KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

Policy # 00233
Original Effective Date: 12/17/2008
Current Effective Date: 02/20/2019

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When Services Are Eligible for Coverage
Coverage for eligible medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products may be provided only if:

• Benefits are available in the member’s contract/certificate, and
• Medical necessity criteria and guidelines are met.

Based on review of available data, the Company may consider KRAS variant analysis for patients with metastatic colorectal cancer (mCRC) to predict nonresponse prior to planned therapy with anti-epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab to be eligible for coverage.**

Based on review of available data, the Company may consider NRAS variant analysis for patients with mCRC to predict nonresponse prior to planned therapy with anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies cetuximab or panitumumab to be eligible for coverage.**

Based on review of available data, the Company considers BRAF variant analysis for patients with mCRC who are found to be wild-type on KRAS and NRAS variant analysis to guide management decisions to be eligible for coverage.**

When Services Are Considered Investigational
Coverage is not available for investigational medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products.

Based on review of available data, the Company considers KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF variant analysis for all other indications to be investigational.*

Policy Guidelines
There is support from the evidence and clinical input to use BRAF V600 variant testing for prognostic stratification. Clinical input suggests that patients who are positive for this variant may be considered for clinical trials.

It is uncertain whether the presence of a BRAF V600 variant in patients with metastatic colorectal cancer who are wild-type on KRAS and NRAS variant analysis is predictive of response to anti-epidermal growth factor receptor therapy. Furthermore, there is mixed opinion in clinical guidelines and clinical input on the use of BRAF variant analysis to predict response to treatment.

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Genetics Nomenclature Update

The Human Genome Variation Society nomenclature is used to report information on variants found in DNA and serves as an international standard in DNA diagnostics. It is being implemented for genetic testing medical evidence review updates starting in 2017 (see Table PG1). The Society’s nomenclature is recommended by the Human Variome Project, the HUman Genome Organization, and by the Human Genome Variation Society itself.

The American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics and the Association for Molecular Pathology standards and guidelines for interpretation of sequence variants represent expert opinion from both organizations, in addition to the College of American Pathologists. These recommendations primarily apply to genetic tests used in clinical laboratories, including genotyping, single genes, panels, exomes, and genomes. Table PG2 shows the recommended standard terminology “pathogenic,” “likely pathogenic,” “uncertain significance,” “likely benign,” and “benign” to describe variants identified that cause Mendelian disorders.

Table PG1. Nomenclature to Report on Variants Found in DNA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous</th>
<th>Updated</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mutation</td>
<td>Disease-associated change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Variant</td>
<td>Change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Familial variant</td>
<td>Disease-associated variant identified in a proband for use in subsequent targeted genetic testing in first-degree relatives</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table PG2. ACMG-AMP Standards and Guidelines for Variant Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variant Classification</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pathogenic Disease-causing change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Likely pathogenic Likely disease-causing change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Variant of uncertain significance Change in DNA sequence with uncertain effects on disease</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Likely benign Likely benign change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Benign Benign change in the DNA sequence</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ACMG: American College of Medical Genetics and Genomics; AMP: Association for Molecular Pathology.

Background/Overview

Cetuximab (Erbitux; ImClone Systems) and panitumumab (Vectibix; Amgen) are monoclonal antibodies that bind to the epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR), preventing intrinsic ligand binding and activation of downstream signaling pathways vital for cancer cell proliferation, invasion, metastasis, and stimulation of neovascularization.
The RAS-RAF-MAP kinase pathway is activated in the EGFR cascade. The Ras proteins are G proteins that cycle between active (RAS guanosine triphosphate) and inactive (RAS guanosine diphosphate) forms in response to stimulation from a cell surface receptor, such as EGFR, and they act as a binary switch between the cell surface EGFR and downstream signaling pathways. The KRAS gene can harbor oncogenic variants that result in a constitutively activated protein, independent of EGFR ligand binding, rendering antibodies to the upstream EGFR ineffective. Approximately 40% of colorectal cancers (CRCs) have KRAS variants in codons 12 and 13 in exon 2. Another proto-oncogene that acts downstream from KRAS-NRAS harbors oncogenic variants in codons 12, 13, or 61 that result in constitutive activation of the EGFR-mediated pathway. These variants are less common compared with KRAS, detected in 2% to 7% of CRC specimens. It is unclear whether NRAS variants predict poor response due to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy or are prognostic of poor CRC outcome in general. A third proto-oncogene, BRAF, encodes a protein kinase and is involved in intracellular signaling and cell growth; BRAF is also a principal downstream effector of KRAS. BRAF variants occur in fewer than 10% to 15% of CRCs and appear to be a marker of poor prognosis. KRAS and BRAF variants are considered to be mutually exclusive.

Cetuximab and panitumumab have marketing approval from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for treatment of metastatic CRC in the refractory disease setting. FDA approval for panitumumab indicates that panitumumab is not indicated for the treatment of patients with KRAS or NRAS variant-positive disease in combination with oxaliplatin-based chemotherapy.

**FDA or Other Governmental Regulatory Approval**

**U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)**

**Approved Companion Diagnostic Tests for KRAS Variant Analysis**

Companion diagnostic tests for the selection of cetuximab and panitumumab have been approved by FDA through the premarket approval process, including:

“The cobas®‡ KRAS Mutation Test, for use with the cobas®‡ 4800 System, [which] is a real-time PCR [polymerase chain reaction] test for the detection of seven somatic mutations in codons 12 and 13 of the KRAS gene in DNA derived from formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded human colorectal cancer (CRC) tumor tissue. The test is intended to be used as an aid in the identification of CRC patients for whom treatment with Erbitux®‡ (cetuximab) or with Vectibix®‡ (panitumumab) may be indicated based on a no mutation detected result.”

“The therascreen®‡ KRAS RGQ PCR Kit is a real-time qualitative PCR assay used on the Rotor-Gene Q MDx instrument for the detection of seven somatic mutations in the human KRAS oncogene, using DNA extracted from formalin-fixed paraffin-embedded (FFPE), colorectal cancer (CRC) tissue. The therascreen KRAS RGQ PCR Kit is intended to aid in the identification of CRC patients for treatment with Erbitux (cetuximab) and Vectibix (panitumumab) based on a KRAS no mutation detected test result.”
Laboratory-Developed Tests for KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF Variant Analysis

Clinical laboratories may develop and validate tests in-house and market them as a laboratory service; laboratory-developed tests must meet the general regulatory standards of the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments. KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF variant analyses using polymerase chain reaction methodology are available under the auspices of the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments. Laboratories that offer laboratory-developed tests must be licensed under the Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments for high-complexity testing. To date, FDA has chosen not to require any regulatory review of this test.

Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS)

There is no national coverage determination. In the absence of a national coverage determination, coverage decisions are left to the discretion of local Medicare carriers.

Rationale/Source

Evidence reviews assess whether a medical test is clinically useful. A useful test provides information to make a clinical management decision that improves the net health outcome. That is, the balance of benefits and harms is better when the test is used to manage the condition than when another test or no test is used to manage the condition.

The first step in assessing a medical test is to formulate the clinical context and purpose of the test. The test must be technically reliable, clinically valid, and clinically useful for that purpose. Evidence reviews assess the evidence on whether a test is clinically valid and clinically useful. Technical reliability is outside the scope of these reviews, and credible information on technical reliability is available from other sources.

A large body of literature has shown that metastatic colorectal cancer (CRC) tumors with a variant in exon 2 (codon 12 or 13) of the KRAS gene do not respond to cetuximab or panitumumab therapy. More recent evidence has shown that variants in KRAS outside exon 2, in exons 3 (codons 59 and 61) and exon 4 (codons 117 and 146), and variants in NRAS exon 2 (codons 12 and 13), exons 3 (codons 59 and 61), and exon 4 (codons 117 and 146) also predict a lack of response to these monoclonal antibodies. Variant testing of these exons outside the KRAS exon 2 is referred to as extended RAS testing.

KRAS VARIANT Testing to Guide Treatment for Metastatic CRC

Clinical Context and Test Purpose

The purpose of KRAS variant testing in individuals with metastatic CRC is to determine KRAS variant status to guide treatment decisions with epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) targeted therapy with the monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: In individuals with metastatic CRC, does the use of KRAS variant testing improve health outcomes?
The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

**Patients**
The relevant population of interest includes individuals with metastatic CRC.

**Interventions**
The test being considered is KRAS variant testing.

**Comparators**
The following test strategy is currently being used: no KRAS variant testing to guide treatment.

**Outcomes**
The beneficial outcomes of interest include progression-free survival (PFS) and overall survival (OS).

**Timing**
The time frame for outcomes measures varies from several months to several years.

**Setting**
Patients with metastatic CRC are actively managed by oncologists.

**Technically Reliable**
Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

**Clinically Valid**
A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

This evidence review has been informed, in part, by a TEC Assessment (2008).

Additional evidence derives from systematic reviews, randomized controlled trials (RCTs), and single-arm studies, organized and outlined below.

**Randomized Controlled Trials**
RCTs have performed nonconcurrent subgroup analyses of the efficacy of EGFR inhibitors in patients with wild-type vs mutated KRAS in metastatic CRC. Data from these trials have consistently shown a lack of clinical response to cetuximab and panitumumab in patients with mutated KRAS, with tumor response and prolongation of PFS observed only in wild-type KRAS patients.
Amado et al (2008) performed a subgroup analysis of KRAS tumor variants in a patient population that had previously been randomized to panitumumab or to best supportive care as third-line therapy for chemotherapy-refractory metastatic CRC.

The original study reported by Van Cutsem et al (2007), designed as a multicenter RCT, was not blinded because of expected skin toxicity related to panitumumab administration.

Patients were randomized 1:1 to panitumumab or to best supportive care. Random assignment was stratified by Eastern Cooperative Oncology Group (ECOG) Performance Status (0 or 1 vs 2) and geographic region. Crossover from best supportive care to the panitumumab arm was allowed in patients who experienced disease progression. Of the 232 patients originally assigned to best supportive care alone, 176 crossed over to the panitumumab arm, at a median time to crossover of 7 weeks (range, 6.6-7.3 weeks).

Of the 463 patients in the original trial, 427 (92%) were included in the KRAS subgroup variant analysis. A central laboratory performed the KRAS variant analysis in a blinded fashion, using formalin-fixed, paraffin-embedded tumor sections and a validated KRAS variant kit (DxS) that identifies 7 somatic variants located in codons 12 and 13 using real-time polymerase chain reaction. KRAS variant status could not be determined in 36 patients because tumor samples were not available or DNA was of insufficient or of poor quality for analysis. Forty-three percent of the KRAS-evaluable patients had KRAS-mutated tumors, with a distribution similar to KRAS variant types between treatment arms.

Patient demographics and baseline characteristics were balanced between the wild-type and mutated groups for the panitumumab and best supportive care groups including patient age, sex, and ECOG Performance Status. The interaction between variant status and PFS was examined, controlling for randomization factors. PFS and tumor response rate were assessed radiographically every 4 to 8 weeks until disease progression using Response Evaluation Criteria in Solid Tumors criteria by blinded, central review. In the KRAS-assessable population, 20% of patients had a treatment-related grade 3 or 4 adverse events. As shown in Table 1, the relative effect of panitumumab on PFS was significantly greater among patients with wild-type KRAS than patients with mutated KRAS in whom no benefit from panitumumab was observed. No responders to panitumumab were identified in the mutated group, indicating a 100% positive predictive value for nonresponse in that group.

Table 1. KRAS Status and Efficacy of Panitumumab as Monotherapy in the Treatment of Chemotherapy-Refractory Metastatic Colorectal Cancer (N=427)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>KRAS WT (n=243 [57%])</th>
<th>KRAS MT (n=184 [43%])</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>P (n=124)</td>
<td>BSC (n=119)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median progression-free survival, wk</td>
<td>12.3</td>
<td>7.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazard ratio (95% CI)</td>
<td>0.45 (0.34 to 0.59)</td>
<td>0.99 (0.73 to 1.36)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Page 6 of 26
Given the crossover trial design and the fact that most of the best supportive care patients crossed over to the panitumumab arm early in the trial, conclusions on the effect of KRAS variant status on PFS and tumor response rate end points are limited. However, of the 168 best supportive care patients who crossed over to panitumumab after disease progression (119 with wild-type KRAS, 77 with mutated KRAS), PFS was significantly longer among patients with wild-type KRAS (median PFS: 16.4 weeks for wild-type vs 7.9 weeks for mutated; hazard ratio [HR], 0.32; 95% confidence interval [CI], 0.22 to 0.45).

