



# Louisiana

## **Multibiomarker Disease Activity Blood Test for Rheumatoid Arthritis**

**Policy #** 00442

**Original Effective Date:** 08/20/2014

**Current Effective Date:** 10/12/2020

*Applies to all products administered or underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc. (collectively referred to as the "Company"), unless otherwise provided in the applicable contract. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically.*

### **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 the use of a multi-biomarker disease activity score for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) (e.g., Vectra<sup>®†</sup> score) in all situations to be **investigational**.\*

### **Background/Overview**

#### **Rheumatoid Arthritis**

RA is characterized by chronic joint inflammation leading to painful symptoms, progressive joint destruction, and loss of function. The disorder is relatively common and associated with a high burden of morbidity for affected patients.

#### **Treatment**

Treatment of RA has undergone a shift from symptom management to a more proactive strategy of minimizing disease activity and delaying disease progression. The goal of treatment is to reduce the irreversible joint damage that occurs from ongoing joint inflammation and synovitis by keeping disease activity as low as possible. The availability of an increasing number of effective disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs has made the achievement of remission, or sustained low disease activity, a feasible goal for a large proportion of patients with RA. This treatment strategy has been called a *tight control* approach.

The concept of tight control in the management of RA has gained wide acceptance. Evidence from clinical trials has demonstrated that outcomes are improved with a tight control strategy, in which treatment targets are mainly based on measures of disease activity. In a systematic review, Schoelset

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# Louisiana

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et al (2010) identified 7 studies that evaluated the efficacy of tight control. Four of these trials randomized patients to tight control using treatment targets or to routine management, two studies compared different treatment targets, and one study compared results from targeted treatment with historical controls. The treatment targets were heterogeneous, including symptom-based measures, joint scores on the exam, validated treatment activity measures, lab values, or combinations of these factors. In all 4 trials that randomized patients to tight control or routine management, there was a significant decrease in the Disease Activity Score (DAS) or its 28 joints version (DAS28) and in the likelihood of achieving remission for patients in the tight control group.

According to the American College of Rheumatology (ACR) guidelines, initial treatment of patients with RA is monotherapy (usually a disease-modifying antirheumatic drug). Treatment may progress to combination therapy if disease activity remains moderate or high despite monotherapy. Combination therapy may consist of additional disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs or the addition of tumor necrosis factors or non-tumor necrosis factors biologics.

### **Selection of Disease Activity Assessment Tools**

For a strategy of tight control to be successful, reliable and valid measurement of disease activity is necessary. Numerous measurements exist that assess various aspects of RA disease activity, including patient self-report of symptom severity and functional capacity, physician examination of joints for swelling and tenderness, laboratory testing of serum biomarkers, and imaging. Various assessment tools exist that range from those that rely only on single types of measurements, to composite tools that combine information from multiple measurement sources. These assessment tools vary in their psychometric properties and their feasibility of implementation and these trade-offs must be considered in their selection for use. For example, although composite tools are more comprehensive, in some cases they may be less feasible for regular use.

Based on a systematic review (2019) of the psychometric properties of 46 tools, an ACR working group determined that the following 11 measures of disease activity fulfilled a minimum standard for regular use in most clinical settings: Disease Activity Score (DAS), Routine Assessment of Patient Index Data 3 (RAPID3), Routine Assessment of Patient Index Data 5 (RAPID5), Clinical Disease Activity Index (CDAI), Disease Activity Score with 28 joints (DAS28-ESR/CRP), Patient Derived DAS28, Hospital Universitario La Princesa Index (HUPI), Multibiomarker Disease Activity Score (MBDA score, Vectra DA), Rheumatoid Arthritis Disease Activity Index (RADAI), Rheumatoid Arthritis Disease Activity Index 5 (RADAI-5), and the Simplified Disease

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Activity Index (SDAI). Additionally, using a modified Delphi process, the ACR working group further identified the following 5 measures as “preferred” for regular use in most clinic settings: the DAS28-ESR/CRP, CDAI, DSAI, RAPID3, and Patient Activity Scale-II.

### **Vectra Test**

The Vectra Test is a commercially available multibiomarker disease activity (MBDA) test that is an approach to measuring RA disease activity that uses only serum biomarkers obtained through a laboratory blood draw. The manufacturer describes Vectra as a complement to clinical judgment. Although not explicitly stated, it appears that the test may be used as an adjunct to other disease activity measures, to potentially identify patients at high-risk of progression who would, therefore, benefit from a more aggressive treatment strategy.

