Genetic testing for people with multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia

Last updated: 27 October 2021

- From 1 November 2021, new and amended MBS items will be available for the diagnosis of multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.
- These changes are relevant for all specialists who manage multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, and should enhance the diagnostic processes of both conditions.

What are the changes?

From 1 November 2021, new item 73391 for genome-wide microarray (GWMA) testing will be introduced for the diagnosis of multiple myeloma.

In addition, item 73343 with be amended so that individuals with relapsed or refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia will be able to access GWMA testing for the detection of 17p chromosomal deletion, in addition to existing fluorescence in-situ hybridisation (FISH) testing, to determine eligibility for treatment with idelalisib, ibrutinib, venetoclax, or acalabrutinib.

These changes will improve diagnosis processes and guide appropriate treatment options in people with multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia.

Why are the changes being made?

In November 2019, the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) supported a recommendation of public funding for GWMA testing for multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia. Following this recommendation, the Australian Government agreed to public funding of these items as part of the 2021-22 Budget.

The items are to be listed in the *Health Insurance (Pathology Services Table) 2020,* Group P7 – Genetics.

What does this mean for providers?

Medical practitioners will now be able to request GWMA testing for the diagnosis of multiple myeloma. Additionally, specialists and consultant physicians will be able to request MBS-funded GWMA testing to assess for 17p chromosomal deletion for patients with relapse or refractory chronic lymphocytic leukaemia or small lymphocytic lymphoma, to determine eligibility for treatment with idelalisib, ibrutinib, venetoclax, or acalabrutinib.

How will these changes affect patients?

Current diagnostic options for multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia relies on karyotyping and FISH. These tests are less accurate when compared to GWMA. The purpose of these services is to improve diagnostic

processes of patients with multiple myeloma and chronic lymphocytic leukaemia, given the superiority of accuracy, detail, and turn-around time of GWMA.

Who was consulted on the changes?

Consultation has been undertaken with key stakeholders, clinical experts and providers, and consumer health representatives as part of the MSAC process, including the Royal College of Pathology Australasia.

How will the changes be monitored and reviewed?

The new MBS items will be subject to MBS compliance processes and activities, including random and targeted audits which may require a provider to submit evidence about the services claimed.

Significant variation from forecasted expenditure may warrant review and amendment of the items and fees, and incorrect use of MBS items can result in penalties including the health professional being asked to repay monies that have been incorrectly received.

Where can I find more information?

The full item descriptor(s) and information on other changes to the MBS can be found on the MBS Online website at www.mbsonline.gov.au. You can also subscribe to future MBS updates by visiting MBS Online and clicking 'Subscribe'.

The Department of Health provides an email advice service for providers seeking advice on interpretation of the MBS items and rules and the Health Insurance Act and associated regulations. If you have a query relating exclusively to interpretation of the Schedule, you should email askMBS@health.gov.au.

Subscribe to 'News for Health Professionals' on the Services Australia website and you will receive regular news highlights.

If you are seeking advice in relation to Medicare billing, claiming, payments, or obtaining a provider number, please go to the Health Professionals page on the Services Australia website or contact the Services Australia on the Provider Enquiry Line – 13 21 50.

The data file for software vendors was released on 22 September 2021 and can be accessed via the MBS Online website under the Downloads page.

Please note that the information provided is a general guide only. It is ultimately the responsibility of treating practitioners to use their professional judgment to determine the most clinically appropriate services to provide, and then to ensure that any services billed to Medicare fully meet the eligibility requirements outlined in the legislation.

This sheet is current as of the Last updated date shown above and does not account for MBS changes since that date.