****

**Medical Coverage Policy |** Exondys (Eteplirsen) for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** 06|01|2018

**POLICY LAST UPDATED:** 05|15|2018

**OVERVIEW**

Duchenne muscular dystrophy is an inherited disorder that results in progressive muscle weakness and loss of muscle mass. It primarily affects boys. It occurs as a result of variant(s) in the gene responsible for producing dystrophin, a cohesive protein essential for maintaining muscle support and strength. Eteplirsen is an antisense oligonucleotide that induces skipping of exon 51 and thereby repairing the mutated reading frame. As a result, eteplirsen enables the production of an internally truncated, yet functional, dystrophin protein.

This policy is applicable to BlueCHiP for Medicare products only. For Commercial Products, see related policy section.

**MEDICAL CRITERIA**

Not applicable

**PRIOR AUTHORIZATION**

Not applicable

**POLICY STATEMENT**

**BlueCHiP for Medicare**

The use of eteplirsen is not covered for all indications including treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

**COVERAGE**

Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Evidence of Coverage for applicable physician administered drug infusion coverage/benefits.

**BACKGROUND**

Duchenne muscular dystrophy (DMD) is an X-linked, recessive disorder that occurs in approximately 1 in every 3,500 to 5,000 boys. It primarily affects boys. However, a small number of girls are also affected, but they are usually asymptomatic, and even when symptomatic, only present with a mild form of the disease. According to U.S. epidemiologic data, the first signs or symptoms of DMD are noted at a mean age of 2.5 years (range, 0.2-1 years), and the mean age at definitive diagnosis is 4.9 years (range, 0.3-8.8 years). DMD occurs as a result of variant (s) in the gene responsible for producing dystrophin, a cohesive protein that is essential for maintaining muscle support and strength. DMDis the longest known human gene and several variants can cause DMD. Most deletion variants disrupt the translational reading frame in the dystrophin messenger RNA (mRNA) resulting in an unstable, nonfunctional dystrophin molecule. As a result, there is progressive muscle degeneration leading to loss of independent ambulation, as well as other complications, including respiratory and cardiac complications. Genetic testing is required to determine the specific DMDgene variant (s) for a definitive diagnosis, even when the absence of dystrophin protein expression has been confirmed by muscle biopsy. There are over 4,700 variants in the Leiden DMD mutation database and the most common variants are concentrated between exons 45 and 53.

Eteplirsen is an antisense oligonucleotide of the phosphorodiamidate morpholino oligomer (PMO) class. PMOs are stable oligonucleotide analogues that selectively bind to RNA to alter gene expression. In the case of eteplirsen, the PMO binds to exon 51 of the dystrophin premessenger RNA causing the exon to be skipped and prevents that part of the code from being read during mRNA processing, thereby partially repairing the mutated reading frame in the mRNA coding sequence. As a result, eteplirsen enables the production of an internally truncated, yet functional, dystrophin protein.

The current standard of pharmacotherapy for DMD is corticosteroids for all patients regardless of genetic variant .Treatment is initiated once patients reach a plateau of motor skill development, generally at ages 4 to 6 years, but prior to onset of motor decline. The goal of corticosteroid therapy is to preserve ambulation and minimize respiratory, cardiac, and orthopedic complications.

**Regulatory Status**

In September 2016, eteplirsen (Exondys 51™; Sarepta Therapeutics) was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the orphan drug status process for use in Duchenne muscular dystrophy patients who have a confirmed variant of the DMDgene that is amenable to exon 51 skipping. This indication was approved under accelerated approval based on an increase in dystrophin in skeletal muscle observed in some patients treated with eteplirsen.

For individuals with confirmed variant of the Duchenne muscular dystrophy gene that is amenable to exon 51 skipping who receive eteplirsen, the evidence includes 1 randomized controlled trial (RCT) and its open-labelled follow-up study, and interim data from an ongoing RCT. Relevant outcomes are disease specific survival, change in disease status, morbid events, functional outcomes, health status measures, quality of life, and treatment-related mortality and morbidity According to the FDA analysis, the pivotal RCT and its open-labelled follow-up failed to provide evidence of a clinical benefit in terms of 6-minute walk distance. Evidence on the impact of eteplirsen treatment on dystrophin levels was inconclusive. Interim results from an ongoing study provided evidence that eteplirsen increased dystrophin levels in skeletal muscle in some patients by a median of 0.1% after 48 weeks of treatment. In summary, the clinical benefit of treatment for Duchenne muscular dystrophy with eteplirsen, including improved motor function, has not been demonstrated. Establishing a clinical benefit is necessary in ongoing clinical trials. The most frequently reported adverse events across clinical trials were balance disorder, vomiting, and contact dermatitis. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes. Therefore, eteplirsen is considered not covered for all indications including treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy.

