



MASSACHUSETTS

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Medical Policy Myocardial Strain Imaging

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Policy Number: 112

BCBSA Reference Number: 2.02.31 (For Plans internal use only)

LCD/NCD: N/A

Related Policies

None

Policy

Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity Medicare HMO BlueSM and Medicare PPO BlueSM Members

Myocardial strain imaging in individuals who have exposure to medications or radiation that could result in cardiotoxicity is INVESTIGATIONAL.

Myocardial strain imaging is INVESTIGATIONAL in all other situations.

Prior Authorization Information

Inpatient

- For services described in this policy, precertification/preauthorization **IS REQUIRED** for all products if the procedure is performed inpatient.

Outpatient

- For services described in this policy, see below for products where prior authorization **might be required** if the procedure is performed outpatient.

	Outpatient
Commercial Managed Care (HMO and POS)	This is not a covered service.
Commercial PPO and Indemnity	This is not a covered service.
Medicare HMO Blue SM	This is not a covered service.
Medicare PPO Blue SM	This is not a covered service.

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD Codes

Inclusion or exclusion of a code does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage as it applies to an individual member.

Providers should report all services using the most up-to-date industry-standard procedure, revenue, and diagnosis codes, including modifiers where applicable.

The following codes are included below for informational purposes only; this is not an all-inclusive list.

The following CPT code is considered investigational for Commercial Members: Managed Care (HMO and POS), PPO, and Indemnity, Medicare HMO Blue and Medicare PPO Blue:

CPT Codes

CPT codes:	Code Description
93356	Myocardial strain imaging using speckle tracking-derived assessment of myocardial mechanics (List separately in addition to codes for echocardiography imaging)

Description

The term strain indicates dimensional or deformational change under force. When used in echocardiography, the term 'strain' is used to describe the magnitude of shortening, thickening, and lengthening of the myocardium through the cardiac cycle. The most frequent measure of myocardial strain is the deformation of the left ventricle in the long axis, termed global longitudinal strain. During systole, ventricular myocardial fibers shorten with movement from the base to the apex. Global longitudinal strain is used as a measure of global left ventricle function and provides a quantitative myocardial deformation analysis of each left ventricle segment. Myocardial strain imaging is intended to detect subclinical changes in left ventricle function in patients with a preserved left ventricle ejection fraction, allowing for early detection of systolic dysfunction. Since strain imaging can identify left ventricle dysfunction earlier than standard methods, this raises the possibility of heart failure prophylaxis and primary prevention before the patient develops symptoms and irreversible myocardial dysfunction. Potential applications of speckle-tracking echocardiography are coronary artery disease, ischemic cardiomyopathy, valvular heart disease, dilated cardiomyopathy, hypertrophic cardiomyopathies, stress cardiomyopathy, and chemotherapy-related cardiotoxicity.

Myocardial Strain Imaging

Myocardial strain can be measured by cardiac magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), tissue Doppler imaging or by speckle-tracking echocardiography. Tissue Doppler strain imaging has been in use since the 1990s but has limitations that include angle dependency and significant noise. In 2016, Smiseth et al reported that the most widely used method of measuring myocardial strain at the present time is speckle-tracking echocardiography.¹ In speckle-tracking echocardiography, natural acoustic markers generated by the interaction between the ultrasound beam and myocardial fibers form interference patterns (speckles). These markers are stable, and speckle-tracking echocardiography analyzes the spatial displacement (tracking) of each point (speckle) on routine 2-dimensional sonograms. Echocardiograms are processed using specific acoustic-tracking software on dedicated workstations, with offline semiautomated analysis of myocardial strain. The 2-dimensional displacement is identified by a search with image processing algorithms for similar patterns across 2 frames. When tracked frame-to-frame, the spatiotemporal displacement of the speckles provides information about myocardial deformation across the cardiac cycle. Global longitudinal strain provides a quantitative analysis of each left ventricle segment, which is expressed as a percentage. In addition to global longitudinal strain, speckle-tracking echocardiography allows evaluation of left ventricle rotational and torsional dynamics.

Summary

Myocardial strain refers to the deformation (shortening, lengthening, or thickening) of the myocardium through the cardiac cycle. Myocardial strain can be measured by tissue Doppler imaging or, more recently, speckle-tracking echocardiography. Speckle-tracking echocardiography uses imaging software

to assess the movement of specific markers in the myocardium that are detected in standard echocardiograms. It is proposed that a reduction in myocardial strain may indicate sub-clinical impairment of the heart and can be used to inform treatment before development of symptoms and irreversible myocardial dysfunction.

