

7.01.164 Hydrogel Spacer use During Radiotherapy for Prostate Cancer

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Policy Statement

Hydrogel spacer use during radiotherapy for prostate cancer is considered **investigational**.

Use of a hydrogel spacer for any other indication is considered **investigational**.

NOTE: Refer to [Appendix A](#) to see the policy statement changes (if any) from the previous version.

Policy Guidelines**Coding**

The following CPT code is specific to the SpaceOAR® System:

- **55874:** Transperineal placement of biodegradable material, peri-prostatic, single or multiple injection(s), including image guidance, when performed

Description

For low- or intermediate-risk prostate cancer, radiation therapy is an option. Because the rectum lies in close proximity to the prostate, the risk of rectal toxicity is high. One approach is to push the rectum away from the prostate, increasing the space between the 2 and reducing the radiation dose to the rectum. A variety of biomaterials, including polyethylene glycol hydrogels (e.g., SpaceOAR System) have been evaluated as perirectal spacers.

Related Policies

- Intensity-Modulated Radiotherapy of the Prostate

Benefit Application

Benefit determinations should be based in all cases on the applicable contract language. To the extent there are any conflicts between these guidelines and the contract language, the contract language will control. Please refer to the member's contract benefits in effect at the time of service to determine coverage or non-coverage of these services as it applies to an individual member.

Some state or federal mandates (e.g., Federal Employee Program [FEP]) prohibits plans from denying Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-approved technologies as investigational. In these instances, plans may have to consider the coverage eligibility of FDA-approved technologies on the basis of medical necessity alone.

Regulatory Status

In October 2014, SpaceOAR® (Augmenix, a subsidiary of Boston Scientific) was cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) through the De Novo process (DEN140030). "SpaceOAR System is intended to temporarily position the anterior rectal wall away from the prostate during radiotherapy for prostate cancer and in creating this space it is the intent of SpaceOAR System to reduce the radiation dose delivered to the anterior rectum."

DuraSeal® Exact (Integra) was approved by the FDA through the premarket approval process as a spine and cranial sealant (dura mater) and has been used off-label as a perirectal spacer.

Rationale

Background

Prostate cancer is a complex, heterogeneous disease, ranging from microscopic tumors unlikely to be life-threatening to aggressive tumors that can metastasize, leading to morbidity or death. It is the second most common cancer in men, with over 1 in 10 men diagnosed with prostate cancer over their lifetime. Cancer is typically suspected due to increased levels of prostate-specific antigen upon screening. A digital rectal exam may detect nodules, induration, or asymmetry, which is then followed by an ultrasound-guided biopsy with evaluation of the number and grade of positive biopsy cores.

Clinical staging is based on the digital rectal exam and biopsy results. T1 lesions are not palpable while T2 lesions are palpable but appear to be confined to the prostate. T3 lesions extend through the prostatic capsule, and T4 lesions are fixed to or invade adjacent structures. The most widely used grading scheme for a prostate biopsy is the Gleason system.¹ It is an architectural grading system ranging from 1 (well-differentiated) to 5 (poorly differentiated); the score is the sum of the primary and secondary patterns. A Gleason score of 6 or less is low-grade prostate cancer that usually grows slowly; 7 is an intermediate grade; 8 to 10 is high-grade cancer that grows more quickly. A revised prostate cancer grading system has been adopted by the National Cancer Institute and the World Health Organization.² A cross-walk of these grading systems are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Prostate Cancer Grading Systems

Grade Group	Gleason Score (Primary and Secondary Pattern)	Cells
1	6 or less	Well-differentiated (low grade)
2	7 (3 + 4)	Moderately differentiated (moderate grade)
3	7 (4 + 3)	Poorly differentiated (high grade)
4	8	Undifferentiated (high grade)
5	9-10	Undifferentiated (high grade)

Literature Review

Evidence reviews assess the clinical evidence to determine whether the use of technology improves the net health outcome. Broadly defined, health outcomes are the length of life, quality of life (QOL), and ability to function-including benefits and harms. Every clinical condition has specific outcomes that are important to patients and managing the course of that condition. Validated outcome measures are necessary to ascertain whether a condition improves or worsens; and whether the magnitude of that change is clinically significant. The net health outcome is a balance of benefits and harms.

