



CANCER GLOSSARY

190 TERMS & DEFINITIONS TO PUT YOU IN THE KNOW

- **First-Line Treatment (1L):** treatment recommended as the first step for a specific disease or condition; in cancer, the 1st line (1L) treatment is the first line of defense against your cancer and statistically the most likely option to be effective and/or tolerable (less toxic). The 2nd (2L) and 3rd-line (3L) options are those that have
- **Acquired/Somatic Mutation:** shown to be the next best choices if the previous line was ineffective, not effective enough, or had to be discontinued due to allergy or side effect toxicities; a mutation that happened during cellular replication at any point of your life (not inherited from family); most often these occur spontaneously ~~but they can~~ be brought on by environmental and/or lifestyle factors; used to refer to mutations specific to a tumor's DNA
- **Actionable Information:** information that allows or enables the recipient to act on it; to do something clinically relevant based on the information provided
- **Adjuvant:** treatment given after an initial treatment has completed its course to try to prevent recurrence; for example: if you have surgery followed by chemotherapy, the chemo would be referred to as adjuvant; sometimes adjuvant chemo is casually referred to as "clean-up chemo"
- **Advance Directives:** documents indicating a patient's end-of-life medical wishes and preferences, can include medical power of attorney, healthcare surrogate designation, POLST, DNR, living will, etc.
- **Adverse Events:** another term for unwanted side effects; the negative off-target effects of a treatment; TRAEs are treatment-related adverse events, irAEs are immune-related adverse events, CINP is chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting, and CIPN is chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy
- **Aggressive Cancer:** a cancer that rapidly divides and/or spreads
- **Anastomosis:** the rejoining of surgically separated tissues and associated blood vessels e.g. reconnecting the two ends of a surgically resected colon
- **Angiogenesis:** the formation of new blood vessels to better connect a tumor to the existing blood supply and increase tumor nourishment
- **Antibodies:** proteins (called immunoglobulins) produced by immune cells that bind to specific antigens on a cell's surface to mark the cell for elimination
- **Anticipatory Grief:** feelings of grief that occur before a loss actually happens; can be in relation to the anticipated loss/death of a loved one, or the anticipated loss of other life events that may not take place in the way you once envisioned (e.g. having a child, getting married, retiring, traveling, relationships, starting a new career, engaging in hobbies or athletic endeavors, etc.)
- **Antigens:** markers (usually proteins) on the cell's surface used to identify the cell type, whether the cell is "self" or foreign, and can spur the production of antibodies to destroy the cell if it is foreign or damaged
- **Apoptosis:** programmed cell death; a built-in mechanism for destroying and eliminating cells that are a threat to the organ/organism
- **Benign:** Non-cancerous tissue/tumor that will not spread to other areas of the body
- **Biomarker:** measurable biological substance in the body, like proteins or genes, which can provide information about a disease or condition; in cancer, this also refers to tumor markers that can be found in your bloodstream
- **Biopsy:** a procedure that removes a tissue sample from the body for pathologic analysis (cell and tissue analysis)
- **Blastoma:** originates in embryonic tissues and develops in the nervous system (brain, nerves, neurons, etc.)
- **Cancer:** a group of disease characterized by uncontrolled cell division and growth, and a proclivity to spread into other tissues (metastasis)

