



Qualified Health Plans offered in North Carolina by CareSource North Carolina Co., d/b/a CareSource

<b>MEDICAL POLICY STATEMENT</b>	
<b>North Carolina Marketplace</b>	
Policy Name & Number	Date Effective
Spinal Canal Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA).NC MP-MM-1390	01/01/2023-12/31/2023
Policy Type	
<b>MEDICAL</b>	

Medical Policy Statement prepared by CareSource and its affiliates are derived from literature based on and supported by clinical guidelines, nationally recognized utilization and technology assessment guidelines, other medical management industry standards, and published MCO clinical policy guidelines. Medically necessary services include, but are not limited to, those health care services or supplies that are proper and necessary for the diagnosis or treatment of disease, illness, or injury and without which the patient can be expected to suffer prolonged, increased or new morbidity, impairment of function, dysfunction of a body organ or part, or significant pain and discomfort. These services meet the standards of good medical practice in the local area, are the lowest cost alternative, and are not provided mainly for the convenience of the member or provider. Medically necessary services also include those services defined in any Evidence of Coverage documents, Medical Policy Statements, Provider Manuals, Member Handbooks, and/or other policies and procedures.

Medical Policy Statements prepared by CareSource and its affiliates do not ensure an authorization or payment of services. Please refer to the plan contract (often referred to as the Evidence of Coverage) for the service(s) referenced in the Medical Policy Statement. If there is a conflict between the Medical Policy Statement and the plan contract (i.e., Evidence of Coverage), then the plan contract (i.e., Evidence of Coverage) will be the controlling document used to make the determination. According to the rules of Mental Health Parity Addiction Equity Act (MHPAEA), coverage for the diagnosis and treatment of a behavioral health disorder will not be subject to any limitations that are less favorable than the limitations that apply to medical conditions as covered under this policy.

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## A. Subject

### **Spinal Canal Magnetic Resonance Angiography (MRA)**

## B. Background

A magnetic resonance angiograph (MRA) is an advanced imaging technology that allows for viewing of an individual's blood vessels. Magnetic resonance angiography is a non-invasive procedure in which the patient is placed in a donut shaped opening in a tunnel-like motorized device. This imaging technique results in a visualization of hemodynamic flow which is used to discriminate between stationary tissue and flowing spins in blood.

MRA can be used for imaging arteries in the half to whole body by a single acquisition without a nephrotoxic contrast medium and acquired images can be reconstructed into a specific cross-sectional view. MRA is useful to visualize vessels non-reachable by a catheter approach, and collateral vessels can be fully visualized. Since MRA is minimally invasive with no exposure to ionized radiation, it can be repeatedly applied for follow-up. A spinal MRA focuses on identification of arteriovenous malformations or injury to the blood vessels supplying the spinal cord.

## C. Definitions

- **Advanced Imaging** – safely screens one or more specialized diagnostic tests for visualization of internal organs and structures.
- **Arteriovenous Malformation** – abnormal, snarled tangles of blood vessels that cause multiple irregular connections between the arteries and veins. These malformations most often occur in the spinal cord and in any part of the brain or on its surface but can develop elsewhere in the body.
- **Hemodynamics** – a term that describes how blood flows through arteries and veins and the forces that affect blood flow. Normally, blood flows in a laminar (streamlined) pattern. It flows fastest in the middle of a blood vessel, where there's no friction with blood vessel walls.
- **Non-invasive Procedure** – procedures which do not break the skin or enter the body.

## D. Policy

- I. CareSource considers spinal canal MRA medically necessary for **any** of the following when clinical criteria are met:
  - A. Evaluation of a known cervical spine fracture, disc herniation, infection, or venous thrombosis when there is concern for vascular pathology.
  - B. Evaluation of a spinal arteriovenous malformation (AVM).
  - C. Evaluation of known or suspected vertebral artery injury when there is concern for vascular compromise to the spinal canal and/or its contents.
  - D. Myelopathy when the suspected etiology is a compromise of spinal cord blood flow or drainage.

E. Preoperative evaluation (e.g., localization of the spinal arteries prior to complex spinal surgery, aortic aneurysm repair, or characterization of suspected vascular lesion of the spinal canal and/or its contents).

II. Documentation requires a medical reason that clearly indicates why additional imaging is needed for the type and area(s) requested. A follow-up study may be needed to evaluate member progress after treatment, procedure, intervention, or surgery.

E. Conditions of Coverage  
NA

F. Related Policies/Rules  
NA

G. Review/Revision History

	DATE	ACTION
<b>Date Issued</b>	11/30/2022	New policy
<b>Date Revised</b>		
<b>Date Effective</b>	01/01/2023	
<b>Date Archived</b>	12/31/2023	This Policy is no longer active and has been archived. Please note that there could be other Policies that may have some of the same rules incorporated and CareSource reserves the right to follow CMS/State/NCCI guidelines without a formal documented Policy.

H. References

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The MEDICAL Policy Statement detailed above has received due consideration as defined in the MEDICAL Policy Statement Policy and is approved.

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