To assess whether the evidence is sufficient to draw conclusions about the net health outcome of technology, 2 domains are examined: the relevance, and quality and credibility. To be relevant, studies must represent 1 or more intended clinical use of the technology in the intended population and compare an effective and appropriate alternative at a comparable intensity. For some conditions, the alternative will be supportive care or surveillance. The quality and credibility of the evidence depend on study design and conduct, minimizing bias and confounding that can generate incorrect findings. The randomized controlled trial (RCT) is preferred to assess efficacy; however, in some circumstances, nonrandomized studies may be adequate. RCTs are rarely large enough or long enough to capture less common adverse events and long-term effects. Other types of studies can be used for these purposes and to assess generalizability to broader clinical populations and settings of clinical practice.

Hydrogel Perirectal Spacer

Clinical Context and Therapy Purpose

Early localized prostate cancer can usually be treated with surgery and radiotherapy, although active surveillance may be adopted in men whose cancer is unlikely to cause major health problems during their lifespan or for whom the treatment might be dangerous. In patients with inoperable or metastatic disease, treatment consists of hormonal therapy and possibly chemotherapy. Treatment decisions are based on the anatomic extent of the lesion, the histologic grade from biopsy, and serum prostate-specific antigen level. Other factors in treatment decisions are expected outcomes, potential complications, other medical conditions, age, and comorbidities, and personal preferences. For patients with clinically localized low-risk cancer (no palpable tumor and prostate-specific antigen of 10 or less), active surveillance is an option. Definitive therapy with radical prostatectomy or radiation therapy (RT) with external beam and/or brachytherapy is also an option for low- or intermediate-risk disease. Dose escalation of RT improves cancer outcomes but also increases the risk of urinary or rectal toxicity. Image-guided RT and intensity-modulated RT may be used to limit margins and reduce toxicity, but because the rectum lies in close proximity to the prostate, the risk of rectal toxicity remains high. Hypofractionation that reduces the number of treatments, dose-escalation, and salvage RT protocols can be particularly prone to rectal toxicity.

One approach to the problem of rectal toxicity is to push the rectum away from the prostate, increasing the space between the 2 organs and reducing the radiation dose to the anterior rectal wall. A variety of biomaterials, including collagen, polyethylene glycol (PEG) hydrogels, and absorbable balloons have been evaluated as a means to reduce rectal radiation exposure. The SpaceOAR System is the first PEG hydrogel that was cleared by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) specifically for use during RT of the prostate.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: Does the use of a hydrogel perirectal spacer improve the net health outcome in patients with prostate cancer who are being treated with external beam radiotherapy (EBRT) or brachytherapy?

The following PICO was used to select literature to inform this review.

Populations

The relevant population of interest is men with prostate cancer who are being treated with EBRT or brachytherapy.

Interventions

The therapy being considered is a polyethylene glycol hydrogel (SpaceOAR System) that is injected between the prostate and rectum. The chemical composition of the SpaceOAR is similar to a PEG-based hydrogel that is FDA-approved as a dural sealant. Hydrodissection is achieved with saline between the retroprostatic (Denonvilliers') fascia and the anterior rectal wall using a transperineal approach. Once the needle placement is confirmed, 2 solutions in a 2-channel syringe are injected into the perirectal space. The hydrogel then polymerizes to form a soft mass. The hydrogel maintains the space for approximately 3 months, the duration of radiotherapy, and is completely absorbed by 12 months. The PEG hydrogel may be injected at the same time as the placement of fiducial markers in the prostate. The gel increases the space between the rectum and the prostate to about 12 mm. It maintains space for approximately 3 months and then is gradually absorbed and cleared.

Comparators

The following therapies are currently being used to make decisions about the treatment of prostate cancer: EBRT or brachytherapy without a spacer. Rectal toxicity of Grade 2 or greater was reported to be 1.5% at 3 to 15 months following moderate hypofractionated EBRT, indicating a number needed to treat (NNT) of 68 to avoid 1 case of clinically significant rectal toxicity.³

Outcomes

The outcomes of interest are symptoms of rectal toxicity, adverse events, and QOL. Rectal toxicity according to the Common Terminology Criteria for Adverse Events is classified as Grade 0: no symptoms or complications; Grade 1: mild symptoms are present but no intervention is required; Grade 2: a moderate event affecting daily activities, intervention is required; Grade 3: a severe event that requires hospitalization; Grade 4: a life-threatening event; and Grade 5: death. Clinically significant rectal toxicity requiring intervention is considered to be Grade 2 or higher.

Prostate cancer-specific QOL can be measured by the Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite (EPIC) health-related QOL questionnaire, with 5- and 10-point thresholds for minimum clinically important differences (MCID). Skolarus et al (2015)⁴ reported the bowel and vitality/hormonal domains had an MCID 4 to 6 point range, while the sexual domain had an MCID range of 10 to 12. Urinary incontinence had a greater MCID range (6 to 9) compared with the urinary irritation/obstruction domain (5 to 7).

