

# **Predictors of Response to Adjuvant Chemotherapy for Colorectal Cancer**

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# Dedication

I dedicate this work to my late father,

Ormond James Thomas

who would have been very proud

and to my mother,

Robyn Arlene Thomas

who is such an inspiration

# Abstract

## **Background:**

It is well recognized that not all patients with stage C colorectal cancer (CRC) derive a survival benefit from adjuvant chemotherapy. It would therefore be advantageous to identify factors that define a target group for treatment. It has been suggested that those most likely to benefit are women with proximal tumours. Recent work has suggested microsatellite instability (MSI) may be a useful marker however the limited studies performed are conflicting.

## **Aim:**

To determine if gender, site, tumour histology or microsatellite (MSI) status predict survival benefit from 5FU-based adjuvant chemotherapy in stage C CRC.

## **Method:**

Data was collated on stage C colorectal cancer cases that underwent curative resection over a 20-year period (inclusive of years prior to standard chemotherapy). Pathology was re-evaluated, DNA extracted from the formalin fixed paraffin specimen and MSI status established. Primary endpoint was cancer-related death. Kaplan-Meier curves were constructed for univariate analysis and differences analysed by log rank test. Multivariate analysis was performed using Cox proportional hazard model adjusting for age, gender, site, distinct pathological variables and MSI. A compounding effect between these factors and chemotherapy benefit was measured by interaction testing

**Results:**

811 unselected cases were included in the study. Thirty-seven percent received chemotherapy. Chemotherapy significantly improved cancer-specific survival (HR of dying 0.66 (95% CI 0.52-0.83 p=0.0003). Female gender offered a survival advantage overall (HR 0.81 95% CI 0.68-0.97; p=0.02) however site did not influence outcome (HR 1.03). On interaction testing, gender, site and tumour histology did not significantly influence the survival effect of chemotherapy.

802 cases were included in the MSI analysis of which 77 exhibited MSI. MSI status did not influence prognosis (HR of cancer death 1.45, 95% CI 0.90-2.21; p= 0.13). However, in the non-chemotherapy cohort, MSI conferred a significantly less favourable outcome (HR 1.89, 95%CI 1.13-3.16; p= 0.02). Chemotherapy produced a survival benefit in both the MSI (HR 0.08 95% CI 0.02-0.27; p=<0.0001) and the microsatellite stable (MSS) cohort (HR 0.62, 95% CI 0.47-0.81; p=0.001). On interaction testing, neither compounded the benefit of chemotherapy, however of all the tested parameters, MSI came closest to significance (p=0.08).

**Conclusion:**

These results suggest that 5FU-based adjuvant chemotherapy for stage C colorectal cannot be targeted using gender, tumour site, histological characteristics or MSI.

# Short Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1	Background.....	2
1.2	Aims .....	5
1.3	Thesis plan.....	8
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature review .....</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1	Overview .....	10
2.2	Colorectal Cancer General .....	11
2.3	Familial CRC.....	13
2.4	Prognostic Indicators in CRC.....	20
2.5	MSI.....	83
2.6	Chemotherapy.....	138
<b>3</b>	<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>163</b>
3.1	Overview of Study Methodology .....	164
3.2	Design.....	164
3.3	Case Identification.....	172
3.4	Database Construction.....	180
3.5	Clinical Information .....	180
3.6	Pathological Assessment .....	183
3.7	MSI Analysis .....	191
3.8	Statistical Analysis .....	199
3.9	Ethics .....	202
<b>4</b>	<b>Results - Study Group Characteristics.....</b>	<b>203</b>
4.1	Overview .....	204
4.2	Inclusions.....	204
4.3	Exclusions.....	204
4.4	Study Population .....	209
4.5	Tumour Characteristics .....	212
4.6	Cohort Matching.....	219
4.7	Multiple Cancers .....	231
4.8	Discussion.....	234
<b>5</b>	<b>Results - MSI Associations.....</b>	<b>239</b>
5.1	Overview .....	240
5.2	Aim .....	240
5.3	Specific Method.....	240
5.4	Results .....	240
5.5	Discussion.....	247