The Vectra test measures the serum concentrations of the following 12 biomarkers: Interleukin-6 (IL-6), Tumor Necrosis Factor Receptor Type I (TNFRI), Vascular Cell Adhesion Molecule 1 (VCAM-1), Epidermal Growth Factor (EGF), Vascular Endothelial Growth Factor A (VEGF-A), YKL-40, Matrix Metalloproteinase 1 (MMP-1), and Matrix Metalloproteinase 3 (MMP-3), C-reactive protein (CRP), Serum Amyloid A (SAA), Leptin, and Resistin. The concentrations of these 12 biomarkers are measured in serum and, combined with age, gender and adiposity (i.e., leptin) information, are entered in a proprietary formula to generate a score on a scale of 1 to 100 that represents the level of RA disease activity:

Categories of scores were constructed to correlate with the DAS28-CRP scale:

- 45-100: high disease activity
- 30-44: moderate disease activity
- 1-29: low disease activity.

Prior to December 2017, the Vectra test was originally referred to as Vectra DA and the original MBDA score did not include adiposity (i.e., leptin) adjustment. However, as the current, commercially available version of the test includes the leptin-adjusted MBDA score (now called the "adjusted MBDA score"), the focus of this policy will primarily be on the leptin-adjusted Vectra test.

In the ACR working group's systematic review reported by England et al (2019), they also graded feasibility of the RA disease activity measurement tools. Any measure not commercially available

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# Louisiana

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or requiring advanced imaging was graded as infeasible. All other measures started with 4 points (ie, “++++”) and were downgraded by 1-point for each of the following implementation considerations: requiring a provider joint count, requiring a laboratory test, not possible to complete during a routine clinic visit, not possible to complete on the same day as the clinic visit. The ACR Working Group downgraded the feasibility of the Vectra DA by 3 points (ie, score of “++++” decreased to “+”). This was due to its requirement of a laboratory test and because its result is not available on the same day as the clinic visit. Although the current, commercially available version of the Vectra test was not assessed in the 2019 ACR guideline, because it requires the same laboratory testing that is not available on the same days as the clinic visit, likely it would have a similar feasibility rating as the older version.

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. The Vectra<sup>®</sup>‡ test (Crescendo Bioscience) is available under the auspices of Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments. Laboratories that offer laboratory-developed tests must be licensed by Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments for high-complexity testing. To date, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration has chosen not to require any regulatory review of this test.

### **Rationale/Source**

Assessment of disease activity in rheumatoid arthritis is an important component of management with a goal of treatment to maintain low disease activity or achieve remission. There are a variety of instruments for measuring rheumatoid arthritis disease activity. The instruments use combinations of physical exam findings, radiologic results, and serum biomarkers to construct a disease activity score. A multibiomarker disease activity instrument is a disease activity measure that is comprised entirely of serum biomarkers. The Vectra test is a commercially available multibiomarker disease activity blood test that measures 12 biomarkers to construct a disease activity score. Concentrations of these 12 biomarkers are entered into a proprietary formula which, after adjustment by age, gender and adiposity (i.e., leptin) levels, generates a disease activity score ("adjusted MBDA score") that ranges from 1 (low disease activity) to 100 (high disease activity).

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# Louisiana

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Policy # 00442

Original Effective Date: 08/20/2014

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### Summary of Evidence

#### **Vectra test with adjusted MBDA score**

For individuals who have RA who receive the current commercially available Vectra test ("adjusted MBDA score") as an adjunct or as a replacement of other disease activity measures, the evidence includes 1 study that analyzed archived serum samples using combined data from an RCT and a cohort study. Relevant outcomes are test validity, other test performance measures, symptoms, change in disease status, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Analyses comparing Vectra with other previously validated disease activity measures such as the DAS28 or to radiographic progression, consisted mostly of correlations. However, the PPV's that individuals with Vectra moderate- to high-risk disease scores had radiographic progression were low, at 3.9% and 9.3%, respectively. Additionally, due to numerous relevance, design and conduct limitations of this study, the body of evidence on the Vectra test is insufficient to determine whether it is as good as or better than other disease activity measures. Additionally, there is no evidence evaluating Vectra as an adjunct to other disease activity measures. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

#### **Original Vectra DA test**

For individuals who have RA who receive the original Vectra DA test as an adjunct or as a replacement of other disease activity measures, the evidence includes analyses of archived serum samples from RCTs and prospective cohort studies. Relevant outcomes are test validity, other test performance measures, symptoms, change in disease status, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Analyses comparing Vectra DA with other previously validated disease activity measures such as the DAS28 or to radiographic progression, consisted mostly of correlations, with only 1 study providing sensitivity, specificity, and PPV and NPV. The PPV from this study was 21%. Other analyses of archived serum samples evaluated the use of Vectra DA to predict treatment response. Results from those analyses were inconsistent. The body of evidence on the Vectra DA test is insufficient to determine whether it is as good as or better than other disease activity measures. Additionally, there is no evidence evaluating Vectra DA as an adjunct to other disease activity measures. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

#### **Additional Information**

Not applicable

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# Louisiana

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## **Supplemental Information**

