

Protocol

Orthopedic Applications of Stem Cell Therapy (Including Allografts and Bone Substitutes Used With Autologous Bone Marrow)

(80152)

Medical Benefit		Effective Date: 10/01/15	Next Review Date: 07/23
Preauthorization	No	Review Dates: 09/10, 07/11, 07/12, 07/13, 07/14, 07/15, 07/16, 07/17, 07/18, 07/19, 07/20, 07/21, 07/22	

This protocol considers this test or procedure investigational. If the physician feels this service is medically necessary, preauthorization is recommended.

The following protocol contains medical necessity criteria that apply for this service. The criteria are also applicable to services provided in the local Medicare Advantage operating area for those members, unless separate Medicare Advantage criteria are indicated. If the criteria are not met, reimbursement will be denied and the patient cannot be billed. Please note that payment for covered services is subject to eligibility and the limitations noted in the patient's contract at the time the services are rendered.

RELATED PROTOCOLS

Autologous Chondrocyte Implantation for Focal Articular Cartilage Lesions

Autologous Platelet-Derived Growth Factors for Wound Healing and Other Non-Orthopedic Conditions

Orthopedic Applications of Platelet-Rich Plasma

Prolotherapy

Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: • With cartilage defects	Interventions of interest are: • Stem cell therapy	Comparators of interest are: • Conservative management • Microfracture • Autologous chondrocyte implantation	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Morbid events • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With meniscal defects	Interventions of interest are: • Stem cell therapy	Comparators of interest are: • Conservative management	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Morbid events • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With joint fusion procedures	Interventions of interest are: • Stem cell therapy	Comparators of interest are: • Iliac crest bone graft	Relevant outcomes include: • Symptoms • Morbid events • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity

Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With osteonecrosis 	Interventions of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stem cell therapy 	Comparators of interest are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core decompression 	Relevant outcomes include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms • Morbid events • Functional outcomes • Quality of life • Treatment-related morbidity

DESCRIPTION

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) have the capability to differentiate into a variety of tissue types, including various musculoskeletal tissues. Potential uses of MSCs for orthopedic applications include treatment of damaged bone, cartilage, ligaments, tendons, and intervertebral discs.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

For individuals who have cartilage defects, meniscal defects, joint fusion procedures, or osteonecrosis who receive stem cell therapy, the evidence includes small RCTs and nonrandomized comparative trials. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, morbid events, functional outcomes, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. Use of MSCs for orthopedic conditions is an active area of research. Despite continued research into the methods of harvesting and delivering treatment, there are uncertainties regarding the optimal source of cells and the delivery method. Studies have included MSCs from bone marrow, adipose tissue, and peripheral blood. Overall, the quality of evidence is low and there is a possibility of publication bias. The strongest evidence to date is on MSCs expanded from bone marrow, which includes several phase 1/2 RCTs. Limitations in these initial trials preclude reaching conclusions, but the results to date do support future study in phase 3 trials. Alternative methods of obtaining MSCs have been reported in a smaller number of trials and with mixed results. Additional study in a larger sample of patients with longer follow-up would be needed to evaluate the long-term efficacy and safety of these procedures. Also, expanded MSCs for orthopedic applications are not U.S. Food and Drug Administration approved (concentrated autologous MSCs do not require agency approval). Overall, there is a lack of evidence that clinical outcomes are improved. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

POLICY

Mesenchymal stem cell therapy is considered **investigational** for all orthopedic applications, including use in repair or regeneration of musculoskeletal tissue.

Allograft bone products containing viable stem cells, including but not limited to demineralized bone matrix with stem cells, are considered **investigational** for all orthopedic applications.

Allograft or synthetic bone graft substitutes that must be combined with autologous blood or bone marrow are considered **investigational** for all orthopedic applications.

POLICY GUIDELINES

Note: This protocol does not address unprocessed allograft bone.

BACKGROUND

MESENCHYMAL STEM CELLS

Mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) are multipotent cells (also called multipotent stromal cells) that can differentiate into various tissues including organs, trabecular bone, tendon, articular cartilage, ligaments, muscle, and fat. MSCs are associated with the blood vessels within the bone marrow, synovium, fat, and muscle, where they can be mobilized for endogenous repair as occurs with the healing of bone fractures. Tissues such as cartilage, tendon, ligaments, and vertebral discs show limited capacity for endogenous repair because of the limited presence of the triad of functional tissue components: vasculature, nerves, and lymphatics. Orthobiologics is a term introduced to describe interventions using cells and biomaterials to support healing and repair. Cell therapy is the application of MSCs directly to a musculoskeletal site. Tissue engineering techniques use MSCs and/or bioactive molecules such as growth factors and scaffold combinations to improve the efficiency of repair or regeneration of damaged musculoskeletal tissues.¹

Bone marrow aspirate is considered the most accessible source and, thus, the most common place to isolate MSCs for the treatment of musculoskeletal disease. However, harvesting MSCs from bone marrow requires a procedure that may result in donor-site morbidity. Also, the number of MSCs in bone marrow is low, and the number and differentiation capacity of bone marrow-derived MSCs decreases with age, limiting their efficiency when isolated from older patients.

In vivo, the fate of stem cells is regulated by signals in the local 3-dimensional microenvironment from the extracellular matrix and neighboring cells. It is believed the success of tissue engineering with MSCs will also require an appropriate 3-dimensional scaffold or matrix, culture conditions for tissue-specific induction, and implantation techniques that provide appropriate biomechanical forces and mechanical stimulation. The ability to induce cell division and differentiation without adverse effects, such as the formation of neoplasms, remains a significant concern. Given that each tissue type requires different culture conditions, induction factors (signaling proteins, cytokines, growth factors), and implantation techniques, each preparation must be individually examined.

