

CAVEAT ON USE OF DATA ITEM

Data Item: **DEGREE OF SPREAD
STAGE AT FIRST PRESENTATION / DIAGNOSIS**

Date Updated: 28 May 2015

Definition: **Degree of Spread** – Extent of spread of cancer from its point of origin, obtained from a combination of pathology reports, inpatient notifications and other treatment facilities.
Stage at First Presentation / Diagnosis (SAFP) – assigned from the highest degree of spread within four months of the cancer diagnosis.

DEGREE OF SPREAD & STAGE AT FIRST PRESENTATION (SAFP) CODING NOTES

Information on SAFP (or stage at diagnosis) is coded and reviewed by the NSW Cancer Registry (NSW CR). Any notifications received by the NSW CR after this point that relate to the four month staging period will trigger an automatic system update of the SAFP if designated criteria is met. In some cases, extent of disease will remain unknown to the NSW CR and value cannot be recorded.

Note: about 50% of all cancer notifications come from the NSW Health Information Exchange (HIE) whereby degree of spread is interpreted and coded within many different hospitals and centres across the state. The NSW CR records the best information available and is as accurate and complete as the information received.

Haemopoietic malignancies such as lymphomas and leukemias are not staged. For all other cancers a degree of spread is not always captured and the proportion will vary by topography.

DEGREE OF SPREAD ARTEFACT (1993-1998)

There is an artefact in the degree of spread data between 1993 and 1998 that affects all cancer types except Breast cancer and Melanoma. There is a significant reduction in recorded localised cases, mirrored by an artefactual increase in unknown degree of spread cases. This artefact was caused by the introduction of the hospital electronic notification system otherwise known as the Health Information Exchange (HIE) whereby the degree of spread was not included. Regionalised and metastatic degree of spread was still accurate for the period as they were able to be derived from the site-of-metastasis field on the HIE. The degree of spread field was restored to the system in 1999.

Any analysis done using degree of spread data or any derived variables (stage at diagnosis or stage at first presentation (SAFP)) in this time frame will need to account for this issue.

REFERENCE:

Barraclough H, Morrell S, Arcorace M, McElroy H, Baker D.
Degree-of-spread artefact in the New South Wales Central Cancer Registry
Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health. 2008; 32:414-6.