



News & Updates

AJCC -In Brief

A Message from the Chair

It has been an eventful spring. The AJCC is in full transformation mode on all levels. The first critical step forward was taken in April with a 2-day retreat lead by a talented facilitator. The Executive Committee members and the AJCC staff engaged in intensive, forthright, and highly fruitful discussions around the challenges and opportunities facing the AJCC as it prepares for a future in which molecular medicine will become the dominant theme in cancer care. The issues addressed included: how current trends (i.e., increasing use of biomarkers and other non-anatomic factors) will impact how the AJCC fulfills its mission to maintain a worldwide cancer staging system; whether the current model of publication of a new edition of the staging system every 6-8 years is a sustainable or appropriate model; what future AJCC products might be needed and what they will look like; and most importantly, how and in what timeframe the AJCC should undertake the needed changes to accommodate the new roles and products it envisions for a world of molecularly-informed cancer medicine. Based on these discussions, several key decisions were made about the key goals and guiding principles for AJCC's transformation:

- The primary focus of the AJCC will remain the review and analysis of anatomic staging data and the development of future editions of the staging systems based on that scientific evidence.
- A standardized and efficient process for the development of future editions of AJCC staging systems will be developed and implemented to achieve uniformity of approach across all disease sites going forward.
- Criteria or “rules” for acceptance and integration of externally validated non-anatomic prognostic factors with anatomic staging will be

AJCC Annual Meeting **REGISTER NOW!**

The 2011 AJCC Annual Meeting will be held September 22-24, 2011 in Chicago at the American College of Surgeons Headquarters. To register for the event, please use the following link.

<http://ajcc2011.eventbrite.com>

The AJCC now on YouTube



The American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) has launched its [YouTube channel](#) and videos are now available for viewing here. The YouTube channel is a new way for the AJCC to present educational information and interact with the oncology and registry community. The initial videos posted on the YouTube channel, the popular Staging Moments that go through the staging of a real cancer case, will be followed by more videos in the.

developed and applied to future staging proposals.

In keeping with our secondary goals related to transparency and education, we will be keeping the AJCC community fully informed about changes implemented and progress achieved as transformation progresses. We are seeking greater involvement and commitment from our constituency, members and partners to ensure AJCC leadership in cancer medicine.

As the AJCC considers future changes to its processes and products, it is of critical importance that the organization continues to serve all of its customers optimally. The two largest user groups for staging data are the cancer care delivery community and the cancer surveillance community. The needs of these two groups are not always fully complementary, and the AJCC will face challenges in assuring that the requirements of both groups are met as it implements change. A key element of the 7th edition is the assurance of compatibility of the data elements entered into hospital based cancer registries with the various requirements of the broad cancer surveillance using the Collaborative Stage (CS) Data Collection System. The CS system uses specific codes to define tumor size and extension, lymph node status, presence of metastases, and relevant non-anatomic factors such as tumor markers, grade, and others. Development and oversight of the CS system has been achieved through a partnership between the AJCC and the major cancer registration and surveillance organizations. The CS system, provides a unified data collection system that is designed to meet the needs of all major cancer surveillance organizations, which historically captured cancer staging information using three different systems (SEER Extent of Disease, Summary Stage, and AJCC TNM) with different purposes, data sets, and rules. Conceptually, this system represents a labor-saving device that eliminates reduplication of effort for the cancer registry community. However, development and implementation version 2 of the CS system for the 7th edition has proven more labor-intensive and cumbersome than expected, raising concern about its future sustainability.

In order to address the issues surrounding the CS system and to more fully understand the perspectives and present and future challenges of the surveillance community so that potential solutions could be developed proactively, the AJCC convened a Cancer Surveillance Summit Conference. The meeting

brought together the clinical cancer care delivery and surveillance communities. Discussions surrounded the ways each community uses the staging data and how the evolution of staging and prognostic data would affect those uses. The deliberations and discussions from the two-day summit will inform the process for rolling revision, version release, and implementation revisions of the cancer staging manual, while respecting retrospective compatibility of the data. In order to meet the goals and requirements of both communities, five areas of priority were identified for the AJCC as follows:

- Development of criteria for inclusion of data elements into Collaborative Stage
- Evaluation and simplification of the data system
- Stabilization of anatomic stage to the greatest degree possible
- Development of a revised governance model for Collaborative Stage
- Development of a process to communicate and implement data items

Last but certainly not least among its transformative spring initiatives was a proposal made to the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC: formerly known as the International Union Against Cancer) at the annual meeting in April of their TNM Committee in Geneva to become a full partner in future development and publication of updated staging systems as well as activities related to the enhancement of stage-related prognosis through integration with non-anatomic prognostic factors. Although the AJCC and the UICC have been harmonizing their separate efforts in both these domains for many years, a true partnership would allow them to speak with one voice to the worldwide cancer community. Such a joint venture would formally bring together intellectual talent and cancer data sets from around the world. The UICC met this proposal with enthusiasm, and a summit conference between the leadership of the two organizations to discuss next steps is in planning.

Many other exciting activities are also underway that include a redesign of the AJCC website, the development of staging “apps” for cell phones, the development of new educational programs, the completion of the development process for the 2nd Edition of the AJCC Staging Atlas (expected publication date January 2012) and planning for the AJCC 2011 Annual Meeting in Chicago, September 22-24.

It is indeed an exciting time for the AJCC as we

expand our mission and redesign our processes to meet the challenges of the future. We have been energized by the prospects for success by the talent, enthusiasm and selfless dedication of members, contributors, collaborators, and staff alike. The agenda is ambitious, but the motivation to continually improve our service to cancer patients is powerful. Working together, we are more than equal to the task.

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