

ACS Cancer Conference 2025

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American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC): Who are we and what do we do?

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ACS Cancer Programs
American College of Surgeons

Disclosures

- Merck – advisory board/consultant/scientific advisory committee
- Philogen - consultant

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AJCC Mission Statement

The AJCC provides worldwide leadership in the development, promotion, and maintenance of evidence-based systems for the classification and management of cancer in collaboration with multidisciplinary organizations dedicated to cancer surveillance and to improving care.

AJCC Member Organizations (N=23)

- American Association of Pathologists' Assistants
- American Cancer Society
- American College of Physicians
- American College of Radiology
- American College of Surgeons
- American Head and Neck Society
- American Society for Radiation Oncology
- American Society of Clinical Oncology
- American Society of Colon and Rectal Surgeons
- American Urological Association
- Association of Molecular Pathology
- Canadian Partnership Against Cancer
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- College of American Pathologists
- International Collaboration on Cancer Reporting
- National Cancer Database
- National Cancer Institute
- National Cancer Registrars Association
- National Comprehensive Cancer Network
- North American Association of Central Cancer Registries
- Society of Gynecologic Oncologists
- Society of Surgical Oncology
- Society of Urologic Oncology

ACS Cancer Conference | Harnessing the Power of Collaboration

Classification and Staging of Cancer

- **Principal communication tool** – **common language** facilitates worldwide consistency
 - Cancer care - clinician–patient & clinician–clinician
 - Surveillance/registry reporting: state/province, national, international, etc.
- Risk stratification defines patient groups → staging/prognosis
- Treatment recommendations → often stage-based
- Informs clinical trial eligibility, stratification, analysis
- AJCC/UICC – TNM structure (de facto constrained) → incorporation of evidence-based non-anatomic factors
- Informs clinical/translational/correlative science

American College of Surgeons - Cancer Programs



Program of the American College of Surgeons
and the Alliance for Clinical Trials in Oncology



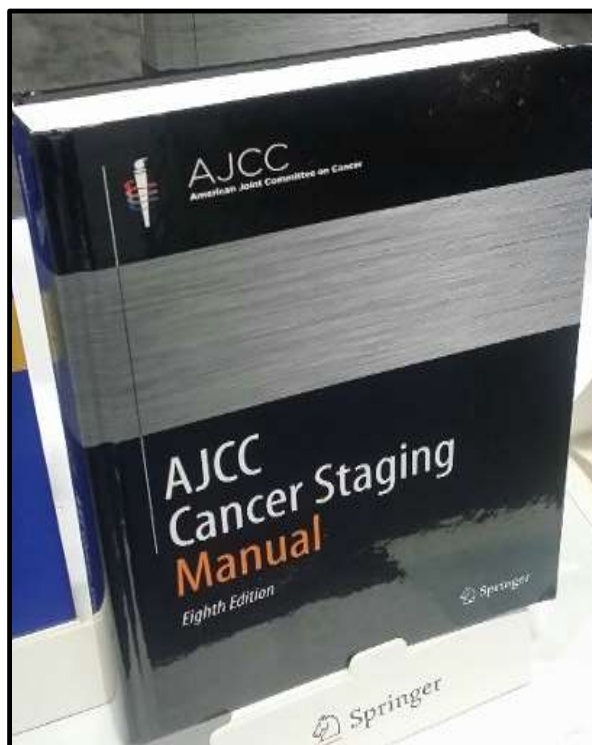
AJCC Cancer Staging Manuals - “Historical Perspective”



Source of Cancer Staging for
Decades → 8 Editions

- 1st - 1977
- 2nd - 1983
- 3rd - 1988
- 4th - 1992
- 5th - 1997
- 6th - 2002
- 7th - 2010
- 8th - 2017

8th Edition



1st – 7th Editions



Why Revise Cancer Classification/Staging Systems?

