

In current practice tumor control (TC) is taken to mean the extinction of clonogenic tumor cells at the end of treatment, a sufficient but not necessary condition for cure. In contrast, patients undergoing radiation therapy are concerned with the probability of cure (long term recurrence-free survival, meaning the absence of a detectable or symptomatic tumor). Tumor control thus defined has significant deficiencies, viz. it is an unobservable event, and elimination of all malignant clonogenic cells is in some cases unnecessary. As well, many primary cancers, such as breast and prostate cancer, are not lethal per se; they kill through metastases and, consequently, an object of tumor control in such cases should be the prevention of metastatic spread of the disease.

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