

Corporate Medical Policy

Abatacept

File Name: abatacept
Policy Number: DRU4001
Origination: 4/2008
Last Review: 3/2008
Next Review: 3/2010

Description of Procedure or Service

Orencia (abatacept) is a biologic drug used to reduce the signs and symptoms of [rheumatoid arthritis](#). It is a fusion protein that blocks [T-cell](#) activation. This inhibits the progression of structural damage, which occurs over time with [rheumatoid arthritis](#). Orencia (abatacept) is a selective co-stimulatory signal required for full [T-cell](#) activation. [T-cell](#) activation is key in [rheumatoid arthritis](#) immunopathology.

[Rheumatoid arthritis](#) is a chronic condition where the person's own immune system causes inflammation of the joints and the tissue around the joints. The body is equipped with a defense mechanism called the immune system which protects you from disease and infection. When a person has an autoimmune condition, the immune system creates [antibodies](#) that attacks its own tissues by mistake. [Rheumatoid arthritis](#) usually starts between the age of 25 and 55 and the cause is unknown. Symptoms of [rheumatoid arthritis](#) (RA) are described as painful inflammation of the synovial tissue lining the joints. These patients have elevated levels of tumor necrosis factor-alpha (TNF-a) in their joints. Chronic joint inflammation leads to tissue break down, cell damage to the bone, edema, warmth, redness, joint stiffness, and pain. These patients are also fatigued, weak, have a low-grade fever, and loss of appetite.

Policy

BCBSNC will provide coverage for Orencia (abatacept) for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis when it is determined to be medically necessary because the medical criteria and guidelines shown below are met

Benefits Application

Please refer to Certificate for availability of benefits. This policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Benefits may vary according to benefit design, therefore certificate language should be reviewed before applying the terms of the policy.

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When Orencia (abatacept) is covered

Orencia (abatacept) may be medically necessary for the treatment of [rheumatoid arthritis](#) when the medical criteria and guidelines shown below are met

1. The patient has moderate to severe [rheumatoid arthritis](#).
2. Orencia (abatacept) may be used alone or in combination with methotrexate.
3. Orencia (abatacept) may be covered when used for the treatment of moderate to severe juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) in patients six years and older.

When Orencia (abatacept) is not covered

1. When the criteria stated above are not met.
2. Orencia (abatacept) should not be used in combination with Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF) inhibiting drugs or other [rheumatoid arthritis](#) biologics including Rituxan (rituximab) or Kineret (anakinra), an interleukin-1 receptor antagonist.
3. Orencia (abatacept) is not covered when used for the treatment of multiple sclerosis, systemic lupus erythematosus, graft versus host disease (GVHD) and other non FDA-approved indications. These indications are considered investigational.

Policy Guidelines

Orencia (abatacept) is administered as a 30 minute IV infusion based on weight. It should be given at 2 and 4 weeks after the first infusion then every 4 weeks. Authorization may be renewed if the biologic has improved the patient's condition as determined by clinical assessment or various Rheumatoid Arthritis disease assessment tools.

Billing/Coding/Physician Documentation Information

This policy may apply to the following codes. Inclusion of a code in this section does not guarantee that it will be reimbursed. For further information on reimbursement guidelines, please see Administrative Policies on the Blue Cross Blue Shield of North Carolina web site at www.bcbsnc.com. They are listed in the Category Search on the Medical Policy search page.

Applicable codes: J0129

BCBSNC may request medical records for determination of medical necessity. When medical records are requested, letters of support and/or explanation are often useful, but are not sufficient documentation unless all specific information needed to make a medical necessity determination is included.

Policy Key Words

Key Words: Orencia, abatacept, rheumatoid arthritis, RA, TNF-a, Tumor necrosis factor- alpha, DRU4001

Medical Term Definitions

Antibody

a protein that is produced by the immune system against a specific antigen.

Rheumatoid arthritis

a chronic disease considered to be autoimmune and characterized by pain, stiffness, inflammation, swelling, and sometimes destruction of joints.

T-cells

a type of white blood cell (lymphocyte). It is called T-cell because it is derived from the thymus gland. Its function is to control cell mediated immune reactions.

Scientific Background and Reference Sources

Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. Orenzia (abatacept) product information. Retrieved 3/14/08 from http://www.orenzia.com/orenzia/home/index.jsp?BV_UseBVCookie=Yes.

Senior Medical Director review, 3/20/2008.

Schiff M, Keiserman M, Codding C, et.al. Efficacy and safety of abatacept or infliximab versus placebo in ATTEST: a phase III, multicenter, randomized, double-blind, placebo-controlled study in patients with rheumatoid arthritis and an inadequate response to methotrexate. *Ann Rheum Dis*. published online 29 Nov 2007; doi 10.1136/ard.2007.080002.

Bristol-Myers Squibb Co. U.S. Food and Drug Administration Approves ORENCIA® (abatacept) for the Treatment of Moderate-to-Severe Polyarticular Juvenile Idiopathic Arthritis (JIA) in Patients Six Years and Older. Retrieved 10/7/08 from http://newsroom.bms.com/article_display.cfm?article_id=5249

FDA Website. Approval History: sBLA 125057/114. Retrieved 10/7/08 from <http://www.fda.gov/cder/foi/appletter/2008/125057s114ltr.pdf>

Policy Implementation/Update Information

- 4/1/08 New policy developed. Under the "When Covered" section;"Orenzia (abatacept) may be medically necessary for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis when the medical criteria and guidelines shown below are met: 1.The patient has moderate to severe rheumatoid arthritis; and 2. The patient has failed to respond adequately to at least one Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF) inhibiting drug or is intolerant to **all** TNF-inhibiting drugs (i.e., Remicade (infliximab), Enbrel (etanercept), Humira (adalimumab); and 3. Orenzia (abatacept) may be used alone or in combination with methotrexate. Under the "When Not Covered" section; "1. When the criteria stated above are not met. 2. Orenzia (abatacept) should not be used in combination with Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF) inhibiting drugs or other rheumatoid arthritis biologics including Rituxan (rituximab) or Kineret (anakinra), an interleukin-1 receptor antagonist. 3. Orenzia (abatacept) is not covered when used for the treatment of juvenile rheumatoid arthritis, juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA), multiple sclerosis, systemic lupus erythematosus, graft versus host disease (GVHD) and other non FDA-approved indications is considered investigational." Senior Medical Director review, 3/20/2008. References added. Notification given April 1, 2008. Policy effective July 1, 2008.
- 7/01/08 Added additional FDA indication to the "When Covered" section to include #4. "Orenzia (abatacept) may be covered when used for the treatment of moderate to severe juvenile idiopathic arthritis (JIA) in patients six years and older." Removed reference to JIA from #3 under the "When Not Covered" section.

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11/3/08 Removed criteria from the "When Covered" section requiring "The patient has failed to respond adequately to at least one Tumor Necrosis Factor (TNF) inhibiting drug or is intolerant to all TNF-inhibiting drugs (i.e., Remicade (infliximab), Enbrel (etanercept), Humira (adalimumab)."
Revised "Policy Guidelines" section. References added

Medical policy is not an authorization, certification, explanation of benefits or a contract. Benefits and eligibility are determined before medical guidelines and payment guidelines are applied. Benefits are determined by the group contract and subscriber certificate that is in effect at the time services are rendered. This document is solely provided for informational purposes only and is based on research of current medical literature and review of common medical practices in the treatment and diagnosis of disease. Medical practices and knowledge are constantly changing and BCBSNC reserves the right to review and revise its medical policies periodically.