Policy Statement

Saturation biopsy is considered investigational in the diagnosis, staging, and management of prostate cancer.

Policy Guidelines

Saturation biopsy is generally considered obtaining more than 20 biopsy tissue cores from the prostate in a systematic manner; it is occasionally defined as obtaining more than 18 biopsy tissue cores.

Coding

There is a CPT code for saturation biopsy:

- 55706: Biopsies, prostate, needle, transperineal, stereotactic template guided saturation sampling, including imaging guidance

This procedure may be reported with code 55700 (biopsy, prostate; needle or punch, single or multiple, any approach) when performed without stereotactic template guidance. This method may involve ultrasound guidance, which is reported with code 76942 (ultrasonic guidance for needle placement [e.g., biopsy, aspiration, injection, localization device], imaging supervision, and interpretation).

Medicare also created a HCPCS G code that can be reported for the surgical pathology associated with this procedure as well as other prostate needle biopsies:

- G0416: Surgical pathology, gross and microscopic examinations, for prostate needle biopsy, any method

Description

Saturation biopsy of the prostate, in which more cores are obtained than by standard biopsy protocol, has been proposed in the diagnosis (for initial or repeat biopsy), staging, and management of patients with prostate cancer.

Related Policies

- Whole Gland Cryoablation of Prostate Cancer

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 the FDA-approved technologies on the basis of medical necessity alone.
**Regulatory Status**

Saturation biopsy is a surgical procedure and, as such, is not subject to regulation by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

**Rationale**

**Background**

**Prostate Cancer**

Prostate cancer is common and is the second leading cause of cancer-related deaths in men in the United States.

**Diagnosis**

The diagnosis of prostate cancer is made by biopsy of the prostate gland. The approach to biopsy has changed over time, especially with the advent of prostate-specific antigen screening programs that identify cancer in prostates that are normal to palpation and to transrectal ultrasound. For patients with an elevated prostate-specific antigen level but with a normal biopsy, questions exist about subsequent evaluation, because repeat biopsy specimens may be positive for cancer in a substantial percentage of patients.

In the early 1990s, use of sextant biopsies involving 6 random, evenly distributed biopsies became the standard approach to diagnosis prostate cancer. In the late 1990s, as studies showed high false-negative rates for this strategy (missed cancers), approaches were developed to increase the total number of biopsies and to change the location of the biopsies. While there is disagreement about the optimal strategy, most would agree that initial prostate biopsy strategies should include at least 10 to 14 cores. Additional concerns have been raised about drawing conclusions about the stage (grade) of prostate cancer based on limited biopsy specimens. Use of multiple biopsies has also been discussed as an approach to identify tumors that may be eligible for subtotal cryoablation therapy.

At present, many practitioners use a 12- to 14-core “extended” biopsy strategy for patients undergoing initial biopsy. This extended biopsy is done in an office setting and allows for more extensive sampling of the lateral peripheral zone; sampling of the lateral horn might increase the cancer detection rate by approximately 25%.

Another approach to increase the number of biopsy tissue cores is “saturation” biopsy. In general, saturation biopsy is considered as more than 20 cores taken from the prostate, with improved sampling of the anterior zones of the gland, which may be undersampled in standard peripheral zone biopsy strategies and might lead to missed cancers. Saturation biopsy might be performed transrectally or transperineally; the transperineal approach is generally performed as a stereotactic template-guided procedure with general anesthesia.

**Surveillance**

In addition to diagnosis of prostate cancer, some have suggested that saturation biopsy could be a part of active surveillance (a treatment approach for men with prostate cancer that involves surveillance with PSA, digital rectal exam, and routine prostate biopsies in men whose cancers are small and expected to behave indolently). Saturation biopsy has the potential to identify tumor grade more accurately than standard biopsy.