- Rationale

- Embrace improved understanding of clinical behavior and biology
 - e.g., advances in diagnosis, prognosis, treatment
- Integrate validated biomarkers into clinical practice
- Maintain relevance in a rapidly evolving cancer landscape

- Considerations

- Balance simplicity vs. complexity
- Maximize generalizability
- Enabled by close collaboration/integration/harmonization
 - AJCC leadership/expert panels AND numerous partner organizations

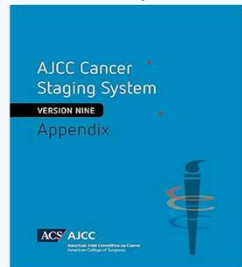
Evolution of AJCC Cancer Staging - I

- Cancer Staging Manual → rebranded as Cancer Staging System
- Goal → Continue to ensure cancer staging is current, evidence-based, and meets needs of clinical care and surveillance communities

8 th Edition	Version 9
Hardcopy book (also available electronically)	Digital product leverages API*-based infrastructure
Chapters	Protocols (1 st protocol released October 2020)
Narrative format – sometimes “wordy”	Standardized format , structured presentation, explanatory notes
Published every 5-7 years	Published on an annual basis
Entire manual (all chapters) published simultaneously	Protocols published disease site by disease site based on needs of clinical care & surveillance communities (and planned coordination with WHO Blue Book cycle update)
Printed manual → “static”	Electronic platform facilitates rapid integration of updated staging information into EHRs and cancer registry databases & use of information; facilitates development of additional tools and applications

AJCC Infrastructure and Product Overview

*AJCC protocol print and e-books – Amazon/Kindle



**AJCC Staging Content
CCMS* (Heretto)**

**AJCC API
(Red Hat/3Scale)**

**Customers:
EHR Vendors**

AJCC Staging Online

Customers:

- Individual Physicians
- Cancer Registrars
- Users of AJCC content

**AJCC Cancer
Surveillance DLL
Schema Manager
& Visual Studio**

Customers:

- Cancer Registry Vendors

*Component content management system

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AJCC Staging Online



Launched June 2024



AJCC

American Joint Committee on Cancer
American College of Surgeons

Discover AJCC Staging Online

Since June 2024 release:

>1400 subscribers

>300,000 portal visits

Addresses unmet needs:

- CCMS-based web portal → *single source* of truth for all AJCC content
- Provides consistent format for both 8th edition & Version 9 content across disease sites
- Registrars/clinicians no longer need to reference 15 protocols & the Cancer Staging Manual or remember which version content to use when staging a case
- The API and DLL are released annually along with protocols (version 9)

just \$42.00 per year.



American Joint Committee on Cancer
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facs.org/ajconline



AJCC Content Currently is Available in...

