Medical Coverage Policy

Manipulation Under Anesthesia for Treatment of Chronic Spinal or Pelvic Pain

☐ Device/Equipment  ☐ Drug  ☐ Medical  ☒ Surgery  ☐ Test  ☐ Other

Effective Date:  5/18/2010  Policy Last Updated:  4/19/2011

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

☒ Prospective review is not required.

Note: This policy does not address manipulation under anesthesia for fractures, completely dislocated joints, adhesive capsulitis (e.g., frozen shoulder), and/or fibrosis of a joint that may occur following total joint replacement.

Description:

Manipulation under anesthesia (MUA) consists of passive movements and stretching of joints performed while the patient receives anesthesia (usually general anesthesia or moderate sedation). Complications from general anesthesia and forceful long-lever, high-amplitude nonspecific manipulation procedures resulted in decreased use of the procedure in favor of other therapies. MUA was modified and revived in the 1990s. This revival is attributed to increased interest in spinal manipulative therapy and the advent of safer, shorter-acting anesthesia agents used for conscious sedation.

MUA is described as follows: after sedation is achieved, a series of mobilization, stretching, and traction procedures to the spine and lower extremities is performed and may include passive stretching of the gluteal and hamstring muscles with straight leg raise, hip capsule stretching and mobilization, lumbosacral traction, and stretching of the lateral abdominal and paraspinal muscles. After the stretching and traction procedures, spinal manipulative therapy (SMT) is delivered with high-velocity, short-amplitude thrust applied to a spinous process by hand while the upper torso and lower extremities are stabilized. SMT may also be applied to the thoracolumbar or cervical area if considered necessary to address the low back pain. The MUA takes 15–20 minutes, and after recovery from anesthesia the patient is discharged with instructions to remain active and use heat or ice for short-term analgesic control. Some practitioners recommend performing the procedure on 3 consecutive days for best results. Care after MUA may include 4–8 weeks of active rehabilitation with manual therapy including SMT and other modalities.
Manipulation is intended to break up fibrous and scar tissue to relieve pain and improve range of motion. Anesthesia or sedation is used to reduce pain, spasm, and reflex muscle guarding that may interfere with the delivery of therapies and to allow the therapist to break up joint and soft-tissue adhesions with less force than would be required to overcome patient resistance or apprehension. MUA is generally performed with an anesthesiologist in attendance. Manipulation has also been performed after injection of local anesthetic into lumbar zygapophyseal and/or sacroiliac joints under fluoroscopic guidance (MUJA) and after epidural injection of corticosteroid and local anesthetic (MUESI).

Scientific evidence regarding spinal manipulation under anesthesia, spinal manipulation with joint anesthesia, and spinal manipulation after epidural anesthesia and corticosteroid injection is limited to observational case series and nonrandomized comparative studies. These data are insufficient to determine whether MUA improves health outcomes.

**Medical Criteria:**

Not applicable.

**Policy**

Spinal manipulation (and manipulation of other joints, e.g., hip joint, performed during the procedure) with the patient under anesthesia, spinal manipulation under joint anesthesia, and spinal manipulation after epidural anesthesia and corticosteroid injection are considered **not medically necessary** for treatment of chronic spinal (cranial, cervical, thoracic, lumbar) pain and chronic sacroiliac and pelvic pain.

**Coverage:**

Benefits may vary by group/contract. Please refer to the appropriate member certificate/subscriber agreement for services not medically necessary benefits/coverage.

**Coding**

CPT code 22505 specifically identifies manipulation of the spine under anesthesia:

22505

The anesthesia administration would be coded using:

00640

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