



**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.**

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

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.

▪ Reference ICD-O-3 note page 48 and SEER Data Collection Answers/Description of this Neoplasm/Item# 15.

<http://seer.cancer.gov/registrars/data-collection.html>

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**