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OVERVIEW

This policy documents coverage guidelines for BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products for enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP) used in outpatient treatment. EECP is a noninvasive treatment used to augment diastolic pressure, decrease left ventricular afterload, and increase venous return. It has been studied primarily as a treatment for patients with refractory angina and heart failure, as well as for other indications such as erectile dysfunction and ischemic stroke.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

BlueCHiP for Medicare

EECP is covered for BlueCHiP for Medicare members.

Note: Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island (BCBSRI) must follow Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) guidelines, such as national coverage determinations or local coverage determinations for all BlueCHiP for Medicare policies. Therefore, BlueCHiP for Medicare policies may differ from Commercial products. In some instances, benefits for BlueCHiP for Medicare may be greater than what is allowed by the CMS.

Commercial Products

EECP used in outpatient treatment is not medically necessary for all indications, including but not limited to, treatment of chronic stable angina pectoris, heart failure, erectile dysfunction, or ischemic stroke as there is insufficient peer-reviewed scientific literature to demonstrate that the procedure is effective.

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the appropriate section of the Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for services not medically necessary.

BACKGROUND

Enhanced external counterpulsation uses timed, sequential inflation of pressure cuffs on the calves, thighs, and buttocks to augment diastolic pressure, decrease left ventricular (LV) afterload, and increase venous return. Augmenting diastolic pressure displaces a volume of blood backward into the coronary arteries during diastole when the heart is in a state of relaxation and the resistance in the coronary arteries is at a minimum. The resulting increase in coronary artery perfusion pressure may enhance coronary collateral development or increase flow through existing collaterals. In addition, when the LV contracts, it faces a reduced aortic pressure to work against, because the counterpulsation has somewhat emptied the aorta. EECP has been primarily investigated as a treatment for chronic stable angina.

Intra-aortic balloon counterpulsation is a more familiar and invasive form of counterpulsation that is used as a method of temporary circulatory assistance for the ischemic heart, often after an acute myocardial infarction

(MI). In contrast, EECP is thought to provide a permanent effect on the heart by enhancing the development of coronary collateral development. A full course of therapy usually consists of 35 one-hour treatments, which may be offered once or twice daily, usually 5 days per week. The multiple components of the procedure include the use of the device itself, finger plethysmography to follow the blood flow, continuous electrocardiograms to trigger inflation and deflation, and optional use of pulse oximetry to measure oxygen saturation before and after treatment.

Regulatory Status

A variety of enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP) devices have been cleared for marketing by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the 510(k) process. Examples of EECP devices with FDA clearance are the Renew® NCP-5 External Counterpulsation System, ECP Health System Model, CardiAssist™ Counter Pulsation System, ACS Model NCP-2 External Counterpulsation Device, and the EECP® Therapy System.

For individuals who have chronic stable angina who receive enhanced external counterpulsation (EECP), the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs), observational studies, and systematic reviews. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, symptoms, morbid events, and functional outcomes. There is only 1 blinded RCT that includes clinical outcomes, and it reported benefit on only 1 of 4 main angina outcomes. Additional small RCTs have reported changes in physiologic measures associated with EECP but did not provide relevant evidence on clinical efficacy. Because of the variable natural history of angina, the multiple confounding variables for cardiac outcomes, and the potential for a placebo effect, RCT evidence is needed. Therefore, observational studies, including registry studies with large numbers of patients, add little to determinations of efficacy. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have heart failure who receive EECP, the evidence includes RCTs, observational studies, and systematic reviews. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, symptoms, morbid events, and functional outcomes. One RCT that reported on clinical outcomes found a modest benefit with EECP on some outcomes and no benefit on others. A second RCT reported improvements on the 6-minute walk test with EECP, but had methodologic limitations that limit conclusions that can be drawn. The observational studies on EECP in heart failure have limited ability to inform the evidence on EECP due to the multiple confounding variables for cardiac outcomes and the potential for a placebo effect. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes. Therefore this service is considered not medically necessary for Commercial products.

CODING

BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products

The following HCPCS code is covered for BlueCHiP for Medicare and not medically necessary for Commercial products:

G0166 External counterpulsation, per treatment session

RELATED POLICIES

None

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, May 2017

Provider Update, August 2016

Provider Update, August 2015

Provider Update, January 2015

Provider Update, November 2013

Provider Update, February 2011

Provider Update, June 2010

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