Lesson 3
T, N, M Categories Used to Describe the Cancer Involvement

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Categories

- Categories are used to describe the cancer
- Anatomic extent or involvement by cancer is the foundation
- Additional non-anatomic factors as proven necessary
- Defined and modified based on
  - Clinical data
  - Biological properties
    - Anatomic site, tissue structure
    - Histologic type
  - Prognostic information for outcomes and survival
Categories

• Category
  – Refers to tumor, nodes, and metastasis
  – Also refers to each of the T’s, N’s and M’s

• For example, T2 is a category
  – Includes multiple criteria such as size and extent
  – T2 is not considered a value
    • Value would be the size, extension, etc, that makes up the criteria
    • AJCC does not use the word “value”
T Category

• **Tumor** – primary tumor

• **Criteria for the category include**
  – Size of the cancer
  – Contiguous spread or extension

• **Varies by anatomic site**

• **Important to understand anatomy**
  – Different tissue layers of the site
  – Landmarks and named parts of the site
  – Relationship to neighboring organs and structures
N Category

• **Node** – regional draining lymph nodes

• **Criteria for the category include**
  – Presence or absence of cancer
  – Extent of cancer
    • Number of nodes involved
    • Location of nodes involved

• **Varies by anatomic site**

• **Important to understand anatomy**
  – Location of lymph nodes including ipsilateral & bilateral
  – Structure of nodes
  – Terminology: extracapsular, matted, totally replaced nodes where the nodal architecture is no longer evident
• **Metastasis** – distant metastasis

• **Criteria for the category include**
  – Presence or absence of cancer
  – Involvement of
    • Specific structures
    • Number of structures

• Varies by anatomic site

• Important to understand anatomy
  – How cancer spreads by
    • Vascular channels
    • Lymphatics beyond the defined regional nodes
  – Different risk based on
    • Organs involved
    • Organ structure involved – capsule vs. parenchyma
Additional Categories

• Other categories are required for some sites
  – Used with T, N, and M
  – Level of importance equal to those categories

• Categories include
  – Histology
  – Age
  – Location
  – Grade
  – Mitotic rate/count
  – Prognostic scoring index for risk factors
  – PSA
  – Gleason
  – Serum tumor markers (AFP, hCG, LDH)
  – Peripheral blood involvement
Additional Categories

Chapters utilizing additional categories

- 8. Thyroid
  - Histology, age

- 10. Esophagus & Esophagogastric Junction
  - Histology, location, grade

- 13. Appendix
  - Histology, grade

- 16. GIST
  - Mitotic rate

- 27. Bone
  - Grade

- 28. Soft Tissue Sarcoma
  - Grade

- 36. Corpus Uteri
  - Histology

- 39. Gestational Trophoblastic Tumors
  - Prognostic scoring index

- 41. Prostate
  - PSA, Gleason

- 42. Testis
  - Serum Tumor Markers (AFP, hCG, LDH)

- 57. Primary Cutaneous Lymphomas
  - Peripheral blood involvement