<b>6</b>	<b>Results - Prognostic Influences .....</b>	<b>251</b>
6.1	Overview .....	252
6.2	Aim .....	252
6.3	Specific Method.....	252
6.4	Results .....	253
6.5	Discussion.....	300
6.6	Prognosis Conclusion .....	312
<b>7</b>	<b>Results - Factors Influencing Chemotherapy response .....</b>	<b>315</b>
7.1	Overview .....	316
7.2	Aim .....	316
7.3	Specific Method.....	316
7.4	Results .....	317
7.5	Pathology Variables.....	333
7.6	Discussion.....	351
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion .....</b>	<b>359</b>
8.1	Summary of Findings .....	360
8.2	Study Limitations .....	363
8.3	Study Strengths.....	367
8.4	Future Research .....	367
<b>9</b>	<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>369</b>
<b>10</b>	<b>Appendix .....</b>	<b>383</b>

# Table of Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.1</b>	<b>Background .....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.2</b>	<b>Aims .....</b>	<b>5</b>
1.2.1	General Aim .....	5
1.2.2	Specific Aims .....	5
1.2.2.1	<i>Prognostic Influences</i> .....	5
1.2.3	Chemotherapy Response .....	6
1.2.4	Secondary Aim .....	7
1.2.4.1	<i>MSI associations</i> .....	7
<b>1.3</b>	<b>Thesis plan.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature review .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1</b>	<b>Overview.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.2</b>	<b>Colorectal Cancer General .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.2.1	Epidemiology .....	11
2.2.2	Aetiology .....	12
2.2.3	Pathology .....	12
2.2.4	Survival.....	13
<b>2.3</b>	<b>Familial CRC .....</b>	<b>13</b>
2.3.1	Familial Adenomatous Polyposis (FAP) .....	13
2.3.2	Other Polyposis Syndromes .....	14
2.3.3	HNPCC.....	14
2.3.4	Clinical Definition .....	14
2.3.4.1	<i>CRC Risk in HNPCC</i> .....	16
2.3.4.2	<i>Clinicopathological Characteristics</i> .....	16
2.3.4.3	<i>Metachronous CRC Rate</i> .....	17
2.3.4.4	<i>Extracolonic Cancers</i> .....	17
<b>2.4</b>	<b>Prognostic Indicators in CRC .....</b>	<b>20</b>
2.4.1	Overview .....	20
2.4.2	Stage .....	21
2.4.3	Gender .....	29
2.4.3.1	<i>Gender Survival Difference</i> .....	29
2.4.3.2	<i>Cause for Gender Variation in CRC</i> .....	35
2.4.4	Site.....	38
2.4.4.1	<i>Definition Proximal/Distal</i> .....	38
2.4.4.2	<i>Cellular and Functional Differences across the Colon</i> .....	39
2.4.4.3	<i>Luminal Fluctuations</i> .....	40
2.4.4.4	<i>Clinical Differences</i> .....	41
2.4.4.5	<i>Molecular Differences in CRC across the Colon</i> .....	42
2.4.4.6	<i>Prognosis</i> .....	45
2.4.4.7	<i>Speculation on Site Influence on CRC</i> .....	49
2.4.5	Other Clinical Prognostic Factors .....	50
2.4.5.1	<i>Age</i> .....	50



