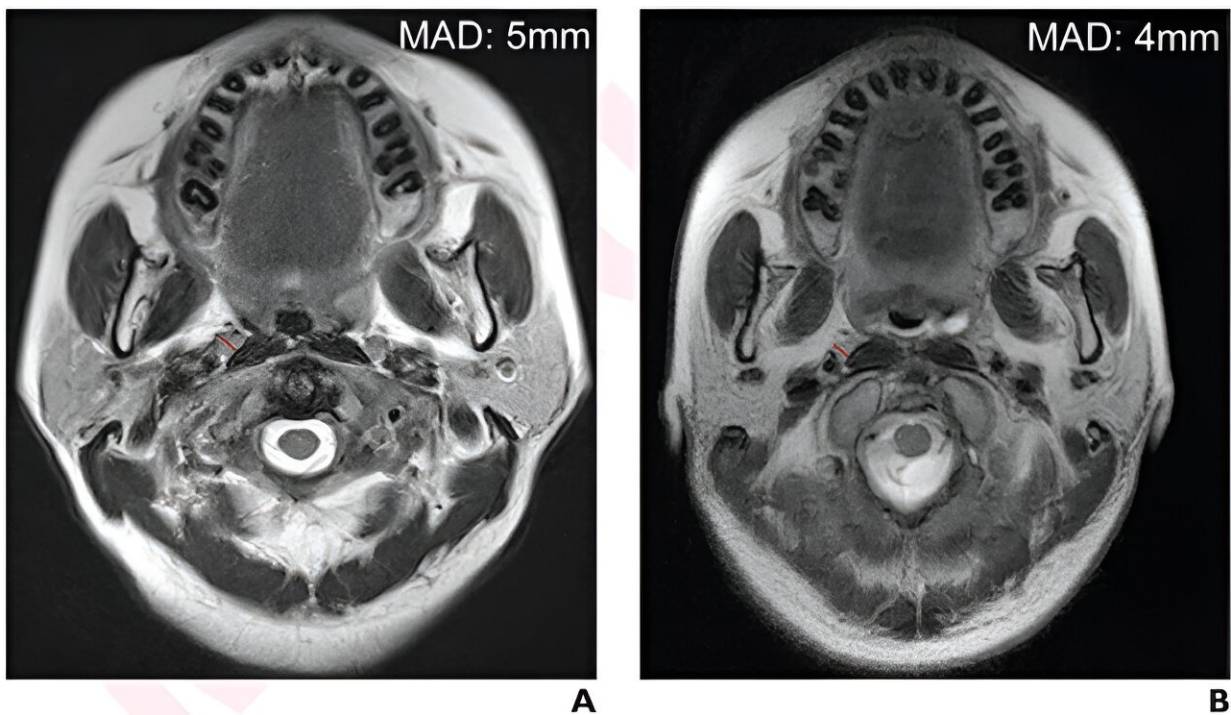


Larger lymph node threshold found to optimize nasopharyngeal carcinoma outcomes

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Credit: AJR

[According to the American Journal of Roentgenology \(AJR\)](#), using a 6-mm threshold, rather than a 5-mm threshold, helps facilitate better risk stratification and treatment decisions in patients with nasopharyngeal carcinoma (NPC).

"Future American Joint Committee on Cancer (AJCC) staging updates should consider incorporation of the 6-mm threshold for N-category and tumor-stage determinations," wrote corresponding author Zhiying Liang, MD, from the radiology department at China's Sun Yat-sen University Cancer Center.

This *AJR* accepted manuscript by Liang et al. included 1,752 patients ([median age](#), 46 years; 1,297 men, 455 women) with NPC treated by intensity-modulated radiotherapy from January 2010 to March 2014 from two hospitals; 438 patients underwent MRI 3-4 months after treatment.

Two [radiologists](#) measured the minimal axial diameter (MAD) of the largest retropharyngeal lymph node (RLN) for each patient via consensus. Then, to assess interobserver agreement, a third radiologist measured MAD in 260 randomly selected patients. Initial ROC and restricted cubic spline analyses were used to derive an optimal MAD threshold for predicting [progression-free survival](#) (PFS).

Ultimately, in patients with NPC, overall survival was significantly different between [patients](#) with stage-I and stage-II disease defined using a 6-mm threshold ($p = .04$)—but not using a 5-mm threshold ($p = .09$). The 5-year PFS rate was associated with post-radiotherapy MAD ≥ 6 mm (HR = 1.68, $p = .04$) but not with post-radiotherapy MAD ≥ 5 mm (HR = 1.09, $p = .71$).

"Given the absence of a defined size threshold in the AJCC 8th edition staging manual," the authors noted, "we propose that future updates to the manual incorporate this threshold for N-category and tumor-stage determinations."

More information: Yuliang Zhu et al, Optimal Size Threshold for MRI-Detected Retropharyngeal Lymph Nodes to Predict Outcomes in

Nasopharyngeal Carcinoma: A Two-Center Study, *American Journal of Roentgenology* (2023). [DOI: 10.2214/AJR.23.29984](https://doi.org/10.2214/AJR.23.29984)

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