**Literature Review**

Assessment of a diagnostic technology typically focuses on 3 categories of evidence: (1) its technical performance (test-retest reliability or interrater reliability); (2) diagnostic accuracy (sensitivity, specificity, and positive and negative predictive value) in relevant populations of patients; and (3) clinical utility demonstrating that the diagnostic information can be used to improve patient outcomes.
Initial or Repeat Saturation Biopsy

Clinical Context and Proposed Clinical Utility
The proposed clinical utility of saturation biopsy for diagnosis of prostate cancer is to improve health outcomes by detecting more clinically significant cancers and intervening appropriately. To evaluate the impact of saturation biopsy on the net health outcome, studies are needed that compare rates of clinically significant prostate cancers detected using saturation biopsy versus other biopsy methods. Change in detection rate alone is not sufficient to determine the impact of saturation biopsy on health outcomes compared with other biopsy methods. With higher detection rates, there is the possibility of detecting clinically insignificant cancers, which could lead to unnecessary treatment. In addition, studies would ideally evaluate the impact of saturation biopsy on health outcomes such as disease progression or mortality.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: In individuals with suspected prostate cancer, does initial or repeat saturation biopsy improve the diagnosis of patients with clinically significant prostate cancer and lead to improved patient management decisions and health outcomes?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review. They apply to the first 2 indications - initial or repeat saturation biopsy.

Patients
The relevant population of interest is patients with suspected prostate cancer.

Interventions
The relevant intervention of interest is initial or repeat saturation biopsy.

Comparators
The comparator of interest is standard biopsy.

Outcomes
The primary outcomes of interest relate to diagnostic accuracy (i.e., test accuracy and validity) and to health outcomes (i.e., disease-specific survival, overall survival).

Timing
Diagnostic accuracy is a short-term outcome. Survival outcomes would be measured over the long term (e.g., 5- or 10-year survival).

Setting
Patients would be tested in the primary or specialty care setting.

Initial Saturation Biopsy

Technical Performance
Discussion of technical performance is irrelevant because saturation biopsy is a surgical procedure that is a variation on standard biopsy.

Diagnostic Accuracy
The literature of diagnostic accuracy consists of studies reporting prostate cancer detection rates or diagnostic yields as a primary outcome. These data are summarized in a 2013 systematic review by Jiang et al on the utility of an initial transrectal saturation biopsy compared with an extended biopsy strategy. Eight studies (total N=11,997 participants) met eligibility criteria (i.e., compared 2 biopsy strategies on initial biopsy). Two of the studies were randomized controlled trials (RCTs), one used a paired design, and 5 were nonrandomized trials. Overall, prostate cancer was diagnosed in 2328 (42.4%) of 5486 men who underwent saturation biopsy compared with 2562 (39.3%) of 6511 men who had extended biopsy. The detection rate was statistically significantly higher in the saturation biopsy group (risk difference [RD], 0.004; 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.01 to 0.008; p=0.002). When only the higher quality studies were analyzed (i.e., the RCTs and prospective paired design), the detection rate remained statistically significantly
higher for saturation biopsy (RD=0.03; 95% CI, 0.01 to 0.05; p=0.01). Subgroup analysis found that the difference in detection rates between saturation and extended biopsy strategies was limited to the subgroup of men with prostate-specific antigen (PSA) levels less than 10 ng/mL. Within this group, prostate cancer was diagnosed in 998 (38%) of 2597 men who had saturation biopsies and in 1135 (34%) of 3322 men with extended biopsies (RD=0.04; 95% CI, 0.01 to 0.07; p=0.002). Although the subgroup analyses included individual risk factors such as PSA level, they did not differentiate between detection of lower and higher risk prostate cancers. In addition, differences in health outcomes (e.g., progression-free survival, overall survival) were not reported.

A related meta-analysis was published Xue et al in 2017.3 Reviewers evaluated the literature comparing transrectal and transperineal biopsy approaches for the detection of prostate cancer. In an analysis stratified by the number of biopsy cores, there was no significant difference in the prostate cancer detection rate with the transrectal strategy or the transperineal biopsy strategy in studies using extended biopsy (odds ratio, 1.14; 95% CI, 0.89 to 1.45) or studies using saturation biopsy (odds ratio, 1.11; 95% CI, 0.92 to 1.34).

