Medical and Behavioral Health Policy
Section: Medicine
Policy Number: II-148
Effective Date: 01/22/2014

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota medical policies do not imply that members should not receive specific services based on the recommendation of their provider. These policies govern coverage and not clinical practice. Providers are responsible for medical advice and treatment of patients. Members with specific health care needs should consult an appropriate health care professional.

**BIOIMPEDANCE SPECTROSCOPY DEVICES FOR DETECTION AND MANAGEMENT OF LYMPHEDEMA**

**Description:** Lymphedema is a condition of localized fluid retention and tissue swelling caused by a compromised lymphatic system. Primary lymphedema occurs in individuals who have a congenital abnormality or dysfunction of their lymphatic system. Secondary lymphedema is an acquired condition and is caused by a disruption or obstruction of the normal lymphatic system. Common causes of secondary lymphedema include: surgery (particularly lymph node dissection for breast cancer), radiation therapy, trauma, and lymphatic obstruction by a tumor. The detection of subclinical lymphedema (i.e., the early detection of lymphedema before clinical symptoms become apparent) is also under investigation. Subclinical disease may exist for months or years before overt edema is noted. Those who support the approach to diagnose subclinical disease believe that early treatment of subclinical lymphedema may result in less severe chronic disease.

Conventional clinical methods to diagnose and monitor lymphedema include serial measurements of limb circumference and limb volume (i.e., water displacement volumetry). A number of newer techniques are also being evaluated, including bioimpedance with use of bioimpedance spectroscopy (BIS) analysis. BIS is based on the theory that the amount of opposition to flow of electric current (impedance) through the body is inversely proportional to the volume of fluid in the tissue. In lymphedema, tissue impedance decreases with the accumulation of excess interstitial fluid.

In 2008, the ImpediMED L-Dex U400BIS Extra Cellular Fluid Analyzer received 510(k) marketing clearance from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). This device is classified as an impedance plethysmograph and was cleared “to aid in the clinical assessment of unilateral lymphedema of the arm in women.” The FDA market clearance also states, “The device is not intended to diagnose or predict lymphedema of an extremity.”
Policy: The use of bioimpedance spectroscopy in the diagnosis and management of patients with lymphedema, including its use in the detection of subclinical secondary lymphedema, is considered INVESTIGATIVE due to a lack of evidence demonstrating its impact on improved health outcomes.

Coverage: Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota medical policies apply generally to all Blue Cross and Blue Plus plans and products. Benefit plans vary in coverage and some plans may not provide coverage for certain services addressed in the medical policies.

Medicaid products and some self-insured plans may have additional policies and prior authorization requirements. Receipt of benefits is subject to all terms and conditions of the member’s summary plan description (SPD). As applicable, review the provisions relating to a specific coverage determination, including exclusions and limitations. Blue Cross reserves the right to revise, update and/or add to its medical policies at any time without notice.

For Medicare NCD and/or Medicare LCD, please consult CMS or National Government Services websites.

Refer to the Pre-Certification/Pre-Authorization section of the Medical Behavioral Health Policy Manual for the full list of services, procedures, prescription drugs, and medical devices that require Pre-certification/Pre-Authorization. Note that services with specific coverage criteria may be reviewed retrospectively to determine if criteria are being met. Retrospective denial of claims may result if criteria are not met.

Coding: The following codes are included below for informational purposes only, and are subject to change without notice. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

CPT: 0239T Bioimpedance spectroscopy (BIS), measuring 100 frequencies or greater, direct measurement of extracellular fluid differences between the limbs

Policy History: Developed January 12, 2011

Most recent history:
Reviewed January 11, 2012
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Cross Reference: