Subject: Allergy Immunotherapy

Overview: Subcutaneous immunotherapy involves gradually introducing patients to increasing doses of the allergen(s) to which they are sensitive. The purpose of the therapy is to modulate the negative immune response to the allergen and improve allergic symptoms.

Policy and Coverage Criteria:

Harvard Pilgrim covers subcutaneous immunotherapy for the following conditions:

- Allergic rhinitis;
- Allergic asthma;
- Stinging insect allergy;
- Allergic conjunctivitis;
- Atopic dermatitis

Harvard Pilgrim does not cover sublingual immunotherapy. It is considered experimental/investigational and unproven.

Exclusions: Harvard Pilgrim does NOT cover subcutaneous immunotherapy for any other condition(s), including, but not limited to: food allergy, chronic urticaria, and angioedema.

Supporting Information:

1. Technology Assessment: Allergy immunotherapy (also known as desensitization, hyposensitization, allergy injection therapy, or allergy shots), is well established indicated in patients with unavoidable allergen triggers and the allergy is IgE-mediated as documented by skin testing or RAST. Allergy immunotherapy is appropriate in patients with symptoms not well controlled by medication and the allergy is not season-specific. Patients with life-threatening allergy, such as severe anaphylactic reaction, to hymenoptera (venom from bees, hornets, wasps or fire ants) typically respond well to allergy immunotherapy, as well as patients with severe seasonal allergic rhinitis or conjunctivitis, perennial allergic rhinitis, and allergic asthma. Allergen extracts can be administered through several routes in addition to the subcutaneous (injection) route. Currently, there are no FDA-approved formulations for a non-injection immunotherapy extract (sublingual immunotherapy).

2. Literature Review: Subcutaneous immunotherapy (SCIT) is proven treatment for patients with certain allergies. According to current clinical guidelines from Cox et al. (2011), SCIT is appropriate for allergic rhinitis, allergic asthma, and stinging insect hypersensitivity. In a summary statement, Cox et al. noted “Immunotherapy is effective for the treatment of allergic rhinitis, allergic conjunctivitis, allergic asthma, and stinging insect hypersensitivity. Therefore immunotherapy merits consideration in patients with these disorders as a possible treatment option.”

   Capella and Durham (2012) reviewed immunotherapy options for allergic respiratory diseases and noted SCIT is of proven value in allergic rhinitis and asthma. It is also effective in seasonal allergy. Extensive clinical trials and studies have established the safety and efficacy of SCIT for the treatment of allergic rhinitis, allergic asthma, stinging insect allergy, allergic conjunctivitis, and atopic dermatitis. Leading professional societies also recognize SCIT as an effective treatment option for these conditions.

3. Professional/Governmental Organizations:

Codes:

Medically necessary ICD10:

CPT:
95115 - Professional services for allergen immunotherapy not including provision of allergen extracts; single injection
95117 - Professional services for allergen immunotherapy not including provision of allergen extracts; .>/2 injections
95120 - Professional services for allergen immunotherapy in the office or institution of the prescribing physician or other qualified health care professional, including provision of allergen extract; single injection
95125 - Professional services for allergen immunotherapy in the office or institution of the prescribing physician or other qualified health care professional, including provision of allergen extract; .>/2 injections
95144 - single dose vial(s); specify # of vials required
95145 - dose extract containing 1 single stinging insect venom
95146 - dose extract containing 2 single stinging insect venoms
95147 - dose extract containing 3 single stinging insect venoms
95148 - dose extract containing 4 single stinging insect venoms
95149 - dose extract containing 5 single stinging insect venoms
95165 - Prof svcs for the supervision of preparation and provision of antigens for allergen immunotherapy; single or multiple antigens (specify # doses)
95170 - Prof svcs for the supervision of preparation and provision of antigens for allergen immunotherapy; whole body extract of biting insect or other arthropod (specify # doses)

References:

2. DeShazo, RD., Kemp, SF. Overview of immunologic treatments for allergic rhinitis. In: UpToDate, Basow, DS (Ed), Waltham, MA, 2013.


Summary of Changes

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<tr>
<td>4/17</td>
<td>Removed Benchmarks and ICD 9 references</td>
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