After completion of the CRYSTAL trial (detailed below), in which 1198 patients with metastatic CRC were randomized to cetuximab in combination with folinic acid (leucovorin), 5-flourouracil, and irinotecan (FOLFIRI) or to FOLFIRI alone for first-line treatment, a subgroup analysis of response rate and PFS by KRAS variant status was performed by Van Cutsem et al (2009).

The original trial design consisted of a central stratified permuted block randomization procedure with geographic regions and ECOG Performance Status as randomization strata. Two interim assessments of safety data were conducted by an independent data safety monitoring board.

Of the original 1198 patients, 540 had KRAS-evaluable, archival material. KRAS testing was performed using genomic DNA isolated from archived formalin-fixed, paraffin-embedded tissue, using quantitative PCR to detect the KRAS variant status of codons 12 and 13. It was not stated whether the KRAS variant analysis was performed blinded. KRAS variants were present in 192 (35.6%) patients. No differences were found in patient demographics or baseline characteristics between the mutated and wild-type populations, including age, sex, ECOG Performance Status, involved disease sites, and liver-limited disease. PFS and tumor response rate were assessed by a blinded, independent review committee using computed tomography scans every 8 weeks. A multivariate analysis performed for PFS by patient characteristics showed a trend for PFS favoring the cetuximab plus FOLFIRI combination. The patients with wild-type KRAS who received cetuximab plus FOLFIRI showed a statistically significant improvement in median PFS and tumor response rate, whereas the mutated KRAS population did not, as summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. KRAS Status and Efficacy in the First-Line Therapy of Metastatic Colorectal Cancer Treated With FOLFIRI With or Without Cetuximab (CRYSTAL Trial) (N=540)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>ITTa</th>
<th>KRAS WT (n=348 [64%]b)</th>
<th>KRAS MT (n=192 [36%]b)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 C+F</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>46.9 (42.9 to 51.0)</td>
<td>38.7 (34.8 to 42.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 RR (95% Cl), %</td>
<td>36.2 (27.0 to 46.2)</td>
<td>36.2 (27.0 to 50.9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Median</td>
<td>8.9</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Amado et al (2008).
BSC: best supportive care; CI: confidence interval; MT: mutated; P: panitumumab; WT: wild-type.

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In a third trial, the phase 2 OPUS trial, the intention-to-treat (ITT) population consisted of 337 patients randomized to cetuximab and folinic acid (leucovorin), 5-florouracil, and oxaliplatin (FOLFOX) or to FOLFOX alone in the first-line treatment of metastatic CRC.

A 10% higher response rate (assessed by independent reviewers) was observed in the population treated with cetuximab, but no difference in PFS was seen between groups. Researchers then reevaluated the efficacy in the 2 treatment arms based on the KRAS variant status of patients’ tumors. Of the original ITT population, 233 subjects had evaluable material for KRAS testing, and 99 (42%) were KRAS variants. The demographics or baseline characteristics were similar between the wild-type and mutated groups, including patient age, sex, ECOG Performance Status, involved disease sites, and liver-limited disease. The trial showed that the addition of cetuximab to FOLFOX resulted in a significant improvement in response rate and PFS only in the wild-type KRAS group. Table 3 summarizes study findings.

Table 3. KRAS Status and Efficacy in the First-Line Therapy of Metastatic Colorectal Cancer Treated With FOLFOX With or Without Cetuximab (OPUS Study) (N=233)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>KRAS WT (n=134 (58%))</th>
<th>KRAS MT (n=99 (42%))</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 n (KRAS-evaluable)</td>
<td>C+Fx</td>
<td>Fx</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 RR (95% CI), %</td>
<td>60.7 (47.3 to 72.9)</td>
<td>37.0 (26.0 to 49.1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 p</td>
<td>0.011</td>
<td>0.016</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Odds ratio (95% CI)</td>
<td>2.54 (1.24 to 5.23)</td>
<td>0.51 (0.22 to 1.15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Median PFS, mo</td>
<td>7.7</td>
<td>7.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 p</td>
<td>0.016</td>
<td>0.019</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Hazard ratio</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>1.83</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from Bokemeyer et al (2009).
C: cetuximab; CI: confidence interval; F: FOLFIRI (folinic acid, 5-florouracil, and irinotecan); HR: hazard ratio; ITT: intention-to-treat; MT: mutated; PFS: progression-free survival; RR: response rate; WT: wild-type.

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In the CAIRO2 study, Tol et al (2009) analyzed tumor samples from 528 of 755 previously untreated patients with metastatic CRC who were randomized to capecitabine, oxaliplatin, and bevacizumab (CB regimen, n=378), or to the same CB regimen plus cetuximab (n=377). KRAS variant was found in 40% of tumors (108 from patients in the CB group, 98 from the CB plus cetuximab group). Patients with KRAS variants treated with cetuximab had a significantly shorter PFS (8.1 months) than the wild-type KRAS patients who received cetuximab (10.5 months; p=0.04). In addition, patients who had mutated KRAS tumors who received cetuximab had a significantly shorter PFS and OS than patients with mutated KRAS tumors who did not receive cetuximab (PFS: 8.1 months vs 12.5 months, respectively, p=0.003; OS: 17.2 months vs 24.9 months, respectively, p=0.03). For patients with wild-type tumors, no significant PFS differences were reported between groups. Overall, patients treated with cetuximab who had tumors with a mutated KRAS gene had significantly decreased PFS compared with cetuximab-treated patients with wild-type KRAS tumors or patients with mutated KRAS tumors in the CB group.

Karapetis et al (2008) analyzed tumor samples from 394 (69%) of 572 patients with CRC who were randomized to cetuximab plus best supportive care (n=287) or to best supportive care alone (n=285) for KRAS variants and assessed whether variant status was associated with survival. The patients had advanced CRC had failed chemotherapy and had no other standard anticancer therapy available. Of the tumors evaluated (198 from the cetuximab group, 196 from the best supportive care group), 41% and 42% had a KRAS variant, respectively, and these groups reported a median OS of 9.5 months and 4.8 months, respectively (HR for death, 0.55; 95% CI, 0.41 to 0.74; p<0.001) and a median PFS of 3.7 months and 1.9 months, respectively (HR for progression to death, 0.40; 95% CI, 0.30 to 0.54; p<0.001). For patients with mutated KRAS tumors, no significant differences were reported between those treated with cetuximab and best supportive care alone with respect to OS (HR=0.98, p=0.89) or PFS (HR=0.99, p=0.96).

