Policy Name: Intense Pulsed Light Treatment for Dry Eye Disease  
Effective Date: 1/21/2019

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

Intense pulsed light (IPL) treatment for dry eye disease (meibomian gland dysfunction) is investigative and therefore NOT COVERED.

Note: See also related Medica coverage policy, Meibomian Gland Evacuation Therapies.
Note: This policy is no longer scheduled for routine review of the scientific literature.

Description

The IPL treatment is suggested for patients with evaporative dry eye, one cause of chronic dry eye. The condition results from ocular rosacea (inflammation of the eyelid skin), which causes the meibomian glands in the eyelids to fail to produce enough natural oil to reduce evaporation of tears. When that happens, patients may experience a burning or gritty sensation in the eye and eyelid, blurry vision and/or redness of the eyes.

IPL treatment uses brief, powerful bursts of light at specific wavelengths (e.g., between 500 and 800 nm) which are purported to cause changes in blood vessels near the surface of the skin. This is intended to raise skin temperature and eliminate problematic flora on the skin and eyes, which are thought to have a beneficial effect on meibomian gland dysfunction and result in improvement in dry eye syndrome. The exact mode of action is unknown. IPL was originally suggested for treatment of cosmetic indications (e.g., hair removal; photorejuvenation following sun damage or aging; treatment of telangiectatic blood vessels).

FDA Approval

Intense pulsed light treatment is a therapy, and therefore is not regulated by the FDA. However, many laser systems have been FDA approved for specific indications. Example of IPL systems intended to treat dry eye syndrome include, but are not limited to, the Dermamed Quadra 4 (DermaMed Solutions) and the E>Eye Polychromatic Pulsed Light system (E-SWIN).

Prior Authorization

Prior authorization is not applicable. Claims for this service are subject to retrospective review and denial of coverage, as investigative services are not eligible for reimbursement.
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 Codes
17999 – Unlisted procedure, skin, mucous membrane and subcutaneous tissue

Original Effective Date: 3/1/2016

Re-Review Date(s): 1/21/2019