Medicare Medical Policy

Endoscopic Treatments for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD)

MEDICARE MEDICAL POLICY NUMBER: 197

Effective Date: 2/1/2025

Last Review Date: 1/2025

Next Annual Review: 1/2026

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE: Company Medicare Medical Policies serve as guidance for the administration of plan benefits and do not constitute medical advice nor a guarantee of coverage. Company Medicare Medical Policies are reviewed annually to guide the coverage or non-coverage decision-making process for services or procedures in accordance with member benefit contracts (otherwise known as Evidence of Coverage or EOCs) and Centers of Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) policies, manuals, and other CMS rules and regulations. In the absence of a CMS coverage determination or specific regulation for a requested service, item or procedure, Company policy criteria or applicable utilization management vendor criteria may be applied. These are based upon published, peer-reviewed scientific evidence and evidence-based clinical practice guidelines that are available as of the last policy update. Coverage decisions are made on the basis of individualized determinations of medical necessity and the experimental or investigational character of the treatment in the individual case. In cases where medical necessity is not established by policy for specific treatment modalities, evidence not previously considered regarding the efficacy of the modality that is presented shall be given consideration to determine if the policy represents current standards of care.

The Company reserves the right to determine the application of Medicare Medical Policies and make revisions to these policies at any time. Any conflict or variance between the EOC and Company Medical Policy will be resolved in favor of the EOC.

SCOPE: Providence Health Plan, Providence Health Assurance, Providence Plan Partners as applicable (referred to individually as “Company” and collectively as “Companies”).

PRODUCT AND BENEFIT APPLICATION

☒ Medicare Only

MEDICARE COVERAGE CRITERIA

IMPORTANT NOTE: More than one Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) reference may apply to the same health care service, such as when more than one coverage policy is available (e.g., both an NCD and LCD exist). All references listed should be considered for coverage decision-making. The Company uses the most current version of a Medicare reference available at the time of publication; however, these websites are not maintained by the Company, so Medicare references and their corresponding hyperlinks may change at any time. If there is a conflict between the Company Medicare Medical Policy and CMS guidance, the CMS guidance will govern.

Service	Medicare Guidelines
Transoral Incisionless Fundoplication (TIF; CPT 43210)	**MEDICARE COVERAGE POSITION:** TIF may be considered **medically necessary** for Medicare Plan members. **RATIONALE:** CPT code 43210, used to report transoral Incisionless fundoplication (TIF), used to be included in the Noridian LCD for *Non-Covered Services* (L35008) and it was also addressed in a separate Noridian LCA for *Non-coverage of Transoral Incisionless Fundoplication* (A52893). However, Noridian removed CPT code 43210 from LCD L35008 **and also** retired the non-coverage LCA A52893. Both of these actions were effective 10/27/2017.[1] Thus, as of 10/28/2017, Noridian no longer considered the service to be a non-covered service. Therefore, TIF may be considered medically necessary by the Company for Medicare Plan members.

Medicare Coverage Criteria: "MA organizations may create publicly accessible internal coverage criteria… when coverage criteria are not fully established in applicable Medicare statutes, regulations, NCDs or LCDs." *(§ 422.101(b)(6) – see Policy Guidelines below)*

- **Medicare Coverage Manuals:** Medicare does not have criteria for endoscopic treatments for gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) in a coverage manual.
- **National Coverage Determination (NCD):** Medicare does not have an NCD for endoscopic treatments for GERD.
- **Noridian J-F Local Coverage Determination (LCD)/Local Coverage Article (LCA):** As of the most recent policy review, two (1) Medicare Administrative Contractors (MACs) have an LCD for **endoscopic or minimally invasive treatments of GERD** and two (2) MACs have LCDs specific to the **Stretta procedure**. However, none of these MACs have jurisdiction over the plan service area and therefore, these LCDs do not apply.
- Therefore, in the absence of established Medicare coverage criteria in a manual, NCD, LCD, or other regulatory guidance for the health plan's service area, Company criteria below are applied for medical necessity decision-making. In this case, Medicare coverage criteria are