A 2014 retrospective nonrandomized study by Li et al reviewed data on 438 men who received an initial saturation biopsy and 3338 men who had an initial extended prostate biopsy.4 In an analysis stratified by PSA levels, there was a statistically significantly higher rate of prostate cancer detection using a saturation biopsy strategy in men with a PSA level less than 10 ng/mL. Detection rates among men with a PSA level less than 4 ng/mL were 47.1% (40/85) with saturation biopsy and 32.8% (288/878) with extended biopsy (p=0.008). Rates among men with PSA levels between 4 ng/mL and 9.9 ng/mL were 50.9% (144/283) with saturation biopsy and 42.9% (867/2022) with extended biopsy (p=0.011). There was no statistically significant difference in detection rates between groups when PSA levels were greater than 10 ng/mL. Detection rates at PSA levels greater than 10 ng/mL were 60% (42/70) with saturation biopsy and 61% (267/438) with extended biopsy (p=0.879).

A related 2014 study by Li et al evaluated the potential benefit of saturation biopsy as the initial prostate biopsy strategy by examining the yield of repeat saturation biopsy in men with initial negative findings by either saturation or extended prostate biopsy.5 A total of 561 men were included in the study; the initial strategy was saturation biopsy in 81 men and extended biopsy in 480 men. In all cases, saturation biopsy was used for the first repeat biopsy. The overall prostate cancer detection rates were 19.8% in the group with initial saturation biopsy and 34.8% in the group with initial extended biopsy (p=0.008). Low-risk prostate cancer was defined using the Epstein criteria (i.e., Gleason score ≤6, PSA density of ≤0.15 g/mL per gram, <3 positive cores, and >50% cancer involvement in a single core). The number of intermediate- and/or high-risk prostate cancers (i.e., not low-risk) identified at first repeat biopsy was 4 (4.9%) of 81 in the initial saturation biopsy group and 85 (17.3%) of 490 in the initial extended biopsy group (p=0.048). The statistically significantly lower prostate cancer detection rate among men who initially underwent saturation biopsy would suggest that initial saturation biopsy might be less likely to miss prostate cancer than extended biopsy, and, in this study, prostate cancer diagnosed by repeat saturation after negative initial saturation biopsy was more likely to be clinically insignificant. However, the study indirectly evaluated the initial biopsy, and the number of events in men who underwent an initial saturation biopsy was relatively small.

**Clinical Utility**

No direct evidence from studies comparing the impact of saturation biopsy with standard biopsy for patient management decisions or health outcomes in patients with suspected prostate cancer was identified. Indirect evidence of clinical utility rests on clinical validity. Because the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate the detection of clinically significant cancers with saturation biopsy, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.
Subsection Summary: Initial Saturation Biopsy

Studies on saturation biopsy as the initial prostate biopsy strategy were summarized in a 2013 systematic review of 8 studies (2 were RCTs). The prostate cancer detection rate was significantly higher in men with saturation biopsy than in men with standard biopsy. In a subgroup analysis, the systematic review found that the higher detection rate was limited to men with PSA levels less than 10 ng/mL. Health outcomes (e.g., survival rate) were not reported. Although several studies were published after the systematic review, none showed that initial saturation biopsy detected more clinically significant cancers and none reported progression or survival outcomes.

Repeat Saturation Biopsy

Technical Performance

Discussion of technical performance is irrelevant because saturation biopsy is a surgical procedure that is a variation on standard biopsy.

Diagnostic Accuracy

In 2006, Eichler et al published a systematic review of cancer detection rates and complications of various prostate biopsy strategies. They pooled data that compared various extended biopsy schemes for studies involving 20,698 patients. Reviewers concluded that prostate biopsy schemes consisting of 12 cores that add laterally directed cores to the standard sextant scheme seem to have the right balance between the cancer detection rate and adverse events, and that taking more than 12 cores added no significant benefit.