	2.4.5.2	<i>Obstruction</i> .....	54
	2.4.5.3	<i>Perforation</i> .....	57
	2.4.5.4	<i>Surgeon/Hospital</i> .....	60
	2.4.5.5	<i>Presenting Symptoms and Complications</i> .....	62
2.4.6		Pathological .....	65
	2.4.6.1	<i>Positive Resection Margin</i> .....	65
	2.4.6.2	<i>Differentiation</i> .....	65
	2.4.6.3	<i>Tumour Type</i> .....	67
	2.4.6.4	<i>Vascular, Lymphatic and Neural Invasion</i> .....	69
	2.4.6.5	<i>Tumour Margin</i> .....	72
	2.4.6.6	<i>Tumour Budding</i> .....	72
	2.4.6.7	<i>Tumour Stroma</i> .....	74
	2.4.6.8	<i>Lymphocytes</i> .....	74
	2.4.6.9	<i>Apical Node</i> .....	76
	2.4.6.10	<i>Lymph Node Harvest</i> .....	78
	2.4.6.11	<i>Size</i> .....	79
	2.4.6.12	<i>Morphology</i> .....	79
2.4.7		Summary of Clinical and Pathological Prognostic Factors .....	82
<b>2.5</b>		<b>MSI</b> .....	<b>83</b>
	2.5.1	Traditional Understanding of CRC Genetics .....	83
	2.5.2	Historical Aspects of MSI .....	84
	2.5.3	Definition of Microsatellite Instability .....	87
	2.5.4	MMR Genes .....	91
	2.5.4.1	<i>MMR Mutation Rates in CRC</i> .....	94
	2.5.4.2	<i>Mutation Spectrum and Variants in CRC</i> .....	95
	2.5.4.3	<i>Genotype/Phenotype Correlation in HNPCC</i> .....	98
	2.5.4.4	<i>Inheritance of MMR Mutation</i> .....	99
	2.5.4.5	<i>HNPCC – Clinical and Molecular Correlations</i> .....	100
	2.5.5	Methylation.....	106
	2.5.5.1	<i>Normal Methylation State</i> .....	106
	2.5.5.2	<i>Methylation in CRC</i> .....	107
	2.5.5.3	<i>Multi Loci/CIMP</i> .....	108
	2.5.5.4	<i>Cause of Methylation</i> .....	110
	2.5.6	Tumourgenesis in MSI .....	111
	2.5.6.1	<i>Precursor Lesions</i> .....	112
	2.5.6.2	<i>Correlation MSI and Traditionally Abnormal Markers</i> ...	112
	2.5.6.3	<i>Factors in MSI Tumourgenesis</i> .....	113
	2.5.7	MSI Rates in CRC .....	116
	2.5.8	Clinicopathological Characteristics of MSI CRC .....	119
	2.5.8.1	<i>MSI CRC and Age</i> .....	119
	2.5.8.2	<i>MSI CRC and Gender</i> .....	121
	2.5.8.3	<i>MSI CRC and Site</i> .....	122
	2.5.8.4	<i>MSI and Pathological Factors</i> .....	126
	2.5.8.5	<i>Rate of Synchronous and Metachronous Tumours in Sporadic MSI CRC</i> .....	131
	2.5.9	Variation between MSI Sporadic and Germline .....	132
	2.5.10	Influence of MSI on Prognosis .....	133
<b>2.6</b>		<b>Chemotherapy</b> .....	<b>138</b>
	2.6.1	Adjuvant Chemotherapy.....	138
	2.6.2	Effect of Gender on Chemotherapy Effect .....	143

