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Research paper 6

An audit of colorectal cancer reporting standards in a Sri Lankan tertiary care setting

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Introduction and objectives: Audits are required to ensure that standards of reporting cancers including colorectal carcinoma (CRC) are maintained, as the histopathology report is essential for the further management of the patient. The objective was to audit the compliance of histopathology reports of CRC specimens with quality standards set by the Royal College of Pathologists UK(RCP).

Methodology: Seventy-two reports of CRC resection specimens from January 2022 to December 2023, from the Department of Pathology of the Faculty of Medicine Ragama, University of Kelaniya, were evaluated against the quality standards set by RCP (April 2023) with regard to lymph node retrieval, peritoneal involvement and lymphovascular invasion and with the National Guidelines in Histopathology (2021)

Results: Of the 72 reports audited, 16 were rectal tumours, of which 14 were entirely above the anterior peritoneal reflection. There was an average lymph node yield of 19 nodes per resection, surpassing the RCP standards. Peritoneal involvement, a critical prognostic factor, was observed in 21.42% (12/56) of colonic tumours, also meeting the recommended standards. However, the study reveals shortcomings in reporting lymphovascular invasion, which was reported in only 22% (16/72), with only around two-thirds (10/16) specifying intramural or extramural invasion. The differentiation between venous and lymphatic invasion also remained deficient.

Discussion and conclusions: The histopathology reporting meets the RCP standards in most areas. However, there are deficiencies in reporting venous invasion, identifying whether invasion is venous or lymphatic and stating the level of such invasion. Increasing the number of tumour blocks, tangential sectioning of the peritumoral mesocolic/mesorectal fat and ancillary techniques such as elastin stains and immunohistochemistry can improve the reporting of these parameters. Implementing these measures will improve the standards of CRC reporting. The establishment of national guidelines with respect to quality standards for audit is recommended.

Keywords: colorectal carcinoma, reporting, quality standards

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