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Effective Date: 12/14/2023

**Proprotein Convertase Subtilisin/Kexin Type 9 (PCSK9) Inhibitors
Leqvio® (inclisiran)**

HCPCS: J1306

Policy:

Requests must be supported by submission of chart notes and patient specific documentation.

- A. Coverage of the requested drug is provided when all the following are met:
 - a. FDA approved indications
 - b. FDA approved age
 - c. Trial and therapeutic failure with one high-intensity statin
OR
 - d. History of statin-associated side effects or intolerance (e.g., skeletal muscle related symptoms) after a trial of two generic statins
OR
 - e. History of rhabdomyolysis after a trial of one statin
 - f. Not to be used in combination with other PCSK9 inhibitors
 - g. Trial and failure, contraindication, or intolerance to the preferred drugs as listed in BCBSM/BCN's utilization management medical drug list and/or BCBSM/BCN's prior authorization and step therapy documents

- B. Quantity Limitations, Authorization Period and Renewal Criteria
 - a. Quantity Limits: Align with FDA recommended dosing
 - b. Authorization Period: One year at a time
 - c. Renewal Criteria: Clinical documentation must be provided to confirm that current criteria are met and that the medication is providing clinical benefit

***Note: Coverage and approval duration may differ for Medicare Part B members based on any applicable criteria outlined in Local Coverage Determinations (LCD) or National Coverage Determinations (NCD) as determined by Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). See the CMS website at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/>. Determination of coverage of Part B drugs is based on medically accepted indications which have supported citations included or approved for inclusion determined by CMS approved compendia.

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Background Information:

- Proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK9) is a protein that targets LDL receptors for degradation and reduces the liver's ability to remove circulating LDL from the blood. Elevated levels of circulating PCSK9 are associated with elevated levels of low-density lipoprotein cholesterol (LDL-C) and consequently worsened cardiovascular outcomes. Inhibitors of PCSK9 bind to circulating PCSK9 and prevent it from binding to and degrading LDL receptors on the liver surface, resulting in more LDL receptors to remove circulating LDL from the blood.
- The first two fully human monoclonal antibodies to PCSK9 to have been approved by the FDA to treat patients with inadequately treated levels of LDL-C were Repatha (evolocumab) and Praluent (alirocumab). Both work by binding to circulating PCSK9 and preventing it from binding to and degrading LDL receptors on the liver surface, resulting in more LDL receptors to remove circulating LDL from the blood. Praluent and Repatha have been shown to lower LDL-C by up to 60% in patients on concurrent statin therapy and additionally have demonstrated cardiovascular outcomes benefits. Both products are approved for the following indications:
 - Secondary prevention of cardiovascular events (e.g., stroke, myocardial infarction, unstable angina) in adults with established cardiovascular disease
 - As an adjunct to diet, alone or in combination with other LDL-C lowering therapies, in adults with primary hyperlipidemia, including heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HeFH), to reduce LDL-C
 - Repatha is also approved for pediatric patients 10 years of age and older with HeFH, as an adjunct to diet and other LDL-C-lowering therapies
 - As an adjunct to other LDL-C lowering therapies in patients with homozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HoFH) to reduce LDL-C
 - Praluent is indicated for adults with HoFH, whereas Repatha has established safety and effectiveness in patients 10 years of age and older with HoFH.
- The most recent addition to the PCSK9 inhibitor class is Leqvio (inclisiran), a small interfering RNA (siRNA) directed to PCSK9 mRNA. Leqvio is the first siRNA therapy approved for LDL-C reduction. It has been approved as an adjunct to diet and maximally tolerated statin therapy for the treatment of adults with HeFH or clinical atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease (ASCVD), who require additional lowering of LDL-C.
- Unlike Praluent and Repatha, Leqvio utilizes the RNA interference mechanism to inhibit hepatic synthesis of PCSK9. In doing so, LDL receptor recycling and expression on the liver surface increase, thereby increasing LDL-C uptake by hepatocytes and consequently lowering the levels in circulation. In clinical trials Leqvio has demonstrated comparable LDL-C lowering potency to Praluent and Repatha. Leqvio's effect on cardiovascular outcomes has yet to be determined. The ORION-4 and CITORION-2P cardiovascular outcomes trials with Leqvio are underway and expected to be completed in 2026 and 2027, respectively; , results are expected to be comparable to Praluent and Repatha
- All three products are administered as subcutaneous injections. With regard to administration and dosing frequency Praluent and Repatha are similar; both products can be self-administered and are dosed every two weeks or every month. Leqvio, however, is intended for administration by a healthcare professional only and is administered every six months after an initial dose titration. Less frequent dosing and a required office visit could potentially yield better adherence with Leqvio compared to Praluent and Repatha.