Although considered a surrogate outcome, studies may also report estimated radiation doses to the rectum from radiation planning, with the rectal volume predicted to receive a radiation dose over the threshold (e.g., rectal volume receiving 70 Gray [Gy]). Guidelines recommend that the volume of rectum receiving 70 Gy should be less than 10 ml.⁵

Beneficial outcomes would be reduced rectal toxicity and reduced impairment in QOL following radiotherapy.

Harmful outcomes would be the adverse effects of the spacer, spacer insertion, or spacer absorption.

Follow-up should be for at least 2 years since the median time for the occurrence of radiation toxicity is 18 months.

Study Selection Criteria

Methodologically credible studies were selected using the following principles:

- To assess efficacy outcomes, comparative controlled prospective trials were sought, with a preference for RCTs;
- In the absence of such trials, comparative observational studies were sought, with a preference for prospective studies.
- To assess long-term outcomes and adverse events, single-arm studies that capture longer periods of follow-up and/or larger populations were sought.
- Studies with duplicative or overlapping populations were excluded.

Review of Evidence

External Beam Radiotherapy

Pivotal Randomized Controlled Trial

Results from the pivotal RCT for the SpaceOAR System were published by Mariados et al (2015), with a 3-year follow-up published by Hamstra et al (2017) (see Table 2)^{6,7}. A total of 222 men were randomized 2:1 to the spacer or control group. All men were implanted with fiducial markers for image-guided intensity-modulated radiation therapy and received 79.2 Gy in 1.8-Gy fractions to the prostate. The primary outcome was the percent of the rectal volume receiving 70 Gy in dose planning studies, which was 3.3% with the peri-rectal spacer and 11.7% in the control group ($p < .001$, see Table 3). Blinded adjudication identified no spacer-related adverse events. Grade ≥ 1 adverse events were similar between the groups at 6 and 15 months but were reduced at 3 years in the group with the SpaceOAR System (2% vs. 9%, $p < .03$) with an NNT of 14.3. Fewer patients reported a clinically significant decline in bowel or urinary-related QOL with an NNT of 6.3 and 6.7, respectively (see Table 3). Patients were not blinded to treatment at the 3-year follow-up.

Table 2. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Characteristics

Study; Trial	Countries	Sites	Dates	Participants	Interventions	
					Active	Comparator
Mariados et al, (2015) ⁶ Hamstra et al (2017) ²	U.S.	20	2012-2013	222 patients with clinical stage T1 or T2 prostate cancer with Gleason score of ≤7, PSA ≤20 ng/mL, Zubrod performance status 0 to 1, who were planning to undergo IG-IMRT	149 patients who received perirectal injection of a hydrogel between the prostate and rectum prior to IG-IMRT	73 patients who received only fiducial markers inserted in the prostate prior to IG-IMRT (79.2 Gy in 1.8-Gy fractions)

Gy: gray; IG-IMRT: image-guided intensity-modulated radiation therapy; PSA: prostate-specific antigen.

Table 3. Summary of Key Randomized Controlled Trial Results

Study	Rectal Volume Receiving ≥70 Gy	Percent of Patients with ≥ 25% Reduction in Rectal Volume Receiving ≥70 Gy	Grade ≥ 1 Rectal or Procedure Adverse Events at 6 mo	Patients with Grade ≥ 1 Late Toxicity	10 Point Decline in Bowel QOL ^a	10 to 12 Point Decline in Urinary QOL
Mariados et al, (2015) ⁶					15 mo ^b n (%)	15 mo
N	219	219		219	219	219
Hydrogel spacer	3.3%	97.3%	34.2%	145 (98.0%)	11.6%	≈10%
Control	11.7%	NA	31.5%	66 (93.0%)	21.4%	≈12%
P-Value	<.001		.70	.044	.087	NS
Hamstra et al (2017) ²					3 yr ^c % (95% CI)	3 yr
N				140	140	140
Hydrogel spacer				2% (1 to 6)	5%	8%
Control				9% (4 to 20)	21%	23%
P-Value				<.03	.02	.03
OR (95% CI)					0.28 (0.13 to 0.63)	0.31 (0.11 to 0.85)
NNT				14.3	6.3	6.7

CI: confidence interval; Gy: gray; NA: not applicable; NNT: number needed to treat; NS: not significant; OR: odds ratio; QOL: quality of life.

