JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

Applies to all products administered or underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc. (collectively referred to as the “Company”), unless otherwise provided in the applicable contract. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically.

When Services Are Eligible for Coverage
Coverage for eligible medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products may be provided only if:

- Benefits are available in the member’s contract/certificate, and
- Medical necessity criteria and guidelines are met.

Based on review of available data, the Company may consider Janus kinase 2 (JAK2) tyrosine kinase and myeloproliferative leukemia (MPL) mutation testing in the diagnosis of patients presenting with clinical, laboratory, or pathologic findings suggesting classic forms of myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPN), that is, polycythemia vera (PV), essential thrombocythemia (ET), or primary myelofibrosis (PMF) to be eligible for coverage.

When Services Are Considered Investigational
Coverage is not available for investigational medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products.

Based on review of available data, the Company considers Janus kinase 2 (JAK2) tyrosine kinase and myeloproliferative leukemia (MPL) mutation testing to be investigational in all other circumstances including, but not limited to, the following situations:

- Diagnosis of nonclassic forms of myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs)
- Molecular phenotyping of patients with myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs)
- Monitoring, management, or selecting treatment in patients with myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs)
- Diagnosis or selection of treatment in patients with Down syndrome and acute lymphoblastic leukemia (ALL).

Background/Overview
Mutations in the gene encoding JAK2 protein and in the MPL virus oncogene encoding the thrombopoietin receptor have been associated with myeloproliferative neoplasms and with ALL in Down syndrome patients. This policy addresses the use of JAK2 and MPL gene mutation testing for diagnosis, prognosis, and treatment selection in patients with myeloproliferative neoplasms. This policy also will address the potential use of JAK2 mutations in the diagnosis or selection of treatment in patients with Down syndrome and acute lymphoblastic leukemia.

Myeloproliferative neoplasms (MPNs) are uncommon overlapping blood diseases characterized by the production of 1 or more blood cells and includes chronic myeloid leukemia (CML), PV, ET, PMF, systemic mastocytosis, chronic eosinophilic leukemia, and others. A common finding in many of the MPNs is
clonality, and a central pathogenic feature is the presence of a mutated version of the tyrosine kinase enzyme, such that it is abnormally constitutively activated. The paradigm for use of this information to revolutionize patient management is CML. A unique chromosomal change (the Philadelphia chromosome) and an accompanying unique gene rearrangement (BCR-ABL) resulting in a continuously activated tyrosine kinase enzyme were identified. These findings led to the development of targeted tyrosine kinase inhibitor drug therapy (imatinib) that produces long-lasting remissions.

Diagnosis and monitoring of patients with Philadelphia chromosome-negative MPNs have been challenging because many of the laboratory and clinical features of the classic forms of these diseases—PV, ET, and PMF—can be mimicked by other conditions such as reactive or secondary erythrocytosis, thrombocytosis, or myeloid fibrosis. In addition, these entities can be difficult to distinguish on morphologic bone marrow exam, and diagnosis can be complicated by changing disease patterns: PV and ET can evolve into PMF or undergo leukemic transformation. World Health Organization (WHO) criteria were published as a benchmark for diagnosis in 2001. These have been challenging to use because they involve complex diagnostic algorithms, rely on morphologic assessment of uncertain consistency, and require tests that are not well-standardized or widely available, such as endogenous erythroid colony formation.

In March and April 2005, 4 separate groups using different modes of discovery and different measurement techniques reported the presence of a novel somatic point mutation in the conserved autoinhibitory pseudokinase domain of the gene encoding JAK2 protein in patients with classic MPNs. The mutation was noted to cause a valine-to-phenylalanine substitution at amino acid position 617 (JAK2\(^{V617F}\)). Loss of JAK2 autoinhibition, caused by JAK2\(^{V617F}\), results in constitutive activation of the kinase and in recruitment and phosphorylation of substrate molecules including signal transducers and activators of transcript (STAT) proteins (so-called JAK-Stat signaling). The result is cell proliferation independent of normal growth factor control. These findings were subsequently confirmed, and additional mutations affecting the JAK2 gene—mutations in exon 12 or in complementary pathways such as thrombopoietin-receptor-pathway mutations in MPL exon 10—were identified. These mutations were seen with varying but reliable frequency in patients with classic MPNs and with uncommon and erratic frequency in other MPNs. In addition, unique cases of JAK2 mutations were reported in a subset of patients with Down syndrome–associated ALL.