- Combination use of more than one PCSK9 inhibitor has not been evaluated, and in clinical trials for Leqvio patients who were taking Praluent and/or Repatha were excluded from participating. Therefore, the use of any of the PCSK9 inhibitors in combination is not supported by evidence.
- The American College of Cardiology (ACC) at present in their 2022 Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on the Role of Nonstatin Therapies for LDL-C Lowering prefers PCSK9 monoclonal antibodies (i.e., Repatha, Praluent) as the initial PCSK9 inhibitor of choice in light of the demonstrated efficacy, safety, and cardiovascular outcomes benefits seen in the FOURIER and ODYSSEY Outcomes trials; however, those with poor adherence to PCSK9 monoclonal antibodies, adverse effects from PCSK9 monoclonal antibodies, or those unable to self-inject may be considered for use of Leqvio. Use of the product(s) with the lowest net cost provides the greatest value.
- Patients with clinical ASCVD include those with a history of myocardial infarction, stable or unstable angina, coronary or other arterial revascularization, stroke, transient ischemic attack, or peripheral artery disease (PAD, including aortic aneurysm), all of atherosclerotic origin. These patients with established cardiovascular disease are at high risk of a cardiovascular disease event. Those with a history of multiple major ASCVD events or one major ASCVD event and multiple high-risk conditions (i.e. age \geq 65 years old, heterozygous familial hypercholesterolemia (HeFH), diabetes mellitus, hypertension, chronic kidney disease, current smoking, LDL-C \geq 100 mg/dL despite maximally tolerated statin therapy and ezetimibe, history of congestive heart failure, history of prior coronary artery bypass surgery or percutaneous coronary intervention outside of the major ASCVD event(s)) are considered very-high risk for future ASCVD events. Therapy to reduce the risk of subsequent events is known as secondary prevention.
- Patients presenting with severe primary hypercholesterolemia (LDL \geq 190 mg/dL), including those with familial hypercholesterolemia (FH), have a high risk of ASCVD and premature/recurrent coronary events. Regardless of whether LDL-C levels \geq 190 mg/dL are found to have a genetic mutation associated with FH, those patients with very high LDL-C are most likely to achieve the greatest benefit both in LDL-C reduction and ASCVD risk reduction from evidence based LDL-C-Lowering therapy.
- FH is an autosomal dominant genetic disease caused by functional mutations in the LDLR, APOB, or PCSK9 genes, and is characterized by lifelong elevations of LDL-C that if left untreated leads to early-onset atherosclerosis and risk of cardiovascular events. Mutations in the LDLR gene are the most common causes of FH, accounting for 85%-90% of genetically confirmed cases. Diagnosis of FH should be considered in children presenting with persistently elevated LDL-C $>$ 160 mg/dL, adults with LDL-C $>$ 190 mg/dL, and in all patients with early coronary artery disease. In the absence of confirmatory genetic testing, FH can be diagnosed using clinical criteria; commonly used diagnostic tools for the diagnosis of FH include the US Make Early Diagnosis to Prevent early Death (MEDPED) criteria, the UK Simon Broome system, and the Dutch Lipid Clinic Network criteria. Though the tools differ from one another, their predictive values are comparable.
- The incidence of HeFH in the United States is approximately 1 in 500. The Dutch Lipid Clinic Network criteria provide the most detailed assessment of the likelihood of a diagnosis of HeFH. A diagnosis of HeFH can also be made based on the following clinical parameters:
 - An untreated LDL of \geq 190 mg/dL (or \geq 160 mg/dL in patients under 16 years of age) and at least one of the following:
 - Family history of a first or second degree relative with HeFH or HoFH.
 - Physical signs of FH such as the presence of tendon xanthomas, premature corneal arcus, premature tuberous xanthomas, or premature xanthelasma.
 - Presence of a mutation causing FH by DNA testing (e.g. mutation in LDLR, APOB, PCSK9).

