



Medical Policy

Radioembolization for Primary and Metastatic Tumors of the Liver

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NCD/LCD: N/A

Related Policies

- Radiofrequency Ablation of Miscellaneous Solid Tumors Excluding Liver Tumors, #[259](#)
- Cryosurgical Ablation of Primary or Metastatic Liver Tumors, #[633](#)
- Transcatheter Arterial Chemoembolization (TACE) to Treat Primary or Metastatic Liver Malignancies, #[634](#)
- Radiofrequency Ablation of Primary or Metastatic Liver Tumors, #[286](#)

Policy

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

Radioembolization may be considered [MEDICALLY NECESSARY](#) to treat primary hepatocellular carcinoma that is unresectable and limited to the liver.

Radioembolization may be considered [MEDICALLY NECESSARY](#) in primary hepatocellular carcinoma as a bridge to liver transplantation.

Radioembolization may be considered [MEDICALLY NECESSARY](#) to treat hepatic metastases from neuroendocrine tumors (carcinoid and noncarcinoid, as classified on pathology report or by WHO classification) with diffuse and symptomatic disease when systemic therapy has failed to control symptoms*.

*Symptomatic disease from metastatic neuroendocrine tumors refers to symptoms related to excess hormone production.

Radioembolization may be considered [MEDICALLY NECESSARY](#) to treat unresectable hepatic metastases from colorectal carcinoma, melanoma (ocular or cutaneous), or breast cancer that are both progressive and diffuse, in patients with liver-dominant disease who are refractory to chemotherapy or are not candidates for chemotherapy or other systemic therapies.

Radioembolization is considered **INVESTIGATIONAL** for all other hepatic metastases except as noted above.

Radioembolization may be considered **MEDICALLY NECESSARY** to treat primary intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma in patients with unresectable tumors.

Radioembolization is considered **INVESTIGATIONAL** for all other indications not described above.

Radioembolization should be reserved for patients with adequate functional status (Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group [ECOG] Performance Status 0-2), adequate liver function and reserve, Child-Pugh score A or B, and liver-dominant metastases.

Prior Authorization Information

Inpatient

- For services described in this policy, precertification/preauthorization **IS REQUIRED** for all products if the procedure is performed **inpatient**.

Outpatient

- For services described in this policy, see below for products where prior authorization **might be required** if the procedure is performed **outpatient**.

	Outpatient
Commercial Managed Care (HMO and POS)	Prior authorization is not required .
Commercial PPO and Indemnity	Prior authorization is not required .
Medicare HMO Blue SM	Prior authorization is not required .
Medicare PPO Blue SM	Prior authorization is not required .

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD Codes

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.

The following codes are included below for informational purposes only; this is not an all-inclusive list.

The above **medical necessity criteria MUST** be met for the following codes to be covered for Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, Indemnity, Medicare HMO Blue and Medicare PPO Blue:

HCPCS Codes

HCPCS codes:	Code Description
S2095	Transcatheter occlusion or embolization for tumor destruction, percutaneous, any method, using yttrium-90 microspheres

The following ICD Diagnosis Codes are considered medically necessary when submitted with the HCPCS code above if **medical necessity criteria** are met:

ICD-10 Diagnosis Codes

ICD-10-CM Diagnosis codes:	Code Description
C22.0	Liver cell carcinoma
C22.1	Intrahepatic bile duct carcinoma
C22.2	Hepatoblastoma
C22.3	Angiosarcoma of liver
C22.4	Other sarcomas of liver
C22.7	Other specified carcinomas of liver
C22.8	Malignant neoplasm of liver, primary, unspecified as to type
C78.7	Secondary malignant neoplasm of liver and intrahepatic bile duct
C7B.02	Secondary carcinoid tumors of liver

Description

TREATMENTS FOR HEPATIC AND NEUROENDOCRINE TUMORS

The use of external-beam radiotherapy and the application of more advanced radiotherapy approaches (eg, intensity-modulated radiotherapy) may be of limited use in patients with multiple diffuse lesions due to the low tolerance of normal liver to radiation compared with the higher doses of radiation needed to kill the tumor.

Various nonsurgical ablative techniques have been investigated that seek to cure or palliate unresectable hepatic tumors by improving locoregional control. These techniques rely on extreme temperature changes (cryosurgery or radiofrequency ablation), particle and wave physics (microwave or laser ablation), or arterial embolization therapy including chemoembolization, bland embolization, or radioembolization.

