Pemetrexed (Alimta®)

**Description of Procedure or Service**

Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is a folate analog metabolic inhibitor indicated for non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer, mesothelioma, urothelial carcinoma, epithelial ovarian cancer and thymic carcinoma.

Alimta is indicated in combination with cisplatin therapy for the initial treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer. Alimta is indicated for the maintenance treatment of patients with locally advanced or metastatic non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer whose disease has not progressed after four cycles of platinum-based first-line chemotherapy.

Alimta is indicated as a single agent for the treatment of patients with recurrent, metastatic non-squamous non-small cell lung cancer after prior chemotherapy.

Alimta in combination with cisplatin is indicated for the treatment of patients with malignant pleural mesothelioma whose disease is unresectable or who are otherwise not candidates for curative surgery.

***Note: This Medical Policy is complex and technical. For questions concerning the technical language and/or specific clinical indications for its use, please consult your physician.***

**Policy**

BCBSNC will provide coverage for Pemetrexed (Alimta®) when it is determined to be medically necessary because the medical criteria and guidelines noted below are met.

**Benefits Application**

This medical policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Please refer to the Member's Benefit Booklet for availability of benefits. Member's benefits may vary according to benefit design; therefore member benefit language should be reviewed before applying the terms of this medical policy.

**When Pemetrexed (Alimta) is covered**

Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is considered medically necessary for the treatment of patients with:

- Non-squamous Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer when one of the following applies:
  - As adjuvant therapy (NCCN 2A)
  - in combination with cisplatin
  - in combination with cisplatin or carboplatin with radiation
  - As chemoradiotherapy in combination with cisplatin or carboplatin (NCCN 2A)
    - as definitive treatment
**Pemetrexed (Alimta)**

- for locoregional recurrence
  - In combination with cisplatin or carboplatin with or without bevacizumab as:
    - (NCCN, FDA label)
      - first line therapy for unresectable, recurrent or metastatic disease OR
      - second line therapy after targeted therapy for EGFR mutation-positive or ALK-positive tumors
  - As maintenance therapy after response or stable disease to at least 4 cycles of platinum-based first-line therapy (NCCN FDA label)
  - As a single agent after prior chemotherapy, if not already received

- Mesothelioma:
  - In combination with cisplatin (FDA label)
  - As first line treatment of unresectable or metastatic disease
    - as a single agent, (NCCN 2A)
    - or in combination with cisplatin or carboplatin with or without bevacizumab
  - As a single agent or in combination with cisplatin or carboplatin as post-operative treatment for individuals not treated with induction chemotherapy, (NCCN 2A)
  - As single agent (NCCN 2A)
    - as second line therapy for unresectable disease

- Urothelial carcinoma, recurrent or metastatic, when used, as a single agent for progressive disease (NCCN 2A)

- Epithelial ovarian cancer, as single agent therapy for persistent or recurrent disease (NCCN 2A)

- Thymic carcinoma or thymoma, as single agent therapy for recurrent or progressive disease (NCCN 2A)

Use of Pemetrexed (Alimta®) may be considered medically necessary for clinical indications not listed above when the drug is prescribed for the treatment of cancer either:

- In accordance with FDA label (when clinical benefit has been established, see Policy Guidelines); OR

  - In accordance with specific strong endorsement or support by nationally recognized compendia, when such recommendation is based on strong/high levels of evidence, and/or uniform consensus of clinical appropriateness has been reached.

**When Pemetrexed (Alimta) is not covered**

Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is considered not medically necessary and therefore not covered when above criteria are not met.

Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is considered investigational when used for:

1. Non-cancer indications; OR

2. When criteria are not met regarding FDA labeling OR strong endorsement/support by nationally recognized compendia, as stated under “When Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is covered.”

**Policy Guidelines**

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Pemetrexed (Alimta)

Combination use in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer and Mesothelioma: Recommended dose of Alimta is 500 mg/m² IV on Day 1 of each 21-day cycle in combination with cisplatin 75 mg/m² IV beginning 30 minutes after ALIMTA administration.

Single-Agent use in Non-Small Cell Lung Cancer: Recommended dose of Alimta is 500 mg/m² i.v. on Day 1 of each 21-day cycle.

Prior to initiating Alimta, initiate supplementation with oral folic acid and intramuscular vitamin B12. Continue folic acid and vitamin B12 supplementation throughout treatment. Administer corticosteroids the day before, the day of, and the day after Alimta administration.

Dose Reductions: Dose reductions or discontinuation may be needed based on toxicities from the preceding cycle of therapy.

Alimta is not indicated for the treatment of patients with squamous cell non-small cell lung cancer.

Drugs prescribed for treatment of cancer in accordance with FDA label may be considered medically necessary when clinical benefit has been established, and should not be determined to be investigational as defined in Corporate Medical Policy (CMP), “Investigational (Experimental) Services.”

Please refer to CMP “Investigational (Experimental) Services” for a summary of evidence standards from nationally recognized compendia.

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 service codes: J9305, S0353, S0354

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.

Scientific Background and Reference Sources
Pemetrexed (Alimta)

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Available at: http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/label/2008/021462s015lbl.pdf


Medical Director review 3/2017

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 4/2017

Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 4/2018

Policy Implementation/Update Information

12/30/16 New policy developed. Pemetrexed (Alimta®) is considered medically necessary for the treatment of patients with nonsquamous non-small cell lung cancer, mesothelioma, urothelial carcinoma, epithelial ovarian cancer and thymic carcinoma. References added. Added HCPCS codes S0353, S0354 to Billing/Coding section. Notification given 12/30/16 for effective date 4/1/17. Medical Director review 8/2016. (lpr)

5/26/17 Added the following statement to “When Covered” section: “Use of Pemetrexed Alimta may be considered medically necessary for clinical indications not listed above when the drug is prescribed for the treatment of cancer either: In accordance with FDA label (when clinical
Pemetrexed (Alimta)

benefit has been established, see Policy Guidelines); OR In accordance with specific strong endorsement or support by nationally recognized compendia, when such recommendation is based on strong/high levels of evidence, and/or uniform consensus of clinical appropriateness has been reached”. Under “When Not Covered” section, added the statement “Pemetrexed Alimta is considered investigational when used for: 1) Non-cancer indications; OR 2) When criteria are not met regarding FDA labeling OR strong endorsement/support by nationally recognized compendia, as stated under “When Pemetrexed Alimta is covered.” Added the following statements under “Policy Guidelines” section: 1) Drugs prescribed for treatment of cancer in accordance with FDA label may be considered medically necessary when clinical benefit has been established, and should not be determined to be investigational as defined in Corporate Medical Policy, Investigational (Experimental) Services.” 2) Please refer to CMP “Investigational (Experimental) Services” for a summary of evidence standards from nationally recognized compendia. Medical director review 3/2017. Specialty Matched Consultant Advisory Panel review 4/26/2017. No change to policy statement. (lpr)


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.