Medical Oncology Program for Arkansas Blue Cross and Blue Shield-affiliated health plans (including Health Advantage and BlueAdvantage Administrators of Arkansas)

Frequently Asked Questions

About the Carelon Medical Benefits Management Cancer Treatment Pathways

What is a cancer treatment pathway?

Pathways are widely accepted as a component in managing oncology treatment quality and costs. More specific than guidelines, they identify high-quality, high-value regimens as established on the basis of efficacy, favorable toxicity profiles, and costs.

Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways

Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways are developed using a rigorous review of professional consensus guidelines and published clinical data. When evaluating a regimen's clinical merits, Carelon oncologists consider:

- Clinical benefits (efficacy)
- Side effects/toxicity – particularly side effects impacting quality of life or commonly leading to hospitalizations
- Strength of consensus guidelines

Lastly, those regimens that have favorable efficacy and toxicity profiles as compared to all other chemotherapy treatments for the same diagnosis are evaluated on the basis of cost.

Standards of oncologic care evolve rapidly. To keep pace, Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways are reviewed at least quarterly – more often when warranted by new drug approvals, new clinical data, or changes in consensus guidelines.

All Carelon Pathways and Pathway updates are vetted by a panel of practicing community and academic oncologists from the country's leading cancer care institutions before they are adopted.

Where can I find a copy of the Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways?

The Pathways are posted here, where you can find information, tools, and worksheets to assist you in incorporating the program into your practice.

What should I consider when selecting a Pathway for my patient?

Selecting a Pathway depends upon a number of factors - the type of cancer, the stage of disease, and the biomarkers or specific genetic profile of the cancer. Within each cancer type, separate pathways are usually available for early stage and advanced cancer, sub-types of cancer (e.g. HER2 positive) and different lines of therapy.

What if I am treating a patient for whom a Pathway regimen is not available?

If a Pathway regimen is not available for a particular type of cancer or line of therapy, the regimen you select will be reviewed for benefit coverage under plan medical policy. Please note that enhanced reimbursement is not available for regimens that are not Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways.

What happens if I do not select a treatment regimen that is designated as an Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathway?

We recognize that every patient is unique. While efforts have been made to identify Pathways that offer the best treatment options for most patients, a treating oncologist may decide that another regimen is best for an individual patient. Whether an Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathway or an alternate regimen is chosen, the program supports all regimens that meet the clinical review criteria under plan medical policy.

Do Pathways apply to pediatric patients?

Carelon Pathways apply to adult oncology patients at this time. However, you are encouraged to enter all cancer treatment regimens for affected members, adults and children, into the Carelon *ProviderPortal*SM as some chemotherapeutic or supportive drugs may be subject to clinical appropriateness review.

Are supportive drugs included in Pathways?

Supportive care drugs, such as those used to manage side effects of chemotherapy, are not currently included in Carelon Cancer Treatment Pathways. However, the entire cancer treatment drug regimen, including supportive care drugs, should be included in an order request because certain supportive drugs may be included on the list of drugs that require utilization management review under Arkansas Blue Cross Blue Shield coverage criteria.