SACROILIAC JOINT ARTHROGRAPHY
RAD601.040

COVERAGE:

Sacroiliac joint arthrography, with or without injection, is not eligible for coverage as it is considered investigational. Arthrography involves the injection of radiopaque dye followed by x-rays.

Note: Sacroiliac joint injections are payable for injections of cortisone or local anesthesia as therapeutic procedures.

DESCRIPTION:

Sacroiliac Joint Arthrography has been recently explored as a diagnostic test for sacroiliac joint pain/dysfunction. Using fluoroscopic guidance, the sacroiliac joint cavity can be entered. Once the position is confirmed with the injection of contrast medium, local anesthesia can be injected. Duplication of the patient's pain pattern with the contrast medium or relief of pain with the injection of the local anesthetic suggests sacroiliac involvement.

In the past, clinical tests for sacroiliac joint dysfunction may have included:

- various movement tests,
- palpations to detect tenderness, and
- pain descriptions by the patient.

There are no standard criteria to measure the prevalence or to validate examination protocol for sacroiliac joint dysfunction. To further confuse the study of the sacroiliac joint, there are multiple structures, such as posterior facet joints and lumbar discs, which may refer pain to the area surrounding the sacroiliac joint.

RATIONALE:

There is minimal literature regarding the use of diagnostic blocks to evaluate sacroiliac joint pain. Blinded studies with placebo controls would normally be required for scientific validation of sacroiliac joint blocks, particularly when dealing with pain relief. In a typical evaluation of a diagnostic test, the results of a sacroiliac diagnostic block would then be compared to a gold standard. However, there is no current gold standard for sacroiliac joint injection. One published study does demonstrate that sacroiliac pain exists. Another study refutes the existence of sacroiliac pain and that sacroiliac joint blocks should be further investigated.

There are no studies that describe how the results of sacroiliac joint arthrography may be used in the management of the patient.

PRICING:
Fluoroscopy and/or sedation are not allowed separately as they are an integral component of the procedure.

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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