**CODING**

**BlueCHiP for Medicare**

The following HCPCS code is not covered:

**J1428** Injection, eteplirsen, 10 mg

**RELATED POLICIES**

Prior Authorization of Drugs

**PUBLISHED**

Provider Update, June 2018

Provider Update, June 2017

**REFERENCES**

1. Bushby K, Finkel R, Birnkrant DJ, et al. Diagnosis and management of Duchenne muscular dystrophy, part 1: diagnosis, and pharmacological and psychosocial management. Lancet Neurol. Jan 2010; 9(1):77-93. PMID 19945913

2. Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Muscular Dystrohpy: MD STARnet Data and Statistics. 2016; http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/musculardystrophy/data.html. Accessed November 7, 2017.

3. Falzarano MS, Scotton C, Passarelli C, et al. Duchenne muscular dystrophy: from diagnosis to therapy. Molecules. Oct 07 2015;20(10):18168-18184. PMID 26457695

4. Sarepta Therapeutics Inc. Prescribing Label: EXONDYS 51 (eteplirsen) injection, for intravenous use. 2016; https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\_docs/label/2016/206488lbl.pdf. Accessed November 7, 2017.

5. Mendell JR, Rodino-Klapac LR, Sahenk Z, et al. Eteplirsen for the treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Ann Neurol. Nov 2013;74(5):637-647. PMID 23907995

6. Ruff S. Sarepta Presentations for the April 25, 2016 Meeting of the Peripheral and Central Nervous System Drugs Advisory Committee 2016; https://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/Drugs/PeripheralandCentralNervousSystemDrugsAdvisoryCommittee/UCM500822.pdf. Accessed November 7, 2017.

7. Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. Application Number: 206488orig1s000. Summary Review. 2016; http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\_docs/nda/2016/206488\_summary%20review\_Redacted.pdf. Accessed November 7, 2017.

8. Mendell JR, Goemans N, Lowes LP, et al. Longitudinal effect of eteplirsen versus historical control on ambulation in Duchenne muscular dystrophy. Ann Neurol. Feb 2016;79(2):257-271. PMID 26573217

9. Food and Drug Administration. FDA Briefing Document: Peripheral and Central Nervous System Drugs Advisory Committee Meeting, April 25, 2016. NDA 206488. Eteplirsen. 2016; http://www.fda.gov/downloads/AdvisoryCommittees/CommitteesMeetingMaterials/Drugs/PeripheralandCentralNervousSystemDrugsAdvisoryCommittee/UCM497063.pdf. Accessed November 7, 2017

10. Feingold B, Mahle WT, Auerbach S, et al. Management of cardiac involvement associated with neuromuscular diseases: a scientific statement from the American Heart Association. *Circulation.* Sep 26 2017;136(13):e200-e231. PMID 28838934

 [[1]](#endnote-1)

**CLICK THE ENVELOPE ICON BELOW TO SUBMIT COMMENTS**

1. **This medical policy is made available to you for informational purposes only. It is not a guarantee of payment or a substitute for your medical judgment in the treatment of your patients. Benefits and eligibility are determined by the member's subscriber agreement or member certificate and/or the employer agreement, and those documents will supersede the provisions of this medical policy. For information on member-specific benefits, call the provider call center. If you provide services to a member which are determined to not be medically necessary (or in some cases medically necessary services which are non-covered benefits), you may not charge the member for the services unless you have informed the member and they have agreed in writing in advance to continue with the treatment at their own expense. Please refer to your participation agreement(s) for the applicable provisions. This policy is current at the time of publication; however, medical practices, technology, and knowledge are constantly changing. BCBSRI reserves the right to review and revise this policy for any reason and at any time, with or without notice. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.** [↑](#endnote-ref-1)