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- HoFH is ultra-rare affecting approximately 1,300 patients in the United States. Genetic mutations primarily affect the LDLR gene, resulting in virtually absent or impaired receptor-mediated catabolism of LDL-C and leading to severely elevated LDL-C levels (> 400 mg/dL) and a lack of responsiveness to standard lipid-lowering therapies. Diagnosis can be made via genetic testing for causative mutations in the LRLR, APOB, and PCSK9 genes, or clinically in patients with an untreated LDL-C of >500 mg/dL (or treated LDL-C \geq 300 mg/dL) and one of the following: cutaneous or tendon xanthoma prior to 10 years of age, or elevated LDL-C levels in both parents consistent with HeFH. Untreated LDL-C < 500 mg/dL may be present in some patients with HoFH, particularly in young children, and would warrant genetic testing to clarify or confirm diagnosis.
- LDL-C is a primary cause of atherosclerosis and a major risk factor for ASCVD. Randomized controlled trials of cholesterol lowering therapies have consistently demonstrated that LDL-C lowering reduces the risk of ASCVD. Generally speaking, lowering LDL-C levels by 1% yields an approximately 1% reduction in ASCVD risk, though this percent risk reduction may be slightly more or less at higher and lower baseline LDL-C levels, respectively.
- Statins are the cornerstone of pharmacologic therapy for lowering LDL-C both as primary and secondary ASCVD prevention. Statin therapy is divided into three categories by intensity, with atorvastatin, rosuvastatin, and simvastatin being the primary statin medications used in clinical practice.

	High Intensity	Moderate Intensity	Low Intensity
LDL-C Lowering	> 50%	30-49%	<30%
Statins**	Atorvastatin ^o 40mg, 80mg Rosuvastatin* 20mg, 40mg	Atorvastatin ^o 10mg, 20mg Rosuvastatin* 5mg, 10mg Simvastatin ^o 20-40mg Pravastatin* 40mg, 80mg Lovastatin ^o 40mg, 80mg Fluvastatin ^o XL 80mg Fluvastatin ^o 40mg BID Pitavastatin ^o 1-4mg	Simvastatin ^o 10mg Pravastatin* 10-20mg Lovastatin ^o 20mg Fluvastatin ^o 20-40mg

*Hydrophilic statin

^oLipophilic statin

**Hydrophilic statins have greater hepatoselectivity and less influence on smooth muscle proliferation than lipophilic statins, which diffuse nonselectively into extrahepatic tissues such as the muscle and may therefore be more likely to cause myopathy.

- The 2018 American College of Cardiology/American Heart Association (ACC/AHA) treatment guidelines for the management of high cholesterol recommend initiating treatment with healthy lifestyle modifications and a high-intensity or maximally tolerated statin to lower LDL-C by \geq 50% to a goal LDL-C level of <70 mg/dL for secondary prevention of ASCVD or <100 mg/dL for severe hypercholesterolemia, including FH. Treatment with high-intensity or maximally tolerated statins has demonstrated reduced ASCVD risk in both primary and secondary prevention trials, in addition to reduced risk of myocardial infarction, coronary heart disease, and all-cause death with phenotypically or genetically confirmed FH. Peak changes in LDL-C levels are generally seen between 4 and 12 weeks after initiating therapy.
- If with a high-intensity statin the patient experiences statin-associated side effects that are not severe (e.g., myalgias), the statin dose can be reduced or alternate statins can be trialed with the ultimate goal of treating with a guideline-recommended maximally tolerated statin.
 - There are a variety of generically available statins that can be dosed at different intensities or dosing regimens to help mitigate bothersome side effects; therefore, it is reasonable to require a trial of at least two statins in patients experiencing statin-associated side effects.