Douillard et al (2010) reported on the results of a multicenter, phase 3 trial in which patients with no prior chemotherapy for metastatic CRC, ECOG Performance Status of 0 to 2, and available tissue for biomarker testing were randomized 1:1 to panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 or to FOLFOX4. The primary end point was PFS; OS was a secondary end point. Results were prospectively analyzed on an ITT basis by tumor KRAS status. KRAS results were available for 93% of the 1183 patients randomized. In the wild-type KRAS group, panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 significantly improved PFS compared with FOLFOX4 alone (median PFS, 9.6 months vs 8.0 months, respectively; HR=0.80; 95% CI, 0.66 to 0.97; p=0.02). A nonsignificant increase in OS was also observed for panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 vs FOLFOX4 (median OS, 23.9 months vs 19.7 months, respectively; HR=0.83; 95% CI, 0.67 to 1.02; p=0.072). In the mutant KRAS group, PFS was significantly reduced in the panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 arm compared with the FOLFOX4 arm (HR=1.29; 95% CI, 1.04 to 1.62; p=0.02), and median OS was 15.5 months vs 19.3 months, respectively (HR=1.24; 95% CI, 0.98 to 1.57; p=0.068). Adverse event rates were generally comparable across arms with the exception of toxicities known to be associated with anti-EGFR therapy.
The trial demonstrated that panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 was well-tolerated and significantly improved PFS in patients with wild-type KRAS tumors.

The CRYSTAL trial (2009) demonstrated that the addition of cetuximab to FOLFIRI statistically significantly reduced the risk of disease progression and increased the chance of response in patients with wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC compared with chemotherapy alone.

In an updated analysis of CRYSTAL, Van Cutsem et al (2011) reported on longer follow-up and more patients evaluable for tumor KRAS status and considered the clinical significance of the BRAF variant tumor status in the expanded population of patients with wild-type KRAS tumors.

Subsequent to the initial published analysis, which reported an OS cutoff of December 2007, and an associated overall median duration of follow-up of 29.7 months, additional tumor analysis allowed for the typing of another 523 tumors for KRAS variant status, representing an increase in the ascertainment rate from 45% of ITT population patients in the original analysis to 89% (540 to 1063) in the current analysis, with variants detected in 37% of tumors. The updated OS analysis was carried out with a new cutoff date of May 2009, giving an overall median duration of follow-up of 46 months. The addition of cetuximab to FOLFIRI in patients with wild-type KRAS disease resulted in significant improvements in OS (median, 23.5 months vs. 20.0 months; HR=0.796; p=0.009), PFS (median, 9.9 months vs 8.4 months; HR=0.696; p=0.001), and response rate (57.3% vs 39.7%; odds ratio [OR], 2.069; p<0.001) compared with FOLFIRI alone. Significant interactions between KRAS status and treatment effect were noted for all key efficacy end points. KRAS variant status was confirmed as a powerful predictive biomarker for the efficacy of cetuximab plus FOLFIRI. BRAF V600E variants were detected in 60 (6%) of 999 tumor samples evaluable for both BRAF and KRAS. In all but a single case, BRAF variants were identified in tumors wild-type for KRAS. The impact of BRAF tumor variant status in relation to the efficacy of cetuximab plus FOLFIRI was examined in the population of patients with wild-type KRAS disease (n=625). No evidence was reported for an independent treatment interaction by tumor BRAF variant status. The trialists concluded that BRAF variant status was not predictive of treatment effects of cetuximab plus FOLFIRI but that BRAF tumor variant was a strong indicator of poor prognosis for all efficacy end points compared with those whose tumors were wild-type.

Peeters et al (2010) reported on the results of a phase 3 study in which 1186 patients with metastatic CRC were randomized to panitumumab plus FOLFIRI or to FORFIRI alone as a second-line treatment. The trial end points were PFS and OS, which were independently tested and prospectively analyzed by KRAS status. KRAS status was available for 91% of patients: 597 (55%) had wild-type KRAS tumors and 486 (45%) had mutated KRAS tumors. In the wild-type KRAS subpopulation, when panitumumab was added to chemotherapy, a significant improvement in PFS was observed (HR=0.73; 95% CI, 0.59 to 0.90; p=0.004); median PFS was 5.9 months for panitumumab plus FOLFIRI and 3.9 months for FOLFIRI. A nonsignificant trend toward increased OS was observed; median OS for panitumumab plus FOLFIRI was 14.5 months while median OS for FOLFIRI alone was 12.5 months (HR=0.85, 95% CI, 0.70 to 1.04; p=0.12). Response rates improved with the addition of panitumumab to the FOLFIRI regimen. In patients
with mutated KRAS, no difference was reported in efficacy. Adverse events were comparable across arms. The trialists concluded that panitumumab plus FOLFIRI significantly improved PFS and was well-tolerated as second-line treatment in patients with wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC.

Maughan et al (2011) reported on the results of a phase 3, multicenter trial (MRC COIN trial), which randomized patients with advanced CRC who had not received previous chemotherapy to oxaliplatin plus fluoropyrimidine chemotherapy (arm A) or to the same combination plus cetuximab (arm B).

The comparison between arms A and B (for which the primary outcome was OS) was in patients with wild-type KRAS tumors. Baseline characteristics were well-balanced between groups. The analysis was by ITT and treatment allocation was not masked. A total of 1630 patients were randomized to treatment groups (815 to standard therapy, 815 to the addition of cetuximab). Tumor samples from 1316 (81%) of patients were used for somatic variant analyses; 43% had KRAS variants. In patients with wild-type KRAS tumors, OS did not differ between treatment groups (median survival, 17.9 months in the control group vs 17.0 months in the cetuximab group; HR=1.04; 95% CI, 0.87 to 1.23; p=0.67). BRAF variants were detected in 8% of patients; BRAF did not show any evidence of a benefit from the addition of cetuximab. Contrary to other trials that have studied the benefit of adding cetuximab to the regimen of wild-type KRAS patients, this trial did not show a benefit of adding cetuximab to oxaliplatin-based chemotherapy.

