Protocol

Preimplantation Genetic Testing

(40205)

Medical Benefit		**Effective Date**: 01/01/14	**Next Review Date**: 09/19
Preauthorization	No	**Review Dates**: 09/11, 09/12, 09/13, 09/14, 09/16, 09/17, 09/18	

Preauthorization is not required.

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.

Populations	Interventions	Comparators	Outcomes
Individuals: • With an identified elevated risk of a genetic disorder undergoing in vitro fertilization	Interventions of interest are: • Preimplantation genetic diagnosis	Comparators of interest are: • In vitro fertilization without preimplantation genetic diagnosis • Prenatal genetic testing	Relevant outcomes include: • Health status measures • Treatment-related morbidity
Individuals: • With no identified elevated risk of a genetic disorder undergoing in vitro fertilization	Interventions of interest are: • Preimplantation genetic screening	Comparators of interest are: • In vitro fertilization without preimplantation genetic screening	Relevant outcomes include: • Health status measures • Treatment-related morbidity

DESCRIPTION

Preimplantation genetic testing involves analysis of biopsied cells as part of an assisted reproductive procedure. It is generally considered to be divided into two categories. Preimplantation genetic diagnosis (PGD) is used to detect a specific inherited disorder in conjunction with in vitro fertilization (IVF) and aims to prevent the birth of affected children to couples at high risk of transmitting a disorder. Preimplantation genetic screening (PGS) involves testing for potential genetic abnormalities also in conjunction with IVF for couples without a specific known inherited disorder.

SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE

For individuals who have an identified elevated risk of a genetic disorder undergoing IVF who receive PGD, the evidence includes observational studies and systematic reviews. Relevant outcomes are health status measures and treatment-related morbidity. Data from observational studies and systematic reviews have suggested that PGD is associated with the birth of unaffected fetuses when performed for detection of single genetic defects and is associated with a decrease in spontaneous abortions for patients with structural chromosomal abnormalities. Moreover, PGD performed for single-gene defects does not appear to be associated with increased risk of obstetric complications. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals who have no identified elevated risk of a genetic disorder undergoing IVF who receive PGS, the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs) and meta-analyses. Relevant outcomes are health status measures and treatment-related morbidity. RCTs and meta-analyses of RCTs on initial PGS methods (e.g., fish in situ hybridization) have found lower or similar ongoing pregnancy and live birth rates compared with IVF without PGS. There are fewer RCTs on newer PGS methods, and findings are mixed. Meta-analyses of RCTs have found higher implantation rates with PGS than with standard care, but improvements in other outcomes are inconsistent. Well-conducted RCTs evaluating PGS in the various target populations (e.g., women of advanced maternal age, women with recurrent pregnancy loss) are needed before conclusions can be drawn about the impact on the net health benefit. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

POLICY

Preimplantation genetic *diagnosis* may be considered **medically necessary** as an adjunct to in vitro fertilization (IVF) in couples not known to be infertile who meet one of the criteria listed below.

For evaluation of an embryo at an identified elevated risk of a genetic disorder such as when:

- Both partners are known carriers of a single gene autosomal recessive disorder
- One partner is a known carrier of a single gene autosomal recessive disorder and the partners have an offspring who has been diagnosed with that recessive disorder
- One partner is a known carrier of a single gene autosomal dominant disorder
- One partner is a known carrier of a single X-linked disorder, or

For evaluation of an embryo at an identified elevated risk of structural chromosomal abnormality such as for a:

- Parent with balanced or unbalanced chromosomal translocation.

Preimplantation genetic *diagnosis* as an adjunct to IVF is considered **investigational** in patients or couples who are undergoing IVF in all situations other than those specified above.

Preimplantation genetic *screening* as an adjunct to IVF is considered **investigational** in patients or couples who are undergoing IVF in all situations.

POLICY GUIDELINES

In some cases involving a single X-linked disorder, determination of the sex of the embryo provides sufficient information for excluding or confirming the disorder.

This protocol does not address the myriad ethical issues associated with PGT that should have been carefully discussed between the treated couple and the physician.

GENETIC NOMENCLATURE UPDATE

The Human Genome Variation Society nomenclature is used to report information on variants found in DNA and serves as an international standard in DNA diagnostics. It is being implemented for genetic testing medical protocol updates starting in 2017 (see Table PG1). The Society's nomenclature is recommended by the Human Variome Project, the HUman Genome Organization, and by the Human Genome Variation Society itself.