- **Carcinoma:** originates in the epithelial tissues of the skin and lining of internal organs; carcinomas make up about 80-90% of all cancers (includes adenocarcinoma, basal cell carcinoma, and squamous cell carcinoma)
- **Case-Fatality Rate:** the rate at which people die from a specific disease; the number of people who die from a specific disease in a specified time frame divided by the total number of people with that disease during the same time period
- **Checkpoint Inhibitors:** subcategory of immunotherapy in which immune system checkpoints are blocked, amplifying the immune system's ability to identify and destroy cancer cells
- **Chemotherapy:** the use of pharmaceutical products (drugs) to reduce and destroy cancer, managed and administered by a medical oncologist
- **Clinical Stage (0-IV):** a numeric system used to clinically classify the severity and spread of cancer; Staging varies by cancer type, but in solid tumors Stage 0 usually indicates the presence of pre-cancerous cells or carcinoma in situ and Stage 4 usually indicates the presence of distant metastasis
- **Clinical Trial:** the study of an experimental treatment, drug, medical device, diagnostic test, etc. in human beings
- **Colectomy:** the surgical removal of the colon (or part of the colon: semicolectomy) to remove cancer
- **Colonoscopy:** gold-standard colorectal cancer screening modality that uses a small camera inserted through the anus to visualize the entire colon from cecum to rectum, and polyps can be removed during the procedure for prevention and analysis
- **Comorbidity:** a combination of more than one illness, disease, or condition that contributes to the overall health status of a patient
- **Complete Response (CR):** the disappearance of cancer as the result of a treatment; a complete radiologic response (no cancer seen on a scan) is not the same as a complete pathologic response (no cancer detected in tissue specimens following treatment)
- **Conversion Therapy:** a treatment intended to make inoperable patients eligible for surgery
- **CT Scan:** Computed Tomography: radiographic tool that uses spinning x-rays to create 3D images of soft tissues, organs, and bones and exposes patients to radiation
- **ctDNA:** circulating tumor DNA, DNA fragments found in your blood that a cancerous tumor has "shed" (or released) into the bloodstream; a ctDNA test can also be referred to as a liquid biopsy or a test to detect MRD (minimal residual disease)
- **Curative:** treatment that has the intention of completely killing and removing cancer from your body; intended to cure your cancer
- **Cure:** the state of cancer when it has not reappeared over the course of 5 consecutive years (for most cancer types) and is not expected to come back; this term is generally not applicable to Stage IV cancers
- **Diagnosis:** the specific condition or disease you have based on tests, symptoms, imaging, and medical expertise
- **Diagnostic Factor:** a factor that can help establish a patient's diagnosis, e.g. cancer type and stage, bloodwork, scans, biomarkers, etc.
- **Differentiation:** cellular differentiation is the process of cells maturing and developing into cells with specialized functions and features; Normal-looking cells are considered well-differentiated, less aggressive, and slower to grow and spread whereas the most abnormal looking cells are considered poorly differentiated or undifferentiated, more aggressive, and faster to grow and spread

- **Digital Rectal Exam (DRE):** prostate cancer screening exam performed by a clinician, fingers are inserted into the anus to palpate (feel) the prostate gland
- **Distant:** refers to the cancer's location/spread to tissues in areas of the body that are not as close to the primary tumor; distant spread refers to metastasis
- **DNA Repair Genes:** genes that fix DNA. If repairs are not sufficient to resolve the issue, DNA repair genes can trigger apoptosis to kill off irreparable cells. When DNA repair genes are mutated, repairs cannot be made as usual, and this can lead to the development of more mutations and cancer.
- **Driver Mutation:** a change in the tumor's DNA that leads to the development or proliferation of cancer
- **Efficacy:** the term used to describe how effective (successful, beneficial, useful, powerful) a treatment is; how well the treatment works. The higher the efficacy, the better it works.
- **Electronic Medical Records (EMR):** digitized and digitally accessible medical records and health information stored on secure, HIPAA- compliant servers; also called Electronic Health Records (EHR)
- **Endogenous:** made inside; something that originates from or is produced INSIDE of a cell, organ, organism, etc., "endo" = inside and "genous" = made/generated. e.g. the liver makes glucose so we can refer to this as the endogenous production of glucose. What's more is we consume (eat or drink) glucose so we can also consider glucose to be an exogenous energy source.
- **Endoscopy:** a procedure that uses a camera to visualize different areas inside the body; "endo" = inside and "scope" = to see; a colonoscopy allows viewing of the entire colon and rectum, a laparoscopy allows viewing of the inside of the abdomen and pelvis, a cystoscopy allows viewing inside the bladder and urethra
- **Epigenetic:** term used to describe changes in gene expression (the switching "on" and "off" of genes) unrelated to changes in DNA sequence; can be caused by environmental exposures or external factors or behaviors.
- **Evidence-based medicine (EBM):** the marrying of relevant research data, clinician experience, and patient preferences and values to form the best possible treatment plans for individual patients.
- **Exogenous:** made outside; something that originates from or is produced OUTSIDE of a cell, organ, organism, etc., "exo" = outside and "genous" = made/generated. e.g. the body does not produce iron or zinc so it must come from our diets. This would be considered an exogenous source of those two micronutrients.
- **Extravasation:** movement of foreign substances (including cancer cells) out of blood vessels or lymph vessels
- **FOBT/FIT:** Fecal occult blood test and fecal immunochemical test; two types of non-invasive colorectal cancer screening tests that detect blood in a stool sample (feces) provided by the patient, which could be a sign of colorectal cancer if detected; if the test is positive for blood, a colonoscopy is the recommended next step for further evaluation
- **Foley Catheter:** a flexible tube inserted into the bladder through the urethra and held in place in the bladder with an inflatable "balloon," used to drain urine into a bag outside of the body
- **Genetics:** the study of individual or smaller groups of genes
- **Genomics/Genome:** a genome is a collection of all your genetic information and genomics is the study of all your genetic information
- **Germ Cell:** a cancer that originates in cells that produce eggs or sperm
- **Growth Factor:** a substance in the body (most often a hormone/protein) that influences cellular growth and proliferation; VEGF (vascular endothelial growth factor) is an example of a notable growth factor in cancer. VEGF stimulates the growth of new capillaries to increase blood supply to tissues, including malignant tumors. VEGF inhibitors are a class of targeted therapy in cancer, and they stop/slow the growth of new blood vessel formation to cut off a tumor's access to nourishment.
- **Hematology:** the study of blood and "liquid" tumors (lymphoma, leukemia, etc.)