For individuals who have exposure to medications or radiation that could result in cardiotoxicity who receive myocardial strain imaging, the evidence includes systematic reviews of observational studies and a randomized controlled trial (RCT). Relevant outcomes include symptoms, morbid events, quality of life, treatment-related mortality, and treatment-related morbidity. A systematic review of 13 studies with 384 patients treated for cancer suggests that myocardial strain imaging with tissue Doppler imaging or speckle-tracking echocardiography may be able to identify changes in myocardial deformation that precede changes in left ventricle ejection fraction. Although myocardial strain imaging may detect sub-clinical myocardial changes, the value of these changes in predicting clinical outcomes or guiding therapy is uncertain. In the Strain Surveillance of Chemotherapy for Improving Cardiovascular Outcomes (SUCCOUR) trial, left ventricle surveillance with global longitudinal strain was associated with an increased use of cardioprotective therapy and a lower incidence of cancer-therapy-related cardiac dysfunction as compared to left ventricular ejection fraction surveillance. However, no difference in the primary endpoint of final left ventricular ejection fraction at 1-year follow-up was observed between the groups and interpretation of findings was limited by important design and relevance limitations. Additional studies are indicated to better define the threshold for cardioprotective therapy and assess whether a global longitudinal strain-guided approach to cardioprotective therapy reduces the long-term risk of heart failure and improves clinical outcomes. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Policy History

Date	Action
6/2022	Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged.
6/2021	Annual policy review. Description, summary, and references updated. Policy statements unchanged.
1/2021	Medicare information removed. See MP #132 Medicare Advantage Management for local coverage determination and national coverage determination reference.
11/2020	Local Coverage Determination (LCD): Category III CPT® Codes (L33392) removed.
8/2020	Annual policy review. Investigational policy statement added to address cardiotoxicity. Effective 8/1/2020.
1/2020	Clarified coding information.
8/2019	New medical policy describing investigational indications. Effective 8/1/2019.

Information Pertaining to All Blue Cross Blue Shield Medical Policies

Click on any of the following terms to access the relevant information:

[Medical Policy Terms of Use](#)

[Managed Care Guidelines](#)

[Indemnity/PPO Guidelines](#)

[Clinical Exception Process](#)

[Medical Technology Assessment Guidelines](#)

References

1. Smiseth OA, Torp H, Opdahl A, et al. Myocardial strain imaging: how useful is it in clinical decision making?. *Eur Heart J*. Apr 14 2016; 37(15): 1196-207. PMID 26508168
2. Doherty JU, Kort S, Mehran R, et al. ACC/AATS/AHA/ASE/ASNC/HRS/SCAI/SCCT/SCMR/STS 2019 Appropriate Use Criteria for Multimodality Imaging in the Assessment of Cardiac Structure and Function in Nonvalvular Heart Disease: A Report of the American College of Cardiology Appropriate Use Criteria Task Force, American Association for Thoracic Surgery, American Heart Association, American Society of Echocardiography, American Society of Nuclear Cardiology, Heart Rhythm Society, Society for Cardiovascular Angiography and Interventions, Society of Cardiovascular

- Computed Tomography, Society for Cardiovascular Magnetic Resonance, and the Society of Thoracic Surgeons. *J Am Soc Echocardiogr*. May 2019; 32(5): 553-579. PMID 30744922
3. Trivedi SJ, Altman M, Stanton T, et al. Echocardiographic Strain in Clinical Practice. *Heart Lung Circ*. Sep 2019; 28(9): 1320-1330. PMID 31064715
 4. Yingchoncharoen T, Agarwal S, Popovic ZB, et al. Normal ranges of left ventricular strain: a meta-analysis. *J Am Soc Echocardiogr*. Feb 2013; 26(2): 185-91. PMID 23218891
 5. Thavendiranathan P, Poulin F, Lim KD, et al. Use of myocardial strain imaging by echocardiography for the early detection of cardiotoxicity in patients during and after cancer chemotherapy: a systematic review. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. Jul 01 2014; 63(25 Pt A): 2751-68. PMID 24703918
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 8. Armenian SH, Lacchetti C, Lenihan D. Prevention and Monitoring of Cardiac Dysfunction in Survivors of Adult Cancers: American Society of Clinical Oncology Clinical Practice Guideline Summary. *J Oncol Pract*. Apr 2017; 13(4): 270-275. PMID 27922796