**Systematic Reviews**

The overall KRAS variant rate was 38% (829/2188 patients). Meta-analytic results were consistent with previous studies on the use of cetuximab and KRAS variant status, in that patients with tumors harboring mutant-type KRAS were more likely to have a worse response, PFS, and OS when treated with cetuximab than those with wild-type KRAS.

Dahabreh et al (2011) conducted a systematic review of RCTs that assessed the use of KRAS variant testing as a predictive biomarker for treatment of advanced CRC with cetuximab and panitumumab.

Reviewers concluded that, compared with patients who had wild-type KRAS, KRAS variants were consistently associated with reduced OS and PFS and increased treatment failure rates among patients with advanced CRC who are treated with anti-EGFR antibodies.

In a pooled analysis of wild-type KRAS tumors from the CRYSTAL and OPUS trials, Bokemeyer et al (2012) assessed extended survival data and enhancement in the ascertainment rate of KRAS and BRAF tumor variant status.

Pooled individual patient data from each trial were analyzed for OS, PFS, and best objective response rate (ORR) in patients evaluable for KRAS and BRAF variant status. In 845 patients with wild-type KRAS tumors, adding cetuximab to chemotherapy led to significant improvements in OS (HR=0.81; p=0.006), PFS
KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

Policy # 00233
Original Effective Date: 12/17/2008
Current Effective Date: 02/20/2019

(HR=0.66; p<0.001), and ORR (OR=2.16; p<0.001). BRAF variants were detected in 70 (8.8%) of 800 evaluable tumors. No significant differences were found in outcomes between treatment groups. However, the prognosis was worse in each treatment arm for patients with BRAF tumors, and OPUS trials confirmed the consistency of the benefit obtained from all efficacy end points from adding cetuximab to first-line chemotherapy in patients with wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC. It further suggested that BRAF variants do not appear to be predictive biomarkers in this setting, but are markers of poor prognosis.

Single-Arm Studies
In addition to the 3 randomized trials discussed, a number of single-arm studies have retrospectively evaluated KRAS variant status and treatment response in patients with metastatic CRC.

Overall they have shown similar nonresponse rates to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies (cetuximab, panitumumab) in patients with mutated KRAS tumors. Two of these single-arm studies have also reported differences in PFS and OS.

Section Summary: Clinically Valid
Evidence for the clinical validity of KRAS variants in predicting nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy consists of multiple systematic reviews, including a TEC Assessment, and RCTs. The evidence has demonstrated that the presence of a KRAS variant predicts nonresponse to treatment while KRAS wild-type status predicts response to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

Clinically Useful
A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

Direct Evidence
Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

No RCTs were identified on the clinical utility of KRAS variant testing to predict nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

Chain of Evidence
Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

A chain of evidence, based on clinical validity, supports the use of the anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab for the treatment of patients with wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC. Cetuximab and panitumumab are not indicated for the treatment of patients when KRAS variants are present or when KRAS variant status is unknown.

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Section Summary: Clinically Useful
Direct evidence for the clinical validity of KRAS variant testing includes RCTs. RCTs supporting Food and Drug Administration approvals for cetuximab and panitumumab have demonstrated that the presence of KRAS variants is predictive of nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy. Documentation of KRAS wild-type status is required before patients are eligible for treatment with cetuximab or panitumumab.

NRAS VARIANT Testing to Guide Treatment for Metastatic CRC

Clinical Context and Test Purpose
The purpose of NRAS variant testing in individuals with metastatic CRC is to determine NRAS variant status to guide treatment decisions with EGFR-targeted therapy with the monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: In individuals with metastatic CRC, does the use of NRAS variant testing improve health outcomes?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

Patients
The relevant population of interest includes individuals with metastatic CRC.

Interventions
The test being considered is NRAS variant testing.

Comparators
The following test strategy is currently being used: no NRAS variant testing to guide treatment.

Outcomes
The beneficial outcomes of interest include PFS and OS.

Timing
The time frame for outcomes measures varies from several months to several years.

Setting
Patients with metastatic CRC are actively managed by oncologists.

Technically Reliable
Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

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Clinically Valid
A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

Systematic Reviews
A systematic review by Therkildsen et al (2014) evaluated the predictive value of NRAS variants on clinical outcomes of anti-EGFR therapy in CRC.

The meta-analysis included data from 3 studies described below.

Reviewers suggested that the pooled analyses showed a trend toward a poor OR based on 17 events, but significant effects on PFS (HR=2.30; 95% CI, 1.30 to 4.07) and OS (HR=1.85; 95% CI, 1.23 to 2.78) among patients with wild-type KRAS. These results are limited by the small pool of variants, permitting no conclusions whether NRAS variants have an effect on anti-EGFR therapy.

Prospective-Retrospective Analyses of Randomized Controlled Trials
RCTs have analyzed nonconcurrent subgroups for the efficacy of EGFR inhibitors in patients with wild-type and mutated RAS genes in metastatic CRC.

Peeters et al (2015) reported on the influence of RAS variant status in a prospective-retrospective analysis of a randomized, multicenter phase 3 trial comparing panitumumab plus FOLFIRI with FOLFIRI alone as second-line therapy in patients with metastatic CRC.

If a tumor was classified as wild-type KRAS exon 2, extended RAS variant testing beyond KRAS exon 2 was performed (KRAS exons 3 and 4; NRAS exons 2, 3, and 4; BRAF exon 15). Primary end points were PFS and OS. RAS variants were obtained in 85% of the specimens from the original trial; 18% of wild-type KRAS exon 2 tumors harbored other RAS variants. Table 4 summarizes the PFS and OS HRs for panitumumab plus FOLFIRI vs FOLIRI alone. The HRs more strongly favored panitumumab in the wild-type RAS population.

