

Position Statement

Subject: **Implementation of the 8th Edition TNM Cancer Staging**
Approval Date: July 2017, December 2017
Review Date: July 2020
Reviewed By: Board of Directors
Number: 2/2017

Background

Most cancers are staged using the Tumour-Node-Metastasis (TNM) staging system. Since 2010, the 7th edition of TNM (TNM7) staging has been in use in Australasia. In late 2016, the 8th edition of TNM (TNM8) staging was published.

AJCC v UICC TNM editions

TNM staging is published by both the American Joint Commission on Cancer (AJCC) and the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC). The AJCC Cancer Staging Manual was published in October 2016 and the UICC TNM Classification of Malignant Tumours was published in November 2016. Ostensibly these versions are harmonised, however on review there have been a number of differences noted. Some of these issues are significant, particularly in relation to testicular cancer where the pT stage may actually be recorded differently depending on which version is used.

The International Collaboration on Cancer Reporting (ICCR) having investigated the issue, has decided to use UICC 8th edition in cases where there is concordance between the versions (due to copyright cost implications), but use the AJCC 8th edition in cases where the AJCC version more accurately reflects the most contemporary and scientifically validated information.

Most Australasian pathologists and clinicians have traditionally used the AJCC version of TNM and applicable Structured Pathology Reporting of Cancer (SPRC) Protocols incorporate AJCC TNM definitions. Staging is not routinely captured by cancer registries in Australia or New Zealand however, there are several pilot projects underway to capture stage and AJCC is their preferred option.

There has been no previous directive to use either the AJCC or UICC versions of TNM.

Given the impending mandate to implement SPRC and the noted issues with the UICC version, the College is advising its members to implement the AJCC version of TNM8.

Timing

In North America, in order to ensure that the cancer care organisations had the necessary electronic infrastructure in place for reporting TNM8, the AJCC released a statement delaying its implementation until January 1, 2018. All newly diagnosed cases will continue to be staged with the 7th edition until 31st Dec 2017.

In the UK, consideration is being given to a similar delay to allow for publication of errata, which may address some of the discrepancies between the AJCC and UICC staging systems, and is considering implementing AJCC TNM8 rather than UICC TNM8.

In Australia, feedback has been sought regarding the timing of implementation from the AIHW, Australian Cancer Registries, MOGA, COSA, RACS, and RANZCR. Responses ranged from deferring to the College for direction, suggesting adopting a similar delay to North America until Jan 2018, or recommending implementation as soon as possible.

Recommendations

The college recommends that the 8th Edition AJCC Cancer Staging System be implemented as soon as possible, with a view to TNM8 being in use for reporting of all cancer cases from January 1, 2018.

Explanatory notes on licencing of AJCC TNM 8th edition is included in Appendix A.

As noted staging is not currently routinely captured by cancer registries but there are several pilot projects underway and therefore having a projected implementation date of Jan 2018 will assist in planning purposes.

All cancer reports should clearly indicate which TNM version has been used, and access to both AJCC TNM7 and TNM8 Cancer Staging Manuals is advisable at multidisciplinary meetings to ensure optimal patient management.

SPRC protocols will be progressively updated to TNM8.

Appendix A: AJCC TNM8 use explanatory notes

AJCC is the sole provider of licencing of TNM8 content. UICC is able to publish TNM8 in print and e-book but is not able to licence the content to other entities.

Two factors influence licencing of content:

- Any organisation selling or profiting from the inclusion of TNM8 content must do so under licence from AJCC,
- Licencing of TNM8 is a means of ensuring accuracy and currency.

In summary, AJCC allows TNM8 number values ie T2, N3 etc to be used without licence implications. However TNM8 descriptors eg “Tumour limited to testis (including rete testis invasion) with lymphovascular invasion...”, cannot be used without a licence from AJCC.

Therefore....

- All producers of cancer datasets, protocols, guidelines etc ie RCPA, ICCR, RCPATH etc, which include TNM8 descriptors must be licenced by AJCC
- Pathologists may include TNM8 descriptors in their reports if this is obtained from:
 - their purchased UICC or AJCC book/e-book,
 - from a hard or softcopy of a dataset /protocol that a dataset/protocol producer has paid a licence fee to include eg ICCR, RCPA etc
- If TNM8 descriptors are provided by the Laboratory Information System (LIS) vendor, such as in cancer reporting checklists/drop down values or reference material etc, the LIS vendor must pay the AJCC licence fee. (The laboratory is not required to pay a separate licence fee. The LIS vendor should clearly state that they are licencing the content for use by the labs that are their customers).
- LIS can include TNM8 number values without descriptors without a licence.
- Laboratories can electronically transmit TNM8 number values without descriptors to a cancer registry or other entity without a licence. However if TNM8 descriptors are included in the electronic message then the transmitting organisation must have a licence.
- If cancer registry software includes TNM8 descriptors this must be licenced. The cancer registry can use TNM number values without descriptors without a licence.

AJCC licencing

Licences for AJCC TNM 8th edition are issued on an annual fee basis from:

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AJCC

American Joint Committee on Cancer

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