VACUUM-ASSISTED CLOSURE OF CHRONIC WOUNDS
DME101.036

COVERAGE:
Vacuum-assisted closure IS CONSIDERED MEDICALLY NECESSARY for the management of chronic wounds. Despite the lack of outcomes data at this time, the system which promotes the maintenance of a clean dry wound is considered appropriate to the management of chronic, poorly healing open wounds in patients who have suboptimal conditions for wound healing. (SEE Rationale section)

DESCRIPTION:
The management and treatment of chronic wounds, including decubitus ulcers, remain a treatment challenge. Most chronic wounds will heal only if the underlying cause (venous stasis, pressure, infection, etc.) is addressed. In addition, cleaning of the wound to remove non-viable tissue, microorganisms, and foreign bodies is essential to create the optimal conditions for either reepithelialization (healing by secondary intention) or preparation for wound closure with skin grafts, or flaps (healing by primary intention). Therefore, debridement, irrigation, whirlpool treatments, and wet to dry dressings are common components of chronic wound care.

VACUUM-ASSISTED CLOSURE is a new technique designed to promote the formation of granulation tissue in the wound bed either as an adjunct to surgical therapy, or as an alternative to surgery in a debilitated patient. In this system, special foam dressing with an attached evacuation tube is inserted into the wound and covered with an adhesive drape in order to create an airtight seal. Negative pressure is then applied and the wound discharge is collected in a canister. Although the exact mechanism has not been explained, it is believed that negative pressure contributes to wound healing by removing excess interstitial fluid, increasing the vascularity of the wound, and/or creating beneficial mechanical forces that draw the edges of the wound closer together.

The Food and Drug Administration (FDA) found that this device was substantially equivalent to another device already legally approved and marketed. Therefore, the FDA issued a 501 K clearance on 3/25/1995 that allowed for marketing of this device and classified it as a Class II device. This classification permits the V.A.C. to process to the market, but does not mean the FDA has approved the device.

RATIONALE:
Vacuum-assisted closure is a promising modality for treating chronic and difficult wounds. The ultimate aim of all treatment should be to achieve a closed wound in the shortest possible period of time with the least trauma to the patient. Treatment with vacuum assisted closure may result in lowered healthcare cost for chronic wound patients due to decreased charges for medical treatment and shorter hospital stays.
DISCLAIMER

State and federal law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific inclusions/exclusions, takes precedence over Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining coverage. The member’s contract benefits in effect on the date that services are rendered must be used. Any benefits are subject to the payment of premiums for the date on which services are rendered. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically.

HMO Blue Texas physicians who are contracted/affiliated with a capitated IPA/medical group must contact the IPA/medical group for information regarding HMO claims/reimbursement information and other general polices and procedures.

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