Although these mutations were of importance in better understanding the biology of MPNs, they also were of immediate interest as laboratory tools to aid in diagnosis and management of disease. To that end, at least 4 potential intended uses for mutation testing have been considered, including:

a. Diagnosis of patients with clinical, laboratory, or pathologic findings suggesting classic MPNs (PV, ET, or PMF);
b. Diagnosis or selection of treatment for patients with Down syndrome ALL;
c. Phenotyping of disease subtypes in patients with MPNs to establish disease prognosis;
d. Identification, selection, and monitoring of treatment.

More than a dozen commercial laboratories currently offer a wide variety of diagnostic procedures for JAK2 testing and MPL mutation testing. These tests are available as laboratory developed procedures under the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) enforcement discretion policy for laboratory developed tests. Variable analytic and clinical performance has been reported, suggesting that nucleic acid amplification
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy #  00420
Original Effective Date:  04/23/2014
Current Effective Date:  04/23/2014

methodologies are more sensitive than mutation sequence analysis. It appears that there can be considerable interassay and interlaboratory variability in the generation of testing results.

FDA or Other Governmental Regulatory Approval
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)
There is no national coverage determination (NCD). In the absence of an NCD, coverage decisions are left to the discretion of local Medicare carriers.

Rationale/Source
The original policy was based on a literature search using MEDLINE that was performed for the period of March 2005 through November 2009. The search identified 1313 publications including 150 reviews, 41 clinical trials, 17 editorials, 2 meta-analyses, and 1 observational prospective study. The literature search for the most recent update was performed on January 10, 2014.

Tyrosine Kinase Mutation Analysis and Diagnosis of Philadelphia Chromosome-Negative Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Diagnosis of classic myeloproliferative neoplasms
Diagnosis of the various classic forms of MPNs has been based most recently on a complex set of clinical, pathological, and biological criteria first introduced by the Polycythemia Vera Study Group (PVSG) in 1996 or the WHO in 2001 (updated in 2008). Both classifications use a combination of clinical, pathological, and/or biological criteria to reach definitive diagnoses. Varying combinations of these criteria are used to determine if a patient has PV, ET, or PMF, ie, MPNs that are Philadelphia chromosome-negative. An important component of the diagnostic process is a clinical and laboratory assessment to rule out reactive or secondary causes of disease.

As noted in the Description section, some diagnostic methods (eg, bone marrow microscopy) are not well-standardized, and others (eg, endogenous erythroid colony formation) are neither standardized nor widely available.

In March 2005, a novel somatic gain-of-function point mutation was discovered in the conserved autoinhibitory pseudokinase domain of the JAK2 gene in patients with MPNs. The mutation was present in blood and bone marrow from a variable portion of patients with classic BCR-ABL-negative (ie, Philadelphia chromosome-negative) MPNs including 65% to 97% of patients with PV, 23% to 57% with ET, and 35% to 56% with PMF (see Table 1). The mutation was initially reported to be absent in all normal subjects and in patients with secondary erythrocytosis, although recently very low levels of mutated cells have been reported in a small subset of healthy individuals.

That the JAK2V617F-mutated protein potentially caused the disease was suggested by the demonstration that cell lines transfected with JAK2V617F could be maintained in culture for several weeks in the absence of growth factor and that dependency was restored by transduction of wild-type JAK2. In vivo, mice irradiated and then transplanted with bone marrow cells infected with retrovirus containing the mutation developed a myeloproliferative syndrome.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Mutation Detection Method</th>
<th>PV</th>
<th>ET</th>
<th>PMF</th>
<th>Normals</th>
<th>Secondary Erythrocytosis</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baxter et al (2005)</td>
<td>DNA sequencing, PCR</td>
<td>71/73</td>
<td>29/51</td>
<td>8/16</td>
<td>0/90</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Levine et al (2005)</td>
<td>DNA sequencing</td>
<td>121/164</td>
<td>37/115</td>
<td>16/46</td>
<td>0/269</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James et al (2005)</td>
<td>DNA sequencing</td>
<td>40/45</td>
<td>9/21</td>
<td>3/7</td>
<td>0/15</td>
<td>0/35</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kralovics et al (2005)</td>
<td>DNA sequencing</td>
<td>83/128</td>
<td>21/94</td>
<td>13/23</td>
<td>0/142</td>
<td>0/11</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jones et al (2005)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>58/72</td>
<td>24/59</td>
<td>15/35</td>
<td>0/160</td>
<td>0/4</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tefferi et al 2006</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>36/38</td>
<td>12/46</td>
<td>3/10</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>0/19</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zhao et al 2005</td>
<td>DNA sequencing</td>
<td>20/24</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>0/12</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell et al (2005)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>414/776</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Prospective, case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wolanskyj et al (2005)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>73/150</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campbell et al (2006)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>83/152</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>NR</td>
<td>Case series</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tefferi et al (2005)</th>
<th>PCR testing</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>80/157 (51%)</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>NR</th>
<th>Case series</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

