

How Pathologists Communicate About the Thyroid

Sylvia L. Asa, MD, PhD
Pathologist-in-Chief,
University Health Network
Professor
University of Toronto

Learning Objectives

1. Emphasize the importance of multidisciplinary care of patients with thyroid disease
2. Understand the role of pathology in the diagnosis, prognosis and therapeutic decision-making for patients with thyroid disease
3. Appreciate the significance of report format and verbiage for thyroid patients
4. Learn the applications and limitations of testing and interpretation for clinical, anatomical and molecular pathology
5. Appreciate the importance of communication between members of the care team

How Pathologists Communicate

- We write reports
- We use words (sometimes too many?!)
- We are precise (anal?)
- We are cautious (scared?)

Cytology: Bethesda for Thyroid

- General diagnostic category
 - 6 tiered scheme
 - Nondiagnostic or Unsatisfactory
 - Benign
 - Follicular lesion (Atypia) of undetermined significance
 - Neoplasm (or suspicious for neoplasm)
 - Follicular neoplasm
 - Hürthle cell neoplasm
 - Suspicious for malignancy
 - Malignant

What About the Commentary?

- If the cytopathologist is good
 - Call them and ask about it!
- If the cytopathologist is not good
 - Read the description
 - If you see worrisome features, ask for a good cytopathologist to review the biopsy
 - Do NOT diagnose it yourself
 - Do NOT repeat the biopsy

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- What should I read?
 - Diagnosis
 - Comment
 - Synoptic data
 - Do NOT waste your time on gross and microscopic descriptions unless you want to be a pathologist

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- What are the difficult areas?
 - Borderline lesions
 - Capsular invasion
 - Tumor capsule vs thyroid capsule (there isn't one!)
 - “Lymphovascular” invasion
 - Lymphatic vs angioinvasion vs pseudoinvasion
 - Extrathyroidal extension
 - What is extrathyroidal?

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- When should I call?
 - Whenever you are not sure
 - Whenever there is a discrepancy with clinical features
 - Whenever you want more information
 - Whenever there is something unusual

Key Messages

- Get to know your pathologist(s)
 - Use the same pathologists as much as possible
 - Develop a relationship
- Know their strengths and weaknesses
- Learn their language
- Don't be afraid to ask for another opinion