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OVERVIEW

Pulsed electrical and electromagnetic stimulation are being investigated to improve functional status and relieve pain related to osteoarthritis (OA) and rheumatoid arthritis (RA) unresponsive to other standard therapies. Electrical stimulation is provided by an electronic device that noninvasively delivers a subsensory low-voltage, monophasic electrical field to the target site of pain. Pulsed electromagnetic fields are delivered via treatment coils that are placed over the skin.

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION

Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT

BlueCHiP for Medicare

Electrical stimulation for the treatment of osteoarthritis or any other condition is not covered as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Commercial Products

Electrical stimulation for the treatment of osteoarthritis or any other condition is not medically necessary as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

MEDICAL CRITERIA

Not applicable

COVERAGE

Benefits may vary between groups and contracts. Please refer to the appropriate Benefit Booklet, Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable not medically necessary/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND

Electrical and electromagnetic stimulation are being investigated to improve functional status and to relieve pain related to osteoarthritis and rheumatoid arthritis that are unresponsive to other standard therapies. Noninvasive electrical stimulators generate a weak electrical current within the target site using pulsed electromagnetic fields, capacitive coupling, or combined magnetic fields. In capacitive coupling, small skin pads or electrodes are placed on either side of the knee or wrist. Electrical stimulation is provided by an electronic device that noninvasively delivers a subsensory low-voltage, monophasic electrical field to the target site of pain. Pulsed electromagnetic fields are delivered via treatment coils placed over the skin. Combined magnetic fields deliver a time-varying field by superimposing that field onto an additional static magnetic field.

In basic research studies, pulsed electrical stimulation has been shown to alter chondrocyte-related gene expression in vitro and to have regenerative effects in animal models of cartilage injury. It is proposed that the device treats the underlying cause of the disease by stimulating the joint tissue and improving the overall health of the joint and that it provides a slow-acting, but longer-lasting improvement in symptoms. Therefore, pulsed electrical stimulation is proposed to be similar to bone stimulator therapy for fracture nonunion.

The BioniCare Bio-1000™ stimulator (VQ OrthoCare) was cleared for marketing by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the 510(k) process to deliver pulsed electrical stimulation for adjunctive treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee and rheumatoid arthritis of the hand. The FDA determined that this device was substantially equivalent to transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation devices. The BioniCare System consists of an electronic stimulator device with electrical leads placed over the affected area and held in place with a lightweight, flexible wrap, and self-adhesive fasteners. The battery-powered device delivers small pulsed electrical currents of 0.0- to 12.0-V output.

The OrthoCor™ Active Knee System (OrthoCor Medical; acquired by Caerus Corp. in 2016) uses pulsed electromagnetic field energy at a radiofrequency of 27.12 MHz to treat pain. In 2009, the OrthoCor Knee System was cleared for marketing by FDA through the 510(k) process and is classified as a short-wave diathermy device for use other than applying therapeutic deep heat (K091996, K092044). It is indicated for adjunctive use in the palliative treatment of postoperative pain and edema in superficial soft tissue and for the treatment of muscle and joint aches and pain associated with overexertion, strains, sprains, and arthritis. The system includes single-use packs (pods) that deliver hot or cold. The predicate devices are the OrthoCor (K091640) and Ivivi Torino II™ (K070541).

In 2008, the SofPulse™ (also called Torino II, 912-M10, and Roma3™; Ivivi Health Sciences, renamed Amp Orthopedics) was cleared for marketing by FDA through the 510(k) process as a short-wave diathermy device that applies electromagnetic energy at a radiofrequency of 27.12 MHz (K070541). The device is indicated for adjunctive use in the palliative treatment of postoperative pain and edema in superficial soft tissue. The Palermo device (Ivivi Health Sciences) is a portable battery-operated device.

In 2017, the ActiPatch® (BioElectronics) was cleared for marketing by FDA through the 510(k) process for over-the-counter use for adjunctive treatment of plantar fasciitis of the heel and osteoarthritis of the knee.

The Magnetofield® (F&B International, Italy) and Elettronica Pagani (Energy Plus Roland Series, Italy) devices provide pulsed electromagnetic field therapy. They are currently marketed in Europe.

For individuals who have arthritis who receive pulsed electrical or electromagnetic stimulation, the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

CODING

There is no specific CPT code for electrical stimulation for the treatment of arthritis. HCPCS code E0762 may be used.

The following code is not covered for BlueCHIP for Medicare and not medically necessary for Commercial Products.

E0762 Transcutaneous electrical joint stimulation device system, includes all accessories

RELATED POLICIES

Not applicable

PUBLISHED

Provider Update, July 2019
Provider Update, November 2018
Provider Update, January 2017
Provider Update, April 2015
Provider Update, June 2014

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