- **Heterogeneity:** a state of having differences; exists between cancer types, within cancer types, between tumors within the same body, and even between subpopulations of cells within a single tumor. There's a lot of variation within cancer, and each variation presents unique challenges with regard to therapy response and patient outcomes.
- **Hospice Care:** care provided by a specialized team to reduce pain and suffering in the final months of one's life (6 months or less)
- **Ileus:** the "freezing" of the intestines following surgery (or other trauma) that inhibits the passage of materials and can lead to serious blockages; a condition in which peristalsis (the involuntary, pulsing contractions that propel contents down the esophagus and through the intestines) is impaired or disabled due to surgery or other trauma
- **Immunotherapy:** relatively recent cancer treatment development in which the immune system is activated (in numerous ways) to recognize and destroy cancer cells
- **Incidence:** the rate at which something new (and often unwanted) occurs within a population, e.g. the proportion of people who are newly diagnosed with a certain type of cancer within a specific period of time
- **Induction Therapy:** a treatment or combination of treatments intended to eradicate all detectable cancer, to induce remission in a patient
- **Informed Consent:** a requirement that relevant information about medical procedures, medications, and treatments be shared with a patient in advance to allow them time to make an informed decision, and that the procedure or treatment cannot begin until the patient has given legal permission to proceed (their consent)
- **Inherited/Germline Mutation:** a mutation that you received when you were conceived by your parents, passed down from one or both parents, found in every cell in your body
- **Inpatient:** a patient who is admitted to the hospital, often for an overnight stay or a procedure that requires a patient to stay overnight in the hospital
- **Intravasation:** movement of foreign substances (including cancer cells) into blood vessels or lymph vessels
- **Invasion:** describes the spread of cancer to tissues adjacent or close to the primary tumor
- **Intravenous (IV) Infusion:** the delivery of a substance intravenously, or through a vein
- **Laparoscopic Surgery:** a minimally invasive surgical technique using small incisions through which long surgical instruments and a camera are inserted into the body, all guided and controlled by a surgeon
- **Late-Term or Late Onset Side Effects:** side effects that usually don't appear until treatment has ended and can linger for weeks, months, years, or indefinitely after treatment ends
- **Lesion:** a worrisome cluster of cells that may or may not be cancerous; often used interchangeably with tumor or mass when referring to cancer
- **Leukemia:** originates in blood-forming tissues and, most commonly, is an overproduction of ineffective white blood cells (leukocytes)
- **Ligands:** molecules that bind to receptors on a cell's surface to initiate or inhibit specific cellular activities
- **Liquid Biopsy:** a blood sample taken to look for and analyze cancer cells and/or the cancer's DNA (ctDNA)
- **Lobectomy:** the surgical removal of an entire lobe of the lungs to remove cancer
- **Local/Localized (spread):** refers to the cancer's location, spread to tissues in very close proximity to the primary tumor
- **Local/Localized (treatment):** treatment applied to a smaller, specific area of the body
- **Long-Term Side Effects:** side effects that can begin at any point once treatment has started and can linger for weeks, months, years, or indefinitely after treatment ends