Table 4. Hazard Ratios of Panitumumab Plus FOLFIRI vs FOLFIRI Alone Based on RAS Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RAS Status</th>
<th>PFS HR (95% CI)</th>
<th>p</th>
<th>OS HR (95% CI)</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Wild-type RAS</td>
<td>0.70 (0.54 to 0.91)</td>
<td>0.007</td>
<td>0.81 (0.63 to 1.03)</td>
<td>0.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Wild-type KRAS exon 2</td>
<td>0.73 (0.59 to 0.90)</td>
<td>0.004</td>
<td>0.85 (0.70 to 1.04)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CI: confidence interval; FOLFIRI: (folinic acid, 5-flourouracil, and irinotecan); HR: hazard ratio; OS: overall survival; PFS: progression-free survival.
For RAS wild-type patients, the ORR was 41% when patients were treated with panitumumab plus FOLFIRI vs 10% when treated with FOLFIRI alone. Therefore, RAS wild-type status predicted likely response to panitumumab and overall benefit from treatment. In contrast, the presence of RAS variants predicted nonresponse to panitumumab and unlikely benefit from treatment.

Van Cutsem et al (2015) reported on results of a prospective-retrospective extended RAS variant analysis of tumor samples from the randomized phase 3 CRYSTAL trial, which compared FOLFIRI with FOLFIRI plus cetuximab in wild-type KRAS exon 2 patients. Variant status was available in 430 (64.6%) of 666 patients from the trial. A pooled analysis of RAS variants, other than KRAS exon 2, found a lack of benefit from the addition of cetuximab to FOLFIRI for median PFS (7.4 months vs 7.5 months; p=0.47) and median OS (16.4 months vs 17.7 months; p=0.64). Patients with tumors without RAS variants experienced significant benefit in median PFS (9.9 months vs 8.4 months; p<0.05) and median OS (23.5 months vs 20 months; p<0.05) with the addition of cetuximab to chemotherapy.

Douillard et al (2013) performed a prospective-retrospective analysis of RAS variants (KRAS, NRAS) in tumor samples from patients enrolled in the Panitumumab Randomized Trial in Combination with Chemotherapy for Metastatic Colorectal Cancer to Determine Efficacy RCT. A total of 108 (17%) of 641 tumor specimens that did not harbor exon 2 KRAS variants had variants in other RAS exons, including NRAS (exons 2 or 4) and KRAS (exons 3 and 4). For patients with a wild-type KRAS exon 2 variant (n=656), OS was significantly better with panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 (n=325; median, 23.8 months) than with FOLFOX4 alone (n=331; median, 19.4 months; p=0.03). For patients with no KRAS exon 2 variant but with 1 type of RAS variant, median OS with panitumumab plus FOLFOX4 was shorter (n=51; median, 17.1 months) than with FOLFOX4 alone (n=57; median, 17.8 months; p=0.01). These data would suggest variants in a RAS gene exon other than KRAS exon 2 negatively affect anti-EGFR therapy. However, the investigators did not discriminate between specific types of RAS variants, so it is not possible to relate NRAS to these results. Furthermore, the numbers of patients involved were very small, further limiting conclusions.

Tumor specimens (288 of 320) from an RCT by Van Cutsem et al (2007). This 2013 analysis showed that NRAS had mutated in 14 (5%) of 282 samples with available data. Among patients with wild-type KRAS (codons 12, 13, and 61) and wild-type NRAS (n=138), treatment with panitumumab was associated with improved PFS (HR=0.39; 95% CI, 0.27 to 0.56; p<0.001) compared with best supportive care. Among those with wild-type KRAS but mutated NRAS (n=11), treatment with panitumumab was no longer associated with longer PFS (HR=1.94; 95% CI, 0.44 to 8.44; p=0.379). A treatment interaction analysis was suggestive but not significantly indicative of an interaction between the presence of mutated NRAS and poorer outcome (p=0.076). The authors suggested their data were consistent with the hypothesis that NRAS variants may limit the efficacy of anti-EGFR therapy. However,
because the prevalence of NRAS variants was low, the degree of predictive or prognostic value is more uncertain.

**Retrospective Cohort Studies**
A retrospective consortium analysis by De Roock et al (2010) reported on results of centrally performed high-throughput mass spectrometric variant profiling of CRC specimens gathered from 11 centers in 7 European countries.

Patients had been treated with panitumumab alone, cetuximab alone, or cetuximab plus chemotherapy. Among 747 of 773 samples with data, KRAS had mutated in 299 (40%), including codons 12, 13, 61, and 146. By contrast, NRAS variants were identified in 17 (2.6%) of 644 samples with data, primarily in codon 61. KRAS and NRAS variants were mutually exclusive. Among wild-type KRAS samples from patients treated with cetuximab plus chemotherapy, the NRAS variant was associated with an ORR of 7.7% (1/13) compared with 38% for the wild-type NRAS (p=0.013). However, there were no significant differences between NRAS mutant and wild-type genes in median PFS (14 weeks vs 26 weeks, p=0.055) or OS (38 weeks vs 50 weeks, p=0.051). Similar to results previously reported, the results of this analysis showed a very low prevalence of NRAS variants and were inconclusive as to whether NRAS variants are predictive of nonresponse to anti-EGFR therapy or are prognostic indicators of poor outcomes of CRC.

The rarity of NRAS variants reported in the studies discussed was also shown in a study by Irahara et al (2010) that used PCR and pyrosequencing (Qiagen) to assess tumor samples from individuals who developed CRC and were identified within the databases of 2 prospective cohort studies: the Nurses’ Health Study and the Health Professionals Follow-Up Study.

Among 225 CRC specimens, NRAS variants were identified in 5 (2.2%). Because of the low frequency of NRAS variants, they were not associated with any clinical or pathologic features or with patient survival.

**Section Summary: Clinically Valid**
Evidence for the clinical validity of NRAS variants in predicting nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy includes prospective-retrospective analyses of RCTs. Subgroup analyses of KRAS wild-type patients who did not respond to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy have suggested that NRAS variants are predictive of nonresponse. However, because of the low prevalence of NRAS variants, the predictive value of NRAS variants is uncertain.

**Clinically Useful**
A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.
Direct Evidence
Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

No RCTs were identified on the clinical utility of NRAS variant testing to predict nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

Chain of Evidence
Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.

Documentation of KRAS wild-type status is required prior to treatment with cetuximab or panitumumab.