EHR Software



Registry Software



Library Services



RITTENHOUSE



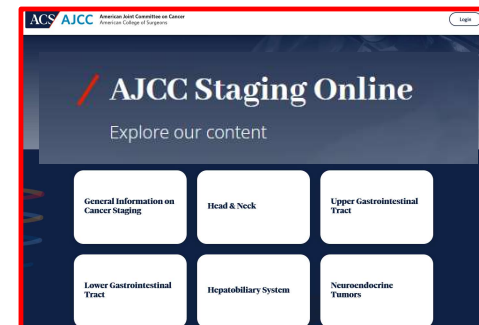
Member Organizations



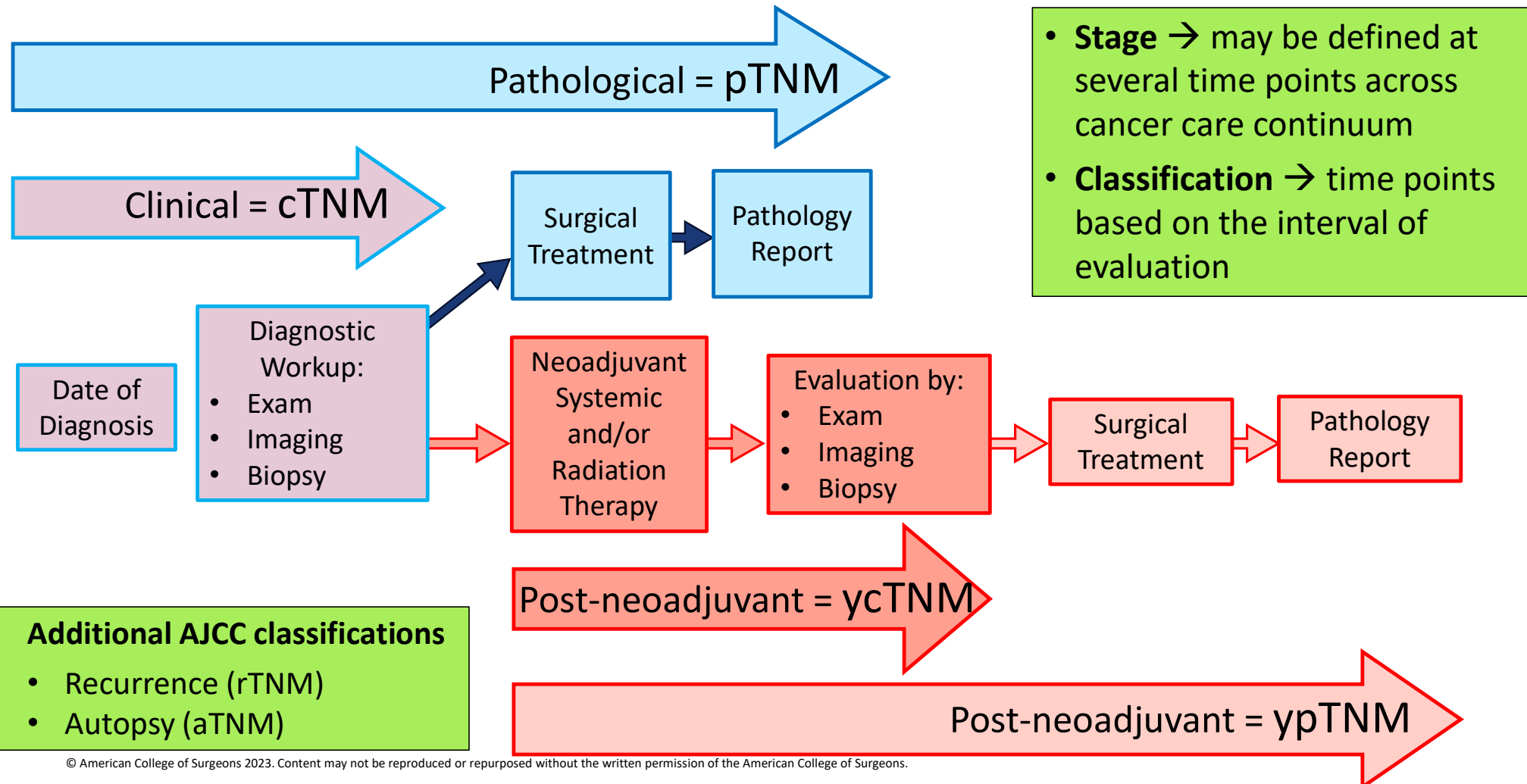
Print and eBook



Print 8th Edition



AJCC Classification Schema



AJCC Classification Schema

Pathological = pTNM

Clinical = cTNM

- **Stage** → may be defined at several time points across cancer care continuum
- **Classification** → time points based on the interval of evaluation

Date of
Diagnosis

Diagnostic
Workup:

- Exam
- Imaging
- Biopsy

Surgical
Treatment

Pathology
Report

Neoadjuvant
Systemic
and/or
Radiation
Therapy

Evaluation by:

- Exam
- Imaging
- Biopsy

Surgical
Treatment

Pathology
Report

Additional AJCC classifications

- Recurrence (rTNM)
- Autopsy (aTNM)

