

Medical Coverage Policy | Transtympanic Micropressure Applications as a Treatment of Meniere's Disease



EFFECTIVE DATE: 02|16|2011
POLICY LAST UPDATED: 02|24|2015

OVERVIEW

Transtympanic micropressure applications as a treatment for Meniere's disease involves use of a hand-held air pressure generator that delivers intermittent complex pressure pulses. For this device to be used, a conventional ventilation tube is surgically placed in the eardrum. Patients then place an ear-cuff in the external ear canal and treat themselves for 3 minutes, 3 times daily. Treatment is continued for as long as patients find themselves in a period of attacks of vertigo.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable.

POLICY STATEMENT

BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial

Transtympanic micropressure applications as a treatment for Meniere's disease is considered not medically necessary due to the lack of peer-review medical literature indicating that it is effective.

COVERAGE

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.

BACKGROUND

Meniere's disease is an idiopathic disorder of the inner ear characterized by episodes of vertigo, fluctuating hearing loss, tinnitus, and ear pressure. The vertigo attacks are often unpredictable and incapacitating, and may prevent activities of daily living. Therapy is symptomatic in nature and does not address the underlying pathophysiology. Although the pathophysiology of Meniere's disease is not precisely known, it is thought to be related to a disturbance in the pressure/volume relationship of the endolymph within the inner ear. Conservative therapy includes a low-sodium diet and diuretics to reduce fluid accumulation (i.e., hydrops) and pharmacologic therapy to reduce vestibular symptoms. Persons who do not respond to these conservative measures may receive gentamicin drops in the ear, as a technique of chemical labyrinthectomy to ablate vestibular function on the affected side. No therapy is available to restore hearing loss.

There has been interest in developing a more physiologic approach to treatment by applying local pressure treatment to restore the underlying fluid homeostasis. Researchers have noted that symptoms of Meniere's disease improve with fluctuations in ambient pressure, and patients with acute vertigo have been successfully treated in hypobaric chambers. It is hypothesized that the application of low-frequency, low-amplitude pressure pulse to the middle ear functions to evacuate endolymphatic fluids from the inner ear, thus relieving vertigo. In 1999, the Meniett device (Medtronic) received clearance to market through a U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) 510(k) process specifically as a symptomatic treatment of Meniere's disease.

At this time, the scientific evidence does not permit conclusions concerning the effect of this technology on health outcomes. Therefore, it is considered not medically necessary.

CODING

BlueCHiP for Medicare and Commercial:

The following code is considered not medically necessary:

E2120: Pulse generator system for tympanic treatment of inner ear endolymphatic fluid

RELATED POLICIES

Not applicable.

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, May 2015

Provider Update, June 2014

Provider Update, May 2013

Provider Update, April 2012

Provider Update, June 2011

Provider Update, April 2010

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