

## **Glossary for NOGCA State of the Nation Report September 2025**

**Adenocarcinoma** – Type of cancer that tends to occur in the lower third of the oesophagus or in the stomach, in glandular cells that make and release fluids.

**Adjuvant treatment** – An additional therapy (e.g. chemotherapy or radiotherapy) provided to improve the effectiveness of the primary treatment (e.g. surgery) and reduce the chance of local recurrence of the cancer.

**AUGIS** – Association of Upper Gastrointestinal Surgery of Great Britain and Ireland

**Barrett's Oesophagus** - A condition in which the normal squamous lining of the lower oesophagus is replaced with a columnar (glandular) lining, usually as a result of chronic gastro-oesophageal reflux disease (GORD). Barrett's oesophagus is a known precancerous condition, as it increases the risk of developing oesophageal adenocarcinoma.

**Breath tests** - Non-invasive diagnostic tests that analyse exhaled air to detect the presence of specific substances or markers associated with disease.

**BSG** – British Society of Gastroenterology

**Cancer Alliance** - A regional partnership of NHS organisations, local authorities, and other stakeholders working together to improve cancer care across a defined geographical area in England.

**Capsule sponge** - A minimally invasive device used to collect cells from the oesophagus for diagnostic purposes, particularly for the early detection of Barrett's oesophagus and oesophageal cancer.

**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 clinical audit and research.

**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).

**Clinical Frailty Scale** - A validated tool used to assess a patient's level of frailty based on their physical function and overall health status. The scale ranges from 1 (very fit) to 9 (terminally ill), helping clinicians to identify vulnerable patients and guide decision-making about treatment options, especially in older adults.

**Clinical governance meeting** - A regular meeting held within healthcare organisations to review the quality and safety of care delivered.

**Clinical nurse specialist (CNS)** – A registered nurse with an advanced nursing role who provides specialist care and advice to patients in a certain medical speciality.

**COVID-19 pandemic** - A global outbreak of coronavirus disease caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). The COVID-19 pandemic led to widespread disruption of healthcare services across the NHS, including cancer diagnosis, treatment, and follow-up, significantly impacting cancer care pathways during 2020 and 2021.

**Curative care** – Treatment with the aim to cure a person of the disease. Curative treatment is not possible in many people with oesophageal or gastric cancer and is dependent on how far the disease has spread, and a person's general health and physical condition.

**Diagnostic endoscopy** - A procedure in which a flexible tube with a camera (endoscope) is passed through the mouth into the oesophagus, stomach, and duodenum. It is often the first investigation that identifies a suspicious lesion, enabling biopsy for histological confirmation of cancer.

**Digital infrastructure** - Technological systems and services that support the collection, storage, sharing, and analysis of healthcare data. This includes electronic health records, data platforms, secure networks, and digital tools used by clinicians and healthcare organisations.

**Disease-targeted treatment** – Treatments that are given with the aim of killing or removing the cancerous tissue (such as surgery, chemotherapy, radiotherapy).

**Endoscopic mucosal resection (EMR)** – 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 submucosal resection (ESD)** – A procedure to used to remove larger or more deeply infiltrated areas of 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 ultrasound (EUS)** – An investigation that uses an ultrasound probe on the end of a telescopic camera. 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.

**Emergency admission** - An unplanned hospital admission that occurs urgently, usually via the emergency department or following referral by a GP or out-of-hours service.

**Epithelial cancer** – Cancers that form in epithelial tissue, which lines organs, internal passageways and skin.

**Excision margin** - The edge or border of tissue removed during cancer surgery. Excision margins are examined histologically to determine whether the tumour has been completely removed. A clear (negative) margin means no cancer cells are seen at the edge of the resected tissue, while a positive margin indicates the presence of cancer cells at or near the margin, suggesting incomplete excision and a higher risk of recurrence.

**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 after the removal of the stomach.

**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.

**Gastro-oesophageal junction** – The part of the digestive tract where the oesophagus joins the stomach.

**Health Board** - An organisational body responsible for planning and delivering NHS healthcare services within a defined geographical area in Wales. Health Boards oversee the provision of primary care, community services, and hospital care, including cancer services. They are accountable to the Welsh Government and work to ensure that healthcare services meet the needs of the local population.

