Adoptive Immunotherapy

Prospective review is recommended/required. Please check the member agreement for preauthorization guidelines.

Prospective review is not required.

Description:
The spontaneous regression of certain cancers, such as renal cell cancer or melanoma, supports the idea that the patient's immune system is sometimes capable of delaying tumor progression and, on rare occasions, can eliminate the tumor altogether. These observations have led to research interest in a variety of immunologic therapies designed to stimulate the patient's own immune systems. Adoptive immunotherapy is the transfer of previously sensitized immunologic cells (e.g., cytotoxic T-lymphocytes or lymphocytes producing specific antigens) to the tumor-bearing host.

The major research challenge in adoptive immunotherapy is to develop immune cells with specific anti-tumor reactivity that could be generated in large enough quantities for transfer to tumor-bearing patients. In current trials, these cells are transferred either using adoptive cellular therapy (ACT), or through antigen-loaded dendritic cell infusions.

ACT protocols vary, but include these common steps:
1. lymphocyte harvesting (either from tumor biopsy or peripheral blood)
2. propagation of tumor-specific lymphocytes in vitro using various immune modulators
3. selection of lymphocytes with reactivity to common tumor antigens with ELISA
4. lymphodepletion with immunosuppressive agents
5. transfusion of lymphocytes back into the tumor-bearing host

Available scientific evidence does not support the safety and efficacy of adoptive immunotherapy at this time. Therefore, adoptive immunotherapy is not medically necessary as there is insufficient peer-reviewed scientific literature to demonstrate its efficacy.

Medical Criteria:
Not applicable.

Policy
Adoptive immunotherapy is not medically necessary as there is insufficient medical literature to support the efficacy of this treatment.

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

Adoptive immunotherapy may be covered in accordance with the New Cancer Therapies Mandate.

Coding:
Also known as:
Not applicable

Related topics:
Not applicable

Published:
Provider Update, May 2010
Provider Update, April 2011
Provider Update, April 2012

References:


Wolfe J. Adoptive Cell Transfer Continues to Show Promise for Melanoma. Practical Dermatology (Oncology Watch);June 2010:21-22.

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