

Healthcare Operations

Utilization Management Protocol

Nerve Blocks of Somatic and Sympathetic Nerves

HEALTH PLAN OF NEVADA, INC. SM SIERRA HEALTH AND LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY, INC. [®]

Number
PAI004

Approved for Commercial, Medicare, & Medicaid

For Sierra Health Option products please review plan documents prior to issuing a determination.

Requires Medical Director Review Approval

CPT: 64400-64530, 64600-64680

Must be performed by physician Board Certified in pain management **or** have completed an ABME approved pain fellowship **or** otherwise be approved by the Health Plan to be considered a pain management specialist qualified to perform invasive pain management procedures.

Description:

Nerve blocks cause the temporary interruption of conduction of impulses in peripheral nerves or nerve trunks by the injection of local anesthetic solutions. Somatic and sympathetic nerves may be injected. They can be performed for several reasons:

Diagnostic - to determine the source of pain e.g., to identify or pinpoint a nerve that acts as a pathway for pain; to determine the type of nerve that conducts the pain; to distinguish between pain that is central (within the spinal cord) or peripheral (outside the spinal cord) in origin; or to determine whether a neurolytic block or surgical lysis of the nerve should be performed. The type of diagnostic test may include injecting saline to simulate pain, or injecting an anesthetic agent to evaluate the patient's response, as an initial diagnostic step so that other pain relief options may be considered. Therapeutic - to treat painful conditions that respond to nerve blocks (e.g., celiac block for pain of pancreatic cancer).

Prognostic - to predict the outcome of long-lasting interventions (e.g., infusions, neurolysis, rhizotomy). Preemptive - to prevent pain following procedures.

Covered Indications:

Nerve blocks may be used intraoperatively to prevent pain of the procedure, diagnostically to ascertain cause of pain, or therapeutically to relieve chronic pain. Blocks are useful in a variety of circulatory and neuropathic syndromes. Nerve blocks are indicated in patients who are not adequately controlled by appropriate doses of medications or who are refractory to medical therapy.

Usually, up to three injections or three sets of injections in any given 60-day period are sufficient for a course of treatment. If additional nerve blocks are given, then documentation supporting the necessity must be in the clinical record.

Steroids are often included and injected for anti-inflammatory effects. Consideration should be given to the cumulative dose injected and limitations made to avoid steroid complications

Review History:

Issued: 10/18/04

Revised: 9/21/06

Corporate Medical Affairs Committee Approval Dates: 9/16/04, 11/18/04, 12/16/04, 7/21/05, 9/21/06, 12/20/07

References:

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