### **Practice Guidelines and Position Statements**

#### **American College of Rheumatology**

In its 2019 guidelines on the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, the American College of Rheumatology identified the following 11 measures of disease activity as fulfilling a minimum standard for regular use in most clinical settings: , Disease Activity Score (DAS), Routine Assessment of Patient Index Data 3 (RAPID3), Routine Assessment of Patient Index Data 5 (RAPID5), Clinical Disease Activity Index (CDAI), Disease Activity Score with 28 joints (DAS28-ESR/CRP), Patient Derived DAS28, Hospital Universitario La Princesa Index (HUPI), Multibiomarker Disease Activity Score (MBDA score, Vectra DA), Rheumatoid Arthritis Disease Activity Index (RADAI), Rheumatoid Arthritis Disease Activity Index 5 (RADAI-5), Simplified Disease Activity Index (SDAI). Although the original Vectra DA test is included in this list, the current commercially available version of the test that is now called Vectra and that includes the leptin-adjusted MBDA score (now called the "adjusted MBDA score") was not addressed in the 2019 ACR guideline. This is because evidence on Vectra with the adjusted MBDA score was published subsequent to the ACR review end date.

#### **European League Against Rheumatism**

In 2017, the European League Against Rheumatism updated its guidelines on the management of early arthritis. The League recommended that arthritis activity be assessed at 1- to 3-month intervals to determine target treatment. "Monitoring of disease activity should include tender and swollen joint counts, patient, and physician global assessments, erythrocyte sedimentation rate, and C reactive protein, usually by applying a composite measure." Composite measures recommended include the Disease Activity Score with 28 joints, Clinical Disease Activity Index, and Simplified Disease Activity Index. One item on the research agenda recommended by the League was to evaluate new biomarkers and multibiomarkers for the prognosis and treatment in early arthritis.

#### **National Institute for Health and Care Excellence**

In 2018, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence published guidance on the management of adult patients with rheumatoid arthritis. There is no discussion on the use of a multibiomarker disease activity blood test to monitor patients with rheumatoid arthritis.

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**U.S. Preventive Services Task Force Recommendations**

Not applicable.

**Medicare National Coverage**

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

**Ongoing and Unpublished Clinical Trials**

A currently ongoing trial that might influence this review is listed in Table 1.

**Table 1. Summary of Key Trials**

NCT No.	Trial Name	Planned Enrollment	Completion Date
<i>Ongoing</i>			
NCT03810144 <sup>a</sup>	Impact of Guided Care with the Vectra DA Multi-Biomarker Disease Activity (MBDA) Blood Test on Clinical Outcomes and Pharmaceutical Utilization in Patients with Rheumatoid Arthritis: a Prospective Randomized Study	440	Mar 2021
NCT03631225 <sup>a</sup>	Vectra InVolved Informed Decision Outcome Study (VIVID): A Prospective Randomized Controlled Trial Evaluating the Effect of Guided Care With Vectra Compared to Treatment as Usual in Patients With Rheumatoid Arthritis	1200	Oct 2021
NCT02832297 <sup>a</sup>	Prospective Outcomes Study: Vectra® DA Guided Care Compared to Usual Care	318	Aug 2022

NCT: national clinical trial.

<sup>a</sup> Denotes industry-sponsored or cosponsored trial.



# Louisiana

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Policy # 00442

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Current Effective Date: 10/12/2020

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# Louisiana

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# Louisiana

## Multibiomarker Disease Activity Blood Test for Rheumatoid Arthritis

Policy # 00442

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Current Effective Date: 10/12/2020

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### **Policy History**

Original Effective Date: 08/20/2014

Current Effective Date: 10/12/2020

- |            |  |
|------------|--|
| 08/07/2014 | Medical Policy Committee review  |
| 08/20/2014 | Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. New policy.            |
| 08/06/2015 | Medical Policy Committee review  |
| 08/19/2015 | Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage. |
| 09/08/2016 | Medical Policy Committee review  |
| 09/21/2016 | Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage. |
| 01/01/2017 | Coding update: Removing ICD-9 Diagnosis Codes                            |
| 09/07/2017 | Medical Policy Committee review  |
| 09/20/2017 | Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage. |
| 09/06/2018 | Medical Policy Committee review  |

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09/19/2018 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage. Title changed.

09/05/2019 Medical Policy Committee review

09/11/2019 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage.

09/03/2020 Medical Policy Committee review

09/09/2020 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. No change to coverage.

Next Scheduled Review Date: 09/2021

### **Coding**

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Code Type	Code
CPT	81490, 83520, 84999
HCPCS	No codes
ICD-10 Diagnosis	M05.0-M05.9, M06.00-M06.9, M08.00-M08.99, M12.00-M12.09 Codes added eff 10/1/2020: M05.7A, M05.8A, M06.0A, M06.8A, M08.0A, M08.2A, M08.4A, M08.9A

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- 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:
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