REGULATORY STATUS

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) regulates human cells and tissues intended for implantation, transplantation, or infusion through the Center for Biologics Evaluation and Research, under Code of Federal Regulation, Title 21, parts 1270 and 1271. MSCs are included in these regulations.

The regulatory status of the stem cell or stem cell-containing products addressed in this protocol is summarized below.

Concentrated autologous MSCs do not require approval by the FDA. No products using engineered or expanded MSCs have been approved by the FDA for orthopedic applications.

The following products are examples of commercialized demineralized bone matrix (DBM) products. They are marketed as containing viable stem cells. In some instances, manufacturers have received communications and inquiries from the FDA related to the appropriateness of their marketing products that are dependent on living cells for their function. The following descriptions are from the product literature.

- AlloStem® (AlloSource) is a partially demineralized allograft bone seeded with adipose-derived MSCs.
- Map3® (RTI Surgical) contains cortical cancellous bone chips, DBM, and cryopreserved multipotent adult progenitor cells (MAPC®).
- Osteocel Plus® (NuVasive) is a DBM combined with viable MSCs isolated from allogeneic bone marrow.

- Trinity Evolution Matrix™ (Orthofix) is a DBM combined with viable MSCs isolated from allogeneic bone marrow.
- Other products contain DBM alone and are designed to be mixed with bone marrow aspirate:
 - Fusion Flex™ (Wright Medical) is a dehydrated moldable DBM scaffold (strips and cubes) that will absorb autologous bone marrow aspirate;
 - Ignite® (Wright Medical) is an injectable graft with DBM that can be combined with autologous bone marrow aspirate.

A number of DBM combination products have been cleared for marketing by the FDA through the 510(k) process. FDA product code: MQV.

Table 1 provides a representative sample of these products; some of which are specifically labeled for mixing with bone marrow aspirate.

Table 1. Demineralized Bone Matrix Products Cleared by FDA

Product	Matrix Type	Mix With Autologous MSCs	Manufacturer or Sponsor	Date Cleared	510(k) No.
Vitoss® Bioactive Foam Bone Graft Substitute	Type I bovine collagen	X	Stryker	Nov 2008	K083033
NanOss BVF-E	Nanocrystalline hydroxyapatite		Pioneer Surgical	Aug 2008	
OrthoBlast® II Demineralized bone matrix putty and paste	Human cancellous bone chips		SeaSpine	Sep 2007	K070751
CopiOs® Bone Void Filler (sponge and powder disc)	Type I bovine dermal collagen	X	Kensey Nash	May 2007	K071237
DBX® Demineralized bone matrix putty, paste and mix	Processed human bone and sodium hyaluronate	X	Musculoskeletal Transplant Foundation	Dec 2006	K053218
Integra MOZAIK™ Osteo-conductive Scaffold-Putty	Human cancellous bone	X	IsoTis OrthoBiologics	Dec 2006	K062353
Formagraft™ Collagen Bone Graft Matrix	Bovine fibrillary collagen	X	R and L Medical	May 2005	K050789
DynaGraft® II Gel and Putty	Processed human bone particles		IsoTis Orthobiologics	Mar 2005	K040419

FDA: U.S. Food and Drug Administration; MSCs: mesenchymal stem cells.

In 2020, the FDA updated their guidance on “Regulatory Considerations for Human Cells, Tissues, and Cellular and Tissue-Based Products: Minimal Manipulation and Homologous Use.”²

Human cells, tissues, and cellular and tissue-based products (HCT/P) are defined as human cells or tissues that are intended for implantation, transplantation, infusion, or transfer into a human recipient. If an HCT/P does not meet the criteria below and does not qualify for any of the stated exceptions, the HCT/P will be regulated as a drug, device, and/or biological product and applicable regulations and premarket review will be required.

An HCT/P is regulated solely under section 361 of the PHS Act and 21 CFR Part 1271 if it meets all of the following criteria:

- 1) “The HCT/P is minimally manipulated;
- 2) The HCT/P is intended for homologous use only, as reflected by the labeling, advertising, or other indications of the manufacturer’s objective intent;

- 3) The manufacture of the HCT/P does not involve the combination of the cells or tissues with another article, except for water, crystalloids, or a sterilizing, preserving, or storage agent, provided that the addition of water, crystalloids, or the sterilizing, preserving, or storage agent does not raise new clinical safety concerns with respect to the HCT/P; and
- 4) Either:
 - i) The HCT/P does not have a systemic effect and is not dependent upon the metabolic activity of living cells for its primary function; or
 - ii) The HCT/P has a systemic effect or is dependent upon the metabolic activity of living cells for its primary function, and: a) Is for autologous use; b) Is for allogeneic use in a first-degree or second-degree blood relative; or c) Is for reproductive use.”

The FDA does not consider the use of stem cells for orthopedic procedures to be homologous use.

Services that are the subject of a clinical trial do not meet our Technology Assessment and Medically Necessary Services Protocol criteria and are considered investigational. *For explanation of experimental and investigational, please refer to the Technology Assessment and Medically Necessary Services Protocol.*

It is expected that only appropriate and medically necessary services will be rendered. We reserve the right to conduct prepayment and postpayment reviews to assess the medical appropriateness of the above-referenced procedures. **Some of this protocol may not pertain to the patients you provide care to, as it may relate to products that are not available in your geographic area.**

REFERENCES

We are not responsible for the continuing viability of web site addresses that may be listed in any references below.

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