Lesson 24
N Category

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AJCC
American Joint Committee on Cancer

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pT Necessary to Assign pN

- Pathologic assessment of primary tumor (pT)
    - Generally necessary to assign pathologic assessment of nodes (pN)

- pN exception
    - Excision of nodes is pN when
    - No resection of primary site
    - Due to unknown primary, assigned T0 (no evidence of primary tumor)
        - *Remember: AJCC physician definition of unknown primary, not registry definition*

- When pathologic T (pT) is available
    - Any microscopic exam of nodes is pN

Highest N Category

- If diagnostic or sentinel biopsy proves highest N category

- Diagnostic biopsy of nodes
  - Used to assign cN for clinical staging
  - May also be used to assign pN for pathologic staging

- Microscopic exam of node in highest N category
  - Assigned as pN
  - Even in absence of pathologic information on other nodes

- Microscopic confirmation of highest N category
  - May be pN
  - Regardless of whether T is pT or cT
  - Caution:
    - cT referring to tumor that cannot be removed
    - Must be in conjunction with other rules such as
    - Microscopic confirmation of highest T, usually not bx of primary site

Info Overrides Pathology Report pN

- Information can override pathology report pN

- Clinical stage information
  - Physical exam
  - Imaging
  - Example for breast
    - Physical exam: ipsilateral supraclavicular nodes involved, N3c
    - Imaging: ipsilat internal mammary/supraclavicular nodes involved, N3c
    - Path report: resection, mets in 6 axillary nodes, pN2a
    - Assign pN3c

- Operative findings during resection
  - Surgeon's observations
  - Example for esophagus
    - Operative findings: 10-12 regional nodes involved, N3
    - Path report: mets in 4 regional nodes, pN2
    - Assign pN3

y for N Category

- y prefix for postneoadjuvant therapy N category
  - N uses same categories as for clinical and pathologic staging

- ycN
  - Used for clinical stage *after* neoadjuvant therapy
  - Registries do not have data field

- ypN
  - Used for pathologic stage *after* surgical resection following neoadjuvant therapy
  - Registries document in pathologic data field and
  - MUST use descriptor data field to indicate "y"
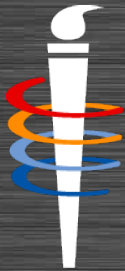
X and Blank for N Category

- X and Blank needed
  - Accommodate variability in cancer behavior and type of workup

- X
  - Information is unknown to physicians, cannot be assessed
  - Diagnostic workup did not provide info needed to assess and assign N category
    - Example: colonoscopy for colon cancer, no scans
  - Surgical resection primary but no nodes examined
    - Example: meets pathologic staging criteria but no nodes removed

- Blank
  - Patient did not meet staging criteria
  - No diagnostic workup for clinical stage
  - No surgical resection primary for pathologic stage
    - Example: diagnostic node biopsy not recorded in pN
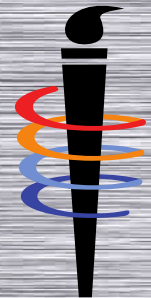
Thank you

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