Representative studies of saturation biopsy in repeat prostate biopsies follow. These studies focused on cancer detection rates and did not report health outcomes (e.g., overall survival, progression-free survival).

Mabjeesh et al (2012) reported on a high-risk group of men with at least 2 previous negative transrectal biopsies who then underwent transperineal template-guided saturation biopsy. Prostate cancer was detected in 24 (26%) of the 92 patients, predominantly in the anterior zones. A median of 30 cores was taken in the saturation biopsies. Gleason scores of 7 or higher were detected in 11 (46%) of the diagnosed men. Most tumors (83.3%) were found in the anterior zones of the gland, with a significantly higher number of positive cores than in the posterior zones (mean, 4.9 vs 1.5, p=0.015).

Lee et al (2011) evaluated the role of transrectal saturation biopsy for cancer detection in men with high-grade prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia diagnosed by extended biopsy. From 1999 to 2009, 314 men had at least 1 or more repeat biopsies due to the presence of exclusive high-grade prostatic intraepithelial neoplasia (without any other pathologic finding) in a previous extended biopsy. They were divided into 2 groups according to the initial follow-up biopsy scheme; 178 men were followed using a second standard extended biopsy scheme, and 136 were followed using the saturation biopsy scheme. In the standard repeat biopsy group, 35 (19.7%) of 178 men had cancer on initial repeat biopsy. In the saturation biopsy group, 42 (30.9%) of 136 had cancer on initial repeat biopsy (overall, p=0.04). Multivariate analysis demonstrated that the biopsy scheme on repeat biopsy was an independent predictor of prostate cancer detection (odds ratio, 1.85; 95% CI, 1.03 to 3.29), exclusive of age, PSA level, days from initial biopsy, digital rectal exam status, and multifocal prostatic epithelial neoplasm. Pathologic findings on repeat biopsies demonstrated similar Gleason scores, regardless of biopsy technique: a Gleason score of 6 was present in 74.3% and 73.1% of specimens in the standard and saturation schemes, respectively. The presence of a Gleason score of 8 or higher was 8.6% and 9.5%, respectively.

Zaytoun et al (2011) reported the results of a prospective, nonrandomized comparative study of extended biopsy versus office-based transrectal saturation biopsy in a repeat biopsy population. After an initially negative biopsy, 1056 men underwent a repeat 12- to 14-core biopsy (n=393) or a 20- to 24-core repeat biopsy (n=663) at the discretion of the attending
urologist's practice pattern. Indications for second biopsy included a previous suspicious pathologic finding and/or clinical indications such as abnormal digital rectal exam, persistently increased PSA level, and PSA level increasing more than 0.75 ng/mL annually. Prostate cancer was detected in 29.8% (n=315) of repeat biopsies. The saturation biopsy group had a detection rate of 32.7% versus 24.9% in the extended biopsy group (p=0.008). Of the 315 positive biopsies, 119 (37.8%) revealed clinically insignificant cancer (defined as Gleason score ≤7, total of ≤3 positive cores, and maximum of ≤50% of cancer in any positive core). There was a trend toward increased clinically insignificant cancer detection for saturation biopsy (40.1%) versus extended biopsy (32.6%; p=0.02).

Clinical Utility
No direct evidence from studies comparing the impact of saturation biopsy with standard biopsy for patient management decisions or health outcomes in patients with suspected prostate cancer was identified. Indirect evidence of clinical utility rests on clinical validity. Because the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate the detection of clinically significant cancers with saturation biopsy, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

Subsection Summary: Repeat Saturation Biopsy
Several studies have compared saturation and standard prostate biopsies in the repeat biopsy setting and have found significantly higher detection rates with saturation biopsy. However, at least 1 study found that about one-third of the positive findings with saturation biopsy were clinically insignificant cancers. Moreover, studies of saturation biopsy as the repeat prostate biopsy strategy focused on cancer detection rates and did not report health outcomes (e.g., progression or survival).