A chain of evidence, based on clinical validity, supports the use of the anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab for the treatment of patients with wild-type NRAS metastatic CRC. Documentation of NRAS variant status is not required but has been recommended to identify patients who are predicted to be nonresponders to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

Section Summary: Clinically Useful
Direct evidence for the clinical utility of NRAS variant testing includes prospective-retrospective analyses of RCTs and retrospective cohort studies. NRAS variant testing has potential clinical utility in predicting nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy in patients with documented KRAS wild-type status. However, the direct evidence is limited for NRAS variant testing due to low prevalence NRAS variants in CRC.

b RAF VARIANT Testing to Guide Treatment for Metastatic CRC

Clinical Context and Test Purpose
The purpose of BRAF variant testing in individuals with metastatic CRC is to determine BRAF variant status to guide treatment.

The question addressed in this evidence review is: In individuals with metastatic CRC, does the use of BRAF variant testing improve health outcomes?

The following PICOTS were used to select literature to inform this review.

Patients
The relevant population of interest includes individuals with metastatic CRC who are found to be wild-type on KRAS and NRAS variant analysis.

Interventions
The test being considered is BRAF variant testing.
Comparators
The following test strategy is currently being used: no BRAF variant testing to guide management.

Outcomes
The beneficial outcomes of interest include PFS and OS.

Timing
The time frame for outcomes measures varies from several months to several years.

Setting
Patients with metastatic CRC are actively managed by oncologists.

Technically Reliable
Assessment of technical reliability focuses on specific tests and operators and requires review of unpublished and often proprietary information. Review of specific tests, operators, and unpublished data are outside the scope of this evidence review and alternative sources exist. This evidence review focuses on the clinical validity and clinical utility.

Clinically Valid
A test must detect the presence or absence of a condition, the risk of developing a condition in the future, or treatment response (beneficial or adverse).

Systematic Reviews
A meta-analysis by Pietrantonio et al (2015) identified 9 phase 3 trials that compared cetuximab or panitumumab with standard therapy or best supportive care.

The analysis included 463 patients with metastatic CRC and BRAF variants. The addition of an EGFR inhibitor did not improve PFS (HR=0.88; 95% CI, 0.67 to 1.14; p=0.33) or ORR (RR=1.31; 95% CI, 0.83 to 2.08; p=0.25) compared with the control arms.

A meta-analysis by Mao et al (2011) assessed BRAF variants and resistance to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies in patients with metastatic CRC.

Anti-EGFR therapy was given as first-line treatment in 1 study and as second-line or greater in the other 10. In 2 studies, the anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody was given as monotherapy, and in 9 studies, patients received various chemotherapies. Seven studies were performed in unselected patients (ie, unknown KRAS variant status) totaling 546 patients, for whom 520 were assessable for tumor response. In the unselected population, a BRAF variant was detected in 8.8% of patients, and the ORR for patients with mutant BRAF was 29.2% (14/48) and for wild-type BRAF was 33.5% (158/472; p=0.048). Four studies were performed in patients with wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC. BRAF variant status was performed on 376 wild-type KRAS tumors. BRAF variant was detected in 10.6% (n=40) of primary tumors. Among the 376 analyzed, all patients were assessable for tumor response. The ORR of patients with a mutant BRAF gene was 0% (0/40), whereas the ORR of patients with wild-type BRAF was 36.3% (122/336). Only 3 studies presented
data on PFS and OS and, therefore, pooled analysis was not performed. Reviewers concluded that, although the meta-analysis provided evidence that BRAF variants were associated with lack of response to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies in wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC, the number of studies and number of patients analyzed were relatively small and that large studies would be needed to confirm the meta-analytic results using homogenous metastatic CRC patients with assessors blinded to the clinical data.

Mao’s meta-analysis (2011) also assessed BRAF V600E variant and resistance to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies in patients with metastatic CRC.

The same 11 studies were selected. Seven included unselected patients, and 4 studies included only patients with wild-type KRAS. The primary end point was ORR. In the 7 studies with unselected patients, BRAF variant status was performed successfully on 546 metastatic CRC. BRAF variants were detected in 8.8% of primary tumors. The ORR of metastatic CRC patients with mutant BRAF was 29.2% and 33.5% in patients with wild-type BRAF. In the 4 studies that included patients with wild-type KRAS, BRAF variant status was performed successfully on 376 wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC. BRAF variants were detected in 10.6% of primary tumors. The ORR of patients with mutant BRAF genes was 0.0%, whereas it was 36.3% in patients with wild-type. Reviewers concluded that their results provided evidence that the BRAF variant is associated with lack of response in wild-type KRAS metastatic CRC treated with anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies.

Retrospective Studies

Di Nicolantonio et al (2008) retrospectively analyzed 113 patients with metastatic CRC who had received cetuximab or panitumumab.

A BRAF variant was found in 8.7% (n=45) of the tumors. Patients with a BRAF variant had a shorter median PFS and OS compared with wild-type BRAF tumors in both treatment arms. The authors concluded that a BRAF variant was a negative prognostic marker in patients with metastatic CRC and that this effect, unlike KRAS variants, was not restricted to the outcome of cetuximab treatment. In the CRYSTAL trial, Van Cutsem et al (2009) randomized 1198 patients with untreated metastatic CRC to FOLFIRI with or without cetuximab.

Analysis of BRAF variants in this patient population and the influence of BRAF variant status by Peeters et al (2014) showed that for the wild-type, KRAS- and BRAF-mutated patients, OS for cetuximab plus FOLFIRI was 14.1 months and 10.3 months with FOLFIRI (p=0.744).

Although this difference was not statistically significant, it suggested a trend toward improved OS, PFS, and response, and that wild-type KRAS- and BRAF-mutant patients might benefit from anti-EGFR therapy.

De Roock et al (2010) reported on the effects of 4 variants, including BRAF, on the efficacy of cetuximab and chemotherapy in chemotherapy-refractory metastatic CRC in 773 primary tumor samples.
Section Summary: Clinically Valid
Evidence for the clinical validity of BRAF variants in predicting nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy includes 2 meta-analyses of prospective and retrospective analyses of RCTs. Subgroup analyses of KRAS wild-type and NRAS wild-type patients who did not respond to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy suggested that BRAF variants might be predictive of nonresponse. However, because of the low prevalence of BRAF variants, the true predictive value of BRAF variants is unclear.

Clinically Useful
A test is clinically useful if the use of the results informs management decisions that improve the net health outcome of care. The net health outcome can be improved if patients receive correct therapy, or more effective therapy, or avoid unnecessary therapy, or avoid unnecessary testing.

