

Reference number
1983-A

# STANDARD MEDICARE PART B MANAGEMENT

## EPOGEN, PROCRIT, RETACRIT (epoetin alfa)

### POLICY

#### I. INDICATIONS

The indications below including FDA-approved indications and compendial uses are considered a covered benefit provided that all the approval criteria are met and the member has no exclusions to the prescribed therapy.

##### A. FDA-Approved Indications

1. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia due to chronic kidney disease (CKD), including patients on dialysis and not on dialysis to decrease the need for red blood cell (RBC) transfusion.
2. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia due to zidovudine administered at  $\leq 4200$  mg/week in HIV-infected patients with endogenous serum erythropoietin levels of  $\leq 500$  mUnits/mL.
3. Epoetin alfa is indicated for the treatment of anemia in patients with non-myeloid malignancies where anemia is due to the effect of concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy, and upon initiation, there is a minimum of two additional months of planned chemotherapy.
4. Epoetin alfa is indicated to reduce the need for allogeneic RBC transfusions among patients with perioperative hemoglobin  $> 10$  to  $\leq 13$  g/dL who are at high risk for perioperative blood loss from elective, noncardiac, nonvascular surgery. Epoetin alfa is not indicated for patients who are willing to donate autologous blood preoperatively.

##### Limitations of Use:

1. Epoetin alfa has not been shown to improve quality of life, fatigue, or patient well-being.
2. Epoetin alfa is not indicated for use:
  - In patients with cancer receiving hormonal agents, biologic products, or radiotherapy, unless also receiving concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy.
  - In patients with cancer receiving myelosuppressive chemotherapy when the anticipated outcome is cure.
  - In patients with cancer receiving myelosuppressive chemotherapy in whom the anemia can be managed by transfusion
  - In patients scheduled for surgery who are willing to donate autologous blood.
  - In patients undergoing cardiac or vascular surgery.
  - As a substitute for RBC transfusions in patients who require immediate correction of anemia.

*Note: Use in members on dialysis is covered under the Medicare Part B dialysis benefit and is excluded from coverage under this policy.*

##### B. Compendial Uses

1. Anemia in members with myelodysplastic syndromes
2. Anemia in epidermolysis bullosa

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3. Anemia in rheumatoid arthritis
4. Anemia due to hepatitis C treatment with ribavirin in combination with either interferon alfa or peginterferon alfa
5. Anemia in porphyria cutanea tarda
6. Anemia in members whose religious beliefs forbid blood transfusions
7. Beta thalassemia
8. Prophylaxis of anemia of prematurity
9. Treatment of iron overload
10. Symptomatic anemia in members with primary myelofibrosis, post-polycythemia vera myelofibrosis, and post-essential thrombocythemia myelofibrosis
11. Anemia due to radiation
12. Anemia due to puerperium
13. Anemia due to multiple myeloma
14. Cancer patients who are undergoing palliative treatment
15. Blood unit collection for autotransfusion

**C. Nationally Covered Indication**

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services guidelines provide coverage for epoetin alfa for anemia secondary to myelosuppressive chemotherapy based on the criteria in Sections II, III, and IV.

All other indications will be assessed on an individual basis. Submissions for indications other than those enumerated in this policy should be accompanied by supporting evidence from Medicare approved compendia.

**II. EXCLUSIONS**

The following exclusions criteria apply to members requesting use for anemia due to concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy:

- A. The anemia is due to folate, B-12, or iron deficiency.
- B. The anemia is due to hemolysis, bleeding, or bone marrow fibrosis.
- C. The anemia is due to treatment for acute myelogenous leukemia, chronic myelogenous leukemia, or erythroid cancers.
- D. The anemia is due to treatment with radiotherapy only.
- E. Prophylactic use to prevent chemotherapy-induced anemia
- F. Prophylactic use to reduce tumor hypoxia
- G. Use in members with erythropoietin-type resistance due to neutralizing antibodies
- H. Members with uncontrolled hypertension

**III. CRITERIA FOR INITIAL APPROVAL**

Note: Requirements regarding current hemoglobin level exclude values due to a recent transfusion.

**A. Anemia due to chronic kidney disease**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for treatment anemia due to chronic kidney disease in members not receiving dialysis with a pretreatment hemoglobin of less than 10 g/dL or a hematocrit of less than 30%.