- **Lumpectomy:** the surgical removal of a portion of the breast to remove a tumor (breast-conserving surgery)
- **Lymph Node (LN):** small filtering structures packed with immune cells that are found throughout the body, part of the lymphatic system; lymph nodes filter lymph (the fluid that travels through the lymphatic system) to remove waste, infections, and other foreign substances from circulation. Lymph nodes can "collect" circulating cancer cells, and the presence of cancer in lymph nodes can indicate that the cancer is spreading beyond the site of origin.
- **Lymphedema:** swelling (edema) caused by the buildup of lymph fluid in the body
- **Lymphoma:** originates in the lymphatic system (lymph vessels, lymph nodes, spleen, thymus gland, and bone marrow)
- **Lymphovascular Invasion (LVI):** term found in pathology reports regarding the spread of cancer to nearby tissues, specifically as it relates to cancer cells being identified in lymph vessels or blood vessels; LVI often occurs prior to cancer cells moving into lymph nodes (called Lymph Node Metastasis), and LN metastasis usually occurs prior to the formation of distant metastases
- **Malignant:** cancerous tissue/tumor that can spread to other areas of the body
- **Mammogram:** gold-standard breast screening method that uses x-rays to form 3D images of breast tissue
- **Margins:** the area around a tumor that is free of cancerous cells or tissue; you want "good" margins after surgical removal of a tumor
- **Mass:** a tumor or cluster of overgrown, rapidly dividing cells that may be cancerous or noncancerous
- **Mastectomy:** the surgical removal of an entire breast to remove cancer
- **Mechanism of Action (MOA):** the way something functions or operates; describes how drugs and other molecules/compounds interact with the body and achieve an effect on a cellular level
- **Metabolism:** the use and breakdown of chemicals and materials within the body as it relates to energy consumption and energy production
- **Metachronous Metastases:** metastases that are discovered 6 months or more after diagnosis of the primary tumor; "meta" = beyond, outside of and "chronous" = time.
- **Metastasis:** describes the spread of cancer to distant tissues in the body not adjacent to the primary tumor; the presence of metastasis almost always leads to a Stage IV diagnosis; plural is metastases
- **Metastectomy:** the surgical removal of metastases (metastatic tumors) from the body
- **Micrometastasis:** refers to a very small or microscopic cluster of tumor cells somewhere in the body not near the primary tumor, usually less than 1 cm in size and undetectable (or not easily seen) on scans
- **Microsatellite Stability/Instability (MSS/MSI):** Refers to genetic changes that may impede built-in DNA repair functions; MSS stands for microsatellite stability and MSI stands for microsatellite instability and can also be written as MSI-H to indicate a high level of instability; MSI status may make a patient eligible for immunotherapy
- **Mitosis:** cell division: the process through which a cell duplicates its DNA and divides into two identical daughter cells
- **MMR:** DNA mismatch repair gene: dMMR indicates deficiency and pMMR indicates proficiency; dMMR status may make a patient eligible for immunotherapy
- **Morbidity:** the burden of illness and disease that a patient carries and how it contributes to the overall health status of the patient
- **Mortality/Mortality Rate:** 1) the idea of one's own life and eventual death 2) mortality rate- a statistic, the rate at which members of a specific group die within a certain time frame, often presented as the number of deaths in a specific time frame divided by the total population, also called death rate

