What’s New in Breast Pathology

In Breast Pathology includes changes from the AJCC 8th Edition, HER2 guidelines from ASCO / CAP, PDL1 staining, recommendations for handling neoadjuvant therapy specimens and DCIS active surveillance clinical trials.


- Lobular carcinoma in situ (LCIS) has been removed from pTis because it is considered a benign risk lesion (Fig. 1).
- Histologic grade and biomarker status (including ER, PR and HER2) are incorporated into clinical prognostic staging.

2018 Update to the ASCO / CAP HER2 Guidelines

- A focused update addressed key HER2 scenarios (Arch Pathol Lab Med 2018;142:1364).
- A 2+, equivocal HER2 result by IHC is now defined as weak to moderate complete membrane staining in > 10% of invasive tumor cells (Figs. 2 and 3).

- The multigene test, Oncotype DX®, is included in the prognostic stage as the only test showing level I evidence of prognostic and therapy predictive information. Tumors that are pT1 or pT2, hormone receptor positive, HER2 negative and lymph node negative with Recurrence Scores < 11 are downstaged to the same prognostic stage as T1a - T1b N0 M0 cancers (Stage IA).
- The TAILORx clinical trial showed that patients with Recurrence Scores of 11 - 25 can be spared chemotherapy but subset analysis showed a chemotherapy benefit for early breast cancer patients ≤ 50 years old with scores of 16 - 25 (N Engl J Med 2018;379:111).
- HER2 should not be repeated on excision if the initial core biopsy is HER2 negative and is either hormone receptor positive or tubular, mucinous or adenoid cystic carcinoma.
- The FISH testing algorithm was updated. IHC is needed for equivocal FISH results (see below), and if still equivocal (2+), additional cells for FISH are counted. If the ratio and average HER2 remain the same, the final result is interpreted as HER2 negative with a comment (Arch Pathol Lab Med 2018;142:1364, figs. 4, 5 and 6).

- Formerly equivocal FISH results.
  (a) Ratio ≥ 2.0 and HER2 copy number < 4.0 signals per cell.
  (b) Ratio < 2.0, average HER2 copy number ≥ 6.0 per cell.
  (c) Ratio < 2.0, average HER2 copy number > 4.0 and < 6.0.

PD-L1 Testing in Breast Cancer

- The IMpassion130 trial has demonstrated prolonged progression free survival in patients with metastatic triple negative breast cancer (ER / PR / HER2 negative)

Sponsored by an unrestricted grant from Yale University School of Medicine

- PD-L1 positivity in this trial was defined as PD-L1 expression (using Ventana SP142 antibody) in > 1% tumor infiltrating immune cells.
- In lung carcinoma, SP142 antibody has a low sensitivity for tumor cells and tumor infiltrating immune cells when compared with other PD-L1 antibody clones (JAMA Oncol 2017;3:1051).
- In March 2019, the FDA approved the SP142 assay as a companion diagnostic to identify patients eligible for treatment with atezolizumab plus chemotherapy.
- How does this affect pathologists? PD-1 and PD-L1 inhibitors are new treatments for non small cell lung carcinoma, melanoma, bladder and breast carcinoma. Medical oncologists request PD-L1 testing to predict response to checkpoint inhibitors in breast cancer. Pathologists should know which assay is used and how to score / evaluate this immunohistochemical stain. Interpretation cutoffs currently lack standardization and vary in different tumor types.

**Recommendation of Standardized Evaluation And Reporting Response to Neoadjuvant Therapy in Breast Cancer Surgical Specimens**

- Neoadjuvant chemotherapy is routinely used for triple negative and HER2 positive tumors (Fig. 4).

  **Fig. 4: Post treatment residual tumor and giant cells.**

- Multiple systems exist for assessing post neoadjuvant therapy specimens to quantify the response to therapy (i.e. Miller-Payne, Sataloff, Chevallier methods). New recommendations were recently made (Mod Pathol 2015;28.1185).
- An image (drawing, photo or radiograph) of the sliced specimen should be maintained with a map of submitted tissue sections.
  - In small specimens with no gross tumor, submit the entire specimen.
  - Attempt to quantify residual tumor in large specimens, sample any grossly visible tumor or location of biopsy clips; in the absence of gross tumor, sample the largest cross sectional area of the pretreatment tumor area (submit 5 blocks per 1 - 2 cm pretreatment size, up to 25 total blocks).
- Quantify and report residual tumor using the MD Anderson calculator for Residual Cancer Burden (RCB), see https://www.pathologyoutlines.com/site/MDA.html.
- Complete pathologic response (pCR) means no residual invasive tumor, lymphatic or lymph node involvement.
- Residual DCIS only is considered pCR (AJCC 8th agrees).
- There is no consensus regarding the need for reassessment of hormone receptor and HER2 status in residual cancer postneoadjuvant therapy (Hum Pathol 2017;62.215).

**DCIS Active Surveillance Clinical Trials**

- Overdiagnosis and overtreatment of ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS) is an ongoing debate and recent clinical trials are exploring active surveillance as an alternative to surgical management.
- How does this affect pathologists? Since DCIS grade and the presence of comedonecrosis are specific inclusion / exclusion criteria for these trials, it is important to report these features for core biopsies.

- Low and Intermediate Risk Ductal Carcinoma in situ Study (LARRIKIN). Recruitment pending. Surgery +/- radiation versus mammographic surveillance.

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**Meet the Author**

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