PV: polycythemia vera; ET: essential thrombocythemia; PMF: primary myelofibrosis; NR: not reported; PCR: polymerase chain reaction.

Although almost all studies were retrospective case series and/or cross-sectional studies, and although both analytical and clinical performances appear dependent on the laboratory method used to detect the mutation, there has been impressive consistency across studies in demonstrating that the JAK2$^{V617F}$ mutation is a highly specific marker for clonal evidence of an MPN.

Early reports suggested that specificity was 100%, although sensitivity was variable (as high as 97% in patients with PV but only 30% to 50% in patients with ET or PMF). A result of the extraordinary specificity observed was that in the setting of evaluating a patient with a suspected Philadelphia chromosome-negative MPN, the predictive value of a positive test also approached 100%. It was recognized within months of the discovery of this mutation, that JAK2$^{V617F}$ testing could dramatically expedite diagnosis by reducing the need for complex workups of secondary or reactive causes of the observed proliferative process in JAK2$^{V617F}$-positive patients. Two important caveats should be noted in use of this test: (1) A negative result cannot be used to rule out classic MPN; and (2) a positive result is excellent evidence that a classic MPN is present but alone is insufficient to subclassify the disease category present.

In recognition of the value of this new marker in refining the diagnostic workup of patients suspected of having Philadelphia chromosome-negative MPNs, several reports recommended new diagnostic algorithms. The 2001 WHO criteria were revised in 2008 to incorporate mutation testing in patient workup.

It is important to note that the 2008 WHO revision represents expert consensus and is not based on independent validation of the 2008 criteria compared with earlier diagnostic criteria or on clinical outcomes. Since these previous criteria were themselves based on expert consensus alone, the importance of such comparative studies may be a moot point. However, 2 small cross-sectional comparative studies have evaluated JAK2$^{V617F}$ testing in comparison with previously established PVSG or WHO criteria.

In 2005, James et al compared PV diagnosed using WHO or PVSG criteria with a streamlined diagnostic approach for PV using a 2-step algorithm (elevated hematocrit and the presence of the JAK2$^{V617F}$ mutation). Although the study group was small (45 patients with a PVSG diagnosis of PV and 61 patients meeting WHO criteria), use of the 2-step algorithm resulted in a correct diagnosis in 96% (PVSG criteria) or 93% (WHO criteria) of patients with PV.

In 2008, Kondo et al compared the 2001 WHO classification and the 2008 classification in a small study of 75 patients undergoing evaluation for MPN. Using the 2001 criteria, 57 patients were diagnosed with MPNs, including 16 with PV, 37 with ET, and 4 with PMF. Using the 2008 criteria, 59 patients were diagnosed with
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

MPNs. The PV and PMF categories were in complete agreement. The 2008 criteria caused reclassification of 2 patients (1 with erythrocytosis and 1 with thrombocytosis) into the ET category.

Ongoing studies of new drugs targeted to treat the mutated tyrosine kinase in patients with MPN are expected to cast additional light on the functionality of the observed $JAK2^{V617F}$ mutation and are likely to contribute not only to refined treatment choices but also to better understanding of the diagnostic role of this important marker.