The American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics and the Association for Molecular Pathology standards and guidelines for interpretation of sequence variants represent expert opinion from both organizations, in

addition to the College of American Pathologists. These recommendations primarily apply to genetic tests used in clinical laboratories, including genotyping, single genes, panels, exomes, and genomes. Table PG2 shows the recommended standard terminology—"pathogenic," "likely pathogenic," "uncertain significance," "likely benign," and "benign"—to describe variants identified that cause Mendelian disorders.

Table PG1. Nomenclature to Report on Variants Found in DNA

Previous	Updated	Definition
Mutation	Disease-associated variant	Disease-associated change in the DNA sequence
	Variant	Change in the DNA sequence
	Familial variant	Disease-associated variant identified in a proband for use in subsequent targeted genetic testing in first-degree relatives

Table PG2. ACMG-AMP Standards and Guidelines for Variant Classification

Variant Classification	Definition
Pathogenic	Disease-causing change in the DNA sequence
Likely pathogenic	Likely disease-causing change in the DNA sequence
Variant of uncertain significance	Change in DNA sequence with uncertain effects on disease
Likely benign	Likely benign change in the DNA sequence
Benign	Benign change in the DNA sequence

ACMG: American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics; AMP: Association for Molecular Pathology

GENETIC COUNSELING

Genetic counseling is primarily aimed at patients who are at risk for inherited disorders, and experts recommend formal genetic counseling in most cases when genetic testing for an inherited condition is considered. The interpretation of the results of genetic tests and the understanding of risk factors can be very difficult and complex. Therefore, genetic counseling will assist individuals in understanding the possible benefits and harms of genetic testing, including the possible impact of the information on the individual's family. Genetic counseling may alter the utilization of genetic testing substantially and may reduce inappropriate testing. Genetic counseling should be performed by an individual with experience and expertise in genetic medicine and genetic testing methods.

BACKGROUND

PREIMPLANTATION GENETIC TESTING

Preimplantation genetic testing describes various adjuncts to an assisted reproductive procedure in which either maternal or embryonic DNA is sampled and genetically analyzed, thus permitting deselection of embryos harboring a genetic defect before implantation of an embryo into the uterus. The ability to identify preimplantation embryos with genetic defects before implantation provides an alternative to amniocentesis, chorionic villus sampling, and selective pregnancy termination of affected fetuses. Preimplantation genetic testing is generally categorized as either diagnostic (preimplantation genetic diagnosis [PGD]) or screening (preimplantation genetic screening [PGS]). PGD is used to detect genetic evidence of a specific inherited disorder, in the oocyte or embryo, derived from mother or couple, respectively, that has a high risk of transmission. PGS is not used to detect a specific abnormality but instead uses similar techniques to identify a number of genetic abnormalities in the absence of a known heritable disorder. This terminology, however, is not used consistently (e.g., some authors use PGD when testing for a number of possible abnormalities in the absence of a known disorder).

Biopsy

Biopsy for PGD can take place at three stages: the oocyte, cleavage stage embryo, or the blastocyst. In the earliest stage, both the first and second polar bodies are extruded from the oocyte as it completes the meiotic division after ovulation (first polar body) and fertilization (second polar body). This strategy thus focuses on mater-

nal chromosomal abnormalities. If the mother is a known carrier of a genetic defect and genetic analysis of the polar body is normal, then it is assumed that the genetic defect was transferred to the oocyte during meiosis.

Biopsy of cleavage stage embryos or blastocysts can detect genetic abnormalities arising from either the maternal or paternal genetic material. Cleavage stage biopsy takes place after the first few cleavage divisions when the embryo is composed of six to eight cells (i.e., blastomeres). Sampling involves aspiration of one and sometimes two blastomeres from the embryo. Analysis of two cells may improve diagnosis but may also affect the implantation of the embryo. In addition, a potential disadvantage of testing at this phase is that mosaicism might be present. Mosaicism refers to genetic differences among the cells of the embryo that could result in an incorrect interpretation if the chromosomes of only a single cell are examined.

The third option is sampling the embryo at the blastocyst stage when there are about 100 cells. Blastocysts form five to six days after insemination. Three to 10 trophectoderm cells (outer layer of the blastocyst) are sampled. A disadvantage is that not all embryos develop to the blastocyst phase in vitro and, when they do, there is a short time before embryo transfer needs to take place. Blastocyst biopsy has been combined with embryonic vitrification to allow time for test results to be obtained before the embryo is transferred.

