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Coverage Policy Number **IP0131**

Deflazacort

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Related Coverage Resources

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE
The following Coverage Policy applies to health benefit plans administered by Cigna Companies. Certain Cigna Companies and/or lines of business only provide utilization review services to clients and do not make coverage determinations. References to standard benefit plan language and coverage determinations do not apply to those clients. Coverage Policies are intended to provide guidance in interpreting certain standard benefit plans administered by Cigna Companies. Please note, the terms of a customer's particular benefit plan document [Group Service Agreement, Evidence of Coverage, Certificate of Coverage, Summary Plan Description (SPD) or similar plan document] may differ significantly from the standard benefit plans upon which these Coverage Policies are based. For example, a customer's benefit plan document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a Coverage Policy. In the event of a conflict, a customer's benefit plan document always supersedes the information in the Coverage Policies. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan document. Coverage determinations in each specific instance require consideration of 1) the terms of the applicable benefit plan document in effect on the date of service; 2) any applicable laws/regulations; 3) any relevant collateral source materials including Coverage Policies and; 4) the specific facts of the particular situation. Coverage Policies relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans. Coverage Policies are not recommendations for treatment and should never be used as treatment guidelines. In certain markets, delegated vendor guidelines may be used to support medical necessity and other coverage determinations.

Overview

This policy supports medical necessity review for deflazacort (Emflaza™).

Receipt of sample product does not satisfy any criteria requirements for coverage.

Initial Approval Criteria

Deflazacort (Emflaza) is considered medically necessary for the treatment of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) when the individual meets ALL of the following criteria:

1. 2 years of age or older
2. Documented diagnosis of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy with confirmed pathogenic or likely pathogenic variant in the dystrophin gene **OR** absence of, or marked decrease in, dystrophin protein on muscle biopsy
3. Experienced significant adverse effects while on prednisone or prednisolone therapy

4. The medication is being prescribed by, or in consultation with, a physician who specializes in the treatment of Duchenne muscular dystrophy and/or neuromuscular disorders

When coverage is available and medically necessary, the dosage, frequency, duration of therapy, and site of care should be reasonable, clinically appropriate, and supported by evidence-based literature and adjusted based upon severity, alternative available treatments, and previous response to therapy.

Continuation of Therapy

Continuation of deflazacort (Emflaza) is considered medically necessary for Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy when initial criteria are met AND beneficial response is demonstrated (for example, improvement or stabilization in motor function [such as time from supine to standing, time to climb four stairs, time to run or walk 30 feet], muscle strength, or pulmonary function).

Authorization Duration

Initial approval duration: up to 12 months.

Reauthorization approval duration: up to 12 months.

Conditions Not Covered

Any other use is considered experimental, investigational or unproven.

Background

OVERVIEW
Emflaza is a corticosteroid indicated for the treatment of patients ≥ 2 years of age with **Duchenne muscular dystrophy** (DMD).[1] The efficacy and safety of Emflaza have not been established in patients < 2 years of age.

Disease Overview
DMD is an X-linked recessive disease affecting 1 in 3,600 to 6,000 newborn male infants.[2] The disease is attributed to large frame-shift deletions in the DMD gene (chromosome Xp21) which lead to loss of a structural protein of muscle cells (dystrophin).[3] Females carriers are usually asymptomatic but some may show mild symptoms.[2] Most patients present with symptoms of DMD between the ages of 3 and 5 years. There are wide variances in how quickly DMD progresses, but without intervention death is at approximately 19 years of age.[2-3] With respiratory, cardiac, orthopedic and rehabilitative interventions and use of corticosteroids, children born today can have a life expectancy of up to 40 years.

Clinical Efficacy
The efficacy and safety of Emflaza were established in two pivotal trials in boys with DMD who were ≥ 5 years of age.[4-5] In one study, treatment consisted of Emflaza 0.9 mg/kg/day, Emflaza 1.2 mg/kg/day, or prednisone 0.75 mg/kg/day (n = 196).[4] The primary efficacy analysis, mean change from baseline to Week 12 in average muscle strength (assessed by modified Medical Research Council [MRC]), demonstrated a significant least squares (LS) mean difference in favor of active treatment vs. placebo: Emflaza 0.9 mg/kg/day (0.25 vs. -0.1, P = 0.17), Emflaza 1.2 mg/kg/day (0.36 vs. -0.1, P = 0.0003), and prednisone 0.75 mg/kg/day (0.37 vs. -0.1, P = 0.0002). Adverse events (AEs) differed between prednisone and Emflaza treatment groups. Cushingoid appearance (69.4%), erythema (41.8%), and hirsutism (39.3%) were observed in a numerically greater proportion of patients in the prednisone group compared with either dose of Emflaza. Central obesity was reported in a statistically significant greater proportion of patients treated with prednisone vs. Emflaza. Psychiatric AEs were generally reported at a higher rate in the prednisone group compared with both Emflaza groups.

Guidelines
There are guidelines for the diagnosis and management of DMD available from the DMD Care Considerations Working Group (updated 2018).[6] Dystrophin gene deletion and duplication testing are usually the first test done to confirm a diagnosis of DMD. If deletion/duplication testing is negative, dystrophin gene sequencing is done to look for remaining types of mutations. If genetic testing does not confirm a diagnosis of DMD, then a muscle biopsy should be performed to test for the presence of dystrophin protein. These guidelines additionally discuss the benefits of glucocorticoids in patients with DMD. These benefits include the loss of ambulation at a later age, preservation of upper limb and respiratory function, and avoidance of scoliosis surgery. Although the benefits of glucocorticoids are well established, based on available data, there is uncertainty about which specific products and doses are best.[6]

References

1. Emflaza™ tablets and oral suspension [prescribing information]. South Plainfield, NJ: PTC Therapetuics; June 2021.
2. Annexstad EJ, Lund-Petersen I, Rasmussen M. Duchenne muscular dystrophy. *Tidsskr Nor Laegeforen*. 2014;134(14):1361-1364.
3. Wood MJA. To skip or not to skip: that is the question for Duchenne muscular dystrophy. *Mol Ther*. 2013;21(12):2131-2132.
4. Griggs RC, Miller JP, Greenberg CR, et al. Efficacy and safety of Emflaza vs prednisone and placebo for Duchenne muscular dystrophy. *Neurology*. 2016;87(20):2123-2131.
5. Angelini C, Pegoraro E, Turella E, et al. Emflaza in Duchenne dystrophy: study of long-term effect. *Muscle Nerve*. 1994;17(4):386-391.
6. Birnkrandt DJ, Bushby K, Bann CM, et al. Diagnosis and management of Duchenne muscular dystrophy, part 1: diagnosis, and neuromuscular, rehabilitation, endocrine, and gastrointestinal and nutritional management. *Lancet Neurol.* 2018 Mar; 17(3): 251-267.