**Diagnosis of nonclassic forms of MPNs**

Although the most common Philadelphia-negative MPNs include what are commonly referred to as classic forms of this disorder (PV, ET, and PMF), rare patients may show unusual manifestations of nonclassic forms of MPNs, such as chronic myelomonocytic leukemia, hypereosinophilic syndrome, systemic mastocytosis, chronic neutrophilic leukemia, or others. Reports have identified $JAK2^{V617F}$ mutations in some of these cases. Due to the paucity of data about the significance of $JAK2^{V617F}$ or MPL mutations in these disease settings, testing in patients with these diseases should be considered investigational.

**Other Tyrosine Kinase or Related Mutations**

In 2007, Scott et al identified 4 somatic gain-of-function mutations in $JAK2$ exon 12 in 10 of 11 PV patients without the $JAK2^{V617F}$ mutation. Patients with a $JAK2$ exon 12 mutation differed from those with the $JAK2^{V617F}$ mutation, presenting at a younger age with higher hemoglobin levels and lower platelet and white cell counts. Erythroid colonies could be grown from their blood samples in the absence of exogenous erythropoietin, and mice treated with transfected bone marrow transplants developed a myeloproliferative syndrome.

Findings were subsequently confirmed by a number of investigators who identified additional mutations with similar functional consequences in patients with PV and in patients with idiopathic erythrocytosis. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the identification of $JAK2$ exon 12 mutations provides a diagnostic test for $JAK2^{V617F}$-negative patients who present with erythrocytosis (see Policy Guidelines section). Of note, different mutations in the same gene appear to have different effects on signaling, resulting in distinct clinical phenotypes. This perhaps explains the unexpected finding of various $JAK2$ mutations in patients with Down syndrome-associated ALL.

In 2006, Pikman et al surveyed $JAK2$ mutation-negative patients with suspected ET and PMF to determine if mutations in pathways complementary to $JAK2$ signaling could be identified. A mutation of the thrombopoietin receptor gene ($MPL$) at codon 515 (exon 10) causing a change from tryptophan to leucine ($MPL^{W515L}$) was discovered.

Subsequent studies identified additional mutations including $MPL^{S505N}$, $MPL^{W515K}$, and $MPL^{W515K}$ in a small but growing number of patients with ET and PMF (see Table 2). Although these mutations can be found in both $JAK2^{V617F}$-positive and -negative patients, they are of particular value in the latter group for helping to establish a clonal basis of the observed disease process.
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

Table 2: Frequency of MPL 515 Mutations in Patients With Philadelphia Chromosome-Negative MPN

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Mutation Detection Method</th>
<th>PV</th>
<th>ET</th>
<th>PMF</th>
<th>Normals</th>
<th>Other MPNs</th>
<th>Comment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pikman et al (2006)</td>
<td>DNA sequencing</td>
<td>0/10</td>
<td>0/50</td>
<td>4/45</td>
<td>0/270</td>
<td>JAK2 negative</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(8.8%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pardanani et al (2006)</td>
<td>Site 1: PCR with DNA sequencing</td>
<td>0/38</td>
<td>2/167</td>
<td>8/198</td>
<td>0/64</td>
<td>3/118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Site 2: DNA sequencing</td>
<td>0/204</td>
<td>2/151</td>
<td>5/92</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(2.5%)</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(1%)</td>
<td>(4%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer et al (2008)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Preliminary 3/88 (3.4%)</td>
<td>Preliminary 8/112 (7.1%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>Prospective 32/776 (4.1%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pancrazzi et al (2008)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>0/50</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>19/217</td>
<td>0/60</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>(8.7%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruan et al (2009)</td>
<td>PCR testing</td>
<td>0/32</td>
<td>7/199</td>
<td>3/24</td>
<td>0/52</td>
<td>0/29</td>
<td>–</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(3.5%)</td>
<td>(12.5%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td>(0%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>–</td>
<td>(5.3%)</td>
<td>(5.2%)</td>
<td>–</td>
<td>(0.8%)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

PV: polycythemia vera; ET: essential thrombocythemia; PMF: primary myelofibrosis; MPN: myeloproliferative neoplasm.
Similar to observations about JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-negative mutations in exon 12, MPL exon 10 mutations appeared to demonstrate an autoinhibitory role leading to receptor activation in the absence of thrombopoietin binding. Expression of the MPL allele resulted in cytokine-independent growth of 3 independent cell lines, and transplantation of mice with bone marrow expressing this allele resulted in a distinct myeloproliferative disorder.

