



## Lesson 17

### N Category



# Minimum Number – Sufficient Sampling

- Minimum number
  - Sufficient sampling to identify positive nodes
  - Eliminate false negatives
- Minimum to be examined can apply to
  - Number and
  - Location of nodes
- Requirements
  - Described in site chapters as appropriate
  - Detail common medical practice
- Sentinel nodes
  - If accepted as accurate for defining involvement, and
  - Sentinel node procedure performed
  - Minimum does **NOT** apply

- Lymph node surgery performed
  - Fewer than ideal minimum number examined
  - N category still generally classified as pN
- pN category assignment
  - Based on information available
    - Number of positive nodes and/or
    - Location of most advanced pathological node resected
  - Assigned even if minimum number or location criteria not met
- Impact of using pN in this situation
  - Importance of outcomes data analysis
  - Determine accuracy of nodal staging with less than minimum

- Sentinel node designation (sn)
  - Example: pN0(sn), pN1(sn)
  - Used when **only** a sentinel node biopsy is performed
  - **Not** used if further dissection of nodes is performed
- Breast chapter instructions for (sn)
  - Indicates nodal status based on less than axillary dissection
  - Used for sentinel node procedure
  - Used where sentinel & non-sentinel nodes are <6 nodes (less than standard low axillary dissection)
  - Do **NOT** use (sn) when >6 sentinel nodes removed
- Does **not** apply to registry coding of procedure or staging
  - Instructions only apply to physician assigning stage

- Assigning pN
  - Pathological primary tumor assessment (pT) is
  - Generally necessary to assign pathological nodal assessment (pN)
- N categories
  - In conjunction with pT
  - Do **NOT** need pathological exam of **highest** N category to assign pN
  - Example:
    - Resection/path exam of N1 nodes only
    - No resection/path exam of N2 and N3 nodes
    - Assign pN1
  - Physician determines appropriate nodal resection for patient
    - N category criteria does not dictate nodal exam

- ITC
  - Single tumor cells or small clusters of cells
  - Clusters of cells < 0.2mm in greatest dimension
  - Identified by
    - Routine histology or immunohistochemistry (IHC)
    - Nonmorphologic techniques such as flow cytometry or DNA analysis
  - Designated as pN0 (i+)
  - Defined in chapters where this commonly occurs
- Nodes with **only** ITC are assigned pN0
- **Exception:** nodes with **only** ITC are assigned pN1 for
  - Melanoma
  - Merkel Cell



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Thank You