

Glossary

Adjuvant treatment – An additional therapy (e.g. chemotherapy or radiotherapy) provided to improve the effectiveness of the primary treatment (e.g. surgery). This may aim to reduce the chance of local recurrence of the cancer or to improve the patient's overall chance of survival.

Ablation – a palliative technique (performed by laser or argon beam coagulation) that aims to reduce symptoms by destroying the surface of the tumour, thereby shrinking it in size.

Adenocarcinoma – Tend to occur in the lower third of the oesophagus or stomach in glandular cells that make and release fluids.

AUGIS – Association of Upper GI Surgery of Great Britain and Ireland

BSG – British Society of Gastroenterology

Chemotherapy – Drug therapy used to treat cancer. It may be used alone, or in conjunction with other types of treatment (e.g. surgery or radiotherapy).

CEU – The Clinical Effectiveness Unit of the Royal College of Surgeons is an academic collaboration between The Royal College of Surgeons of England and the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, and undertakes national surgical audit and research. It is one of the key stakeholders leading the Audit.

CT scan – (Computer Tomography) an imaging modality that uses X-ray radiation to build up a 3-dimensional image of the body. It is used to detect distant abnormalities (such as metastases) but has a limited resolution, so is less useful for detecting smaller abnormalities (such as in lymph nodes).

Curative care – This is where the aim of the treatment is to cure the patient of the disease. It is not possible to do this in many patients with OG cancer and is dependent on how far the disease has spread and the patient's general health and physical condition.

Endoscopy – An investigation whereby a telescopic camera is used to examine the inside of the digestive tract. It can be used to guide treatments such as stents (see below).

Endoscopic mucosal resection – A procedure to remove abnormal tissue from the digestive tract using a telescopic camera to guide instruments. This procedure can be used to treat high grade dysplasia or early cancers of the oesophagus, stomach or duodenum.

Endoscopic palliative therapies – These are treatments that aim to relieve symptoms, such as vomiting or swallowing difficulties, by using a telescopic camera to guide instruments that can relieve the blockage. Examples include stents, dilatation, laser therapy and brachytherapy.

Endoscopic ultrasound (EUS) – An investigation that uses an ultrasound probe on the end of a telescope. It is used to determine how deep into the surrounding tissues a cancer has invaded and to what extent it has spread to local lymph nodes.

Gastric – An adjective used to describe something that is related to or involves the stomach, e.g. gastric cancer is another way of saying stomach cancer.

Gastrectomy – A surgical procedure to remove either a section (a partial gastrectomy) or all (a total gastrectomy) of the stomach. In a total gastrectomy, the oesophagus is connected to the small intestine.

Gy/F or Grays/Fractions – External beam radiotherapy treatment is usually delivered over several treatment sessions. A course of radiotherapy is described as the full planned dose of radiation in Grays (Gy), and the number of treatment sessions (fractions, F) over which the dose is delivered.

HES – Hospital Episode Statistics is a database which contains data on all in-patients treated within NHS trusts in England. This includes details of admissions, diagnoses and those treatments undergone.

High-grade dysplasia of the oesophagus – abnormal changes in the cells of the oesophagus, which are often associated with Barrett’s oesophagus.

ICD10 – International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision

Laparoscopy – This is often called “keyhole surgery” and involves inserting a small camera into the belly through a small cut, so as to either guide the operation or to look at the surface of the abdominal organs and so accurately stage the disease.

Lymph nodes – Lymph nodes are small oval bits of tissue that form part of the immune system. They are distributed throughout the body and are usually the first place to which cancers spread.

Margins – Margins are the edges of the tissue removed in resection procedures (endoscopic or surgical resections). When cancer cells are found at the edge of the removed tissue, the margin is described as positive or involved. Positive or involved margins suggest that not all of the cancer has been removed. Margins are described as negative or clear when no cancer cells are found at the edge of the tissue.

