

# Lesson 5

## Terminology – Difference Between Physician and Registrar

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# AJCC

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# Terminology Differences

- Writing style of AJCC manual
  - Conversational
  - Journal or book style
  - Not a legal document where words are absolutely precise
  - General guidelines
  - Most common scenarios
  - Not always strict rules
  - Allow for variability seen in medical practice
- Writing style of registry manuals
  - Attribute specific meaning to words
  - Strict rules
  - Need for consistency in data collection
  - Parse words for definitive meaning
  - Definitions constructed by registry community
  - Not necessarily consistent with dictionary definitions



# No Ambiguous Terminology for AJCC

- Cannot use registry ambiguous terminology lists from
  - FORDS
  - SEER manuals
  - Collaborative Stage
  - Summary Stage
  - Out of date manuals, standards
    - Cancer Program Manual 1980's
    - Cancer Program Standards 1990's, early 2000
    - Data Acquisition Manual (DAM)
    - Registry Operations and Data Standards (ROADS)
  - Local, state, regional, and national documentation
  - Personal memory of past use



# Examples: Why NOT to Use

- Example of term definitions
  - 1996 Volume I: Cancer Program Standards defined terms
    - Must, shall, required: mandatory and acceptable
    - Should: commonly accepted, allow effective alternatives
    - May: acceptable alternative but not preferred
- If physician uses “may”
  - Do not apply definition from your memory of other manuals
- Use common sense or dictionary definition for term
  - Permission requested or granted
  - Usual or typical interpretation of the word
- If employer says “you may have the day off”
  - You should not take the day off, it is not preferred?
  - You will take the day off



# Ambiguous Terms – A Secret Club

- Secret handshake that only registrars know
- No-one can join our exclusive secret club
  - Isolates registrars from medical world
  - Isolates registrars from reality
- Not in keeping with
  - Current medical practice
  - Standard dictionary definitions
  - General usage of these terms
  - Common phrasing by physicians
- Jeopardizes communication with physicians
  - Physicians are not aware of these definitions
  - Must be used by every physician worldwide for accuracy
  - Unrealistic to teach these arbitrary definitions to physicians



# Ambiguous Terms Threaten Registrars

- Use of ambiguous terminology
  - Computer could identify ambiguous terminology
  - Automated data collection based on terminology
  - Replace registrar jobs
  - Threaten registrars place in the cancer team
- Value of registrars is their ability to
  - Interpret terminology
  - Understand the context
  - Decipher the meaning in light of all information
  - Perform critical thinking
- Registrars are capable – they do not need this crutch
- Using the terms can lead to wrong conclusions



# Intent vs. Terminology

- Cannot use one word or one report in isolation
  - Assess intent, interpretation, perception
  - Do not over analyze or parse word choices
- Need to evaluate the whole picture
  - Reports list all abnormal findings, not just cancer involvement
  - Understand other medical causes for abnormalities
  - Look for further testing ordered to investigate
- Review
  - Consults
  - Guidelines from NCCN, ASCO, others
  - Treatment plans, which can infer stage
- Rely on physician's medical judgment



# Pragmatism

- Not practical for worldwide medical community to agree on
  - Definitions of imprecise words
  - Usage of descriptions for equivocal findings
  - Use consist word style, not allowing variation by
    - Region of the country or world
    - Medical training
    - Personal style
- Registrars are capable of
  - Understanding the intent
  - Analyzing the information
  - Applying critical thinking
  - Deducing the physician's conclusions
  - Asking questions of the physician when there is doubt





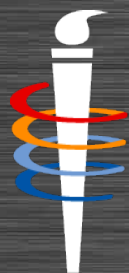
# AJCC Terminology

- Interpretation of 7<sup>th</sup> edition writing style
  - Describes usual or common case scenario
  - Describes guidelines and best practice
  - Allows for variation seen in medical practice
  - Do not apply registry definitions
  
- Ambiguous terminology lists are not valid or necessary
  - CANNOT use for AJCC staging



# Thank you

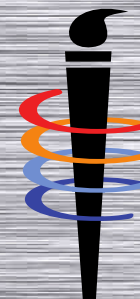
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