



## Florida Orthopaedic Society Medical Economics Committee Monthly Practice Management Tip



December 2003

### **BCBSF Approves Use of Carticel**

Article originally appeared in Blue Line, a publication for participating providers in North Florida

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Florida now covers Carticel (autologous cultured chondrocytes) in treating chronic knee pain for all product lines except the Federal Employee Program where federal guidelines apply.

Approximately two million knee injuries occur each year, making knee pain one of the most common sources of chronic joint pain. Some knee injuries include damage to knee cartilage that may lead to pain and swelling, making it difficult for a patient to maintain an active lifestyle.

The FDA has approved Carticel as a biologic therapy for the treatment of damaged knee cartilage for patients who did not gain relief from surgical repair procedures. Surgeons have the option to repair a patient's articular cartilage injuries by implanting the patient's own (autologous) cultured cartilage cells (chondrocytes) in the damaged area.

Since articular cartilage does not regenerate once it is damaged, people with this type of damage generally display symptoms including joint locking, catching, localized pain, and swelling. In addition, chronic injuries to this cartilage, over time, may lead to debilitating osteoarthritis. If osteoarthritis is present in the knee, the procedure is no longer an option.

Carticel has demonstrated important benefits in patients with damaged articular cartilage. Many resume normal daily activities within a few months of receiving treatment. Since the replacement cartilage is derived from a patient's own cells, there is no danger of rejection.

### **Pre-authorization Needed**

Carticel coverage now provides an alternative for select patients who have failed previous conservative surgery and/or therapy. Prior authorization is required for Carticel treatment. Certain restrictions and some contraindications apply to procedural approval. **Appropriate billing codes include CPT codes 29870, 29874; HCPCS codes J7330, S2112.**

---

Florida Orthopaedic Society  
1001 Samy Drive, Tampa, FL 33613  
Phone: 866-269-7720 Fax: 813-269-7539  
Email: [fcobbe@tampabay.rr.com](mailto:fcobbe@tampabay.rr.com)  
Website: [www.fos-society.com](http://www.fos-society.com)