



Lesson 24

N Category



pT Necessary to Assign pN

- Pathological assessment of primary tumor (pT)
 - Generally necessary to assign pathological 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 pathological 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 pathological staging
- Microscopic exam of node in highest N category
 - Assigned as pN
 - Even in absence of pathological 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 but tumor extension

- Information can override pathology report pN
- Clinical stage information
 - Physical exam
 - Imaging
 - Example for breast
 - Physical exam: ipsilateral supraclavicular nodes involved, N3c
 - Imaging: ipsilateral 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 prefix for postneoadjuvant therapy N category
 - N uses same categories as for clinical and pathological staging
- ycN
 - Used for clinical stage *after* neoadjuvant therapy
 - Registries document in posttherapy clinical data field
- ypN
 - Used for pathological stage *after* surgical resection *following* neoadjuvant therapy
 - Registries document in posttherapy pathological data field

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 pathological staging criteria but no nodes removed
- Blank
 - Patient did not meet staging criteria
 - No diagnostic workup for clinical stage
 - No surgical resection primary for pathological stage
 - Example: diagnostic node biopsy not recorded in pN



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Thank You