OVERVIEW
Scintimammography refers to the use of radiotracers with nuclear medicine imaging as a diagnostic tool for abnormalities of the breast. Breast-specific gamma imaging (BSGI), or molecular breast imaging (MBI), refers to specific types of imaging machines that are used in conjunction with scintimammography to improve diagnostic performance.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products
Scintimammography, BSGI, and MBI are considered not medically necessary in all applications, including but not limited to their use as an adjunct to mammography or in staging the axillary lymph nodes as there is insufficient peer-reviewed scientific literature that demonstrates the procedure/service is effective.

Use of gamma detection following radiopharmaceutical administration for localization of sentinel lymph nodes in patients with breast cancer may be considered medically necessary.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
None Applicable

BACKGROUND:
Scintimammography is a diagnostic modality using radiopharmaceuticals to detect tumors of the breast. After injection of a radiopharmaceutical, the breast is evaluated with planar imaging. Scintimammography is performed with the patient lying prone and the camera positioned laterally, which increases the distance between the breast and the camera. Scintimammography using conventional imaging modalities has relatively poor sensitivity in detecting smaller lesions (e.g., smaller than 15 mm), because of the relatively poor resolution of conventional gamma cameras in imaging the breast.

BSGI and MBI were developed to address this issue. Breast-specific gamma cameras acquire images while the patient is seated in a position similar to that in mammography, and the breast is lightly compressed. The detector head(s) is immediately next to the breast, increasing resolution, and the images can be compared with the mammographic images. Breast-specific gamma imaging and molecular breast imaging differ primarily in the type and number of detectors used (multi-crystal arrays of cesium iodide or sodium iodide versus semiconductor materials, such as cadmium zinc telluride, respectively). In some configurations, a detector is placed on each side of the breast and used to lightly compress it. The maximum distance between the detector and the breast is therefore from the surface to the midpoint of the breast. Much of the research on BSGI and MBI has been conducted at the Mayo Clinic. The radiotracer usually utilized is technetium Tc99m sestamibi. MBI imaging takes approximately 40 minutes.

Preoperative lymphoscintigraphy and/or intraoperative hand-held gamma detection of sentinel lymph nodes is a method of identifying sentinel lymph nodes for biopsy after radiotracer injection. Surgical removal of 1 or more sentinel lymph nodes is an alternative to full axillary lymph node dissection for staging evaluation and
management of breast cancer. Several trials have compared outcomes following sentinel lymph node biopsy versus axillary lymph node dissection for managing patients with breast cancer.

Breast-specific gamma imaging and molecular breast imaging have been suggested for a variety of applications:

1. For individuals who have dense breasts or high risk for breast cancer who receive scintimammography, BSGI or MBI as adjunct to mammography, the evidence includes diagnostic accuracy studies.

2. For individuals who have indeterminate or suspicious breast lesions who receive scintimammography and BSGI, the evidence includes diagnostic accuracy studies.

3. For individuals who have breast cancer undergoing detection of residual tumor after neoadjuvant therapy who receive scintimammography and BSGI, the evidence includes diagnostic accuracy studies and a meta-analysis.

4. For individuals who have breast cancer undergoing surgical planning for breast-conserving therapy who receive scintimammography and BSGI, the evidence includes 1 retrospective observational study.

5. For individuals who have breast cancer undergoing detection of axillary metastases who receive scintimammography and BSGI, the evidence includes diagnostic accuracy studies and systematic reviews of diagnostic accuracy studies.

Localization of Sentinel Lymph Nodes Using Radiopharmaceutical and Gamma Detection
For individuals who have breast cancer undergoing sentinel lymph node biopsy for detection of axillary metastases who receive radiopharmaceutical and gamma detection for localization of sentinel lymph nodes, the evidence includes 3 studies and a meta-analysis. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy and validity, and treatment-related morbidity. The evidence to date does not provide sufficient support for any of the uses discussed. For these reasons, BSGI is considered not medically necessary as there is no proven efficacy.

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

CODING
BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products
The following code is considered not medically necessary:
S8080  Scintimammography (radioimmunoscintigraphy of the breast), unilateral, including supply of radiopharmaceutical

BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial Products
The following codes are medically necessary when submitted with one of the ICD-10 codes listed below:
78800  Radiopharmaceutical localization of tumor or distribution of radiopharmaceutical agent(s); limited area
78801  Radiopharmaceutical localization of tumor or distribution of radiopharmaceutical agent(s); multiple areas
RELATED POLICIES
None

PUBLISHED
Provider Update, January 2017
Provider Update, April 2015
Provider Update, January 2014
Provider Update, March 2012
Provider Update, February 2011

REFERENCES


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