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

**Hospital Episode Statistics (HES)** – A database which contains data on all in-patients treated within NHS trusts in England. This includes details of admissions, diagnoses and treatments.

**ICD-10** – International Statistical Classification of Diseases and Related Health Problems 10th Revision. A list of medical codes used to identify and categorise medical diagnoses.

**Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD)** – a measure of relative deprivation in a particular small area (of ~1,500 residents or 650 households), used as a measure of deprivation in England and Wales.

**Lymph nodes** – 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.

**Metastases** – 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.

**Morbidity and mortality meeting** - A regular meeting held within healthcare organisations to review and discuss complications (morbidity) and deaths (mortality) that have occurred during patient care. The purpose is to promote learning, improve clinical practice, and enhance patient safety.

**Multidisciplinary Team (MDT)** – a group of professionals from diverse specialties that works to optimise diagnosis and treatment throughout the patient pathway.

**The National Cancer Audit Collaborating Centre (NATCAN)** - A national centre of excellence that has been commissioned to deliver ten national cancer audits by the Healthcare Quality Improvement Partnership (HQIP), on behalf of NHS England and the Welsh Government. NATCAN is part of the Clinical Effectiveness Unit (CEU) – a collaboration between the Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSEng) and the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine (LSHTM).

**National Disease Registration Service (NDRS)** – A service that collects and analyses data on cancer and rare diseases in the UK, part of NHS England.

**Neoadjuvant therapy** – Disease-targeted treatment (such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy) 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 main treatment.

**NHS trust** - An organisational unit within the National Health Service (NHS) in England responsible for delivering healthcare services. Each NHS trust operates with a degree of autonomy and is accountable for the quality, safety, and efficiency of the care it provides.

**The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE)** - An independent organisation responsible for providing national guidance on the promotion of good health and the prevention and treatment of ill health.

**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)

**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.

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

**Palliative care** (also called non-curative care) - The care given to patients whose disease cannot be cured. It aims to improve quality of life and extend survival.

**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).

**Performance status** – A classification system to describe a person's functional status in carrying out routine activities of daily living. Scores range from 0 (fully active with no restrictions) to 5 (dead). Note: only scores of 0-4 are included in the audit.

**Quality assurance** – A process of monitoring and evaluation that helps to ensure that diagnostic and treatment services are consistently delivered to a high standard, and that variations in practice or outcomes are identified.

**Quality improvement** – An approach to enhancing the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of healthcare services by identifying areas where care can be improved, testing and implementing changes, and measuring the impact over time.

**Radiotherapy** – A treatment that uses radiation to kill tumour cells and shrink the tumour. In most cases, it is a palliative treatment but it can be used together with surgery or chemotherapy in some patients as part of curative treatment.

**Rapid Cancer Registration Data (RCRD)** – Dataset that contains information about proxy tumour registrations and some associated events on the cancer patient pathway (e.g. surgery, radiotherapy and

chemotherapy) from January 2018. This data set provides a quicker source of cancer data compared to the National Cancer Registration Data (NCRD). The RCRD is curated by the National Disease Registration Service (NDRS), as part of NHS England.

The Royal College of Surgeons of England (RCSEng) - 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.

Specialist surgical centre - A hospital or NHS trust/health board designated to provide complex surgical treatment for patients with oesophago-gastric (OG) cancer. These centres have multidisciplinary teams with specific expertise in OG cancer surgery, including access to specialist surgeons, anaesthetists, intensive care, and post-operative support services. Surgery for OG cancer is centralised in these centres to ensure high-quality care, better outcomes, and adherence to national standards and guidelines.

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 / TNM (Tumour / Nodal / Metastatic) stage – The extent to which the primary tumour has spread; the higher the stage, the more extensive the disease. TNM is an international classification system to describe the extent of a cancer using information on the tumour size, lymph node status, and the presence or absence of metastatic disease. Overall cancer stages range from 1 (localised disease) to 4 (advanced disease).

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

Surgical resection – A medical treatment that involves surgically removing all, or part, of a tissue, structure or organ.

Systemic anti-cancer therapy / SACT – Medication given to treat cancer, such as chemotherapy or immunotherapy.