Photodynamic Therapy (PDT) for the Treatment of Cancer, including Barrett's Esophagus

DESCRIPTION

Photodynamic therapy (PDT) has been investigated for use in a wide variety of cancers, including esophageal, lung, cholangiocarcinoma, bladder, breast, brain (administered intraoperatively), head and neck cancers; including Barrett’s esophagus. PDT utilizes a photosynthesizing drug given intravenously that preferentially accumulates in cancerous tissues. After a period of time ranging from a few minutes to 48 hours, the treated cancer cells are exposed to a low-energy single wavelength laser light that activates the drug. A light source (e.g., fiberoptic endoscope, quartz fiberoptic cable with a modified tip) endoscopically delivers the laser light to the targeted tumor tissue. Light-activation of the drug produces a toxic form of oxygen that causes destruction of the cancer cells. Photodynamic therapy may also be called phototherapy, photoradiation therapy, photosensitizing therapy, or photochemotherapy.

Note: PDT can also be delivered via external application for the treatment of skin lesions. This policy does not address the external application for the treatment of skin lesions. Also, PDT should not be confused with extracorporeal photopheresis, which involves withdrawing blood from the patient, irradiating it with ultraviolet light, and then returning the blood to the patient.

POLICY

The proposal is to add words in red text and to delete words or statements with a strikethrough:

- Photodynamic therapy for the treatment of certain cancers and high-grade dysplastic Barrett’s esophagus is considered medically necessary if the medical appropriateness criteria are met. (See Medical Appropriateness below.)

- Photodynamic therapy for the treatment of other conditions/diseases, including, but not limited to, the following: Barrett’s esophagus without associated high-grade dysplasia, bladder, breast, brain, and other head and neck cancers, and all other malignancies is considered investigational.

- Any device utilized for this procedure must have FDA approval specific to the indication, otherwise it will be considered investigational.

MEDICAL APPROPRIATENESS

- One or more courses of photodynamic therapy is considered medically appropriate if ANY ONE of the following are met:
  - Obstructing esophageal cancer, for palliation when treatment cannot be performed satisfactorily with Nd:YAG (neodymium-doped yttrium aluminum garnet) laser therapy
  - Early-stage endobronchial non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC), when surgery and radiotherapy are not indicated
  - Obstructing endobronchial lesions non-small lung cancer (NSCLC), for reduction of obstruction and palliation of symptoms
  - Barrett's esophagus with associated high-grade dysplasia
  - Palliative treatment of unresectable cholangiocarcinoma (bile duct cancer) when used with stenting

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

This document has been classified as public information
• Any specific products referenced in this policy are just examples and are intended for illustrative purposes only. It is not intended to be a recommendation of one product over another, and is not intended to represent a complete listing of all products available. These examples are contained in the parenthetical e.g. statement.

• We develop Medical Policies to provide guidance to Members and Providers. This Medical Policy relates only to the services or supplies described in it. The existence of a Medical Policy is not an authorization, certification, explanation of benefits or a contract for the service (or supply) that is referenced in the Medical Policy. For a determination of the benefits that a Member is entitled to receive under his or her health plan, the Member's health plan must be reviewed. If there is a conflict between the Medical Policy and a health plan, the express terms of the health plan will govern.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The American College of Gastroenterology recommends that an expert gastrointestinal pathologist confirm the diagnosis of dysplasia in Barrett's esophagus.

SOURCES


EFFECTIVE DATE

ID_BA