Post-neoadjuvant = ycTNM

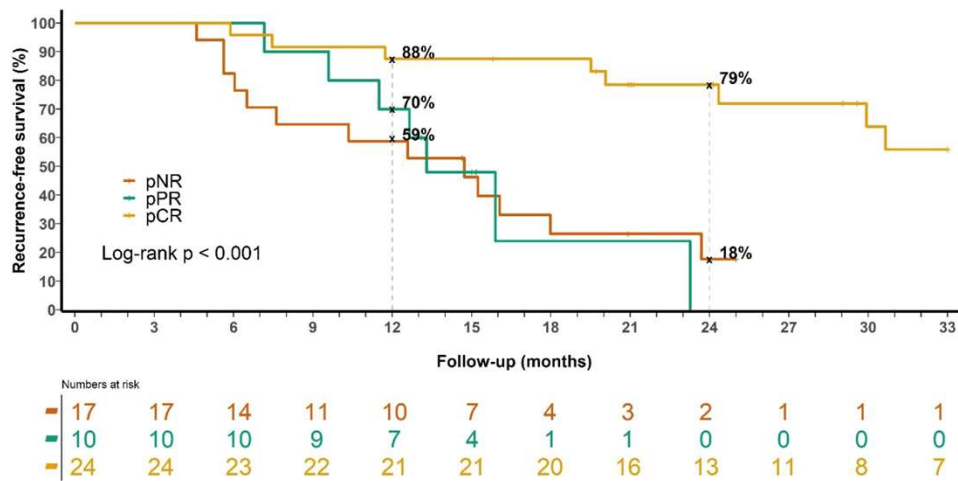
Post-neoadjuvant = ypTNM

Neoadjuvant Tx Landscape in Melanoma

Pathological response and survival with neoadjuvant therapy in melanoma: a pooled analysis from the International Neoadjuvant Melanoma Consortium (INMC)

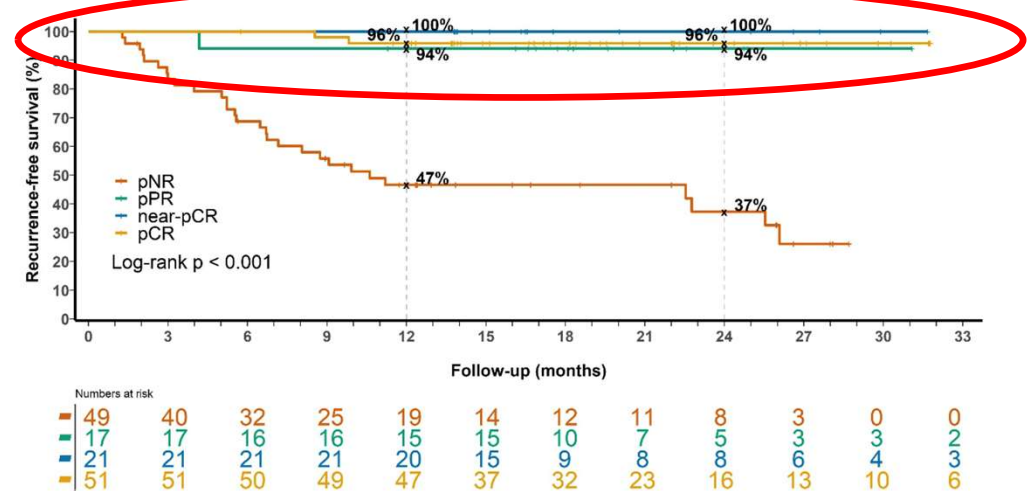
- Patient with stage III (cT4b cN3 cM0) → 2 cycles combination immunotherapy → **pCR**
- No yp stage assigned → unable to capture prognostic significance of path CR

Targeted Therapy



*No patient had a near-pCR

Immunotherapy



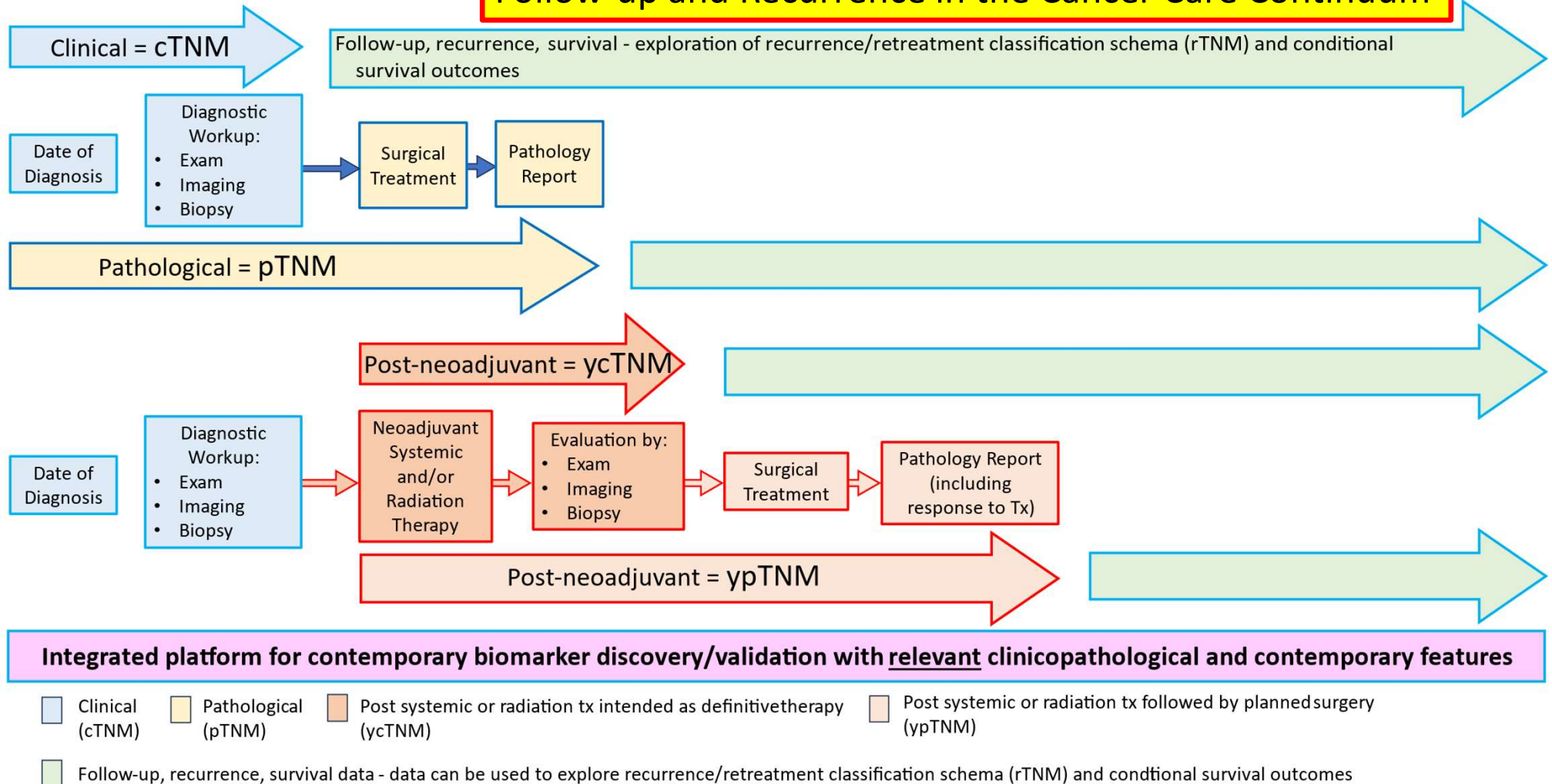
Unresolved Questions → Tremendous Opportunities

- **What qualifies as Neoadjuvant Therapy?**
 - Agents
 - Duration (minimum?)
 - “New” era of immunotherapy → toxicity ≠ lack of response, duration not measured in months, etc.
- **How to define, capture, and codify response to neoadjuvant tx?**
 - Clinical, radiological, pathological response
 - Role of biomarkers
- **Clinical practice ↔ registry/surveillance community considerations and harmonization**
 - CAP, NAACR, NPCR, NCDB, AJCC, CoC, NCI, SEER, STORE, SSDI
- **Disease site agnostic vs disease-site-specific considerations**

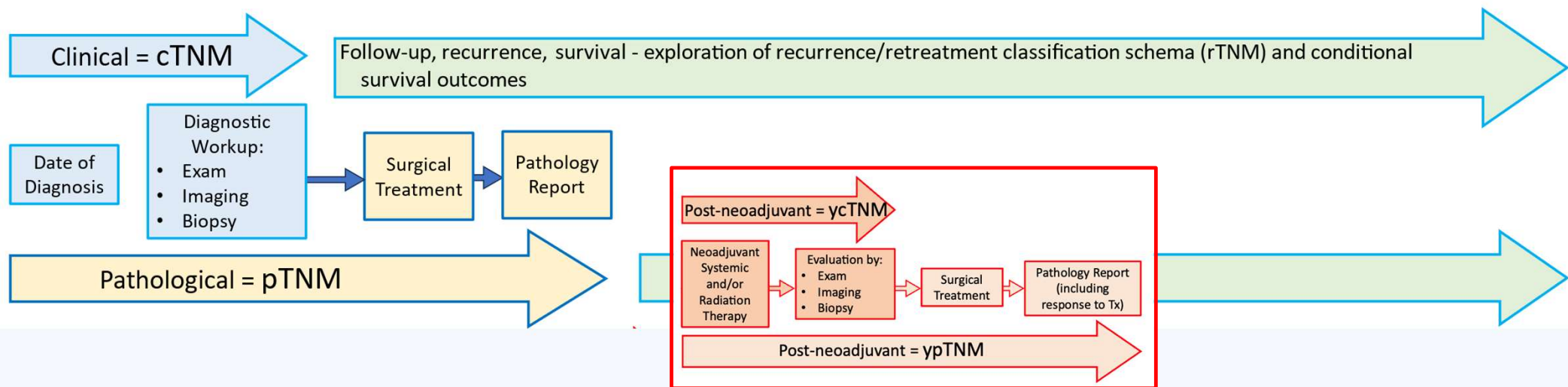
Where do we go from here?