Although data sets are small, the JAK2 exon 12 and MPL exon 10 mutations are unique, appear to be associated with MPNs, and exhibit in vitro and murine model behavior consistent with a causative role in MPNs. The 2008 WHO criteria specifically cite testing for JAK2 exon 12 mutations in patients with suspected PV (presumably in patients who are JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-negative) and for MPL\(^{W515L/K}\) in patients with PMF (presumably in patients who are JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-negative). The criteria suggest testing for JAK2\(^{V617F}\) or other clonal markers, such as MPL, in patients with ET.

Mutations of JAK2 in Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemias Associated With Down Syndrome

Children with Down syndrome have a 10- to 20-fold increased risk of developing acute leukemia. The mechanisms for this are unknown; the disease process appears to be exclusively B cell in origin. In 2007, Malinge et al published a case report describing a novel JAK2 mutation in a patient with Down syndrome and B-cell precursor ALL. Speculating that this finding might relate to the role the JAK/signal transducer and activator of transcription (STAT) signaling pathway played in early B-cell development, Bercovich et al studied 88 patients with Down syndrome-associated ALL for JAK2 mutations and compared these to 216 patients with sporadic ALL. Five mutant alleles were identified in 16 (18%) of the patients with Down syndrome, all at a highly conserved arginine residue (R683) on exon 16. These mutations immortalized primary mouse hematopoietic progenitor cells in vitro. Only a single non-Down syndrome patient exhibited this mutation, and this patient was found to have an isochromosome 21q (loss of the short [p] arm of chromosome 21 and duplication of the long [q] arm). This finding was subsequently confirmed by Gaikwad et al who found that 20% of patients with Down syndrome with ALL exhibited a point mutation at this location. The role of this abnormality and efforts to consider treatment modifications based on its finding remain subject to future study.

Molecular Profiling: Phenotype/Genotype Associations and Impact on Prognosis

Although there has been great interest in the use of the JAK2\(^{V617F}\) test as a front-line diagnostic test in the evaluation of myeloproliferative patients, there also has been a growing effort to link the presence of this mutation and the quantitative measurement of its allele burden with clinical features and biological behavior. Unfortunately, due to differences in disease definitions, differences in methods of testing, differences in sample type (bone marrow versus circulating blood cells), and differences in study design, the literature in this area is conflicting and inconclusive.

Because most patients with PV exhibit the mutation, attention has been focused in this disease on differences in its presence in the homozygous versus heterozygous state and on whether allele burden correlates with clinical or laboratory features. Studies have reported a range of findings, including association of homozygous states with older age, higher hemoglobin level at diagnosis, leukocytosis, more frequent pruritus, increased incidence of fibrotic transformation, and larger spleen volumes. Studies that compared quantitative measurements of allele burden with disease manifestations have demonstrated both...
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

a positive association and lack of an association with thrombosis, fibrotic transformation, and need for chemotherapy.

The impact of the presence of JAK2\(^{V617F}\) in patients with ET is also controversial. In several studies, the presence of this mutation has been associated with advanced age, higher hemoglobin levels, increased leukocyte count, lower platelet count, and a higher rate of transformation to PV. Discrepant results have been reported for thrombotic events and for fibrotic transformation. A 2009 meta-analysis by Dahabreh et al surveyed 394 studies on the subject of outcomes in ET. Dahabreh et al concluded that thrombosis but not myelofibrosis or leukemia appeared to be influenced by the presence of JAK2 mutations. Dahabreh et al cautioned that there was a need for prospective studies to determine how this information might be used in treatment choices.

Thrombotic effects have been reported to be most pronounced for splanchnic vascular events, and there has been little support for use of testing in patients with more general thrombosis or primary thrombocytosis. Results for splanchnic events have been contradictory. In 1 retrospective study that assessed JAK2\(^{V617F}\) in patients treated for thrombosis in ET and in unselected patients with splanchnic vein thrombosis, JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutations were more common in patients with splanchnic vein thrombosis and appeared to identify a subset of patients who might benefit from antiplatelet therapy. However, the outcome of routine testing in both settings remained unclear. In a 2011 international collaborative study of patients with ET, patients with JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutations appeared at risk for arterial thrombosis but not for venous thrombosis.