^a Expanded Prostate Cancer Index Composite health-related QOL questionnaire

^b Difference between groups due primarily to grade 1 toxicity. There was one case of grade 3 toxicity in the control group and no cases of grade 4 toxicity.

^c There was no grade ≥ 2 rectal toxicity in the spacer arm compared with 6% (95% CI, 2% to 17%, p<.015) in the control arm.

Limitations in relevance and design and conduct are shown in Tables 4 and 5. The primary limitation in relevance was the population, which was restricted for this pivotal controlled trial. The primary limitations in design and conduct were the lack of investigator blinding and the loss to follow-up at 3 years.

Table 4. Study Relevance Limitations

Study	Population ^a	Intervention ^b	Comparator ^c	Outcomes ^d	Follow-Up ^e
Mariados et al, (2015) ⁶	4. Patients with prostate volumes >80 mL, extracapsular extension, or prior radiation or surgery were excluded				1, 2. 15-month follow-up; 3-year follow-up was reported by Hamstra et al 2017

Hamstra et al (2017)^L	4. Patients with prostate volumes >80 mL, extracapsular extension, or prior radiation or surgery were excluded
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The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Population key: 1. Intended use population unclear; 2. Clinical context is unclear; 3. Study population is unclear; 4. Study population not representative of intended use.

^b Intervention key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Version used unclear; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as comparator; 4. Not the intervention of interest.

^c Comparator key: 1. Not clearly defined; 2. Not standard or optimal; 3. Delivery not similar intensity as intervention; 4. Not delivered effectively.

^d Outcomes key: 1. Key health outcomes not addressed; 2. Physiologic measures, not validated surrogates; 3. No CONSORT reporting of harms; 4. Not establish and validated measurements; 5. Clinical significant difference not prespecified; 6. Clinical significant difference not supported.

^e Follow-Up key: 1. Not sufficient duration for benefit; 2. Not sufficient duration for harms.

Table 5. Study Design and Conduct Limitations

Study	Allocation ^a	Blinding ^b	Selective Reporting ^c	Data Completeness ^d	Power ^e	Statistical ^f
Mariados et al, (2015)^L		1, 3. Not blinded to treatment assignment				
Hamstra et al (2017)^L		1, 2, 3. Not blinded to treatment assignment		1. 3 yr data were available for only 63% of patients		

The study limitations stated in this table are those notable in the current review; this is not a comprehensive gaps assessment.

^a Allocation key: 1. Participants not randomly allocated; 2. Allocation not concealed; 3. Allocation concealment unclear; 4. Inadequate control for selection bias.

^b Blinding key: 1. Not blinded to treatment assignment; 2. Not blinded outcome assessment; 3. Outcome assessed by treating physician.

^c Selective Reporting key: 1. Not registered; 2. Evidence of selective reporting; 3. Evidence of selective publication.

^d Data Completeness key: 1. High loss to follow-up or missing data; 2. Inadequate handling of missing data; 3. High number of crossovers; 4. Inadequate handling of crossovers; 5. Inappropriate exclusions; 6. Not intent to treat analysis (per protocol for noninferiority trials).

^e Power key: 1. Power calculations not reported; 2. Power not calculated for primary outcome; 3. Power not based on clinically important difference.

^f Statistical key: 1. Analysis is not appropriate for outcome type: (a) continuous; (b) binary; (c) time to event; 2. Analysis is not appropriate for multiple observations per patient; 3. Confidence intervals and/or p-values not reported; 4. Comparative treatment effects not calculated.

Fischer-Valuck et al (2017) reported secondary analysis of magnetic resonance imaging for the 149 patients enrolled in the pivotal trial who received the hydrogel spacer.⁸ The spacer was symmetrically placed at midline for 71 (47.7%) patients, with 78 (50.9%) having some asymmetry and 3 (2.0%) with greater than 2 cm lateral distribution. The greater the asymmetry the lower the decrease in rectal radiation, although all but 4 patients achieved a 25% or greater reduction in rectal volume receiving 70 Gy. Infiltration of the rectal wall occurred in 9 (6%) patients but was not associated with procedure-related adverse events or acute or late rectal toxicity.