2.6.3	Effect of Site on Chemotherapy Effect .....	144
2.6.4	Interaction of the MMR system and Chemotherapy .....	145
2.6.4.1	<i>Role of MMR in Cytotoxic Drug Affect</i> .....	145
2.6.4.2	<i>Specific Drug Interaction with MMR</i> .....	147
2.6.4.3	<i>Ionising Radiation</i> .....	150
2.6.4.4	<i>5FU</i> .....	150
2.6.4.5	<i>Invitro Studies of 5FU Effect in MMR Deficiency</i> .....	151
2.6.5	Clinical Studies of MSI Influence on Chemotherapy Effect.....	153
<b>3</b>	<b>Methods .....</b>	<b>163</b>
<b>3.1</b>	<b>Overview of Study Methodology .....</b>	<b>164</b>
<b>3.2</b>	<b>Design.....</b>	<b>164</b>
3.2.1	Eligibility.....	166
3.2.1.1	<i>Inclusion Criteria</i> .....	166
3.2.1.2	<i>Exclusion Criteria</i> .....	166
3.2.2	Cohorts .....	171
3.2.2.1	<i>Chemotherapy</i> .....	171
3.2.2.2	<i>Subgroups</i> .....	171
3.2.3	Outcome Measures .....	172
<b>3.3</b>	<b>Case Identification.....</b>	<b>172</b>
3.3.1	State Cancer Registry .....	173
3.3.2	Hospital Registries.....	174
3.3.3	Registry Accuracy .....	176
3.3.4	Pathology Databases.....	177
3.3.5	Case Sourcing.....	178
3.3.6	Years Included and Dates for Follow-Up.....	179
<b>3.4</b>	<b>Database Construction .....</b>	<b>180</b>
<b>3.5</b>	<b>Clinical Information .....</b>	<b>180</b>
3.5.1	Data.....	180
3.5.2	Cross-Checks .....	181
3.5.3	Clinical Covariates used in Analysis .....	182
<b>3.6</b>	<b>Pathological Assessment .....</b>	<b>183</b>
3.6.1	Process .....	183
3.6.2	Pathological Parameters Recorded and Definitions .....	184
3.6.3	Pathology Parameters used in Analysis.....	189
<b>3.7</b>	<b>MSI Analysis .....</b>	<b>191</b>
3.7.1	Markers used .....	191
3.7.2	Laboratory Process .....	191
3.7.2.1	<i>Summary of Laboratory Process</i> .....	191
3.7.2.2	<i>Sampling and DNA Extraction</i> .....	192
3.7.2.3	<i>PCR Amplification</i> .....	194
3.7.2.4	<i>MSI Sequencing</i> .....	194
3.7.2.5	<i>Gene Scan</i> .....	195
3.7.2.6	<i>Assessment</i> .....	198
3.7.2.7	<i>MSI Information Recorded</i> .....	198
3.7.2.8	<i>MSI for Analysis</i> .....	198
<b>3.8</b>	<b>Statistical Analysis.....</b>	<b>199</b>
3.8.1	Statistical Analysis .....	199
3.8.2	Power Calculations.....	202

3.9	Ethics .....	202
<b>4</b>	<b>Results - Study Group Characteristics.....</b>	<b>203</b>
4.1	Overview.....	204
4.2	Inclusions.....	204
4.3	Exclusions.....	204
4.4	Study Population .....	209
4.5	Tumour Characteristics.....	212
4.5.1	Site.....	212
4.5.2	Histological Profile.....	212
4.5.3	MSI.....	213
4.6	Cohort Matching .....	219
4.6.1	Chemotherapy.....	219
4.6.2	Gender .....	221
4.6.3	Site.....	221
4.6.4	MSI.....	222
4.7	Multiple Cancers .....	231
4.7.1	Metachronous Cancers .....	231
	4.7.1.1 <i>MSI in Metachronous Cases</i> .....	232
4.7.2	Synchronous Cancers .....	232
	4.7.2.1 <i>MSI in Synchronous Cases</i> .....	233
4.8	Discussion .....	234
<b>5</b>	<b>Results - MSI Associations.....</b>	<b>239</b>
5.1	Overview.....	240
5.2	Aim.....	240
5.3	Specific Method .....	240
5.4	Results.....	240
5.4.1	Overview .....	240
5.4.2	Frequencies of Clinicopathological Variable According to MSI .....	241
5.4.3	Logistic Regression .....	241
5.4.4	Combinations.....	242
5.5	Discussion .....	247
<b>6</b>	<b>Results - Prognostic Influences .....</b>	<b>251</b>
6.1	Overview.....	252
6.2	Aim.....	252
6.3	Specific Method .....	252
6.4	Results.....	253
6.4.1	Overview .....	253
6.4.2	Multivariate Analysis .....	253
6.4.3	Survival.....	258
6.4.4	Gender and Site .....	263
6.4.5	Pathological Factors .....	271
	6.4.5.1 <i>Staging Criteria</i> .....	271
	6.4.5.2 <i>Differentiation</i> .....	272
	6.4.5.3 <i>Type</i> .....	272
	6.4.5.4 <i>Neurovascular Invasion</i> .....	273

