



PATIENTS AND THEIR FAMILIES

Before a treatment plan for a cancer can be given, there are three important factors that have to be known.

These are:

- The site of origin of the cancer or the organ that the cancer developed from (e.g. breast, prostate, colon).
- The characteristics of the cancer. This includes its histologic type, the tissue the cancer developed from (adenocarcinoma from gland like tissue, or squamous cell cancer from skin like tissue), and molecular characteristics.
- The degree to which the cancer has grown or spread (i.e. the anatomical extent of the disease). The method describing the extent of cancer that is accepted through out the world, is the TNM classification which is based on anatomic distribution of cancer. Patients with small tumours have a better prognosis than those with larger tumours at the primary site. In general, patients with tumours confined to the site of the tumour only have a better prognosis than those with spread of the cancer to the nearby or (regional) lymph nodes, which in turn is better than those with distant spread of disease to other organs.

FURTHER

For more detailed description of T N and M categories and stage groupings go to how to use the TNM Classification.