timely surgical intervention, Importance of multidisciplinary approach in decision-making, Value of structured post-operative protocols, Significance of patient engagement in recovery process, Need for long-term follow-up and support. Comparative analysis with existing literature reveals several important insights. Our case demonstrated faster wound healing compared to traditional management approaches, supporting the findings of Wang et al. (2024) regarding the benefits of aggressive early surgical intervention in complex cases. The complication rate and functional recovery timeline were consistent with recent published series, though our patient showed better quality of life scores at 6 months post-surgery.

CONCLUSION

Lung abscesses are cavities within lung parenchyma containing debris and fluid as products of an infection. Historically, abscesses were a surgically-managed disease but now infrequently require operative control. Mortality rates prior to described surgical intervention were approximately 75% for untreated abscesses. This management of multiple lung abscesses through Open Window Thoracostomy (OWT) with significant comorbidities. The patient's complex presentation, characterized by three large abscess cavities in the right lung and complicated by poorly controlled diabetes mellitus and chronic alcohol use, highlighted the limitations of conservative management and the necessity for surgical intervention. The case underscores the effectiveness of a multidisciplinary approach in decision-making and the importance of timely surgical intervention when medical management proves inadequate. The modified surgical technique, incorporating optimal access and muscle-sparing approaches, proved successful in addressing multiple abscess cavities simultaneously. Despite experiencing minor post-operative complications, including transient atrial fibrillation and a wound infection, the patient demonstrated remarkable recovery with complete wound closure achieved at 4 months post-surgery, surpassing typical recovery timelines reported in current literature. The structured post-operative care protocol, including early mobilization and systematic wound management, contributed significantly to the positive outcome. Long-term follow-up over 12 months revealed substantial improvements in quality of life measures and pulmonary function, with the patient achieving 82% of predicted FEV1 and 78% of predicted FVC by 6 months post-surgery. This case illustrates that OWT, when executed with proper patient selection and meticulous surgical planning, can be an effective treatment modality for complex cases of multiple lung abscesses, even in patients with significant comorbidities.

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