Radioembolization

Radioembolization (referred to as selective internal radiotherapy in older literature) delivers small beads (microspheres) impregnated with yttrium 90 intra-arterially via the hepatic artery. The microspheres, which become permanently embedded, are delivered to tumors preferentially because the hepatic circulation is uniquely organized, whereby tumors greater than 0.5 cm rely on the hepatic artery for blood supply while the normal liver is primarily perfused via the portal vein. Yttrium 90 is a pure beta-emitter with a relatively limited effective range and a short half-life that helps focus the radiation and minimize its spread. Candidates for radioembolization are initially examined by hepatic angiogram to identify and map the hepatic arterial system. At that time, a mixture of technetium 99-labeled albumin particles is delivered via the hepatic artery to simulate microspheres. Single-photon emission computed tomography is used to detect possible shunting of the albumin particles into the gastrointestinal or pulmonary vasculature.

Currently, 2 commercial forms of yttrium-90 microspheres are available: a glass sphere (TheraSphere) and a resin sphere (SIR-Spheres). Noncommercial forms are mostly used outside the United States. While the commercial products use the same radioisotope (yttrium 90) and have the same target dose (100 gray), they differ in microsphere size profile, base material (ie, resin vs glass), and size of commercially available doses. The physical characteristics of the active and inactive ingredients affect the flow of microspheres during injection, their retention at the tumor site, spread outside the therapeutic target region, and dosimetry calculations. The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted premarket approval of SIR-Spheres for use in combination with 5-fluorouridine chemotherapy by hepatic arterial infusion to treat unresectable hepatic metastases from colorectal cancer. In contrast, TheraSphere's glass sphere was approved under a humanitarian device exemption for use as monotherapy to treat unresectable hepatocellular carcinoma. In 2007, this humanitarian device exemption was expanded to include patients with hepatocellular carcinoma who have partial or branch portal vein thrombosis. For these reasons, results obtained with a product do not necessarily apply to another commercial (or noncommercial) products

Summary

For individuals who have unresectable hepatocellular carcinoma who receive RE or RE with a liver transplant, the evidence includes primarily retrospective and prospective observational studies, with limited evidence from RCTs. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Observational studies have suggested that RE has high response rates compared with historical controls. Two small pilot RCTs have compared RE with alternative therapies for hepatocellular carcinoma, including transarterial chemoembolization and transarterial chemoembolization with drug-eluting beads. Both trials reported similar outcomes for RE compared with alternatives. Evidence from observational studies has demonstrated that RE can permit successful liver transplantation in certain patients. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have unresectable intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma who receive RE, the evidence includes case series. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Comparisons of these case series to case series of alternative treatments have suggested that RE for primary intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma has response rates similar to those seen with standard chemotherapy. RE may play a role for patients with unresectable tumors that are chemorefractory or who are unable to tolerate systemic chemotherapy. However, the evidence is not yet sufficiently robust to draw definitive conclusions about treatment efficacy. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have unresectable neuroendocrine tumors who receive RE, the evidence includes an open-label phase 2 study, retrospective reviews, and case series, some of which have compared RE with other transarterial liver-directed therapies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. This evidence has suggested that RE provides outcomes similar to standard therapies and historical controls for patients with neuroendocrine tumor-related symptoms or progression of the liver tumor. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have unresectable intrahepatic metastases from colorectal cancer and prior treatment failure who receive RE, the evidence includes several small- to moderate-sized RCTs, prospective trials, and retrospective studies using a variety of comparators, as well as systematic reviews of these studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. RCTs of patients with prior treatment failure have methodologic problems, do not show definitive superiority of RE compared with alternatives, but tend to show greater tumor response with RE. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have unresectable intrahepatic metastases from other cancers (eg, breast, melanoma, pancreatic) who receive RE, the evidence includes observational studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. These studies have shown significant tumor response; however, improvement in survival has not been demonstrated in controlled comparative studies. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Policy History

Date	Action
9/2018	BCBSA National medical policy review. No changes to policy statements. New references added. Background and summary clarified.
8/2017	New references added from BCBSA National medical policy.
8/2016	Policy statement on neuroendocrine tumors clarified to indicate carcinoid and noncarcinoid, as classified on pathology report or by WHO classification. 8/1/2016
11/2015	BCBSA National medical policy review. New medically necessary indications described. Clarified coding information. Effective 11/1/2015.

5/2014	Updated Coding section with ICD10 procedure and diagnosis codes, effective 10/2015.
5/2014	BCBSA National medical policy review. Clarified coding information Investigational indications clarified. Effective 5/1/2014.
1/2014	Coding information clarified.
9/2013	BCBSA National medical policy review. New investigational indications described. Effective 9/1/2013.
11/2011-4/2012	Medical policy ICD 10 remediation: Formatting, editing and coding updates. No changes to policy statements.
12/1/2011	BCBSA National medical policy review. Changes to policy statements.
4/1/2011	Medical policy 292, effective 04/01/2011, describing covered and non-covered indication.

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](#)

[Clinical Exception Process](#)

[Medical Technology Assessment Guidelines](#)

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