

AJCC 2017 Annual Meeting

September 7-8, 2017

Report to the NAACCR Board of Directors from Frances Ross, NAACCR liaison to AJCC

The first session was the Executive Committee meeting, which started with a discussion of updates to the AJCC Staging Manual 8th edition, which have occurred since the first printing in the fall of 2016. The delay in implementation from January, 2017 to January, 2018 allowed the AJCC the opportunity to work with the cancer surveillance community, the pathology community, and the clinical decision support software developers to make improvements that will help all audiences – from registrars to clinicians to software developers. Using an additional year of data from the NCDB, the AJCC Breast Expert Panel has significantly revised the Prognostic Stage tables, and thus the critical content of the Breast Chapter. Other significant updates include revisions to the Head and Neck chapter sites, and to the histology inclusion list in all chapters. In order to communicate these changes widely to the community, and to ease the burden on those who purchased the first printing of the manual, the entire Breast Chapter will be made publicly available online in October, 2017, and replacement pages for all updates and corrections made to the entire manual will be available in December, 2017. A statement to this effect was drafted and approved by the Committee, with minor wording changes, and is set for release by the end of September.

A good deal of discussion followed regarding a communication strategy for the broad dissemination of revisions and updates to the AJCC Staging Manual. AJCC plans to post these on their web site, and send an email notification to all members of the Commission on Cancer as well as the AJCC members. The liaisons to the various partner organizations of CoC and AJCC will be expected to convey the notification of the changes and postings to their organizations. Most of the updates are expected to be finalized by October, but all will be posted by December. All of these changes will be included in the AJCC's API for licensed users by December, as well.

The next topic addressed was the implementation of the 8th edition Manual. All required data items for staging have been finalized. An issue with the histology inclusion lists for each chapter, which would have resulted in approximately a 29% drop in stageable cases, had been brought to the attention of the AJCC. Efforts to review and revise these lists are almost completed, and will be communicated along with the other updates mentioned above. AJCC is also working with representatives of CAP and NCCN in order to facilitate the implementation of AJCC 8th edition contents with CAP protocols and NCCN guidelines for patient care.

AJCC is collaborating with its partner organizations, particularly NPCR, SEER, NCRA, and NAACCR, to provide education and training on AJCC staging principles and classification schemes for the entire cancer community. They have just recently posted five new disease site webinars for AJCC 7th edition staging of prostate, breast, lung, melanoma, and colorectal cancers. Donna Gress, RHIT, CTR, of the American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) has recorded a series of webinars developed for and delivered to the NPCR Education Training Coordinators (ETC). NPCR has agreed to share these recordings and handouts with the registrar community. These webinars provide information on the assignment of stage, clarification of classification criteria with procedure/treatment differences and highlighting common questions and case scenarios.

The next topic was the AJCC Application Programming Interface (API) maintenance and updates. This is a new area for AJCC, as their past publications have always been in a printed book format. The API is offered to software developers through a licensing agreement, and, once licensed, the software vendor may access the API through a web portal. This has required a transformation of the 8th edition contents into unambiguous and discrete information for program developers. They have been getting familiar with interoperability standards and using XML in the API. They have participated in the ACoC Interoperability meetings with clinicians, oncologists, and modelers to pilot real world work flow processes with a goal of moving to HL7 for balloting and acceptance.

Finally, the Executive Committee reviewed a draft of an AJCC Cancer Staging Content Governance Plan. Recognizing that the 'content' of the AJCC staging system also refers to such items as data elements, measurement ranges, terminologies and other aspects of cancer staging that may be used in data collection and the development of clinical decision support tools.

The strategy for the Content Governance Plan is to maintain and improve the 8th edition committee infrastructure, re-engage the expert panels and identify new contributors, include additional partner organizations, continuously evaluate the science underlying the staging classification system, and develop a regular production cycle that considers external stakeholder requirements. The draft of the Content Governance included an action plan as well as short and long term goals. The plan was well received by the Executive Committee and was presented to the other AJCC committees during the rest of the meeting.

After the Executive Committee meeting, the other committees (Finance, Education, and Informatics) all met to discuss the same topics, but in more detail, highlighting the work accomplished by each of the committees. The draft of the AJCC Cancer Staging Content Governance Plan was presented to the full membership at the end of the day. On the second day of the meeting, the AJCC members joined the Commission on Cancer sponsored Cancer Programs Conference and presented a session on the AJCC's mission and structure. An update on the AJCC Manual 8th edition, and an overview of the Content Governance Plan for 2018 and beyond was also presented to the larger CoC audience