Analysis and Testing

The biopsied material can be analyzed in a variety of ways. Polymerase chain reaction or other amplification techniques can be used to amplify the harvested DNA with subsequent analysis for single genetic defects. This technique is most commonly used when the embryo is at risk for a specific genetic disorder such as Tay-Sachs disease or cystic fibrosis. Fluorescent in situ hybridization (FISH) is a technique that allows direct visualization of specific (but not all) chromosomes to determine the number or absence of chromosomes. This technique is most commonly used to screen for aneuploidy, sex determination, or to identify chromosomal translocations. FISH cannot be used to diagnose single genetic defect disorders. However, molecular techniques can be applied with FISH (e.g., microdeletions, duplications) and, thus, single-gene defects can be recognized with this technique. Performing PGS using FISH is known as PGS version 1.

Another more recent approach is array comparative genome hybridization testing at either the eight cell or, more often, the blastocyst stage, also known as PGS version 2. Unlike FISH analysis, hybridization allows for 24 chromosome aneuploidy screening, as well as more detailed screening for unbalanced translocations and inversions and other types of abnormal gains and losses of chromosomal material. Other PGS version 2 methods include single nucleotide variant microarrays and quantitative polymerase chain reaction.[1, 2] Next-generation sequencing such as massively parallel signature sequencing has potential applications to prenatal genetic testing and is grouped with PGS version 2 techniques in some literature and referred to as PGS version 3 in other literature.

Embryo Classification

Three general categories of embryos have undergone preimplantation genetic testing, which are discussed in the following subsections.

Embryos at Risk for a Specific Inherited Single-Gene Defect

Inherited single-gene defects fall into three general categories: autosomal recessive, autosomal dominant, and X-linked. When either the mother or father is a known carrier of a genetic defect, embryos can undergo PGD to deselect embryos harboring the defective gene. Sex selection of a female embryo is another strategy when the mother is a known carrier of an X-linked disorder for which there is no a specific molecular diagnosis. The most common example is female carriers of fragile X syndrome. In this scenario, PGD is used to deselect male embryos, half of which would be affected. PGD could also be used to deselect affected male embryos. While there is a growing list of single-gene defects for which molecular diagnosis is possible, the most common indications include cystic fibrosis, β-thalassemia, muscular dystrophy, Huntington disease, hemophilia, and fragile X disease. It should be noted that when PGD is used to deselect affected embryos, the treated couple is not tech-

nically infertile but is undergoing an assisted reproductive procedure for the sole purpose of PGD. In this setting, PGD may be considered an alternative to selective termination of an established pregnancy after diagnosis by amniocentesis or chorionic villus sampling.

Embryos at a Higher Risk of Translocations

Balanced translocations occur in 0.2% of the neonatal population but at a higher rate in infertile couples or those with recurrent spontaneous abortions. PGD can be used to deselect embryos carrying the translocations, thus leading to an increase in fecundity or a decrease in the rate of spontaneous abortion.

Identification of Aneuploid Embryos

Implantation failure of fertilized embryos is common in assisted reproductive procedures; aneuploidy of embryos is thought to contribute to implantation failure and may also be the cause of recurrent spontaneous abortion. The prevalence of aneuploid oocytes increases in older women. These age-related aneuploidies are mainly due to nondisjunction of chromosomes during maternal meiosis. Therefore, PGS has been explored as a technique to deselect aneuploid oocytes in older women and is also known as PGD for aneuploidy screening. FISH analysis of extruded polar bodies from the oocyte or no blastomeres at day three of embryo development was initially used to detect aneuploidy (PGS version 1). A limitation of FISH is that analysis is restricted to a number of proteins. More recently, newer PGS methods have been developed (PGS version 2). These methods allow for all chromosomes analysis with genetic platforms including array comparative genomic hybridization and single nucleotide variant chain reaction analysis. Moreover, in addition to older women, PGS has been proposed for women with repeated implantation failures.

REGULATORY STATUS

Clinical laboratories may develop and validate tests in-house and market them as a laboratory service; laboratory-developed tests (LDTs) must meet the general regulatory standards of the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA). Laboratories that offer LDTs must be licensed by the CLIA for high-complexity testing. To date, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has chosen not to require any regulatory review of this test.

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

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

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