	6.4.5.5	<i>Invasive Margin</i> .....	273
	6.4.5.6	<i>Budding</i> .....	274
	6.4.5.7	<i>Stroma</i> .....	274
	6.4.5.8	<i>Lymphocytes</i> .....	274
	6.4.5.9	<i>Obstruction</i> .....	275
	6.4.5.10	<i>Perforation</i> .....	276
	6.4.6	MSI .....	297
<b>6.5</b>	<b>Discussion</b> .....		<b>300</b>
	6.5.1	Gender and Site .....	300
	6.5.2	Pathology .....	301
		6.5.2.1 <i>Pathology Conclusion</i> .....	309
	6.5.3	MSI .....	311
<b>6.6</b>	<b>Prognosis Conclusion</b> .....		<b>312</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Results - Factors Influencing Chemotherapy response</b> .....		<b>315</b>
<b>7.1</b>	<b>Overview</b> .....		<b>316</b>
<b>7.2</b>	<b>Aim</b> .....		<b>316</b>
<b>7.3</b>	<b>Specific Method</b> .....		<b>316</b>
<b>7.4</b>	<b>Results</b> .....		<b>317</b>
	7.4.1	Overview .....	317
	7.4.2	Site Gender Subgroups .....	317
<b>7.5</b>	<b>Pathology Variables</b> .....		<b>333</b>
	7.5.1	MSI .....	343
<b>7.6</b>	<b>Discussion</b> .....		<b>351</b>
	7.6.1	Gender and Site .....	351
	7.6.2	Pathological Factors .....	352
	7.6.3	MSI .....	353
<b>8</b>	<b>Conclusion</b> .....		<b>359</b>
<b>8.1</b>	<b>Summary of Findings</b> .....		<b>360</b>
	8.1.1	Prognostic influences .....	360
		8.1.1.1 <i>Aim 1 and 2 - Gender and Site</i> .....	360
		8.1.1.2 <i>Aim 3 - Tumour Histology</i> .....	360
		8.1.1.3 <i>Aim 4 - MSI</i> .....	361
	8.1.2	Predictors of Chemotherapy Response .....	361
		8.1.2.1 <i>Aim 1 and 2 - Gender and Site</i> .....	361
		8.1.2.2 <i>Aim 3 - Tumour Histology</i> .....	361
		8.1.2.3 <i>Aim 4 - MSI</i> .....	362
		8.1.2.4 <i>Chemotherapy Conclusion</i> .....	362
	8.1.3	MSI Associations .....	362
<b>8.2</b>	<b>Study Limitations</b> .....		<b>363</b>
	8.2.1	Retrospective .....	363
	8.2.2	Prognostic Factors .....	364
	8.2.3	Pathology .....	364
	8.2.4	Power .....	365
	8.2.5	MSI Determination .....	365
	8.2.6	5FU-Based Therapy .....	366
	8.2.7	Rectal Cancers .....	366
	8.2.8	Select Stage .....	366

8.3	Study Strengths.....	367
8.4	Future Research.....	367
9	Bibliography.....	369
10	Appendix .....	383

# List of Tables

Table 1 Amsterdam criteria .....	19
Table 2 Lifetime risk of CRC in HNPCC .....	19
Table 3 Extracolonic cancer rate.....	19
Table 4 Lockhart-Mummery stages .....	26
Table 5 Dukes Classification .....	26
Table 6 Aster Coller classification.....	26
Table 7 ACPS Stage.....	26
Table 8 ACPS crude survival by stage compared to Dukes .....	27
Table 9 Modified ACPS.....	27
Table 10 TNM stage .....	27
Table 11 International Documentation System.....	28
Table 12 Gender variation in prognosis .....	33
Table 13 Gender variation in prognosis – select groups.....	34
Table 14 Features of Proximal Cancers .....	44
Table 15 Delattre et al.....	44
Table 16 Prognostic influence of site.....	47
Table 17 Prognosis colon versus rectum .....	48
Table 18 Prognostic influence of Age .....	53
Table 19 Prognostic influence of obstruction .....	59
Table 20 Prognostic influence of perforation .....	59
Table 21 Prognostic influence of presenting symptoms and complications.....	64
Table 22 Prognostic influence of differentiation .....	68
Table 23 Prognostic influence of differentiation – colon cases .....	68
Table 24 Prognostic influence of differentiation – rectal cases.....	68
Table 25 Prognostic influence of tumour type.....	68
Table 26 Prognostic influence of neurovascular invasion .....	71
Table 27 Prognostic influence of growth pattern of margin .....	71
Table 28 Prognostic influence of lymphocytes.....	71
Table 29 Prognostic influence of apical nodal status.....	77
Table 30 Prognostic Influence of Tumour Size .....	81
Table 31 Mismatch repair genes .....	93

