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Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) for Diagnosing Brain Tumors

Note: This article was updated on April 6, 2013, to reflect current Web addresses. All other information remains unchanged.

Provider Types Affected

Physicians, providers, and suppliers

Provider Action Needed

This instruction notifies physicians, providers and suppliers that upon reconsideration, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) determined that MRS used as a diagnostic tool for distinguishing indeterminate brain lesions and/or as an aid in conducting brain biopsies is not reasonable and necessary, and CMS reaffirms its existing noncoverage policy for all indications of MRS.

Background

Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy (MRS) is an application of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). It is a non-invasive diagnostic test that uses strong magnetic fields to measure and analyze the chemical composition of human tissues. On March 22, 1994, CMS considered MRS an investigational procedure and issued a national noncoverage determination for all indications of MRS.

Upon thorough review and reconsideration of the existing noncoverage policy, as well as the available evidence for the use of MRS as a diagnostic tool for distinguishing indeterminate brain lesions, and/or as an aid in conducting biopsies, CMS determined that the evidence is not adequate to conclude that MRS is reasonable and necessary under Section 1862(a)(1)(A) of the Social Security Act.

Therefore, CMS reaffirms its existing noncoverage policy at Section 220.2.1 (Magnetic Resonance Spectroscopy) of the *National Coverage Determinations (NCD) Manual* for all indications of MRS. This addition to Section 220.2.1 is an NCD, and NCDs are binding on all carriers, fiscal intermediaries, quality

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improvement organizations, health maintenance organizations, competitive medical plans, and health care prepayment plans. In addition, an administrative law judge may not review an NCD (see Section 1869(f)(1)(A)(i) of the Social Security Act).

Additional Information

In addition to the updated manual instructions found at Section 220.2.1 (MRS) of the *Medicare NCD Manual* (Publication 100-03), Chapter 1, as outlined above, Sections 220.2 (MRI) and 220.3 (Magnetic Resonance Angiography), are being reprinted with clerical/technical edits/clarifications. There are no substantive revisions and no changes to existing NCD policy.

The updated manual instructions are included in the official instruction issued to your carrier, and it can be found by going to <http://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Guidance/Transmittals/downloads/R21NCD.pdf> on the CMS website.

If you have any questions, please contact your carrier or intermediary at their toll-free number, which may be found at <http://www.cms.gov/Research-Statistics-Data-and-Systems/Monitoring-Programs/provider-compliance-interactive-map/index.html> on the CMS website.

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