Surgical margin/Tissue edges

Reason/Evidentiary Support:

Margin measurements to within the nearest 1 mm are sufficient for the purposes of directing further management. If the melanoma is within 2 mm of the resection line, it is recommended that the margin measurement be recorded to within the nearest 0.1 mm measurement.\(^1\)

The standard treatment for primary melanoma is wide local excision of the skin and subcutaneous tissues around the melanoma. Such definitive treatment is not usually performed until after a pathological diagnosis of melanoma has been established. The aim is complete surgical excision of all in situ and invasive melanoma components. Involvement of the surgical margin may result in regrowth or metastasis from residual melanoma, and may adversely affect patient outcome.\(^2,4\) On the basis of several randomized controlled trials (RCTs)\(^5-9\) national guidelines from several countries have recommended wide excision margins according to the thickness of the primary cutaneous melanoma.\(^10-12\) The trials were based on surgical margins measured clinically at the time of wide excision. Clinically measured wide excision margins are a less precise measure of the extent of excision of normal tissues surrounding the tumor than the histopathological margins. However, there is very little evidence is available for relationship between histopathological measured margin and local, in transit and regional recurrence.

Providing data on distance of melanoma from the margins may be helpful not only to clinicians in guiding patient management but also for pathologists when examining any subsequent specimen (eg. re-excision specimen or for determining whether recurrent tumour at the primary site represents local persistence of melanoma or a metastasis). Defining the peripheral extent of the epidermal component of a melanoma may be difficult and subjective particularly for melanomas arising in chronically sun-damaged skin in which the peripheral changes merge with those related to the effects of severe chronic sun damage and also for acral (and mucosal) melanomas.\(^13\)

References: