Medical Oncology Program and Cancer Treatment Pathways

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the Medical Oncology Program?

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of North Carolina (BCBSNC) recognizes the critical role that practices like yours play in the delivery of quality cancer care for our members. The Medical Oncology Program (Program) has been developed as an innovative quality initiative to help bring physician practices evidence-based cancer treatment information, which will allow you to compare planned cancer treatment regimens against evidence-based clinical criteria for managing our members’ cancer care needs. The Program also identifies utilization of certain evidence-based Cancer Treatment Pathways. By choosing designated Cancer Treatment Pathways, your practice may become eligible for enhanced reimbursement.

Practices participating in the Program can gain efficiency through:

+ Synchronization with BCBSNC’s Medical Policy and Clinical Guidelines,
+ Identification of regimens on selected Pathways, which are eligible for enhanced reimbursement, and
+ 24/7 online access to the AIM ProviderPortalSM, a proven technology platform to process your requests in real time.

What is AIM and what is its role in The Medical Oncology Program?

AIM Specialty Health® is a National Specialty benefit manager. The Medical Oncology Program will be administered by AIM Specialty Health on behalf of BCBSNC. AIM Specialty Health was chosen for this Program, in-part, because many in-network providers are already familiar with them and their online tools and services for managing services under similarly structured programs. AIM Specialty Health has been providing specialty benefit management services such as the Diagnostic Imaging Program for BCBSNC members since 2007.

How will the Program be administered?

The Medical Oncology Program will be administered by AIM Specialty Health on behalf of BCBSNC. Participation in the Program is most easily managed using the AIM ProviderPortal via Blue eSM. Through use of the ProviderPortal you can open a new order, update an existing order and retrieve order summaries. The ProviderPortal is available 24/7. AIM can also be contacted directly by calling their toll free number 1-866-455-8414, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Central Time.

Additional information, including a listing of prior review drugs, care Pathways, and information about enhanced reimbursement will be available on the BCBSNC website bcbsn.com by January 1, 2017.
How is the AIM ProviderPortal accessed?

The Medical Oncology Program is accessed through the AIM ProviderPortal System through Blue e at https://providers.bcbsnc.com/providers/login.faces.

The AIM ProviderPortal is available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, processing requests in real-time. You can access the AIM provider portal for Medical Oncology using the same method as you do today for high tech imaging authorization requests.

The program is intended for new treatments starting on date-of-service April 1, 2017 and or after. For treatments initiated prior to April 1, 2017, this program will not apply.

A step-by-step tutorial on using the AIM ProviderPortal to submit a cancer treatment regimen can be accessed online under the How to Participate tab at www.medicaloncologyprogram.com.

If accessing AIM for the first time, registration will be required.

Requests that meet criteria receive a response instantly on screen in the AIM ProviderPortal, or if requested by phone the AIM contact center will answer during the call.

What happens if I do not call AIM or enter information through the AIM ProviderPortal?

If you call BCBSNC directly, you will be requested to use the AIM ProviderPortal or call the AIM contact center. If AIM is not provided the necessary information, you will not be eligible for enhanced reimbursement, even if the treatment regimen is on a Pathway. In addition, if any oncology drugs are subject to BCBSNC’s Medical Policy or Clinical Guidelines and have not been reviewed prospectively, they may be subject to post-service review or denial of payment according to member benefit.
About BCBSNC Cancer Treatment Pathways

What are Cancer Treatment Pathways?

Pathways are widely accepted as a component in managing oncology treatment quality and costs. More specific than guidelines, the Pathways identify treatments selected based on effectiveness, favorable toxicity profiles, and cost. Over half of practices responding to ASCO’s 2010 National Practice Benchmark report that they regularly use Pathways in patient care. Organizations that have implemented Pathways have found that survival outcomes are equivalent for patients treated on and off Pathway, while treatment costs decrease substantially for patients treated on a Pathway.

How were the Cancer Treatment Pathways developed?

The goal of the Medical Oncology Program is to help ensure BCBSNC members have access to quality and affordable cancer care. A key component of the Medical Oncology Program is the development of the BCBSNC Cancer Treatment Pathways. Cancer Treatment Pathways are developed using a rigorous process of evidence-based medicine. In order to be considered as a possible Cancer Treatment Pathway, a cancer treatment regimen must first be recognized by national guidelines as an effective and recommended cancer therapy. BCBSNC selects the Cancer Treatment Pathways from these recommended cancer therapies on the basis of:

+ Clinical benefit (efficacy)
+ Side-effects (toxicity), especially those that lead to hospitalizations or impact quality of life
+ Strength of national guideline recommendations
+ Cost (final consideration when efficacy, toxicity and national guidelines are equal)

What happens if a treatment regimen not designated as Cancer Treatment Pathway is selected?

We recognize that every patient is unique. While efforts have been made to identify Cancer Treatment Pathways that offer the best treatment option for most patients, you may decide another treatment regimen is best for an individual patient. Unlike other treatment regimens, those designated as a Cancer Treatment Pathways will be eligible for enhanced S-code reimbursement. However, whether a Cancer Treatment Pathway or an alternate regimen is chosen, the Medical Oncology Program supports benefit coverage for all regimens that meet clinical review criteria under BCBSNC medical policies* and clinical guidelines.

*Medicare Advantage coverage will follow Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) National Coverage Determinations and Local Coverage Determinations.
How often are the Cancer Treatment Pathways updated?

Cancer Treatment Pathways are reviewed at least quarterly, as well as any time updates are made to nationally published guidelines.

What is the S-code enhanced reimbursement?

When a Cancer Treatment Pathway regimen is selected for a BCBSNC member and Pathway services are included in the Program, you will be eligible to receive an enhanced reimbursement when billing the following S-codes:

+ **S0353**—Treatment planning and care coordination management for cancer, initial treatment
+ **S0354**—Treatment planning and care coordination management for cancer, established patient

S-code enhanced reimbursement is only available to BCBSNC participating, in-network providers. Please email **DM-MedOnc@bcbsnc.com** to learn more about S-code enhanced reimbursement from BCBSNC.

Where can I learn more about AIM Cancer Treatment Pathways?

Additional details about AIM Cancer Treatment Pathways, as well as additional tools and information about the Program are available on AIM’s website for providers at: [https://www.medicaloncologyprogram.com/index.html](https://www.medicaloncologyprogram.com/index.html).

About pharmacy benefit programs

How do I know if the drugs I’m ordering require prior authorization/precertification under my patients' pharmacy benefits?

BCBSNC Utilization Management program information, including information about how to submit requests electronically and which drugs require authorization/precertification is available on the BCBSNC website. Information and specific drug authorization/precertification requirements for members actively enrolled in BCBSNC’s commercially insured products is located at [www.bcbsnc.com/content/providers/ppa/prescriptions.htm](http://www.bcbsnc.com/content/providers/ppa/prescriptions.htm), and for members actively enrolled in BCBSNC’s Medicare Advantage products at [www.bcbsnc.com/content/medicare/member/policies/approval.htm](http://www.bcbsnc.com/content/medicare/member/policies/approval.htm).

Additional drugs that are typically recognized under members’ medical benefits will be added as requiring prior authorizations through the AIM program. Several oral oncology drugs typically recognized under members’ pharmacy benefits will also be added to BCBSNC’s Utilization Management program. Our Utilization Management program will help to ensure these medications are used according to evidence-based medicine per compendia, as well as prescribing information per the Food and Drug Administration. Combined, the programs will look for pertinent diagnoses, dosing/quantity limits, and bio-marker tests where applicable.
About the clinical review process

If I select a treatment regimen that’s on a Cancer Treatment Pathway, how will I be informed about my eligibility for S-code reimbursement?

You will be notified immediately after selecting a Pathway regimen if you are eligible for S-code reimbursement. A separate letter will not be provided. It is recommended that you save the summary page you receive from the AIM ProviderPortal after completing your initial order in your patients' charts.

What happens if I don't call AIM or enter information through the AIM ProviderPortal?

If you call BCBSNC directly, you will be directed to use the AIM ProviderPortal or call the AIM contact center. If you do not provide AIM with all necessary information, you will not be eligible for enhanced reimbursement, even if the treatment regimen is on a Pathway. In addition, if any oncology drugs are subject to BCBSNC Medical Policy or Clinical Guidelines and have not been reviewed prospectively, they may be subject to post-service review and payment may be denied.

What if I need a longer treatment period than is indicated in the Cancer Treatment Pathway?

Each Cancer Treatment Pathway reflects an expected duration of treatment. For a regimen (e.g., adjuvant therapy) of fixed duration, the Pathway approval is for the duration of all planned cycles of chemotherapy. For a treatment regimen that is indefinite (e.g., planned until disease progression), the Pathway approval is for six months. If treatment continues beyond six months, you will need to submit a new treatment regimen request to AIM.

What happens if I have a patient who started a treatment prior to April 1, 2017?

If a treatment in this program was started prior to April 1, 2017, that outcome will be recognized for a total of six months. To ensure continuity of care, we will add an auto-approved precertification in our system, on the provider's behalf, for any member who is currently receiving treatment. Drugs that currently require prior authorizations will be subject to receiving prior authorizations for any time period, which may differ from the six month auto-approved precertification. Drugs new to prior authorization requirements as part of this program will receive an automatic authorization with a six month time period.

If you have specific questions about the program, please send an email to DM-MedOnc@bcbsnc.com for assistance.