

QUALITY OF HISTOPATHOLOGICAL REPORTING ON MELANOMA IN NSW

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ABSTRACT

NSW Oncology Group (NSWOG) Melanoma

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As part of a wider study on patterns of melanoma care in NSW, histopathology reports of all primary invasive melanomas notified to the NSW Central Cancer Registry between 23/10/2006 to 22/10/2007 (n = 3784) were collated and reviewed.

The reports included initial biopsies of primary invasive lesions (n = 3058), wide local excisions of primary invasive lesions (n = 77), and reviews of primary lesions by other pathologists (n = 649). A total of 267 pathologists submitted reports on melanoma during the 12-month period, 66% of whom were based in metropolitan areas, 13% in rural areas, and 21% out of state.

A detailed audit of a 3-month subset (n = 1067) of the histopathological reports was performed to assess the quality of each histopathology report against the recommendations of the 2008 Clinical Practice Guidelines for the Management of Melanoma in Australia and New Zealand. The reports were reviewed to determine whether they included information on histopathological features necessary to stage the patient according to the 2002 AJCC/UICC melanoma staging system and to guide appropriate definitive management (Breslow thickness, level of invasion, margins of excision, dermal mitotic rate, and ulceration) and other features (e.g. satellitosis, regression). The validity of the information provided on these variables was also assessed.

Preliminary analyses suggest that the proportion of reports containing 100% of essential components was higher among metropolitan than rural reports and much higher among reports with a synoptic component than reports that were solely descriptive.

Results from this study offer the first state-wide evaluation of histopathological reporting for melanoma and provide an evidence base to direct future improvements in the pathology reporting of melanomas and the management of melanoma patients.