Policy Name: Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
Effective Date: 11/18/2019

Important Information – Please Read Before Using This Policy

These services may or may not be covered by all Medica plans. Please refer to the member’s plan document for specific coverage information. If there is a difference between this general information and the member’s plan document, the member’s plan document will be used to determine coverage. With respect to Medicare and Minnesota Health Care Programs, this policy will apply unless those programs require different coverage. Members may contact Medica Customer Service at the phone number listed on their member identification card to discuss their benefits more specifically. Providers with questions about this Medica coverage policy may call the Medica Provider Service Center toll-free at 1-800-458-5512.

Medica coverage policies are not medical advice. Members should consult with appropriate health care providers to obtain needed medical advice, care and treatment.

Coverage Policy
Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) is COVERED for post-traumatic stress disorder.

EMDR is investigative and therefore NOT COVERED for all other indications. There is insufficient reliable evidence in the form of high quality peer-reviewed medical literature to establish the efficacy or effects on health care outcomes.

Note: This policy is no longer scheduled for routine review of the scientific literature.

Description
Eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR) is an information processing therapy that utilizes an eight-phase approach. During EMDR, the patient recalls past and present experiences in brief sequential doses while simultaneously focusing on an external stimulus. After assessing the patient’s appropriateness and readiness for EMDR, the therapist guides the patient in recalling distressing experiences (desensitization) and gaining new understanding (reprocessing) of these events. During the eye movement component, the therapist induces a series of rapid and rhythmic eye movements that are purported to facilitate cognitive changes and decrease symptoms of stress and anxiety. Patients move their eyes horizontally back and forth for a period of about 20 - 30 seconds, following the therapist's fingers while recalling the distressing experience. Adaptations to EMDR incorporate other types of rhythmic movement, such as auditory tones, tapping or other tactile stimulation, in place of eye movement. The mechanism of action of EMDR is not known.

Since its creation as a therapeutic method, therapists have investigated and used EMDR primarily as a treatment for posttraumatic stress disorder. However, more recently EMDR has been investigated as a treatment for depression, other anxiety disorders, such as phobias, panic attacks and performance anxiety, as well as chronic pain and dermatologic disorders.

FDA Approval
EMDR is a therapy and is not regulated by the FDA.
Prior Authorization
Prior authorization is not required. However, services with specific coverage criteria may be reviewed retrospectively to determine if criteria are being met. Retrospective denial may result if criteria are not met.

Coding Considerations
Use the current applicable CPT/HCPCS code(s). The following codes are included below for informational purposes only, and are subject to change without notice. Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

CPT Code:
90899 – Unlisted psychiatric service or procedure

Original Effective Date: 9/1/2004

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