Table 32 Amsterdam and mutation correlation .....	104
Table 33 Rate of MSI in Amsterdam cases .....	104
Table 34 Amsterdam criteria in mutation positive cases .....	104
Table 35 Bethesda Criteria.....	105
Table 36 Revised Bethesda criteria.....	105
Table 37 Rates of mutation of other factors in MSI vs MSS.....	115
Table 38 MSI rate in sporadic CRC.....	117
Table 39 MSI rates in select groups.....	118
Table 40 Age variation MSI and MSS.....	123
Table 41 Proximal location in MSI cases .....	124
Table 42 MSI rate per site.....	125
Table 43 Rate of poor differentiation in MSI .....	128
Table 44 Mucinous type MSI .....	128
Table 45 Lymphocytes in MSI .....	128
Table 46 MSI Prognosis – Unadjusted studies .....	136
Table 47 MSI Prognosis – Multivariate studies.....	137
Table 48 Chemotherapy/MSI trials.....	162
Table 49 Exclusion criteria .....	170
Table 50 Standard Adjuvant chemotherapy regimen.....	170
Table 51 Histological parameters .....	190
Table 52 DNA buffers .....	193
Table 53 Exclusions.....	208
Table 54 Age.....	210
Table 55 Follow- up.....	211
Table 56 Deaths .....	211
Table 57 Gender distribution .....	211
Table 58 Adjuvant therapy.....	211
Table 59 Site .....	215
Table 60 Histology parameters .....	216
Table 61 Full panel MSI results.....	218
Table 62 Chemo vs non-chemo cohort .....	223
Table 63 Subsite Gender distribution .....	224
Table 64 Chemotherapy/subsite.....	224
Table 65 Chemo nodal status correlation pre- and post-standard chemotherapy .....	224

Table 66 Chemo vascular invasion correlation pre- and post-standard chemotherapy .....	224
Table 67 Extramural vascular associations.....	225
Table 68 Mural vascular associations.....	225
Table 69 Chemo peritumoral lymphocyte correlation to year.....	225
Table 70 Associations with peritumoral lymphocytes.....	225
Table 71 Gender cohort comparison.....	226
Table 72 Female CRC associations.....	227
Table 73 Site cohort variations.....	228
Table 74 Subsite Gender variations.....	229
Table 75 Associations of site.....	229
Table 76 MSI/MSS cohorts.....	230
Table 77 MSI/MSS cohort comparison.....	244
Table 78 All variables - associations with MSI.....	245
Table 79 Clinical associations with MSI.....	245
Table 80 Female gender associations.....	245
Table 81 Site gender correlation with MSI.....	246
Table 82 Histological predictive combinations.....	246
Table 83 Clinical and histological predictive combinations.....	246
Table 84 Covariates for multivariate analysis.....	254
Table 85 Initial step multivariate analysis – entry of all variables.....	255
Table 86 Significant variables at last step.....	256
Table 87 Non significant variables.....	256
Table 88 Significant variables- overall survival,.....	257
Table 89 Non significant variables – overall survival.....	257
Table 90 5-year survival in site gender subgroups.....	264
Table 91 Gender site subgroup numbers.....	264
Table 92 Pathological factors significantly affecting cancer-specific survival.....	277
Table 93 Pathological factors not affecting survival.....	277
Table 94 5-year survival according to pathological factors.....	278
Table 95 5-year overall survival according to gender site and chemotherapy.....	322
Table 96 Chemotherapy effect on site gender subgroups.....	322
Table 97 Interaction between pathological variables and chemotherapy effect.....	335
Table 98 Cancer deaths vs no cancer deaths.....	336



Table 99 Predictors of cancer death within chemotherapy cohort, significant variables .....	337
Table 100 Predictors of cancer death within chemotherapy cohort, non-significant variables .....	337
Table 101 Prognostic subgroup numbers.....	342
Table 102 5-year overall survival depending on MSI and chemotherapy .....	350
Table 103 Adjusted analysis for MSI effect on chemotherapy survival response.....	350