Active Surveillance
Clinical Context and Proposed Clinical Utility
The proposed clinical utility of saturation biopsy is to improve health outcomes by better identifying patients with prostate cancer who are appropriate candidates for active surveillance through more accurate determination of the Gleason score. Gleason score is a criterion used to select men for active surveillance. More accurate selection of patients for active surveillance could lead to better health outcomes by reducing misclassification of patients as being at sufficiently low risk that active surveillance is an appropriate approach to patient management. The question addressed in this evidence review is: In individuals with prostate cancer who are candidates for active surveillance, does saturation biopsy improve the identification of tumor grade and improve health outcomes compared with standard biopsy?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

Patients
The relevant population of interest is patients with prostate cancer who are potential candidates for active surveillance.

Interventions
The relevant intervention of interest is saturation biopsy.

Comparators
The comparator of interest is standard biopsy.

Outcomes
The primary outcomes of interest relate to diagnostic accuracy (i.e., test accuracy and validity) and to health outcomes (i.e., disease-specific survival, overall survival).

Timing
Diagnostic accuracy is a short-term outcome. Survival outcomes would be measured over the long term (e.g., 5- or 10-year survival).
Setting
Patients would be tested in the primary or specialty care setting.

Technical Performance
Discussion of technical performance is irrelevant because saturation biopsy is a surgical procedure that is a variation on standard biopsy.

Diagnostic Accuracy
Several studies have evaluated the accuracy of saturation biopsy for identifying patients who might be suitable candidates for active surveillance. In 2013, Linder et al reviewed data on 500 consecutive patients who underwent standard template prostate biopsy (12 cores) or saturation biopsy (at least 18 cores) before radical prostatectomy. They identified 218 patients who would have been candidates for active surveillance. Criteria were a Gleason score no greater than 6, clinical stage T1 or T2a, PSA level less than 10 ng/mL, and involvement of no more than 33% of cores. Among these 218 patients, 124 had undergone standard biopsy and 94 underwent saturation biopsy. In a multivariate analysis, biopsy method was not a significant predictor of upstaging on analysis of pathologic findings (p=0.26). In addition, the 5-year biochemical failure-free survival rates (defined as PSA level of at least 0.4 ng/mL) did not differ significantly between groups: rates were 97% for standard biopsy and 95% for saturation biopsy (p=0.11).

In 2016, Quintana et al compared 12-core biopsy and saturation biopsy (18-33 cores; median, 20 cores) in 375 patients to determine the Gleason score accurately. The authors stated that patients with Gleason scores of 4 or higher were generally not considered candidates for active surveillance. Gleason score was confirmed by pathologic analysis of prostate specimens. For detecting a high Gleason grade (i.e., ≥4), there were no statistically significant differences in the sensitivity, specificity, negative predictive value, or positive predictive value of 12-core versus saturation biopsies. The areas under the receiver operating characteristic curve were 0.82 for saturation biopsy and 0.84 for 12-core biopsy (p value not reported).

Clinical Utility
No direct evidence from studies comparing the impact of saturation biopsy with standard biopsy for patient management decisions or health outcomes in patients with prostate cancer being considered for active surveillance was identified. Indirect evidence of clinical utility rests on clinical validity. Because the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate that saturation biopsy improves the identification of tumor grade, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

Summary of Evidence
For individuals who have suspected prostate cancer who receive initial saturation biopsy, the evidence includes randomized controlled trials (RCTs), observational studies and systematic reviews. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy, and treatment-related morbidity. A 2013 systematic review found higher rates of cancer detection with saturation biopsy than with extended biopsy overall, but, in the subgroup of men with prostate-specific antigen levels less than 10 ng/mL, the degree of difference was small and possibly not clinically significant. Health outcomes (e.g., survival rate) were not reported. Although several studies were published after the systematic review, none showed that initial saturation biopsy improves the detection of clinically significant cancers and none reported progression or survival outcomes. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have suspected prostate cancer who receive repeat saturation biopsy, the evidence includes observational studies and a systematic review. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy, and treatment-related morbidity. Several studies have compared saturation and standard prostate biopsies in the repeat biopsy setting and have found significantly higher detection rates with saturation biopsy. However, at least 1 study found that about one-third of the positive findings with saturation biopsy were clinically insignificant cancers. Moreover, studies of saturation biopsy as the repeat prostate biopsy
strategy focused on cancer detection rates and did not report health outcomes (e.g., progression or survival). Evidence is lacking as to whether saturation biopsy leads to improved health outcomes, including the possibility of detecting clinically insignificant cancers, which could lead to unnecessary treatment. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

