N Category

Debunking Urban Legends in Staging

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N Category Assessment

- Regional nodes
  - Utilize the best source for that classification
  - Exams, diagnostic studies, FNA, biopsies, resections
  - Exact category may not be determined clinically
    - If doubt between category values, assign less advanced
    - Appropriate use of NX when information is unknown
N Category New Rules

• Single node or sentinel node(s) microscopic exam
  – Clinical (cN) in cases with cT
  – Diagnostic workup
  – Pathologic (pN) in cases with pT
  – Usually in conjunction with treatment
N Category New Rules

• Size criteria for N category

  – Size of the metastases

  – Size of node only used when size of mets not available

  – Similar to size rules for the T category

  – More specific or exact measurement takes priority
N Category Cautions - Reminders

- Microscopic exam of highest category can be used for pathologic staging

- Isolated tumor cells are pN0
  - Except for melanoma and Merkel cell ca

- Classified as positive node
  - Direct extension of tumor into node
  - Tumor nodule with smooth contour
Use of “X” Designation

• Used when information is unknown

• TX and NX usually preclude stage assignment
  – May be appropriate
  – Do not abuse

• MX has been eliminated from 7th Edition
  – Clinical M0 unless clinical or pathologic evidence of mets