considered "not fully established" as defined under CFR § 422.101(6)(i)(C) as there is no Medicare coverage criteria available. • ***NOTE:*** *The summary of evidence, as well as the list of citations/references used in the development of the Company's internal coverage criteria, are publicly available and can be found using the Company medical policy link below [CFR § 422.101(6)(ii)(A) and (B)].*	
Other Endoscopic Treatments of GERD *Examples:* • *Transesophageal radiofrequency ablation of the gastroesophageal junction (e.g. Stretta®)* • *Endoscopic suturing (e.g. EndoCinch™ Suturing System)* • *Endoluminal gastroplasty* • *Endoscopic implantation of a prosthesis or bulking agent (e.g. Gatekeeper™ Reflux Repair System, Durasphere™)*	Company medical policy for Endoscopic Treatments for Gastroesophageal Reflux Disease (GERD) I. These services are considered **not medically necessary** for Medicare based on the Company medical policy. *See Policy Guidelines below.*

IMPORTANT NOTICE: While some services or items may appear medically indicated for an individual, they may also be a direct exclusion of Medicare or the member's benefit plan. Such excluded services or items by Medicare and member EOCs include, but are not limited to, services or procedures considered to be cosmetic, not medical in nature, or those considered not medically reasonable or necessary under *Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, §1862(a)(1)(A).* If there is uncertainty regarding coverage of a service or item, please review the member EOC or submit a pre-service organization determination request. Note that the Medicare Advance Beneficiary Notice of Noncoverage (ABN) form **cannot** be used for Medicare Advantage members. *(Medicare Advance Written Notices of Non-coverage. MLN006266 May 2021)*

POLICY CROSS REFERENCES

None

The full Company portfolio of Medicare Medical Policies is available online and can be accessed here.

POLICY GUIDELINES

MEDICARE AND MEDICAL NECESSITY

For Medicare, only medically reasonable and necessary services or items which treat illness or injury are eligible for Medicare coverage, as outlined in *Title XVIII of the Social Security Act, §1862(a)(1)(A)*. MA organizations (MAOs) make medical necessity determinations based on coverage and benefit criteria, current standards of care, the member's unique personal medical history (e.g., diagnoses, conditions, functional status, co-morbidities, etc.), physician recommendations, and clinical notes, as well as involvement of a plan medical director, where appropriate. *(§ 422.101(c)(1))*

In addition:

> "MA organizations may create publicly accessible internal coverage criteria that are based on current evidence in widely used treatment guidelines or clinical literature when coverage criteria are not fully established in applicable Medicare statutes, regulations, NCDs or LCDs. Current, widely-used treatment guidelines are those developed by organizations representing clinical medical specialties, and refers to guidelines for the treatment of specific diseases or conditions. Acceptable clinical literature includes large, randomized controlled trials or prospective cohort studies with clear results, published in a peer-reviewed journal, and specifically designed to answer the relevant clinical question, or large systematic reviews or meta-analyses summarizing the literature of the specific clinical question." *(§ 422.101(b)(6) and Medicare Managed Care Manual, Ch. 4, §90.5)*

The Plan's Medicare policy for *PHA Medicare Medical Policy Development and Application* (MP50) provides details regarding Medicare's definition of medical necessity and the hierarchy of Medicare references and resources during the development of medical policies, as well as the Plan's use of evidence-based processes for policy development.

Only two Medicare Contractor (MACs) have a local coverage determination (LCD) or article (LCA) which addresses endoscopic or minimally invasive treatments for GERD (Wisconsin Physician Services LCD L34659 and LCA A56395; National Government Services LCD L35080 and LCA A56863). Two different MACs have an LCD and LCA specific to the Stretta procedure (Palmetto LCD L34553 and CGS Administrators LCD L34540). However, none of these MACs have jurisdiction over the health plan's service area. Note that with the exception of the Palmetto LCD, all of these MACs consider the Stretta® procedure, the Bard EndoCinch™ Suturing System, Plicator™, or similar treatments to be **not** reasonable and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of an injury or disease. The MACs that address TIF allow coverage for the TIF procedure, all of which is consistent with the Plan coverage position noted above.