Direct Evidence
Direct evidence of clinical utility is provided by studies that have compared health outcomes for patients managed with and without the test. Because these are intervention studies, the preferred evidence would be from RCTs.

No RCTs were identified on the clinical utility of BRAF variant testing to predict nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

Chain of Evidence
Indirect evidence on clinical utility rests on clinical validity. If the evidence is insufficient to demonstrate test performance, no inferences can be made about clinical utility.
A chain of evidence, based on clinical validity, cannot be constructed to support the use of the anti-EGFR monoclonal antibodies cetuximab and panitumumab for the treatment of patients with wild-type BRAF metastatic CRC.

Documentation of KRAS wild-type status is required prior to treatment with cetuximab or panitumumab. Documentation of BRAF variant status is not required but has been suggested to identify patients who are predicted to be nonresponders to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy.

**Section Summary: Clinically Useful**

Direct evidence for the clinical validity of BRAF variant testing includes meta-analyses of prospective and retrospective analyses of RCTs. BRAF variant testing has potential clinical utility in predicting nonresponse to anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy in patients with documented KRAS wild-type and NRAS wild-type status. However, the direct evidence is limited for BRAF variant testing due to the low prevalence BRAF variants in CRC.

**Summary of Evidence**

For individuals with metastatic CRC who receive KRAS variant testing to guide treatment, the evidence includes multiple systematic reviews including a TEC Assessment. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, change in disease status, medication use, resource utilization, and treatment-related morbidity. Variant testing of tumor tissue performed in prospective and retrospective analyses of RCTs has consistently shown that the presence of a KRAS variant predicts nonresponse to cetuximab and panitumumab, either as monotherapy or in combination with other treatment regimens and supports the use of KRAS variant analysis of tumor DNA before considering a treatment regimen. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals with metastatic CRC who receive NRAS variant testing to guide treatment, the evidence includes prospective-retrospective analyses of RCTs and retrospective cohort studies. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, change in disease status, medication use, resource utilization, and treatment-related morbidity. Pooled analyses have shown that NRAS variants (beyond the common KRAS exon 2 variants) predict nonresponse to cetuximab and panitumumab, and support the use of NRAS variant analysis of tumor DNA before considering a treatment regimen. In addition, there is strong support from the National Comprehensive Cancer Network and American Society of Clinical Oncology for NRAS and KRAS testing in patients with metastatic CRC. The evidence is sufficient to determine that the technology results in a meaningful improvement in the net health outcome.

For individuals with metastatic CRC who receive BRAF variant testing to guide treatment, the evidence includes 2 meta-analyses of prospective and retrospective analyses of RCTs. Relevant outcomes are overall survival, disease-specific survival, change in disease status, medication use, resource utilization, and treatment-related morbidity. The meta-analyses have shown that anti-EGFR monoclonal antibody therapy did not improve survival in patients with RAS wild-type or BRAF-mutated tumors; however, the individual studies have been small, and the results have been inconsistent. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.
KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Mutation Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

Policy # 00233
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Current Effective Date: 02/20/2019

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4. Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association Technology Evaluation Center (TEC). KRAS mutations and epidermal growth factor receptor inhibitor therapy in metastatic colorectal cancer. TEC Assessments 2006;Volume 23:Tab 6. PMID 1664. PMID 17470858

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KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

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38. Moroni M, Veronese S, Benvenuti S, et al. Gene copy number for epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) and clinical response related metastatic sites may be clinically relevant. Br J Cancer. Apr 26 2009;100(8):1164-1170. PMID 19253854


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KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

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**Policy History**

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KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

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Original Effective Date:  12/17/2008
Current Effective Date:  02/20/2019

02/21/2018  Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Title changed from “KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF Mutant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer” to “KRAS, NRAS, and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer”. BRAF variant analysis changed from investigational to eligible for coverage. Policy revised with updated genetic nomenclature.
02/07/2019  Medical Policy Committee review
02/20/2019  Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.
Next Scheduled Review Date:  02/2020

Coding

The five character codes included in the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Louisiana Medical Policy Coverage Guidelines are obtained from Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), copyright 2018 by the American Medical Association (AMA). CPT is developed by the AMA as a listing of descriptive terms and five character identifying codes and modifiers for reporting medical services and procedures performed by physician.

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CPT is a registered trademark of the American Medical Association.

Codes used to identify services associated with this policy may include (but may not be limited to) the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Type</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CPT</td>
<td>81210, 81275, 81276, 81311, 81403, 81404, 81445, 81450, 81455, 88363</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HCPCS</td>
<td>No codes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICD-10 Diagnosis</td>
<td>C18.0-C18.9  C19  C20  C21.0-C21.2  C21.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Investigational – A medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational if the effectiveness has not been clearly tested and it has not been incorporated into standard medical practice. Any determination we make that a medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational will be based on a consideration of the following:

A. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product can be lawfully marketed without approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and whether such approval has been granted at the time the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is sought to be furnished; or

B. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product requires further studies or clinical trials to determine its maximum tolerated dose, toxicity, safety, effectiveness, or effectiveness as compared with the standard means of treatment or diagnosis, must improve health outcomes, according to the consensus of opinion among experts as shown by reliable evidence, including:

1. Consultation with the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association technology assessment program (TEC) or other nonaffiliated technology evaluation center(s);
KRAS, NRAS and BRAF Variant Analysis in Metastatic Colorectal Cancer

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2. Credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community; or

3. Reference to federal regulations.

**Medically Necessary (or “Medical Necessity”) - Health care services, treatment, procedures, equipment, drugs, devices, items or supplies that a Provider, exercising prudent clinical judgment, would provide to a patient for the purpose of preventing, evaluating, diagnosing or treating an illness, injury, disease or its symptoms, and that are:

A. In accordance with nationally accepted standards of medical practice;
B. Clinically appropriate, in terms of type, frequency, extent, level of care, site and duration, and considered effective for the patient's illness, injury or disease; and
C. Not primarily for the personal comfort or convenience of the patient, physician or other health care provider, and not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of that patient's illness, injury or disease.

For these purposes, “nationally accepted standards of medical practice” means standards that are based on credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community, Physician Specialty Society recommendations and the views of Physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas and any other relevant factors.

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