A 2009 report by Hussein et al demonstrated that although there was significant overlap in JAK2\(^{V617F}\) allele burden among various MPN entities, quantitative measurements suggested discriminatory differences between patients with ET and the prefibrotic stage of PMF.

JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutational status and allele burden appear particularly poorly defined in patients with PMF. In a series of confusing and non congruent articles, it has been concluded that:
- Patients with JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutations required fewer blood transfusions but exhibited poorer overall survival than those without the mutation.
- Patients with JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutations did not show differences in the incidence of thrombosis, overall survival, or leukemia-free survival.
- Patients with homozygous JAK2\(^{V617F}\) mutations showed an increased evolution toward large splenomegaly, need of splenectomy, and leukemic transformation.
- Patients with low allele burdens appeared to exhibit shortened survival, perhaps because they represented a myelodepleted subset of affected patients.

In 2013, European LeukemiaNet and MPN&MPNr (related diseases)-EuroNet undertook a joint systematic evaluation of JAK2\(^{V617F}\) quantitative polymerase chain reaction (qPCR) assays to identify "an assay that, beyond being robust enough for routine diagnostic purposes, also showed the best performance profile when used for predicting outcome following an allogeneic transplant." Effective assays can detect an allele burden as low as 1%. Investigators assessed 3 unpublished laboratory-developed tests and 6 published assays in 12 laboratories in 7 countries. The detection limit of each assay was determined in 7 quality
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

control rounds comprising serial dilutions of centrally-distributed wild-type and mutated cell line DNA and plasmid standards. DNA detection was verified by pyrosequencing. Sensitivity and specificity of the 2 best-performing assays were further assessed in serial samples from 28 patients who underwent allogeneic hematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT) for JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-positive disease and in 100 peripheral blood samples from healthy controls, respectively. The most sensitive assay performed consistently across various qPCR platforms and detected mutant allele (ie, minimal residual disease) in transplant recipients a median of 22 weeks (range, 6-85 weeks) before relapse. The authors suggested that the assay could be used to guide management of patients undergoing allogeneic HSCT. Although the study supports the analytic validity of the assay, given the inconsistency of outcomes when JAK2\(^{V617F}\) testing is used for treatment monitoring (described earlier), utility of this assay or any JAK2\(^{V617F}\) test for treatment monitoring is uncertain. Other investigators have studied methods to improve JAK2 and MPL mutation testing using qPCR, and novel approaches (eg, an electrochemical DNA biosensor).

Treatment

Due to the strong epidemiologic and biologic literature linking JAK2 pathway mutations to occurrence of MPNs, there has been considerable recent attention on using JAK2 as a molecular target for drug discovery. In preclinical and early clinical studies, a number of promising JAK2 inhibitors have been identified, and reports have suggested that some of these are useful in symptom relief. Many patients with these diseases have good responses to cytotoxic drugs, and the natural course of disease, particularly for PV and ET, can be quite indolent. Considerable study will be required to sort through issues of safety and efficacy of these new treatments before they enter routine clinical use. Several early phase and preliminary treatment trials evaluating the safety and efficacy of tyrosine kinase inhibitors in patients with JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-positive myeloproliferative neoplasms have been reported. It also has been noted that benefits from tyrosine kinase therapy may not be specific for JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-positive MPNs but may be observed in wild-type disease as well.

Although identification of a drug producing long-term remission (like imatinib in CML) is the ultimate goal, discovery likely will be complicated by the complexity of molecular processes occurring in patients with these other MPNs and the fact that JAK2\(^{V617F}\) alone does not appear to be a unique or absolutely necessary event in many patients with these diseases. The role of JAK2\(^{V617F}\) in selecting or monitoring patients for new treatments or residual neoplasia remains undefined.

Several reports suggest that JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-positive patients are more sensitive to treatment with hydroxyurea than JAK2\(^{V617F}\)-negative patients. In 1 study of hydroxyurea treatment in patients with PV or ET harboring the JAK2\(^{V617F}\) gene, serial changes in allele burden were observed. However, the value of these findings was unclear, and the authors concluded that serial testing in patients taking hydroxyurea should be confined to clinical studies.

