AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook: from the AJCC Cancer Staging Manual (7th edition)

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Correct staging is critical and mandatory, because treatment is directly related to disease stage. The American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC), together with the International Union Against Cancer (UICC), sharing a collaborative effort, is the most authoritative international organization in proposing a cancer staging system recognized worldwide. Its paradigm is both used to diagnose cancer and to determine the extent to which cancer has progressed.

This seventh edition of the *AJCC Cancer Staging Handbook*, arriving 7 years after the sixth, updates the old classification system to provide a new organ-specific classification that oncologists and other professionals who manage patients with cancer need in order to accurately classify tumours for staging.

Its relevance derives from the incredibly fast and wide knowledge recently acquired, mainly in cancer biology and in non-anatomical prognostic factors, that has led some cancer experts to conclude that TNM is starting to become obsolete.

Waiting for major changes in the future, this book is an expression of a never ending editorial process that has to be strongly supported by statistically relevant objective data, controlled and revised by a panel of international experts, to arrive at evidence-based conclusions. In cases of less common cancers, a consensus by experts has been required to overcome problems related to the acquirement of too low a number of observations.

With respect to the previous edition, major revisions have been performed on many issues, including breast, colon, prostate, kidney and others tumours. Furthermore, new chapters have been added or enlarged such as those evaluating bile ducts, cutaneous squamous cell carcinoma, Merkel cell carcinoma, adrenal glands and ophthalmological malignancies.

Without destroying pilasters of the TNM system, this edition has to be acquired as a major implementation in respect to the previous one. The reasons are not only related to new information that can eventually modify staging criteria in some areas, but because in this publication data start to become relevant other than the traditional data, based mainly on anatomy and pathology. Examples include the mitotic rate in staging gastrointestinal stromal tumour (GIST) and prostate-specific antigen and Gleason score in staging prostate cancer.

All the information is included in a pocket-size book, transportable for easy consultation; data allowing cancer staging to be defined are immediately obtainable in a highly visual rapid-reference format, with clear colour diagrams and TNM stages by organ site.

The handbook of 718 pages is organized on the basis of the disease site into 57 comprehensive chapters, divided into sections according to organs. Chapters are structured for specific body sites, allowing one to quickly find a brief compendium of all currently available information on cancer staging for most clinically important neoplasms.

This publication has to be a “Bible” for oncologists, pathologists and surgeons, being also useful for all health officers, including general physicians and students, who want to remain updated in oncology.

In our opinion, this is a book that has to be present in all diagnostic imaging departments, as a major support to produce information adequate to the new oncology algorithms.

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