- **MRD:** Minimum Residual Disease, evidence of remaining tumor DNA found in your body (usually detected in the bloodstream) following treatment
- **MRI:** Magnetic Resonance Imaging: radiographic tool that uses electromagnetic waves to form 3D images of soft tissues and organs and does not expose patients to any radiation
- **Mutation:** in cancer, it's a change in or damage to a gene that can impact your body's ability to develop, identify, control, fight, or eradicate cancer; can occur as the result of inheritance (born with it, passed from one or both parents) or acquisition (spontaneous development over the course of your life due to any number of factors)
- **Myeloma:** originates in plasma cells and bone marrow
- **Necrosis:** cell/tissue death brought upon by exogenous factors/agents (caused by something from outside of the body) like chemotherapy, UV exposure, radiation, medications, etc., or it can be due to a reduced/insufficient blood supply that's unable to sustain the life of the cell/tissue. When a necrotic cell dies, it swells and bursts, releasing its contents, and potentially initiating an inflammatory response that can cause further damage to surrounding tissues. Necrosis can appear as a living tumor on imaging and can sometimes appear metabolically active on PET scans.
- **NED:** No evidence of disease, scans and labs cannot identify any cancer in your body
- **Negative Results:** in cancer, a "negative result" usually means that cancer has NOT been found or identified; think of it as "negative for cancer" (good news)
- **Neo-Adjuvant:** treatment given before surgery (or before the primary treatment) to reduce the size of tumors and overall tumor burden
- **Next-Generation Sequencing (NGS):** an advanced DNA and RNA sequencing methodology used to assess the genetic characteristics of the sampled tissue/blood
- **Nucleotide:** building block of nucleic acids (DNA) made up of a sugar (deoxyribose in DNA), a phosphate, and a nitrogen base. There are four possible DNA nitrogen bases: adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), and cytosine (C). Adenine and thymine pair with each other using two hydrogen bonds, and cytosine and guanine pair with each other using three hydrogen bonds to create nucleic acids that form the double-helix structure of DNA.
- **Oligometastatic:** a few metastases; a few tumors that have spread away from the primary tumor
- **Oncogenes:** Proto-oncogenes are useful genes we have in our bodies that control cellular growth and replication. However, if one of these genes becomes mutated, it won't work properly and can encourage continued growth and proliferation, leading to tumor development. Once proto-oncogenes are mutated or activated, they are called oncogenes.
- **Oncology:** the study of tumors
- **Oral Administration:** the delivery of a substance by mouth (pill, capsule, tablet, liquid, etc.)
- **Ostomy:** a surgical procedure that creates an opening in the body (called a stoma) that allows either 1) the draining and removal of waste (feces, urine) from the body as is the case with a colostomy, ileostomy, or urostomy or 2) the entry of air into the body through the trachea, bypassing the mouth and nose for oxygen intake, called a tracheostomy
- **Outpatient:** a patient who receives services, care, or a procedure from a facility and returns home the same day
- **Palliative Care:** care provided by a specialized team to reduce pain, suffering, and side effects and increase quality of life and overall wellbeing at ANY time for ANY stage of cancer or serious illness
- **Palliative Treatment:** treatment that has the intention of controlling the cancer so it doesn't grow larger or spread further; not intended to cure your cancer
- **Partial Response (PR):** the reduction of tumor size or overall tumor burden by a minimum of 25% (usually) as the result of a treatment; reduction by less than 25% is sometimes categorized as "no response" or a "clinically insignificant response."
- **Pathology:** gross and microscopic study of bodily fluids, cells, tissue, and organs that have been removed from the body
- **Patient Portal:** online or app-based platform that allows patients to personally access their medical records, view test results, communicate with providers, schedule appointments, etc.

- **Perineural Invasion (PNI):** term found in pathology reports regarding the spread of cancer to nearby tissues, specifically as it relates to cancer cells being identified inside, surrounding, or adjacent to a nerve
- **Peristalsis:** the involuntary, pulsing contractions that propel contents down the esophagus and through the intestines
- **PET Scan:** Positive Electron Tomography: radiographic tool (classified as nuclear medicine) that uses radioactive tracers to visualize biochemical and physiological activities within the body, exposes patients to radiation
- **PICC Line:** Peripherally inserted central catheter; a catheter implanted in the upper arm (usually) for easy access to the bloodstream for infusions and blood draws
- **Plastic:** the quality of being adaptable, flexible, dynamic
- **Port:** Port-a-cath; a catheter implanted surgically in the chest that allows easy access to the bloodstream for infusions and blood draws
- **Positive Result:** in cancer, a "positive result" usually means that cancer has been found or identified; think of it as "positive for cancer" (bad news)
- **Prevalence:** the frequency with which something exists within a population during a certain time frame, e.g. the proportion of people who have a certain type of cancer within a specific period of time regardless of when they were diagnosed
- **Primary Tumor:** the tumor from which your cancer originated; where the cancer started; can also be referred to as Tissue of Origin
- **Prognosis:** the likely outcome of your specific diagnosis, usually defined in terms of time; educated estimate provided by clinicians
- **Prognostic Factor:** a factor that can help establish a patient's prognosis, e.g. cancer stage, tumor grade, extent of metastasis, genetic tests, etc.
- **Progression:** in cancer, this refers to the cancer's progress (not yours); if there is "progression" it means that the cancer is growing and/or spreading
- **Progression Free Survival (PFS):** the length of time during which a cancer does not recur, grow, spread, or take the life of the patient
- **Proliferation:** quick and continuous reproduction
- **Radiology:** the use of various forms of energy to produce images
- **Radioresistant:** a cancer that is resistant to or unaffected by radiation therapy
- **Radiosensitive:** a cancer that is vulnerable/susceptible to radiation therapy
- **Radiotherapy/Radiation Therapy (RT):** the use of different forms of energy to reduce and destroy cancer, managed and administered by radiation oncologists/interventional radiologists
- **Receptors:** molecules embedded in the outer cell membrane that, when activated by a ligand, allow or prohibit the passage of signals or substances between cells or into a cell's interior
- **Recurrence:** the return or reappearance of cancer in the body after a period of remission
- **Regional:** refers to the cancer's location/spread to tissues in the area of the body near the primary tumor
- **Regression:** in cancer, this refers to the cancer's regression (not yours); if there is "regression" it means that the cancer is getting smaller or disappearing
- **Remission:** the state of cancer when it has shrunk, disappeared, or not grown larger over a period of time (months or years); disappearance is considered full remission and shrinking or not growing larger is considered partial remission
- **Resection:** surgical procedure in which some or most of an organ is removed in the process of removing a tumor or multiple tumors
- **Resistant/Refractory:** in cancer, this refers to the cancer's reduced vulnerability or lack of susceptibility to treatment; with repeated exposure to a treatment, cancer can develop resistance by using workarounds to avoid the harm intended by the treatment; resistant or refractory cancer is generally more challenging to treat