Metastases – Metastases are deposits of cancer that occur when the cancer has spread from the place in which it started to other parts of the body. These are commonly called secondary cancers, and is known as metastatic disease.

MDT – The multi-disciplinary team is a group of professionals from diverse specialties that works to optimise diagnosis and treatment throughout the patient pathway.

Minimally invasive surgery – A procedure performed through the skin or anatomical opening using a laparoscopic instrument rather than through an opening. Full minimally invasive oesophagectomies involve thoracoscopy for the chest-phase of the operation and laparoscopy for the abdominal phase.

Neoadjuvant chemotherapy – Chemotherapy given before another treatment, usually surgery. This is usually given to reduce the size, grade or stage of the cancer and therefore improve the effectiveness of the surgery performed.

Neoplasm – A neoplasm or tumour is an abnormal mass of tissue that results when cells divide more than they should or do not die. Neoplasms may be benign (not cancerous), or malignant (cancerous).

NICE – The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence is an independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.

Oesophagus – The portion of the digestive tract that carries food from the bottom of the throat to the top of the stomach. It is also known as the gullet or the foodpipe.

Oesophagectomy – The surgical removal of all or part of the oesophagus. The procedure can be performed by opening the thorax (a trans-thoracic oesophagectomy) or through openings in the neck and abdomen (a trans-hiatal oesophagectomy)

Oncology – The branch of medicine which deals with the non-surgical treatment of cancer, such as chemotherapy and radiotherapy.

Pathology – The branch of medicine that deals with tissue specimens under a microscope to determine the type of disease and how far a cancer has spread within the specimen (i.e. whether a tumour has spread to the edges of the specimen or lymph nodes).

Palliative care – Palliative care (also called non-curative care) is the care given to patients whose disease cannot be cured. It aims to improve quality of life rather than just extend survival and concentrates on relieving physical and psychological distress.

PEDW – Patient Episode Database for Wales (PEDW) is an administrative database that contains data on all in-patients treated within NHS hospitals in Wales.

PET – An imaging technique that detects cancer spread or metastases by looking at how fast radioactive sugar molecules are used by different parts of the body. Cancer cells use sugar at a very high rate so show up brightly on this test.

Radiology – The branch of medicine that involves the use of imaging techniques (such as X-rays, CT Scans and PET scans) to diagnose and stage clinical problems.

Radiotherapy – A treatment that uses radiation to kill tumour cells and so shrink the tumour. In most cases, it is a palliative treatment but it can be used together with surgery or chemotherapy in a small number of patients as part of an attempt at cure.

RCS – The Royal College of Surgeons of England is an independent professional body committed to enabling surgeons to achieve and maintain the highest standards of surgical practice and patient care. As part of this it supports audit and the evaluation of clinical effectiveness for surgery.

Siewert classification – Anatomical classification used for adenocarcinomas of the gastro-oesophageal junction. Type I (SI) – adenocarcinoma of the distal part of the oesophagus (tumour centre 1-5 cm above the gastric cardia). Type II (SII) – adenocarcinoma of the real cardia (tumour centre within 1 cm above or 2 cm below the gastric cardia). Type III (SIII) – adenocarcinoma of the subcardial stomach (tumour centre located 2-5 cm below the gastric cardia).

Squamous cell carcinoma – A tumour that is located in the cells lining the oesophagus and tends to occur in the upper or middle of the oesophagus.

Stage – The extent to which the primary tumour has spread; the higher the stage, the more extensive the disease.

Staging – The process by which the stage (or extent of spread) of the tumour is determined through the use of various investigations.

Stent – A device used to alleviate swallowing difficulties or vomiting in patients with incurable OG cancer. It is a collapsible tube that expands and relieves the blockage when inserted into the affected area.

Surgical resection – An operation whose aim is to completely remove the tumour

Two-week wait referral – This is a referral mechanism used by General Practitioners (GPs) in England when they suspect the patient may have cancer.

Ultrasound – An imaging modality that uses high frequency sound waves to create an image of tissues or organs in the body.