Systematic Reviews

Forero et al (2018) conducted a systematic review for the Technology Assessment Unit of the McGill University Health Centre.³ They included the RCT reported by Mariados et al (2015) and Hamstra et al (2017) and 5 non-randomized comparative studies (3 from the same institution) that evaluated the effect of SpaceOAR on rectal radiation exposure, rectal toxicity, or QOL (See

Table 6). Four studies found that placement of SpaceOAR resulted in lower rectal radiation exposure, but 3 studies that assessed rectal toxicity did not show important differences between the SpaceOAR and control groups. The RCT and 3 observational studies that evaluated QOL found no major differences between the SpaceOAR and control groups in the first year of follow-up. Longer-term results were inconsistent across studies. All of the studies had major limitations. The review concluded that while SpaceOAR does reduce rectal radiation exposure, it is unclear whether this impacts rectal toxicity and QOL.³

Miller et al (2020) reported a manufacturer-sponsored meta-analysis that included the studies described in Table 6 plus 2 additional prospective cohort studies, and 2 retrospective comparative studies on SpaceOAR for brachytherapy.² The percentage of rectal radiation over 70 Gy was 3.5% with SpaceOAR compared to 10.4% in controls (mean difference, -6.5%; 95% confidence interval [CI], -10.5% to -2.5%; $p = .001$). The spacer did not reduce the risk of early grade 2 or greater rectal toxicity, but was associated in this analysis with a reduced risk of late grade 2 or higher rectal toxicity (1.5% vs 5.7%; risk ratio, 0.23; 95% CI, 0.06 to 0.99; $p = .05$). These results were driven by the studies by Mariados et al (2015) and Pinkawa et al (2017) described in Table 6. There was imprecision in the other 2 studies included for this outcome (te Velde et al 2019, Whalley et al, 2016) and did not show a significant reduction of rectal toxicity. Bowel-related QOL was reported in only 2 studies (Mariados et al 2015 and Pinkawa et al 2017), with higher QOL reported in patients treated with SpaceOAR. Interpretation of these results is limited by the small number of included studies, most of which were non-randomized, and limited follow-up duration for the detection of long-term outcomes of rectal irradiation.

Babar et al (2021) conducted a systematic review describing clinical outcomes of SpaceOAR in men undergoing EBRT for localized prostate cancer.¹⁰ Eight studies were included, including all those analyzed in the systematic review by Miller et al (2020), plus an additional retrospective review by Navaratnam et al (2019) and a pooled analysis on long-term outcomes by Seymour et al (2020) (summarized in the Longer-term Follow-up section below). Unlike the publication by Miller et al (2020), a meta-analysis of the data was not performed. However, following a review of the available evidence, the authors concluded that SpaceOAR may be beneficial for those patients who 1) do not meet the standard rectal dose-volume criteria 2) have higher risk factors for the development of rectal toxicities post-radiation, and 3) wish to decrease the length and costs of radiotherapy by increasing the dose of radiation per fraction.

Table 6. Characteristics of Included Studies

Study	Design	Control	N SpaceO AR/ controls	Treatm ent	Radiati on Dose - Gy	Follo w-up mo	Outcome Measures			
							Rectal Dose- Volu me	Acute Rectal Toxicity	Late Toxicity	Quality of Life
Mariados et al (2015) Hamstra et al (2017) ⁶ ¹	RCT	Blinded through 15 mo	149/73	IMRT	79.2	15 and 36	x	x	x	x
Whalley et al (2016) ¹ ¹	Prospective cohort	Historical controls	30/110	IMRT	80	28	x	x	x	

Te Velde et al (2017) ¹²	Retrospective	Concurrent controls	65/60	IMRT	81	4	x	x	x
Pinkawa et al (2012) ³	Retrospective	Matched controls	28 vs 28	IMRT	78 vs 76 vs 70	3	x		x
Pinkawa et al (2017) ⁴			101/66	IMRT	76-80	12			x
Pinkawa et al (2017) 5 yr ¹⁵			54/60	IMRT	76-78	72			x

Gy: gray; IMRT: intensity-modulated radiation therapy.

Longer-term Follow-up

Te Velde et al (2019) published a 3-year follow-up of patients from their 2017 report (See Table 6).¹⁶ Patients were excluded from analysis if their follow-up evaluations were not completed. The cumulative incidence of Grade 1 diarrhea (6.2% vs. 21.4%, $p = .016$) and Grade 2 proctitis (0% vs. 7.1%, $p = .043$) were statistically lower in the SpaceOAR group, but these outcome measures were not significantly different when assessed at 3 years after radiotherapy. The clinical significance of a difference between groups of Grade 1 diarrhea at any time during follow-up, but not at final follow-up, suggests that mild rectal toxicity resolves by 3 years. Fecal incontinence and hemorrhoids were not significantly different at any time point. In addition to questions of clinical significance, this study is limited by the potential for selection bias and detection bias due to unblinded and non-randomized methodology. All patients had been offered the SpaceOAR, but only patients with private insurance underwent the procedure, raising the possibility of differences in health or other personal factors between patients who had received the SpaceOAR and those who had not.