For individuals who have prostate cancer and are candidates for active surveillance who receive saturation biopsy, the evidence includes 2 nonrandomized comparative studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, test accuracy, and treatment-related morbidity. Both studies retrospectively compared standard biopsy with saturation biopsy for selecting patients for active surveillance; neither found that saturation biopsy improved the ability to select patients. In 1 study, biopsy method was not a significant predictor of upstaging and, in the other study, biopsy method was not significantly associated with selecting patients with a high Gleason score. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Supplemental Information
Clinical Input from Physician Specialty Societies and Academic Medical Centers
While the various physician specialty societies and academic medical centers may collaborate with and make recommendations during this process, through the provision of appropriate reviewers, input received does not represent an endorsement or position statement by the physician specialty societies or academic medical centers, unless otherwise noted.

In response to requests from Blue Cross Blue Shield Association, input was received from 3 physician specialty societies and 3 academic medical centers in 2014. There were 5 responses from 1 specialty society, 4 responses from another, and 1 response from the third, for a total of 10 specialty society responses. Most reviewers stated that saturation biopsy is considered investigational and did not think that saturation biopsy in patients with 2 prior negative biopsies and persistently rising prostate-specific antigen level is considered medically necessary. Clinicians proposed various options that could be used in the situation of prior negative biopsies and rising prostate-specific antigen level: there was no consensus on the best approach. Suggestions included magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) with transrectal ultrasound, multiparametric MRI, and 3T pelvic MRI. There was near consensus that there is insufficient evidence to support use of any of these techniques in the indications being considered.

Practice Guidelines and Position Statements
National Comprehensive Cancer Network Guidelines
National Comprehensive Cancer Network guidelines (v.1.2017) on early detection of prostate cancer state that routine use of advanced biopsy techniques, including saturation biopsy, is not recommended for initial biopsy. However, based on emerging evidence, the guidelines also state that saturation biopsy can be considered for “very high-risk” men with previous negative biopsies.

U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations
The 2012 U.S. Preventive Services Task Force recommendations on prostate cancer screening do not address saturation biopsy. As of June 2017, an update is in process.

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
A search of ClinicalTrials.gov in June 2017 did not identify any ongoing or unpublished trials that would likely influence this review.
References


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. Inclusion or exclusion of a procedure, diagnosis or device code(s) does not constitute or imply member coverage or provider reimbursement.

IE

The following services may be considered investigational.

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<th>Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<td>CPT®</td>
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<td>Biopsy, prostate; needle or punch, single or multiple, any approach</td>
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**Policy History**

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

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<tr>
<th>Effective Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>06/30/2015</td>
<td>BCBSA Medical Policy adoption</td>
<td>Medical Policy Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/01/2016</td>
<td>Policy title change from Saturation Biopsy for Diagnosis and Staging of Prostate Cancer to Saturation Biopsy for Diagnosis, Staging, and Management of Prostate Cancer</td>
<td>Medical Policy Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>09/01/2017</td>
<td>Policy revision without position change</td>
<td>Medical Policy Committee</td>
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**Definitions of Decision Determinations**

**Medically Necessary:** A treatment, procedure, or drug is medically necessary only when it has been established as safe and effective for the particular symptoms or diagnosis, is not investigational or experimental, is not being provided primarily for the convenience of the patient or the provider, and is provided at the most appropriate level to treat the condition.

**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. Please call (800) 541-6652 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.