- Embrace clinical advances to maintain/enhance relevance
- Develop future-state framework & associated infrastructure – *in process!*
- Revisit legacy/current AJCC neoadjuvant content
 - Clarify definitions (T, N, M category conventions; prognostic stage groups), reduce redundancies, identify opportunities to further structure data
 - Codify disease-site agnostic vs disease-site specific themes/elements
- Harmonize clinical $\leftrightarrow$ registry/surveillance spheres
- Foster maximal collaboration
- ***Neoadjuvant working group recently convened***

Follow-up and Recurrence in the Cancer Care Continuum



Follow-up and Recurrence in the Cancer Care Continuum





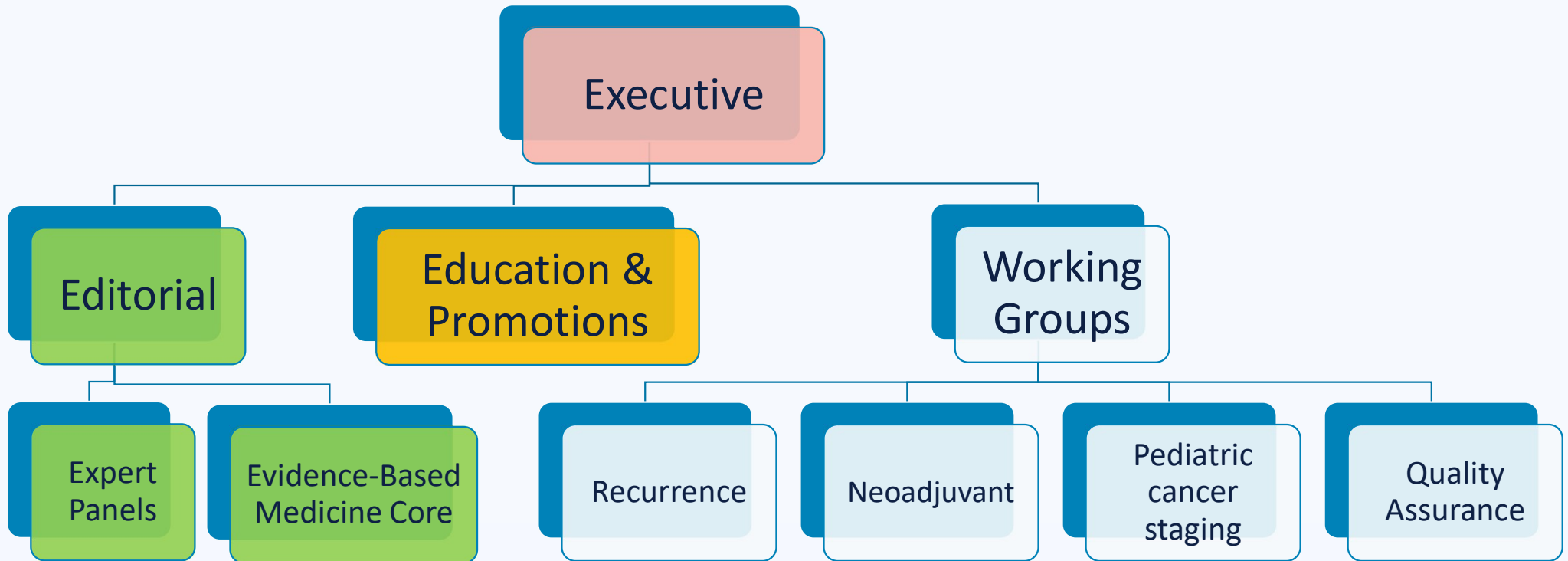
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Thank
you!



AJCC Committee Structure



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