- Patients who experience more severe side effects with statin therapy (e.g. rhabdomyolysis) or recurrent statin-associated muscle symptoms despite multiple statin rechallenge attempts may need to discontinue statin use and transition to non-statin therapy that has been shown to provide clinical benefit.
- If maximally tolerated statin therapy fails to reduce LDL-C by at least 50% and/or the LDL-C level remains above goal, the 2022 ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on the Role of Non-Statin Therapies for LDL-C lowering recommends considering adding either ezetimibe or a PCSK9 monoclonal antibody as the initial non-statin therapy. Preference of which agent to add may be influenced by the desired amount of LDL-C-lowering. ACC/AHA guidelines suggest that additional ASCVD risk reduction can be derived by adding ezetimibe to statin therapy, which can lower LDL-C by an additional 13-20%, and placebo-controlled randomized clinical trials have demonstrated favorable safety profiles and additional LDL-C reduction ranging from 43-64% with PCSK9 inhibitors in patients on maximally tolerated statin therapy. If additional LDL-C lowering is required after addition of a single nonstatin agent (ezetimibe or PCSK9 monoclonal antibody) to statin therapy, a second evidence-based non-statin agent should be considered (e.g., ezetimibe + PCSK9 monoclonal antibody).
- If additional LDL-C lowering is warranted despite maximally tolerated statin therapy, ezetimibe, and a PCSK9 monoclonal antibody, the addition of bempedoic acid may be considered, or the PCSK9 monoclonal antibody may be replaced with inclisiran. There is no cardiovascular outcomes data available at this time for either bempedoic acid or inclisiran. For persistent severe hypercholesterolemia where drug therapy fails to adequately control LDL-C, LDL apheresis may be an option and referral to a lipid specialist may be indicated.
- For children and adolescents 10 years of age and older with an LDL-C \geq 190 mg/dL or \geq 160 mg/dL with a clinical presentation consistent with FH who fail to respond adequately to 3 to 6 months of lifestyle therapy, the 2018 guidelines suggest initiation of statin therapy. Statin treatment intensity in children is not specified in the guidelines as it should be individualized to the child based on the severity of hypercholesterolemia and the needs of the child/family. Use of non-statin therapies to further treat persistently elevated LDL-C in children is not addressed in the guidelines; however, for children with HoFH Repatha may be a reasonable next step for children and adolescents who require additional LDL-C lowering since it is approved by the FDA for use in pediatric patients 10 years of age and older with HoFH in combination with diet and other LDL-C lowering therapies. Praluent, however, is only approved for adult patients with HoFH.

References:

1. Lloyd-Jones D, Morris P, et al. 2022 ACC Expert Consensus Decision Pathway on the Role of Nonstatin Therapies for LDL-Cholesterol Lowering in the Management of Atherosclerotic Cardiovascular Disease Risk. *J Am Coll Cardiol*. 2022 Oct, 80 (14) 1366–1418.
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3. McGowan MP, et al. Diagnosis and Treatment of Heterozygous Familial Hypercholesterolemia. *Journal of the American Heart Association*. 2019; 8:e013225.
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9. Raal FJ et al. Familial hypercholesterolemia treatments: Guidelines and new therapies. *Atherosclerosis* 277 (2018) 483-492.
10. Repatha [prescribing information]. Thousand Oaks, CA: Amgen Inc; October 2021.
11. Praluent [prescribing information]. Tarrytown, NY: Regeneron Pharmaceuticals Inc; April 2021.
12. Leqvio [prescribing information]. East Hanover, NJ: Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; December 2021.

Policy History												
#	Date	Change Description										
1.6	Effective Date: 12/14/2023	Annual review of criteria performed; no changes were made										
1.5	Effective Date: 12/01/2022	Added criteria preventing use of PCSK9 inhibitors in combination with one another										
1.4	Effective Date: 06/09/2022	Removed criteria requiring trial and failure of Repatha or Praluent for Leqvio; will utilize trial and failure of preferred criteria (bullet f) instead for flexibility										
1.3	Effective Date: 03/01/2022	Removed criteria requiring t/f of Repatha or Praluent for Leqvio; will utilize t/f of preferred criteria (bullet f) instead for flexibility										
1.2	Effective Date: 03/01/2022	UM medical management system update for MAPPO and BCNA <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Line of Business</th> <th>PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BCBS</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCN</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MAPPO</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCNA</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Line of Business	PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)	BCBS	Yes	BCN	Yes	MAPPO	Yes	BCNA	Yes
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1.1	Effective Date: 02/17/2022	UM medical management system update for BCBS and BCN <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Line of Business</th> <th>PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BCBS</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCN</td> <td>Yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MAPPO</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCNA</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Line of Business	PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)	BCBS	Yes	BCN	Yes	MAPPO	No	BCNA	No
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1.0	Effective Date: 02/10/2022	Update to include Leqvio <table border="1" style="margin-left: 20px; width: 100%;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Line of Business</th> <th>PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BCBS</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCN</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>MAPPO</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>BCNA</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Line of Business	PA Required in Medical Management System (Yes/No)	BCBS	No	BCN	No	MAPPO	No	BCNA	No
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* The prescribing information for a drug is subject to change. To ensure you are reading the most current information it is advised that you reference the most updated prescribing information by visiting the drug or manufacturer website or <http://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/index.cfm>.

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