

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF ONCOLOGY

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The Language of Oncology

Often it must seem like oncologists speak a different language. Whether in referral letters, lectures or the scientific literature, the language can be a barrier to understanding. This month I will try to help clarify the Language of Oncology.

- **Adjunctive:** A therapy given after definitive local control. For example the use of chemotherapy after limb amputation in osteosarcoma is adjunctive use of chemotherapy.
- **Angiogenesis:** Formation of new blood vessels. This process is essential for tumour growth.
- **Apoptosis:** A process resulting in cell death due to activation of a genetic program which causes cells to die, sometimes known as Programmed Cell Death.
- **Carcinogen:** A substance that causes cancer.
- **Carcinoma:** Types of cancer arising in epithelial tissue.
- **Cytokine:** A molecule secreted by cells and acts to modify the function, differentiation and proliferation of other cells. Cytokines are often responsible for the distant effects of cancer.
- **Discrete cell tumour:** Type of cancers involving cells of the immune system, sometimes called liquid cancers (e.g. Lymphoma, leukemia, mast cell tumour).
- **Grade:** The histologic appearance of a tumour in terms of degree of differentiation. Often used as a prognostic tool.
- **Hemangiopericytoma:** See Peripheral Nerve Sheath Tumour.
- **Immunohistochemistry (IHC):** A diagnostic process where special stains are linked to antibodies on the tumour cell surface to recognize specific proteins and provide diagnostic and prognostic information beyond that noted by routine histologic staining.
- **Median Survival Time:** The time at which 50% of the patients given a specific therapy are alive & 50% have died.
- **Metastasis:** The spread of tumour cells from the primary location to a distant site by way of the lymphatics or the blood stream.
- **Myelosuppression:** A reduction in circulating mature blood cells, often the result of chemotherapy administration.
- **Nadir:** The point at which the WBC count is maximally suppressed from a chemotherapy treatment. Each drug has its own nadir. CBC's are often taken on this day so that the degree of myelosuppression can be assessed.
- **Neoadjuvant:** Therapy given before surgical treatment of cancer. For example the use of chemotherapy to shrink a mast cell tumour prior to surgical removal is the neoadjuvant use of chemotherapy.
- **Neoplasia:** The growth of new tissue.
- **Peripheral Nerve Sheath Tumour:** A soft tissue sarcoma usually arising from peripheral nerve tissue. (Old name: hemangiopericytoma).
- **Prognosis:** The expected outcome of any given therapy.
- **Round Cell Tumour:** See Discrete Cell Tumour.
- **Sarcoma:** A malignant tumour derived from mesenchymal cells (e.g. connective tissue).
- **Staging:** The process by which the extent of cancer in the body is determined. Staging often involves tests such as chest radiographs, abdominal ultrasound and bone marrow aspirate.



DR. KEVIN FINORA IS A BOARD CERTIFIED ONCOLOGIST AND SMALL ANIMAL INTERNIST. HE SEES PATIENTS WEDNESDAY (INCLUDING EVENINGS) TO SATURDAY AT VEC/RC SOUTH. PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT DR. FINORA IF YOU HAVE ANY CANCER RELATED QUESTIONS.

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