**B. Anemia due to concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy**

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Authorization of 8 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia due to concomitant chemotherapy with all of the following criteria are met:

1. The member is receiving chemotherapy for a solid tumor, multiple myeloma, lymphoma, or lymphocytic leukemia.
2. The hemoglobin level immediately prior to initiation or maintenance of therapy is less than 10 g/dL or the hematocrit is less than 30%.
3. The starting dose is not greater than 450 U/kg per week or 40,000 units weekly.

**C. Reduction of allogeneic red blood cell transfusion in members undergoing elective, noncardiac, nonvascular surgery**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for members scheduled to have an elective, noncardiac, nonvascular surgery when the pretreatment hemoglobin is > 10 to ≤ 13 g/dL.

**D. Anemia due to zidovudine in HIV-infected members**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members currently receiving zidovudine with pretreatment hemoglobin < 10 g/dL.

**E. Anemia due to myelodysplastic syndrome**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia due to myelodysplastic syndrome with a pretreatment hemoglobin of less than 10 g/dL or a hematocrit of less than 30%.

**F. Anemia in epidermolysis bullosa**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members with epidermolysis bullosa whose hemoglobin is less than 10 g/dL or whose hematocrit is less than 30%.

**G. Anemia in rheumatoid arthritis**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members with rheumatoid arthritis whose hemoglobin is less than 10 g/dL or whose hematocrit is less than 30%.

**H. Anemia due to hepatitis C treatment**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members receiving treatment for hepatitis C who meet all of the following criteria:

1. The member's hemoglobin is less than 10 g/dL or hematocrit is less than 30%.
2. The member is receiving ribavirin in combination with either interferon alfa or peginterferon alfa.

**I. Anemia in porphyria cutanea tarda**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members with porphyria cutanea tarda.

**J. Anemia in members whose religious beliefs forbid blood transfusions**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for members whose religious beliefs forbid blood transfusions whose hemoglobin is less than 10 g/dL or whose hematocrit is less than 30%.

**K. Beta thalassemia**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia in members with beta thalassemia.

**L. Prophylaxis of anemia of prematurity**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the prophylaxis of anemia of prematurity in members less than 1 year of age.

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**M. Iron overload**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of iron overload in combination with phlebotomy.

**N. Anemia in myelofibrosis, post-polycythemia vera myelofibrosis, or post-essential thrombocythemia myelofibrosis**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia due to myelofibrosis, post-polycythemia vera myelofibrosis, or post-essential thrombocythemia myelofibrosis when all of the following criteria are met:

1. The member has a hemoglobin level of less than 10 g/dL or a hematocrit of less than 30%.
2. The member has an erythropoietin level of less than 500 mU/mL.

**O. Anemia due to radiation**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia due to radiation.

**P. Anemia during the puerperium**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia following childbirth.

**Q. Anemia due to multiple myeloma**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for the treatment of anemia due to multiple myeloma.

**S. Anemia due to cancer**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for members who have cancer and are undergoing palliative treatment.

**T. Blood unit collection for autotransfusion**

Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted to increase the capacity for donation for future autologous transfusion prior to elective surgery.

**IV. CONTINUATION OF THERAPY**

Note: Requirements regarding current hemoglobin level exclude values due to a recent transfusion.

All members (including new members) requesting authorization for continuation of therapy must be currently receiving therapy with the requested agent.

A. Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for treatment of anemia due to concomitant myelosuppressive chemotherapy when all of the following criteria are met:

1. The member is currently receiving therapy with epoetin alfa.
2. The member does not have any exclusions listed in Section II.
3. The member has experienced at least a 1 g/dL increase in their hemoglobin or a 3% increase in their hematocrit.
4. Current hemoglobin is less than 11 g/dL or the prescriber will hold or reduce the dose of epoetin alfa to maintain a hemoglobin level sufficient to avoid transfusion.
5. Treatment will not extend beyond 8 weeks following the final dose of myelosuppressive chemotherapy given in the member's current chemotherapy regimen.

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B. Authorization of 12 weeks may be granted for all other indications when all of the following criteria are met:

1. The member is currently receiving therapy with epoetin alfa.
2. The member receiving epoetin alfa for an indication listed in Section III.
3. Epoetin alfa has been effective for treating the diagnosis or condition.

**V. REFERENCES**

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