Before You Code Primary Site as Unknown C809

If the primary site of origin for a tumor is unknown, there may be clues and information which can at least define the organ system of origin, or the specific morphology/histology may identify the primary site origin.

**Use an NOS topography code for an Organ system or Ill-Defined Site if MD is unable to identify primary site.**

1. **Default** primary site code for some specific morphologies with unknown primary site; although these may arise in other sites, the majority arise in one specific site, therefore when primary site unknown, code the default primary site noted.
   - If histology is Sarcoma, NOS and site of origin is unknown, code primary site to C499 (Soft tissue, NOS)
     Example: Biopsy of pulmonary nodules positive for metastatic sarcoma. No evidence of primary lesion.
   - If histology is Melanoma, and primary site is unknown, code primary site to C449 (Skin, NOS)
     Example: BX of lung mass reveals metastatic melanoma. No evidence of originating skin lesion.
   - If histology is Merkel Cell carcinoma, and primary site is unknown, code primary site to C449 (Skin, NOS)

2. **Site-associated morphology/histology which usually arise in one particular site/organ system.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Morphology/Histology Documented with no Primary Site</th>
<th>Code Primary Site to:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cholangiocarcinoma (8160/3)</td>
<td>C249 Biliary Tract, NOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hepatocellular carcinoma (8170/3)</td>
<td>C220 Liver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meningioma (9530/0)</td>
<td>C709 Meninges, NOS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retinoblastoma (9511/3)</td>
<td>C692 Retina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renal Cell Carcinoma (8312/3)</td>
<td>C649 Kidney, NOS</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Example: Humerus biopsy reveals metastatic carcinoma consistent with renal cell carcinoma. Abdominal CT negative for any kidney abnormalities. MD final diagnosis: “no specific site found, as of now, unknown”.

- Code primary site to C649 [Kidney, NOS] per ICD-O-3 Rule H. • Reference SINQ 20031140 (updated 02/26/2009)

3. **Head and Neck Primary, unknown sub-site, with squamous cell carcinoma**

   - Code C148 (overlapping lesion of lip, oral cavity or pharynx) is assigned for squamous cell carcinoma diagnosed from a lymph node and deemed to be a head and neck primary but specific site could not be identified. Code C148 is based on the note in ICD-O-3 indicating it should be used when a code between C000 and C142 cannot be assigned.
   - Effective for cases with 2018+ Dx Date; code presumed Head & Neck primary with unknown subsite to C760 (Head, Neck, Face NOS).

4. **Code to Unknown Primary Site (C809) ONLY when there is not enough information to assign an NOS or an Ill-Defined Site category and the morphology/histology is not associated with a specific primary site.**

SINQ examples for review: SINQ 20140008, SINQ 20061034