Seymour et al (2020) published 5-yr QOL outcomes from a combined data set that included patients in the studies by Mariados et al (2015) and Pinkawa et al (2017) described in Table 6.¹⁷ Out of 125 patients from the RCT by Mariados and 165 non-randomized patients from Pinkawa (64% with the spacer and 36% without) there were 199 men who had prospective QOL data (EPIC) with at least 24-month follow-up (median 39.5 months, range 31 to 71.4). With a prespecified clinically important decline in EPIC of at least 5 points, controls had a decline of 5.1 points compared to an increase of 0.3 points in the spacer group (difference = 5.4, $p < .001$). A lower percentage of patients had a decline in bowel-related QOL of at least 5 points (14% vs 36%, $p = .01$) and 10 points (6% vs 19%, $p = .008$). Out of 13 questions, 4 were significantly impaired for bowel function (urgency, loose stools) and bother (urgency, frequency) at 36 months. Limitations of the long-term follow-up remain the same as in the original RCT (Tables 4 and 5), since the patients were no longer blinded to treatment and there was a high loss to follow-up (47%).

Brachytherapy with External Beam Radiotherapy Non-Randomized Comparative Studies

Studies on the use of a hydrogel spacer with brachytherapy and EBRT for the treatment of prostate cancer are described in Tables 7 and 8.

Several retrospective comparative studies have been published that evaluated the effect of a hydrogel spacer on rectal toxicity and quality of life in men who are treated with brachytherapy and EBRT for prostate cancer.^{18,19,20} The studies are consistent in showing a decrease in rectal dose with insertion of a hydrogel spacer, with no adverse effect on the dose to the prostate. No study has demonstrated a benefit of a hydrogel spacer on late rectal toxicity or quality of life in

these patients. Investigators have noted that there may be some instances where the brachytherapy beads have migrated close to the rectum that might benefit from a spacer, but this will require further study.

Table 7. Characteristics of Non-Randomized Comparative Studies

Study	Design	Hydrogel	Participants	N Hydrogel/controls	Brachytherapy Dose - Gy	EBRT Dose - Gy	Follow-up	Outcome Measures			
								Rectal Dose - Volume	Acute Rectal Toxicity	Late Rectal Toxicity	Quality of Life
Chao et al (2019) ¹⁸	Retrospective analysis of consecutive patients	Space OAR	Patients with intermediate and high-risk prostate cancer between 2010-2017	32/54	HDR 16	54.1	3 mo	x	x	x	
Kahn et al (2020) ¹⁹	Retrospective analysis of consecutive patients	DuraSeal	A first and second group of 40 consecutive patients between 2013-2014	40/40	LDR 145 if monotherapy LDR 110 when used as a boost to EBRT	:	2 yr	x	x	x	
Nehlsen et al (2020) ²⁰	Retrospective	Space OAR	Patients with intermediate and high-risk prostate cancer	22/146	100	EBRT: 45 SBRT: 25	5 yr	x			x
Butler et al (2021) ²¹	Retrospective analysis of consecutive patients	Space OAR	Patients who received a low-dose-rate permanent seed brachytherapy implant between November 2016 and July 2020	174/174			NR	x			

EBRT: external beam radiotherapy; Gy: gray; HDR: high dose rate; LDR: low dose rate; NR: not reported; SBRT: stereotactic body radiotherapy.

Table 8. Summary of Non-Randomized Comparative Study Results

Study	Rectal Dose-Volume	Early Gastrointestinal Toxicity		Late Gastrointestinal Toxicity	
		> Grade 1	Grade 2	> Grade 1	Grade 2
Chao et al (2019)¹⁸	Median V75 (cc)				
SpaceOAR	0 (0 to 0.22)	13.3%	0%	0%	0
Control	0.45 (0 to 1.46)	30.8%	1.5%	7.7%	0
p-Value	<.001	.05	.48	.11	
Kahn et al (2020)¹⁹	V100 (cc)				
DuraSeal	0.0 (0.0)	12.5%	0%		0
Control	0.18 (0.25)	17.5%	2.5%		0
p-Value	<.001	.35		NS	
Nehlsen et al (2020)²⁰	V100 (cc)				
SpaceOAR	0.09				
Control	0.17				
p-Value	.04				
Butler et al (2021)²¹	Average dose (% of the prescribed dose)				
SpaceOAR	22.8				
Control	34.1				
p-Value	<.001				
	Maximum dose (% of the prescribed dose)				
SpaceOAR	32.6				
Control	51.5				
p-Value	<.001				

NS: not significant.