Since there are not fully established coverage criteria for endoscopic treatments for gastroesophageal reflux disease (GERD) available in applicable Medicare statutes, regulations, NCDs or LCDs, then Company medical policy criteria will be applied. See the Medicare Coverage Criteria table above for more information regarding the use of internal coverage criteria when Medicare coverage criteria are not fully established. The Company medical policy non-coverage position is consistent with the above noted Medicare reference.

REGULATORY STATUS

U.S. FOOD & DRUG ADMINISTRATION (FDA)

While clearance by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is a prerequisite for Medicare coverage, the 510(k) premarket clearance process does not in itself establish medical necessity. Medicare payment policy is determined by the interaction of numerous requirements, including but not limited to, the availability of a Medicare benefit category and other statutory requirements, coding and pricing guidelines, as well as national and local coverage determinations and clinical evidence.

BILLING GUIDELINES AND CODING

CODES*		
CPT	43192	Esophagoscopy, rigid, transoral; with directed submucosal injection(s), any substance
	43201	Esophagoscopy, flexible, transoral; with directed submucosal injection(s), any substance
	43210	Esophagogastroduodenoscopy, flexible, transoral; with esophagogastric fundoplasty, partial or complete, includes duodenoscopy when performed
	43236	Esophagogastroduodenoscopy, flexible, transoral; with directed submucosal injection(s), any substance
	43257	Esophagogastroduodenoscopy, flexible, transoral; with delivery of thermal energy to the muscle of lower esophageal sphincter and/or gastric cardia, for treatment of gastroesophageal reflux disease
	43499	Unlisted procedure, esophagus
HCPCS	None	

***Coding Notes:**

- The code list above is provided as a courtesy and may not be all-inclusive. Inclusion or omission of a code from this policy neither implies nor guarantees reimbursement or coverage. Some codes may not require routine review for medical necessity, but they are subject to provider contracts, as well as member benefits, eligibility and potential utilization audit. According to Medicare, "presence of a payment amount in the MPFS and the Medicare physician fee schedule database (MPFSDB) does not imply that CMS has determined that the service may be covered by Medicare." The issuance of a CPT or HCPCS code or the provision of a payment or fee amount by Medicare does **not** make a procedure medically reasonable or necessary or a covered benefit by Medicare. *(Medicare Claims Processing Manual, Chapter 23 - Fee Schedule Administration and Coding Requirements, §30 - Services Paid Under the Medicare Physician's Fee Schedule, A. Physician's Services)*
- All unlisted codes are reviewed for medical necessity, correct coding, and pricing at the claim level. If an unlisted code is submitted for non-covered services addressed in this policy then it will be **denied as not covered**. If an unlisted code is submitted for potentially covered services addressed in this policy, to avoid post-service denial, **prior authorization is recommended**.
- **See the non-covered and prior authorization lists on the Company Medical Policy, Reimbursement Policy, Pharmacy Policy and Provider Information website for additional information.**
- HCPCS/CPT code(s) may be subject to National Correct Coding Initiative (NCCI) procedure-to-procedure (PTP) bundling edits and daily maximum edits known as "medically unlikely edits" (MUEs) published by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). This policy does not take precedence over NCCI edits or MUEs. Please refer to the CMS website for coding guidelines and applicable code combinations.

REFERENCES

1. Medicare Coverage Database (MCD) Archive web site; Available at: https://localcoverage.cms.gov/mcd_archive/search.aspx?clickon=search

POLICY REVISION HISTORY

DATE	REVISION SUMMARY
4/2023	Annual review, no changes. Converted to new policy template.
4/2024	Annual review, no changes to criteria but language revision due to Company policy change from "investigational" to "not medically necessary", update title
2/2025	Annual review, no changes.