Subcutaneous Implantable Naltrexone Pellets

Policy Number: CS2024D0078I
Effective Date: September 1, 2024

➲ Instructions for Use

Table of Contents **Page**

Commercial Policy
• Subcutaneous Implantable Naltrexone Pellets

Application

This Medical Benefit Drug Policy does not apply to the states listed below; refer to the state-specific policy/guideline, if noted:

State	Policy/Guideline
Indiana	Subcutaneous Implantable Naltrexone Pellets (for Indiana Only)
Kansas	None
Louisiana	Subcutaneous Implantable Naltrexone Pellets (for Louisiana Only)
North Carolina	None
Ohio	None
Pennsylvania	Refer to the state's Medicaid clinical policy

Coverage Rationale

Compounded Implantable Drug Pellets

Compounded drugs, including compounded naltrexone pellets, are not FDA approved.[1] **Compounded drug pellets, including but not limited to compounded naltrexone, are not proven nor medically necessary for any indication**.

This policy does not apply to Vivitrol® (Naltrexone Powder for suspension for injection, extended-release).

Applicable Codes

The following list(s) of procedure and/or diagnosis codes is provided for reference purposes only and may not be all inclusive. Listing of a code in this policy does not imply that the service described by the code is a covered or non-covered health service. Benefit coverage for health services is determined by federal, state, or contractual requirements and applicable laws that may require coverage for a specific service. The inclusion of a code does not imply any right to reimbursement or guarantee claim payment. Other Policies and Guidelines may apply.

CPT Code	Description
11981	Insertion, drug-delivery implant (i.e., bioresorbable, biodegradable, non-biodegradable)
11982	Removal, non-biodegradable drug delivery implant

CPT Code	Description
11983	Removal with reinsertion, non-biodegradable drug delivery implant

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HCPCS Code	Description
J3490	Unclassified drugs
J7999	Compounded drug, not otherwise classified

Background

Naltrexone is an opiate antagonist which can displace or block opiate agonists from opiate receptors, resulting in elimination and inhibition of the euphoric effect of opiate agonists. Naltrexone is available in the following U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved formulations: oral tablet and powder for suspension for injection, extended-release.

Clinical Evidence

Larney S. et al, completed a systematic literature review to assess the safety and efficacy of naltrexone implants for treating opioid dependence.[3] The authors included studies that compared naltrexone implants with other interventions, as well as placebo. Outcomes included induction to treatment, retention in treatment, opioid and non-opioid use, adverse events, non-fatal overdose, and mortality. Quality of the evidence was assessed using the Grading of Recommendations Assessment, Development, and Evaluation approach. Meta-analysis was used to combine data from randomized studies. The review included five randomized trials (n = 576) and four non-randomized studies (n = 8,358). The quality of the evidence ranged from moderate to very low. The evidence on safety and efficacy of naltrexone implants is limited in quantity and quality, and the evidence has little clinical utility in settings where effective treatments for opioid dependence are used. The authors concluded that better designed research is needed to establish the safety and efficacy of naltrexone implants. Until such time, their use should be limited to clinical trials.

The Australian National Health and Medical Research Council completed a review of evidence available around the use of naltrexone implants for the treatment of opioid dependence.[2] After reviewing available evidence, the authors reported that studies were of small sample sizes, included an inadequate duration of treatment and follow-up, the comparators are inappropriate, and many studies reported on the same cohort. Because of this, the authors concluded that naltrexone implants are an experimental product, more studies are needed, and the efficacy of the treatment cannot be determined.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

This section is to be used for informational purposes only. FDA approval alone is not a basis for coverage.

Compounded naltrexone pellets are not currently FDA approved.

References

1. FDA Compounding Laws and Policies. https://www.fda.gov/Drugs/GuidanceComplianceRegulatoryInformation/PharmacyCompounding/ucm606881.htm. Accessed October 25, 2023.
2. National Health and Medical Research Council. Naltrexone implant treatment for opioid dependence. NHMRC Literature Review. 2011.
3. Larney S, Gowing L, Mattick RP, et al. A systematic review and meta-analysis of naltrexone implants for the treatment of opioid dependence. Drug Alcohol Rev. 2014;33(2):115-128.
4. Clinical Pharmacology. https://www.clinicalkey.com/pharmacology/. Elsevier/Gold Standard. Accessed October 25, 2023.

Policy History/Revision Information

Date	Summary of Changes
09/01/2024	**Application** ***Ohio*** • Removed reference link to state-specific policy version (retired Sep. 1, 2024) **Supporting Information** • Archived previous policy version CS2024D0078H

Instructions for Use

This Medical Benefit Drug Policy provides assistance in interpreting UnitedHealthcare standard benefit plans. When deciding coverage, the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage must be referenced as the terms of the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage may differ from the standard benefit plan. In the event of a conflict, the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage govern. Before using this policy, please check the federal, state, or contractual requirements for benefit plan coverage. UnitedHealthcare reserves the right to modify its Policies and Guidelines as necessary. This Medical Benefit Drug Policy is provided for informational purposes. It does not constitute medical advice.

UnitedHealthcare may also use tools developed by third parties, such as the InterQual® criteria, to assist us in administering health benefits. The UnitedHealthcare Medical Benefit Drug Policies are intended to be used in connection with the independent professional medical judgment of a qualified health care provider and do not constitute the practice of medicine or medical advice.