

Medical Policy Manual

Approved Revised Policy: Do Not Implement Until 4/30/19

Intravenous Anesthetics for the Treatment of Chronic Pain and Psychiatric Disorders

DESCRIPTION

Intravenous (IV) infusion of lidocaine or ketamine has been investigated for the treatment of migraine and chronic daily headache, fibromyalgia and chronic neuropathic pain. Chronic neuropathic pain disorders include phantom limb pain, postherpetic neuralgia, complex regional pain syndromes (CRPSs), diabetic neuropathy, and pain related to stroke or spinal cord injuries. For this application, one or more courses of IV infusion would be administered over a period of several hours or several days. IV infusion of lidocaine or ketamine has also been investigated for the treatment of psychiatric disorders, e.g., treatment resistant depression, suicidal ideation and obsessive-compulsive disorder.

Intractable pain presents a great challenge to individuals and their healthcare providers. Recent studies, primarily from outside of the United States, suggests that IV courses of ketamine may provide at least temporary relief to some individuals with chronic pain. The intense treatment protocols, severity of adverse effects, and limited durability raise questions about the overall health benefit of this procedure. Additional clinical trials are needed to evaluate the long-term safety of repeated courses of IV anesthetics.

IV lidocaine is approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for systemic use in the acute treatment of arrhythmias and locally as an anesthetic. Ketamine hydrochloride injection is FDA-indicated for diagnostic and surgical procedures that do not require skeletal muscle relaxation, for the induction of anesthesia before the administration of other general anesthetic agents, and to supplement low-potency agents, such as nitrous oxide. IV ketamine and lidocaine for the treatment of chronic pain and psychiatric disorders is an off-label use.

POLICY

- Intravenous infusion of anesthetics (e.g., ketamine or lidocaine) for the treatment of **psychiatric disorders** and chronic pain, including, but not limited to chronic neuropathic pain, chronic daily headache, and fibromyalgia, is considered **investigational**.

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

- 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

There is a lack of evidence in the peer-reviewed literature evaluating the overall health benefit and long-term safety of repeat courses of IV anesthetics in the treatment of chronic pain and psychiatric disorders.

SOURCES

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EFFECTIVE DATE 4/30/2019

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