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HIGH COST DRUGS	darbepoetin or epoetin alpha	1 of 2		
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BACKGROUND

Since September 2003, the Calgary Health Region has utilized grant funding from Alberta Health and Wellness to cover the cost of darbepoetin or epoetin alfa to treat patients with anemia due to chronic renal failure. These medications have been supplied to all Care Centre patients through the Dialysis Program at the time of dialysis. Grant funding ended July 1, 2006 and as such, responsibility for funding of these agents for patients in Long Term Care facilities has become the responsibility of the Region.

PREAMBLE

Darbepoetin and epoetin have similar efficacy and safety. The erythropoiesis-stimulating action of darbepoetin is similar to epoetin, yet it is unique in having a longer duration of action. Darbepoetin requires only once or bi-weekly dosing, while epoetin is administered two or three times weekly.

Protocol 1 – Treatment of anemia of chronic renal failure in dialysis patients with low hemoglobin (less than 110g/L).

Hemoglobin levels should be maintained within 95 –110 g/L and if hemoglobin levels exceed 110 g/L, the dose should be reduced.

For new patients, the pre-treatment hemoglobin level (g/L) must be indicated on the HCD form.

For patients who have had previous special authorization for darbepoetin or epoetin alfa, the patient's current hemoglobin level (g/L) must be indicated on the HCD form.

The medication is to be sent from the Care Centre to the Dialysis Centre.

HCD authorization requires submission every six months .

OR,

Protocol 2 - Treatment of anemia of chronic renal failure in non-dialysis patients with low hemoglobin (less than 110g/L) AND consultation with a nephrologist or hematologist, results in recommendations for use.

Hemoglobin levels should be maintained within 95 –110 g/L and if hemoglobin levels exceed 110 g/L, the dose should be reduced.

For new patients, the pre-treatment hemoglobin level (g/L) must be indicated on the HCD form.

For patients who have had previous special authorization for darbepoetin or epoetin alfa, the patient's current hemoglobin level (g/L) must be indicated on the HCD form.

HCD authorization requires annual submission.

Long Term Care Formulary

HCD-04

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REFERENCES

1. Alberta Health and Wellness Drug Benefit List, Special Authorization Request Form.
2. Calgary Health Region letter to All Pharmacy Service Providers and Care Centre Owner Operators, Steve Long (Director Pharmacy Integration and Strategic Initiatives), August 2006.
3. Pharmacist's Letter, November 2001, Volume 17(11):171112.
4. Pharmacist's Letter, September 2002, Volume 18(9):180921