

PROVIDER QUICK POINTS

PROVIDER INFORMATION

January 23, 2019

Medical Drug Update for New to Market Esketamine Nasal Spray

As stewards of healthcare expenditures for our subscribers, we are charged with ensuring they receive appropriate, quality care while also managing overall costs. As new drugs and/or drug indications are approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the United States, Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Minnesota and Blue Plus (Blue Cross) carefully examine the scientific evidence and outcomes of new drug treatments. During the process, Blue Cross may decide a new drug requires further evaluation to determine appropriate coverage or utilization management policies under the medical benefit. Medical drugs are generally administered by infusion or injection by a healthcare professional and process under a subscriber's medical benefit.

Medical Drug Evaluation Process

As new to market medical drugs are evaluated, Blue Cross's **Medical Drug Evaluation Process** involves clinical review of recent FDA-approved medical drugs or medical drug indications within 6 months of FDA approval. Blue Cross's Medical Policy Committee carefully examines the scientific evidence and outcomes for each medical drug treatment under consideration. The clinical review includes evaluation of published data and evidence supporting the safety, effectiveness, and the effect of the drug on health outcomes. The Medical Policy Committee's goal is to find the right balance between making new treatments available and guarding against unsafe or unproven approaches.

While new medical drugs and/or drug indications are under clinical review, the treatment is considered experimental/investigative until the evaluation process is completed, and a determination made if the treatment should be a covered service under the medical benefit. Covered services are determined in accordance with Blue Cross' policies in effect at the time treatment is rendered. Claims submitted while a drug is under review are subject to retrospective review and may be denied.

Upon product launch, **Esketamine Nasal Spray** will be added to the [Medical Drug Evaluation Process List](#). The new product is an investigational antidepressant medication the FDA is reviewing for treatment-resistant depression and major depression disorder with imminent risk for suicide.

Members Impacted

Subscribers with coverage through Commercial health plans (excluding Federal Employee Program (FEP) which has separate requirements).

Notes:

- Providers are encouraged to review the Medical Drug Evaluation Process List periodically for updates.
- Medical drugs do not include drugs that process under the pharmacy benefit, such as self-administered drugs or oral pills which do not need to be given by a health care provider or under their supervision.
- The requirement of Committee Review is a precondition of Blue Cross coverage and applies in addition to all other conditions and terms stated in Blue Cross contracts. For additional information on the Medical Drug Evaluation Process, see **Medical Policy II-174: New FDA-Approved Medical Drugs or Medical Drug Indications**. To access Blue Cross medical policies:

- Go to providers.bluecrossmn.com

- Under Tools and Resources, select “Medical Policy”, then acknowledge the Acceptance statement
- Select the “+” (plus) sign next to Medical and Behavioral Health Policies

Questions?

If you have questions, please contact provider services at **(651) 662-5200** or **1-800-262-0820**.