On November 16, 2011, FDA approved ruxolitinib (a JAK kinase inhibitor) for the treatment of intermediate- and high-risk myelofibrosis (including primary myelofibrosis, postpolycythemia vera myelofibrosis, and postessential thrombocythemia myelofibrosis) based on results from 2 randomized controlled trials (RCTs). One, a double-blind RCT in patients with intermediate- to high-risk myelofibrosis, randomized participants to twice-daily oral ruxolitinib (n=155) or placebo (n=154) and followed patients for 76 weeks.
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

outcome, a 35% or greater reduction in spleen volume at or after 24 weeks, was observed in 41.9% of patients treated with ruxolitinib compared with 0.7% in the placebo group (p<0.001). There were 13 deaths in the ruxolitinib group (8.4%) and 24 deaths in the placebo group (15.6%) over a median follow-up of 51 weeks (Kaplan-Meier method, p=0.04). This association was no longer significant at the prospectively defined data cutoff of 32 weeks median follow-up (Kaplan-Meier method, p=0.33). Myelofibrosis symptom score at 24 weeks improved 45.9% from baseline in patients who received ruxolitinib and 5.3% in placebo patients. Discontinuations due to adverse events were similar in the ruxolitinib and placebo groups (11% and 10.6%, respectively). In post hoc subgroup analysis of patients with the JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F} mutation, mean changes in spleen volume at 24 weeks were -34.6% in the ruxolitinib group and +8.1% in the placebo group. Changes in total symptom score at 24 weeks in patients with the JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F} mutation were -52.6% in the ruxolitinib group and +42.8% in the placebo group. (Higher scores indicate more severe symptoms.)

A second trial by Harrison et al reached similar conclusions. Patients with intermediate- or high-risk primary myelofibrosis, postpolycythemia vera myelofibrosis, or postessential thrombocythemia myelofibrosis received oral ruxolitinib (n=146) or best available therapy (n=73). No difference in overall survival was observed between the 2 groups at 48 weeks. Twenty-eight percent of patients in the ruxolitinib group had at least a 35% reduction in spleen volume at 48 weeks compared with 0% in the control group (p<0.001). In the JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F}-positive subgroup, spleen reduction was 33% in the ruxolitinib group and 0% in the control group. In the ruxolitinib group, patients had an improved overall quality of life and a reduction in myelofibrosis symptoms compared with no benefit in the control group. Serious adverse events were similar between groups: anemia occurred in 5% of patients in the ruxolitinib group and 4% of the control group, pneumonia occurred in 1% of the ruxolitinib group and 5% of the control group, and 8% of patients in the ruxolitinib group and 5% in the control group discontinued treatment.

Summary
There is an extensive body of literature on the clinical validation of JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F} as a distinct marker of patients with Philadelphia chromosome-negative classic MPNs. In almost a dozen reports (all case series), JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F} has emerged as a unique clonal finding in patients with PV, ET, or PMF. Although the association between defined disease and presence of the marker has been variable depending on detection methods used and study design, test specificity is virtually 100%. In patients with PV tested using polymerase chain reaction methodology, sensitivity also may approach 100% (reports up to 97%). In the subset of patients with suspected PV who are JAK2\textsuperscript{V617F}-negative, there is compelling evidence from several case series suggesting that other JAK2 mutations (involving exon 12) may be identified.

Given the difficulty of using classic criteria (morphology and complex tests such as erythropoietin measurements or measurements of endogenous erythroid colony formation), JAK2 testing will facilitate the diagnostic workup. The presence of this marker biologically and clinically is a convincing substitute for the need to rule out reactive causes of erythrocytosis. Testing for this marker is recommended in clinical practice guidelines for patients with all of the most common Philadelphia chromosome-negative MPNs. Therefore, JAK2 testing may be considered medically necessary as a diagnostic test for patients with signs and symptoms of MPN.
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Mutation testing to establish disease phenotype (such as disease prognosis) or to select or monitor therapy remains an area of intense interest with a growing number of studies, in particular drug trials. Recently, multiple additional mutations have been identified in patients with various MPN disorders. These appear to have less specificity than the JAK2 and MPL mutations, and their use in understanding, diagnosing, and treating disease remains a matter requiring further study. It is currently unclear if these mutations carry broad, albeit nonspecific pathogenetic relevance to MPNs or whether they are simply passenger mutations with little or no functional relevance. JAK2 testing for prognosis or to direct therapy is considered investigational.

