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Otolaryngology Health Policy Advisory Committee (OHPAC) 2024 Report

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The Otolaryngology Health Policy Advisory Committee (OHPAC) has demonstrated meaningful collaboration with BCBSNC for the benefit of patients in North Carolina. Below are highlights of the successful efforts between OHPAC and BCBSNC over the past 4 years:

1. Comprehensive Otolaryngology: Balloon Eustachian Tube Dilation Coverage

OHPAC Comprehensive Otolaryngology Consultant Advisory Team provided supporting peer reviewed literature and relevant AAO-HNS clinical consensus statements to BCBSNC for consideration of coverage.

Positive Impact: BCBSNC reviewed the data and agreed to payment for balloon eustachian tube dilation under defined guideline criteria:

https://www.bluecrossnc.com/content/dam/bcbsnc/pdf/providers/policies-guidelines-codes/policies/commercial/surgery/balloon_dilation_of_the_eustachian_tube.pdf

2. Facial Plastic Surgery: Botox Injection Step Therapy Medical Policy

OHPAC Facial Plastics Consultant Advisory Team engaged the BCBSNC Pharmacy & Therapeutics Committee (PTC) presenting a request for a special policy review after denials were reported relating to the use of Botox for hemifacial spasm, blepharospasm and facial nerve disorders. Supporting peer reviewed literature and relevant AAO-HNS clinical consensus statements were provided to BCBSNC for consideration of policy reversal.

Positive Impact: BCBSNC PTC made alterations to the policy for facial nerve disorders eliminating requirement of a step alternative trial allowing existing patients to continue current Botox therapy without having to regress backwards to a new step trial:

https://www.bluecrossnc.com/content/dam/bcbsnc/pdf/providers/formulary/commercial/botulinum_toxin_medical_criteria.pdf

3. Otology: Cochlear Implantation (CI) for Single Sided Deafness Coverage

OHPAC Otology Consultant Advisory Team presented a comprehensive summary of peer reviewed literature data and supporting AAO-HNS clinical consensus statements for consideration of coverage.

Positive impact: BCBSNC reviewed the data and agreed to allow payment for CI for single sided deafness under defined guideline criteria:

https://www.bluecrossnc.com/content/dam/bcbsnc/pdf/providers/policies-guidelines-codes/policies/commercial/surgery/cochlear_implant.pdf

4. Comprehensive Otolaryngology/Rhinology: Balloon Sinuplasty Medical Policy

BCBSNC requested an OHPAC review of the current BCBSNC Balloon Sinuplasty medical policy. OHPAC convened a 4 physician (2 academic and 2 private practice) special Rhinology Consultant Advisory Team. Peer review literature and relevant AAO/HNS clinical consensus statements were provided to BCBSNC for clinical indications consideration.

Positive impact: BCBSNC removed "mucosal thickening of at least 3 mm" and added "air fluid levels or opacification" to support the diagnosis of sinusitis in the "When Covered" section defining sinus disease:

https://www.bluecrossnc.com/content/dam/bcbsnc/pdf/providers/policies-guidelines-codes/policies/commercial/surgery/balloon_ostial_dilation.pdf

OHPAC Background

Formed in 2019 at the Annual Meeting of the NC Society of Otolaryngology-Head & Neck Surgery, OHPAC was created as an initiative to facilitate communication between Payers and practicing Otolaryngologist in North Carolina. The OHPAC Board maintains balanced representation with 3 private and 3 academic practitioner members.

2021-2024 Private Practice OHPAC Members

Western Region: Dr. Will Harrill *Co-Chair*
Central Region: Dr. Nick Stowell
Eastern Region: Dr. Mark Clarkson

2021-2024 Academic OHPAC Members

Duke: Dr. Chip Woodard *Co-Chair*
UNC: Dr. Austin Rose
Wake: Dr. Eric Kraus

In 2019 a BCBSNC/OHPAC annual medical policy review pilot project was launched which has proven to be a very successful and sustainable model and remains unique to the BCBSNC medical policy review process. The OHPAC Board coordinates the formation of scope-of-practice Otolaryngology Consultant Advisory Teams consisting of private practice and academic North Carolina Otolaryngologists which are compensated by BCBSNC to perform bi-annual reviews of Otolaryngology BCBSNC medical policies. OHPAC Consultant Advisory Team reviews serve as expert scope-of-practice guidance for BCBSNC policy coverage consideration.

The OHPAC Board would like to recognize and thank the following physicians for their time and willingness to serve within this collaborative OHPAC/BCBSNC Medical Policy Review project effort:

¹Academic

²Private Practice

David Jang MD ¹	Cooper Scurry MD ²
Brent Senior MD ¹	Matt Ellison MD ¹
David Melon MD ²	Michele Gandolfi MD ¹
Zachary Cappello MD ²	John McIlveen MD ²
Howard Francis MD ¹	Adam Zanation, MD ²
Madison Clark MD ¹	Mark Clarkson, MD ²
Eric Kraus, MD ¹	

If you have an interest in serving on future OHPAC Consultant Advisory Teams, please reach out to either wharrill@carolinaearnosethroat.com or charles.woodard@duke.edu.