

Medical Coverage Policy | Progenitor Cell Therapy for the Treatment of Damaged Myocardium due to Ischemia



EFFECTIVE DATE: 02|01|2017
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OVERVIEW

Progenitor cell therapy describes the use of multipotent cells of various cell lineages (autologous or allogeneic) for tissue repair and/or regeneration. Progenitor cell therapy is being investigated for the treatment of damaged myocardium resulting from acute or chronic cardiac ischemia and for refractory angina.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

BlueCHiP for Medicare

Progenitor cell therapy, including but not limited to skeletal myoblasts or hematopoietic cells, is considered not covered as a treatment of damaged myocardium as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes

Infusion of growth factors (ie, granulocyte colony stimulating factor) is considered not covered as a technique to increase the numbers of circulating hematopoietic cells as treatment of damaged myocardium as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes

Commercial

Progenitor cell therapy, including but not limited to skeletal myoblasts or hematopoietic cells, is considered not medically necessary as a treatment of damaged myocardium as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes

Infusion of growth factors (ie, granulocyte colony stimulating factor) is considered not medically necessary as a technique to increase the numbers of circulating hematopoietic cells as treatment of damaged myocardium as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable not medically necessity/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND

Progenitor cell therapy describes the use of multipotent cells of various cell lineages (autologous or allogeneic) for tissue repair and/or regeneration. Progenitor cell therapy is being investigated for the treatment of damaged myocardium resulting from acute or chronic cardiac ischemia and for refractory angina.

For individuals who have acute cardiac ischemia who receive progenitor cell therapy, the evidence includes two phase 3 randomized controlled trials (RCTs), numerous small, early-phase RCTs, and meta-analyses of these RCTs. The relevant outcomes are disease-specific survival, morbid events, functional outcomes, quality of life (QOL), and hospitalizations. Limited evidence on clinical outcomes has suggested there may be benefits from improving left ventricular ejection fraction, reducing recurrent myocardial infarction, decreasing the need for further revascularization, and perhaps decreasing mortality, although a

recent, large, individual patient data meta-analysis reported no improvement in these outcomes. No adequately powered trial has reported benefits in clinical outcomes (eg, mortality, adverse cardiac outcomes, exercise capacity, QOL). Overall, this evidence has suggested that progenitor cell treatment may be a promising intervention, but robust data on clinical outcomes are lacking. High-quality RCTs, powered to detect differences in clinical outcomes, are needed to answer this question. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have chronic cardiac ischemia who receive progenitor cell therapy, the evidence includes 2, phase 3 RCTs with more than 100 participants, systematic reviews of smaller, early-phase RCTs, and a nonrandomized comparative trial. The relevant outcomes are disease-specific survival, morbid events, functional outcomes, QOL, and hospitalizations. The studies included in the meta-analyses have reported only on a small number of clinical outcome events. These findings from early phase 2 trials need to be corroborated in larger phase 3 trials. A well-conducted, phase 3 RCT trial failed to demonstrate superiority of cell therapy for its primary composite outcome that included death, worsening heart failure events, and other multiple events. The nonrandomized STAR-Heart trial showed a mortality benefit as well as favorable hemodynamic effect, but a lack of randomization limits interpretation due to the concern about selection bias and differences in known and unknown prognostic variables at baseline between both arms. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have refractory angina who receive progenitor cell therapy, the evidence includes a systematic review of RCTs, phase 2 trials, and a phase 3 pivotal trial. The relevant outcomes are disease-specific survival, morbid events, functional outcomes, QOL, and hospitalizations. The only phase 3 trial identified was terminated early and insufficiently powered to evaluate clinical outcomes. Additional larger trials are needed to determine whether progenitor cell therapy improves health outcomes in patients with refractory angina. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Regulatory Status

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates human cells and tissues intended for implantation, transplantation, or infusion through the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, under Code of Federal Regulation title 21, parts 1270 and 1271. Progenitor cells are included in these regulations. The FDA marketing clearance is not required when autologous cells are processed on site with existing laboratory procedures and injected with existing catheter devices. Several cell products are expanded ex vivo and require FDA approval. The 21st Century Cures Act (December 2016) established new expedited product development programs including 1 for regenerative medicine advanced therapy (RMAT). The RMAT designation may be given if: (1) the drug is a regenerative medicine therapy (ie, a cell therapy), therapeutic tissue engineering product, human cell and tissue product, or any combination product; (2) the drug is intended to treat, modify, reverse, or cure a serious or life-threatening disease or condition; and (3) preliminary clinical evidence indicates that the drug has the potential to address unmet medical needs.

Multiple progenitor cell therapies such as MyoCell® (U.S. Stem Cell, formerly Bioheart), ixmyelocel-T (Vericel, formerly Aastrom Biosciences), MultiStem® (Athersys), and CardiAMP™ (BioCardia) are being commercially developed, but none has been approved by the FDA so far.

MyoCell® comprises patient autologous skeletal myoblasts that are expanded ex vivo and supplied as a cell suspension in a buffered salt solution for injection into the area of damaged myocardium. In 2017, U.S. Stem Cell prioritized its efforts away from seeking RMAT designation for MyoCell®.

Ixmyelocel-T is an expanded multicellular therapeutic product produced from a patient's bone marrow by selectively expanding bone marrow mononuclear cells for two weeks. The expanded cell product enriched for

mesenchymal and macrophage lineages might enhance potency. Vericel has received RMAT designation for Ixmyelocel-T.

MultiStem® is an allogeneic bone marrow-derived adherent adult stem cell product.

CardiAMP™ Cell Therapy system consists of a proprietary assay to identify patients with a high probability to respond to autologous cell therapy, a proprietary cell processing system to isolate process and concentrate the stem cells from a bone marrow harvest at the point of care, and a proprietary delivery system to percutaneously inject the autologous cells into the myocardium. BioCardia has received an investigational device exemption from the FDA to perform a trial of CardiAMP™.

CODING

BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products

There are no specific codes for this procedure, either describing the laboratory component of processing the harvested autologous cells or for the implantation procedure. Claims should be filed with an unlisted CPT code

RELATED POLICIES

Not applicable

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, August 2020

Provider Update, January 2020

Provider Update, April 2018

Provider Update, April 2017

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11

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