# List of Figures

Figure 1 Gene Scan.....	196
Figure 2 Computerised output from genescan.....	197
Figure 3 Age distribution.....	210
Figure 4 Study group overall survival.....	259
Figure 5 Study group cancer-specific survival.....	259
Figure 6 Chemotherapy effect on overall survival.....	260
Figure 7 Chemotherapy effect on cancer-specific survival.....	260
Figure 8 Effect of radiotherapy on overall survival.....	261
Figure 9 Effect of radiotherapy on cancer-specific survival.....	261
Figure 10 Effect of radiotherapy on overall survival of rectal cases.....	262
Figure 11 Effect of radiotherapy on cancer-survival of rectal cases.....	262
Figure 12 Overall survival by gender.....	265
Figure 13 Cancer-specific survival by gender.....	265
Figure 14 Overall survival according to site.....	266
Figure 15 Cancer-specific survival according to site.....	266
Figure 16 Overall survival per site subgroup.....	267
Figure 17 Cancer-specific survival per site subgroup.....	268
Figure 18 Overall survivals per site gender subgroups.....	269
Figure 19 Cancer-specific survivals per site gender subgroups.....	270
Figure 20 Overall survival by T stage.....	279
Figure 21 Cancer-specific survival by T stage.....	279
Figure 22 Cancer-specific survival according to muscularis propria breach.....	280
Figure 23 Cancer-specific survival according to N stage.....	280
Figure 24 Cancer-specific survival if only micrometastases in LN.....	281
Figure 25 Overall survival effect of differentiation.....	282
Figure 26 Cancer-specific survival effect of differentiation.....	282
Figure 27 Overall survival according to tumour type.....	283
Figure 28 Cancer-specific survival according to tumour type.....	284
Figure 29 Cancer-specific survival if mucinous component.....	285
Figure 30 Effect of extravascular invasion on overall survival.....	286
Figure 31 Effect of extravascular invasion on cancer-specific survival.....	286

Figure 32 Effect of perineural invasion on overall survival .....	287
Figure 33 Effect of perineural invasion on cancer-specific survival .....	287
Figure 34 Effect of mural vascular invasion on overall survival.....	288
Figure 35 Effect of mural vascular invasion on cancer-specific survival.....	288
Figure 36 Effect of infiltrating margin on overall survival.....	289
Figure 37 Effect of infiltrating margin on cancer-specific survival .....	289
Figure 38 Effect of budding on overall survival .....	290
Figure 39 Effect of budding on cancer-specific survival.....	290
Figure 40 Effect of stroma type on overall survival .....	291
Figure 41 Effect of stroma type on cancer-specific survival .....	291
Figure 42 Effect of peritumoral lymphocytes on overall survival.....	292
Figure 43 Effect of peritumoral lymphocytes on cancer-specific survival.....	292
Figure 44 Effect of crohn`s like lymphocytes on overall survival.....	293
Figure 45 Effect of crohn`s-like lymphocytes on cancer-specific survival .....	293
Figure 46 Effect of TILs on overall survival .....	294
Figure 47 Effect of TILs on cancer specific survival .....	294
Figure 48 Influence of obstruction on overall survival.....	295
Figure 49 Influence of obstruction on cancer-specific survival.....	295
Figure 50 Influence of perforation of tumour on overall survival .....	296
Figure 51 Influence of perforation of tumour on cancer-specific survival .....	296
Figure 52 Influence of MSI on overall survival.....	298
Figure 53 Influence of MSI on cancer-specific survival .....	299
Figure 54 Effect of gender on chemotherapy survival response.....	320
Figure 55 Effect of gender on chemotherapy cancer-specific survival response .....	321
Figure 56 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender on overall survival .....	323
Figure 57 Non-chemotherapy cohort influence of gender on overall survival.....	323
Figure 58 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender on cancer-specific survival ...	324
Figure 59 Non-chemotherapy cohort influence of gender on cancer-specific survival .....	324
Figure 60 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of site on overall survival.....	325
Figure 61 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of site on cancer-specific survival .....	326
Figure 62 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender and site on overall survival ...	327
Figure 63 Chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender and site on cancer-specific survival.....	328