- **Response Rate:** measurement of a treatment's impact on a disease/condition in a patient population and is usually presented as a percentage e.g. 45% of patients on this drug showed benefit or "responded." A clinically meaningful response in cancer treatment is usually a reduction of tumor size/burden by at least 25%.
- **Response/Responder:** in cancer, this refers to the cancer's response to treatment; if the cancer "responded" then the cancer was reduced or eliminated with that treatment
- **Robotic Surgery:** a minimally invasive surgical technique using small incisions through which the instrumental arms of a robotic machine (Da Vinci), controlled by a surgeon, are manipulated inside of the body
- **ROS (Reactive Oxygen Species):** another term for free radicals; unstable molecules that include oxygen and an unpaired electron that can cause damage to important molecules in the body like proteins or DNA; free radicals/ROS are neutralized by antioxidants
- **Sarcoma:** originates in supportive and connective tissues like tendons, ligaments, bones, fat, cartilage, nerves, blood vessels, and muscles
- **Secondary Tumor/Cancer:** cancer that has spread (metastasized) from the primary to another location in the body
- **Sensitive:** in cancer, this refers to how sensitive the cancer is to treatment; more sensitive = more likely to reduce or eliminate the cancer
- **Sensitivity:** a measurement of test quality and clinical performance; higher sensitivity indicates that the test is likely to accurately identify patients with the disease; the more sensitive a test is the less likely it is to produce false negatives
- **Short-Term Side Effects:** side effects that can begin at any point once treatment has started and usually resolve within a brief period of time after treatment ends
- **Side Effects:** the (often unwanted) off-target impacts of a treatment/drug/procedure on the body
- **SNP:** Single nucleotide polymorphism, a genetic change in which a change occurs in a single nucleotide (adenine (A), thymine (T), guanine (G), or cytosine (C))
- **Social Determinants of Health (SDOH):** the various factors in an individual's life and in society that impact the health of the individual
- **Specificity:** a measurement of test quality and clinical performance; higher specificity indicates that the test is likely to accurately identify patients without disease; the more specific a test is the less likely it is to produce false positives
- **Stable Disease:** cancer that is not getting larger or spreading OR getting smaller/disappearing, but rather remaining "as is"
- **Standard of Care (SOC):** a term used to describe evidence-based diagnostic & treatment guidelines that are applied broadly to patient care in the US, also called Best Standard Care (BSC)
- **Stem Cells:** versatile cells that have the ability to differentiate, or mature, into many distinct types of cells with specialized functions and features
- **Surveillance:** the practice of keeping an eye on cancer's presence/status in the body using bloodwork, imaging, and other tests; also called monitoring or watching
- **Survival Rate/ Overall Survival (OS):** the proportion of individuals with a specific diagnosis who are still alive after a specified period of time (1 year, 3 years, 5 years, etc.)