References
20. Sidon P, EJ Housni, Dessars B et al. The JAK2(V617F) mutation is detectable at very low level in peripheral blood of healthy donors. Leukemia 2006; 20(9):1622.
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014


50. Tefferi A, Lasho TL, Huang J et al. Low JAK2V617F allele burden in primary myelofibrosis, compared to either a higher allele burden or unmutated status, is associated with inferior overall and leukemia-free survival. Leukemia 2008; 22(4):756-61.


55. Fantasia F, Di Capua EN, Centra N et al. A highly specific q-RT-PCR assay to address the relevance of the JAK2WT and JAK2V617F expression levels and control genes in Ph-negative myeloproliferative neoplasms. Ann Hematol 2013.


Coding
The five character codes included in the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines are obtained from Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), copyright 2013 by the American Medical Association (AMA). CPT is developed by the AMA as a listing of descriptive terms and five character identifying codes and modifiers for reporting medical services and procedures performed by physician.

The responsibility for the content of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines is with Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and no endorsement by the AMA is intended or should be implied. The AMA disclaims responsibility for any consequences or liability attributable or related to any use, nonuse or interpretation of information contained in Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines. Fee schedules, relative value units, conversion factors and/or related components are not assigned by the AMA, are not part of CPT, and the AMA is not recommending their use. The AMA does not directly or indirectly practice medicine or dispense medical services. The AMA assumes no liability for data contained or not contained herein. Any use of CPT outside of Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines should refer to the most current Current
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

Procedural Terminology which contains the complete and most current listing of CPT codes and descriptive terms. Applicable FARS/DFARS apply.

CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association.

Codes used to identify services associated with this policy may include (but may not be limited to) the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>81270, 81402, 81403</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
<td>No codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD-9 Diagnosis</td>
<td>202.60-202.68, 205.10-205.12, 238.4, 238.71, 238.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD-9 Procedure</td>
<td>No codes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Policy History

Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014
04/03/2014 Medical Policy Committee review
Next Scheduled Review Date: 04/2015

*Investigational – A medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational if the effectiveness has not been clearly tested and it has not been incorporated into standard medical practice. Any determination we make that a medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational will be based on a consideration of the following:

A. whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product can be lawfully marketed without approval of the U.S. FDA and whether such approval has been granted at the time the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is sought to be furnished; or

B. whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product requires further studies or clinical trials to determine its maximum tolerated dose, toxicity, safety, effectiveness, or effectiveness as compared with the standard means of treatment or diagnosis, must improve health outcomes, according to the consensus of opinion among experts as shown by reliable evidence, including:

1. Consultation with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association technology assessment program (TEC) or other nonaffiliated technology evaluation center(s);
2. credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community; or
3. reference to federal regulations.

**Medically Necessary (or “Medical Necessity”) - Health care services, treatment, procedures, equipment, drugs, devices, items or supplies that a Provider, exercising prudent clinical judgment, would provide to a patient for the purpose of preventing, evaluating, diagnosing or treating an illness, injury, disease or its symptoms, and that are:

A. in accordance with nationally accepted standards of medical practice;

B. clinically appropriate, in terms of type, frequency, extent, level of care, site and duration, and considered effective for the patient’s illness, injury or disease; and

C. not primarily for the personal comfort or convenience of the patient, physician or other health care provider, and not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of that patient's illness, injury or disease.

For these purposes, “nationally accepted standards of medical practice” means standards that are based on credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community, Physician Specialty Society recommendations and the views of Physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas and any other relevant factors.

‡ Indicated trademarks are the registered trademarks of their respective owners.
JAK2 and MPL Mutation Analysis in Myeloproliferative Neoplasms

Policy # 00420
Original Effective Date: 04/23/2014
Current Effective Date: 04/23/2014

NOTICE: Medical Policies are scientific based opinions, provided solely for coverage and informational purposes. Medical Policies should not be construed to suggest that the Company recommends, advocates, requires, encourages, or discourages any particular treatment, procedure, or service, or any particular course of treatment, procedure, or service.