Figure 64 Non-chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender and site on overall survival .....	329
Figure 65 Non-chemotherapy cohort, influence of gender and site on cancer specific survival.....	330
Figure 66 Chemotherapy effect for men/proximal cancers .....	331
Figure 67 Chemotherapy effect for men/distal cancers .....	331
Figure 68 Chemotherapy effect for women/proximal cancers .....	332
Figure 69 Chemotherapy effect for women/distal cancers .....	332
Figure 70 Chemotherapy effect if N1 nodal status .....	338
Figure 71 Chemotherapy effect if N2 nodal status .....	338
Figure 72 Chemotherapy effect according to margin .....	339
Figure 73 Chemotherapy effect if extravascular invasion .....	339
Figure 74 Chemotherapy effect if perforation .....	340
Figure 75 Prognostic groups cancer-specific survival –good prognosis .....	341
Figure 76 Prognostic groups cancer-specific survival –poor prognosis .....	341
Figure 77 Cancer-specific survival according to MSI chemotherapy subgroups .....	345
Figure 78 Survival MSI vs MSS groups within non-chemotherapy cohort.....	346
Figure 79 Survival MSI vs MSS groups within chemotherapy cohort.....	347
Figure 80 Chemotherapy effect within MSS group.....	348
Figure 81 Chemotherapy effect within MSI group.....	349

# List of Abbreviations

5FU	5-fluorouracil
ACPS	Australian clinicopathological stage
AJCC	American Joint Committee on Cancer
APC	Abnormal in polyposis coli
Ams	Amsterdam criteria
C	Colon
C/R	Colon/rectum
CA	Cancer specific survival
CIMP	CpG island methylator phenotype
CpG	Cytosine phosphate bonded to guanine
CRC	Colorectal cancer
DCC	Deleted in colorectal cancer
DNA	Deoxynucleic acid
FAP	Familial polyposis coli
FFPE	Formalin fixed paraffin embedded
GIT	Gastrointestinal
GITSG	Gastrointestinal Study Group
HNPCC	Hereditary non-polyposis colorectal cancer
HR	Hazard ratio
ICG	International Collaboration Group
IDL	Insertion/deletion loop
IDS	International documentation system
IGF	Insulin like growth factor
JPS	Juvenile polyposis coli
LN	Lymph node
LOH	Loss of heterozygosity
MGMT	O6-methylguanine methyltransferase
MMR	Mismatch repair
MNNG	N-methyl-N-nitro-N-nitrosoguanidine
MSI	Microsatellite instability
MSI-H	Microsatellite instability high
MSI-L	Microsatellite instability low

MSS	Microsatellite stable
MV	Multivariate
n	Number
N/S	Not stated or specified
NA	Not assessable
NCI	National Cancer Institute
NS	Not significant
O/C	Outcome
OR	Odds ratio
OS	Overall survival
PJS	Pertz Jegher Syndrome
R	Rectal
RR	Relative risk
Ref	Reference
RER	Replication error
SIG	Significant difference detected
TGF	Transforming growth factor
TILs	Tumour infiltrating lymphocytes
TME	Total mesorectal excision
TS	Thymidate synthetase
UICC	International Union Against Cancer
uk	Unknown
UV	Univariate

# Declaration

I declare that this work contains no material that has been accepted for award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Michelle Thomas and to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text.

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Michelle Thomas

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**Association of Coloproctology of Great Britain and Ireland (ACPGBI) Annual Conference 2006**

*Is Microsatellite Instability a Useful Molecular Marker to Target Chemotherapy in Colorectal Cancer?*

**American Society of Colon and Rectum Surgeons (ASCRS) Annual Conference 2006**

*Is Microsatellite Instability a Useful Molecular Marker to Target Chemotherapy in Colorectal Cancer?*

**Annual Scientific Congress, Royal Australasian College of Surgeons 2005**

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*Pathological Predictors of Outcome in Colorectal Cancer*

**Annual Scientific Congress 2004**

*The Influence of Gender and Site on the Response to Adjuvant Chemotherapy in Colorectal Cancer*