- **Survivor:** a classification of cancer patients who are at any point in their cancer journey, from diagnosis through the remainder of one's life
- **Survivorship:** usually refers to the time period following active treatment
- **Synchronous Metastases:** metastases that are discovered at the time of or within 6 months of diagnosis of the primary tumor; "sync" = same and "chronous" = time.
- **Systemic Treatment:** a treatment that travels through the blood or digestive system, potentially impacting all areas of the body since more of the body is exposed to the treatment
- **Targetable Mutation:** a change in the tumor's DNA for which a specialized therapy has been developed to offset, correct, repair, etc. that mutation
- **Targeted Treatment:** Two definitions: 1) a treatment that is focused on a smaller area of the body and is less likely to have impacts elsewhere in the body as compared to systemic treatment and 2) treatments designed to target specific molecular or genetic abnormalities (mutations, gene expression, etc.) within the cancer. However, this latter "type" of targeted therapy can be administered orally or via infusion, both of which disseminate the drug systemically, not locally.
- **Terminal:** the term used to describe a cancer that is not curable using today's treatment options and is likely to lead to the death of the patient; sometimes called "advanced" or "Stage IV" instead
- **Theranostic Factor:** a factor that can help determine appropriate therapies or treatment plans, e.g. IHC testing to determine eligibility for immunotherapy
- **Tissue of Origin:** the body tissue in which the cancer first developed and proliferated
- **TNM Stage:** pathological staging system used to define characteristics of the tumor (T), lymph nodes (N) and metastasis (M)
- **Tolerability:** a characterization of how easy or challenging it is for patients to endure, handle, or make it through the course of treatment; greater tolerability usually aligns with a treatment that causes fewer or less intense side effects
- **Topical Administration:** the application of a substance directly on the skin (cream, balm, ointment, etc.)
- **Toxicity:** a characterization of how harmful, severe, disruptive, and tolerable a treatment's side effects are
- **Treatment Naive:** term used to describe a cancer (or a cancer patient) that has not yet been exposed to treatment (in general) or exposed to a specific type of treatment e.g. chemo-naïve (no exposure to chemo) or radio-naïve (no exposure to radiation therapy)
- **Tumor:** a cluster or mass of abnormal cells that may be benign or malignant
- **Tumor Board:** multidisciplinary group of medical professionals who collaborate & review individual patient cases to determine the best courses of treatment, usually includes medical oncologists, radiation oncologists, surgeons, pathologists, and nurses, among others
- **Tumor Grade:** a determination of how normal or abnormal cancer cells function and look under a microscope in comparison to healthy cells of the same tissue; Tumors are graded G0-G4, a G1 grade indicates cells that are well-differentiated and pretty normal looking whereas G4 indicates undifferentiated, very abnormal looking cells



- **Tumor Marker:** a type of biomarker that points to and measures the presence of certain types of cancer in the body
- **Tumor Microenvironment (TME):** the composition of cells and substances surrounding a tumor that influences the survival and growth of that tumor
- **Tumor Mutational Burden (TMB):** a biomarker used to measure the estimated quantity of mutations within a tumor's DNA
- **Tumor Profiling:** an assessment of the DNA/mutations/genetic characteristics of your cancer/tumor; also called molecular profiling, tumor genomic testing, tumor sequencing
- **Tumor Seeding:** the dislodging, spread, and recolonization of cancer cells that sometimes follows biopsy or surgery
- **Tumor Suppressor Genes (TSG):** genes that help regulate growth by slowing down cellular division and promoting apoptosis (programmed cell death). Essentially, they work to prohibit the development of tumors. When TSGs are mutated, cells can grow out of control and become cancerous.
- **Tissue-Agnostic ctDNA Assay:** a type of ctDNA detection test that only requires a blood sample and does not require tumor tissue
- **Tissue-Informed ctDNA Assay:** a type of ctDNA detection test that requires access to and analysis of tumor tissue along with a blood sample
- **Unremarkable:** term used in radiology reports (scan reports) that signifies normality and that the structure or organ is typical in appearance; not concerning or worrisome
- **Variant:** a different version of a gene mutation; a single gene can have thousands of possible gene mutations and each one is referred to as a variant
- **Variant of Uncertain Significance (VUS):** a mutation for which we don't know its clinical significance and impact on a patient and their health
- **Wild-Type:** this refers to a variant of a gene that is NOT mutated in your cancer; for example, if your KRAS is defined as wild-type (WT), then your KRAS gene is not mutated



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