V75 = volume of structure (X%) receiving 100% of the dose

V100 = volume of structure (X%) receiving 100% of the dose

Summary of Evidence

For individuals who have prostate cancer and are undergoing radiation therapy who receive a hydrogel spacer, the evidence includes a pivotal RCT with a 3-year follow-up, observational studies, and systematic reviews of these studies. Relevant outcomes include symptoms, quality of life, and treatment-related morbidity. The combined evidence indicates that the hydrogel spacer can reduce the radiation dose to the rectum with a statistically significant decrease in Grade 1 or greater late toxicity and an NNT of 14.3. There were few events of greater than Grade 1 toxicity in either group, and the NNT for a reduction in clinically significant Grade 2 toxicity has been reported as 68. Patient-reported declines in rectal and urinary quality of life at 3 years were statistically lower in the spacer group and met the threshold for a clinically significant difference, although patients were not blinded to treatment at the longer-term follow-up. The NNT for late improvement in rectal and urinary quality of life was 6.3 to 6.7, respectively.

Limitations to the study include the lack of blinding and the exclusion of patients who might be at greater risk of rectal toxicity. Evidence from observational studies is inconclusive but generally shows a decrease in radiation dose to the rectum with the insertion of a hydrogel spacer. However, the potential benefits of the hydrogel spacer must be balanced against the risks of an additional procedure. Additional study is needed to corroborate the findings of the pivotal RCT, to identify the factors that increase the risk of rectal toxicity, and to determine who is likely to benefit from the use of a spacer. The evidence is insufficient to determine that the technology results in an improvement in the net health outcome.

Supplemental Information

The purpose of the following information is to provide reference material. Inclusion does not imply endorsement or alignment with the evidence review conclusions.

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements

Guidelines or position statements will be considered for inclusion in 'Supplemental Information' if they were issued by, or jointly by, a US professional society, an international society with US representation, or National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE). Priority will be given to guidelines that are informed by a systematic review, include strength of evidence ratings, and include a description of management of conflict of interest.

National Comprehensive Cancer Network

The National Comprehensive Cancer Network guideline for prostate cancer (v2.2021) provides the following recommendation in principles of radiation therapy, "Overall, the panel believes that biocompatible and biodegradable perirectal spacer materials may be implanted between the prostate and rectum in patients undergoing external radiotherapy with organ-confined prostate cancer in order to displace the rectum from high radiation dose regions."²²

National Institute for Health and Care Excellence

In 2017, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published guidance on the biodegradable spacer.²³ The NICE concluded that "current evidence on the safety and efficacy of insertion of a biodegradable spacer to reduce rectal toxicity during radiotherapy for prostate cancer is adequate to support the use of this procedure."

American Society of Clinical Oncology, the American Urological Association, and the American Society for Radiation Oncology

In 2018, the American Society of Clinical Oncology, the American Urological Association, and the American Society for Radiation Oncology published a joint guideline on hypofractionated radiation therapy for localized prostate cancer.²⁴ The guideline recommends that men be counseled about the small increased risk of acute gastrointestinal toxicity with hypofractionation. "Moderately fractionated EBRT has a similar risk of acute and late genitourinary and late GI toxicity compared with conventionally fractionated EBRT. However, physicians should discuss the limited follow-up beyond 5 years for most existing RCTs [randomized controlled trials] evaluating moderate hypofractionation." This was a strong recommendation based on high-quality evidence and 100% consensus.

American College of Radiology

American College of Radiology appropriateness criteria, last reviewed in 2016, for dose-volume constraints for the rectum with external beam radiotherapy are described in Table 9.

Table 9. Dose Constraints for the Rectum With External Beam Radiotherapy

EBRT Dose-Volume	Dose	<15%	<25%	<35%	<50%
Conventional Fractionation	1.8 Gy X 44 fractions (79.2 Gy total)	V75	V70	V65	V60
Hypofractionation	2.5 Gy X 25 fractions (70 Gy total)	V74	V69	V64	V59

EBRT: External beam radiotherapy; Gy: gray.

V100 = volume of structure (X%) receiving 100% of the dose

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations

Not applicable.

Medicare National Coverage

There is no national coverage determination. In the absence of a national coverage determination, coverage decisions are left to the discretion of local Medicare carriers.

Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials

Some currently unpublished trials that might influence this review are listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Summary of Key Trials

NCT No.	Trial Name	Planned Enrollment	Completion Date
<i>Ongoing</i>			
NCT04905069	Effectiveness of the SpaceOAR Vue System in Subjects With Prostate Cancer Being Treated With Stereotactic Body Radiotherapy	500	November 2027
<i>Unpublished</i>			
NCT01999660^a	Prospective National Post-marketing Surveillance for the Investigation of the Efficacy and Safety of SpaceOAR™ to Maintain Space Between the Rectum and Prostate During Radiation Therapy	250	Jan 2019 (status unknown last update posted Feb 2015)

NCT: national clinical trial.

^a Denotes industry-sponsored or cosponsored trial.

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Documentation for Clinical Review

- No records required

Coding

This Policy relates only to the services or supplies described herein. Benefits may vary according to product design; therefore, contract language should be reviewed before applying the terms of the Policy.

The following codes are included below for informational purposes. Inclusion or exclusion of a code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement policy. Policy Statements are intended to provide member coverage information and may include the use of some codes for clarity. The Policy Guidelines section may also provide additional information for how to interpret the Policy Statements and to provide coding guidance in some cases.

Type	Code	Description
CPT®	55874	Transperineal placement of biodegradable material, peri-prostatic, single or multiple injection(s), including image guidance, when performed
HCPCS	None	

Policy History

This section provides a chronological history of the activities, updates and changes that have occurred with this Medical Policy.

Effective Date	Action
03/01/2019	BCBSA Medical Policy Adoption
03/01/2020	Annual review. No change to policy statement. Literature review updated.
03/01/2021	Annual review. No change to policy statement. Literature review updated.
09/01/2021	No change to policy statement. Literature review updated.

Definitions of Decision Determinations

Medically Necessary: Services that are Medically Necessary include only those which have been established as safe and effective, are furnished under generally accepted professional standards to treat illness, injury or medical condition, and which, as determined by Blue Shield, are: (a) consistent with Blue Shield medical policy; (b) consistent with the symptoms or diagnosis; (c) not furnished primarily for the convenience of the patient, the attending Physician or other provider; (d) furnished at the most appropriate level which can be provided safely and effectively to the patient; and (e) not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of the Member's illness, injury, or disease.

Investigational/Experimental: A treatment, procedure, or drug is investigational when it has not been recognized as safe and effective for use in treating the particular condition in accordance with generally accepted professional medical standards. This includes services where approval by the federal or state governmental is required prior to use, but has not yet been granted.

Split Evaluation: Blue Shield of California/Blue Shield of California Life & Health Insurance Company (Blue Shield) policy review can result in a split evaluation, where a treatment, procedure, or drug will be considered to be investigational for certain indications or conditions, but will be deemed safe and effective for other indications or conditions, and therefore potentially medically necessary in those instances.

Prior Authorization Requirements (as applicable to your plan)

Within five days before the actual date of service, the provider must confirm with Blue Shield that the member's health plan coverage is still in effect. Blue Shield reserves the right to revoke an authorization prior to services being rendered based on cancellation of the member's eligibility. Final determination of benefits will be made after review of the claim for limitations or exclusions.

Questions regarding the applicability of this policy should be directed to the Prior Authorization Department at (800) 541-6652, or the Transplant Case Management Department at (800) 637-2066 ext. 3507708 or visit the provider portal at www.blueshieldca.com/provider.

Disclaimer: This medical policy is a guide in evaluating the medical necessity of a particular service or treatment. Blue Shield of California may consider published peer-reviewed scientific literature, national guidelines, and local standards of practice in developing its medical policy. Federal and state law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions, take precedence over medical policy and must be considered first in determining covered services. Member contracts may differ in their benefits. Blue Shield reserves the right to review and update policies as appropriate.

Appendix A

POLICY STATEMENT (No changes)	
BEFORE	AFTER
<p>Hydrogel Spacer use During Radiotherapy for Prostate Cancer 7.01.164</p> <p>Policy Statement: Hydrogel spacer use during radiotherapy for prostate cancer is considered investigational.</p> <p>Use of a hydrogel spacer for any other indication is considered investigational.</p>	<p>Hydrogel Spacer use During Radiotherapy for Prostate Cancer 7.01.164</p> <p>Policy Statement: Hydrogel spacer use during radiotherapy for prostate cancer is considered investigational.</p> <p>Use of a hydrogel spacer for any other indication is considered investigational.</p>