Medical Policy
Left-Atrial Appendage Closure Devices for Stroke Prevention in Atrial Fibrillation

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Policy Number: 334
BCBSA Reference Number: 2.02.26

Related Policies
None

Policy
Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity Medicare HMO BlueSM and Medicare PPO BlueSM Members

Left-atrial appendage closure devices for the prevention of stroke in atrial fibrillation is INVESTIGATIONAL.

Prior Authorization Information
Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS)
This is NOT a covered service.

Commercial Members: PPO, and Indemnity
This is NOT a covered service.

Medicare Members: HMO BlueSM
This is NOT a covered service.

Medicare Members: PPO BlueSM
This is NOT a covered service.

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD-9 Codes
The following codes are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member’s contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage as it applies to an individual member.
Providers should report all services using the most up-to-date industry-standard procedure, revenue, and diagnosis codes, including modifiers where applicable.

**CPT Codes**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CPT codes:</th>
<th>Code Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0281T</td>
<td>Percutaneous transcatheter closure of the left atrial appendage with implant, including fluoroscopy, transseptal puncture, catheter placement(s), left atrial angiography, left atrial appendage angiography, radiological supervision and interpretation</td>
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**ICD-9 Diagnosis Codes**

Investigational for all diagnoses.

**Description**

Stroke is the most serious complication of atrial fibrillation and occurs primarily as a result of thromboembolism from the left atrium. The lack of atrial contractions in atrial fibrillation leads to blood stasis in the left atrium, and this low flow state increases the risk for thrombosis. The area of the left atrium with the highest risk of thrombosis is the left-atrial appendage (LAA).

The main treatment for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation is anticoagulation, which has proven efficacy. Surgical removal, or exclusion, of the LAA is often performed in patients with atrial fibrillation who are undergoing open heart surgery for other reasons. Percutaneous LAA closure devices have been developed as a nonpharmacologic alternative to anticoagulation for stroke prevention in atrial fibrillation. The devices may prevent stroke by occluding the LAA, thus preventing thrombus formation.

An example of an LAA closure device for the prevention of stroke in atrial fibrillation is the WATCHMAN® device from Atritech, the Cardioblate® device from Medtronic Corp., and the Amplatzer® device from AGA Medical Corp. All LAA closure devices for the prevention of stroke in atrial fibrillation are considered investigational regardless of the commercial name, the manufacturer or FDA approval status.

**Summary**

LAA occlusion devices are nonpharmacologic alternatives to anticoagulation for patients with atrial fibrillation. Case series have demonstrated that these devices can be successfully implanted percutaneously in most patients. Complications such as pericardial effusion and tamponade are reported in available studies at a rate of 2-5%. Periprocedural stroke has been reported uncommonly. One randomized, controlled trial compared the WATCHMAN® device to warfarin and reported noninferiority on a composite outcome of stroke, cardiovascular/unexplained death, or systemic embolism after 2 years of follow-up. There were a higher number of complications in the LAA closure group, primarily due to early complications associated with the device placement. Longer term outcomes past 2 years have not been reported. Given the limited data regarding impact on net health outcome, this is considered investigational.

**Policy History**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Action</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9/2014</td>
<td>New references added from BCBSA National medical policy.</td>
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<tr>
<td>5/2013</td>
<td>New references from BCBSA National medical policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/1/2011</td>
<td>No changes to policy statements.</td>
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**Information Pertaining to All Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Policies**

Click on any of the following terms to access the relevant information:

- Medical Policy Terms of Use
- Managed Care Guidelines
- Indemnity/PPO Guidelines
References