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Incorporating cell therapies into your health plan

Key considerations

Introduction to cell therapy

In the modern healthcare landscape, cell therapies represent a transformative shift in the approach to disease treatment.[1] **For employers and benefits consultants, understanding the impact of emerging treatments like cell therapies is essential for making informed decisions about employee health benefits.**

What are cell therapies?

Cell therapies are advanced therapies that aim to address the genetic or cellular root causes of diseases. **Unlike traditional treatments that often require ongoing intervention, cell therapies can sometimes be administered in a single dose, potentially offering a lasting cure.**[1] This novel approach is especially important when traditional treatments fail or are unavailable.[1]

Potential benefits to employers

Reasons for employers to consider providing coverage for cell therapies:

1. **Access to new, transformative treatment options:** When no other treatments exist for certain diseases—or current options are costly and only temporarily manage symptoms.[1]
2. **Slowed or halted disease progression:** In some cases, cell therapies can halt disease progression entirely by addressing its underlying genetic cause.[1,2]
3. **Reduced long-term healthcare costs:** With the right price point and benefit structure, cell therapies have the potential to prevent costly lifelong medical interventions and may offset costs of long-term treatment.[1,3,4]
4. **Quality-of-life improvements:** Cell therapies may offer improved function, reduced, or eliminated pain and suffering, provide a psychological sense of well-being, and reduce strains on time and caregiving.[1]

Steps for incorporating cell therapies into health plans

To effectively integrate cell therapies into your organization's health benefits plan, consider the following steps:

- **Understand cell therapies:**
  - Educate your team about the potential benefits of cell therapies
  - Stay informed about the latest developments and approved therapies
- **Assess coverage:**
  - Review your health plans to understand current coverage
  - Ensure that the Conditions of Coverage (COC) align with treatment needs
- **Learn about authorization:**
  - Understand the specific prior authorization process
  - Familiarize yourself with any special requirements or cell therapy coverage considerations
- **Explore financial models:**
  - Consider innovative financial solutions such as Centers of Excellence (COE) models,[5] outcome-based payments,[6] and participation in industry-specific risk pools[7]
  - Consider leveraging a stop-loss plan to mitigate financial risks associated with high-cost claims[8]

What this means for employers

Navigating the integration of cell therapies into your health benefits design requires careful planning and ongoing management. By referring to these key considerations, the aim is to help ensure comprehensive support for your employees while managing financial risks effectively. The information shared is recommended to be used in conjunction with discussions with your plan carrier, PBM, consultants, or brokers.

References: 1. Salzman R et al. Addressing the value of gene therapy and enhancing patient access to transformative treatments. *Mol Ther*. 2018;26:2717-2726. **2.** American Society of Cell and Gene Therapy. Gene therapy basics. Updated October 31, 2022. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://patienteducation.asgct.org/gene-therapy-101/gene-therapy-basics **3.** Sun Life Assurance Company of Canada. Introduction to gene therapies. 3rd edition. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.sunlife.com/us/en/about/insights-and-events/introduction-to-gene-therapies/ **4.** Brennan T. White paper: gene therapy. Keeping costs from negating its unprecedented potential. CVS Health. Accessed February 14, 2025. **5.** Elrod JK, Fortenberry JL Jr. Centers of excellence in healthcare institutions: what they are and how to assemble them. *BMC Health Serv Res.* 2017;17(Suppl 1):425. doi: 10.1186/s12913-017-2340-y. PMID: 28722562; PMCID: PMC5516836. **6.** Cell & Gene. The promise of outcomes-based agreements for cell & gene therapies. Updated January 20, 2023. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.cellandgene.com/doc/the-promise-of-outcomes-based-agreements-for-cell-gene-therapies-0001 **7.** American Academy of Actuaries. Risk pooling: how health insurance in the individual market works. Updated June 2023. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.actuary.org/content/risk-pooling-how-health-insurance-individual-market-works-0 **8.** Insuranceopedia Inc. Stop-loss insurance. Updated March 11, 2024. Accessed May 5, 2026. https://www.insuranceopedia.com/definition/4372/stop-loss-insurance

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