

PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY***Extraspinal Manual Therapy*****Utilization Management Policy # 81**

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What is extraspinal manual therapy for musculoskeletal disorders and what is known about it so far?

Manual therapy is a treatment that uses hands-on pressure to gently move your joints and tissues to correct any restrictions in your range of motion. Manual therapy has been shown to be effective treatment options for common spinal pain of musculoskeletal origin.

There is evidence that manual therapy of the extremity (extraspinal) joints appears to be helpful for treating certain conditions involving the upper and lower extremities.

How was extraspinal manipulative/mobilization therapy for musculoskeletal disorders evaluated?

A work group of clinicians was assigned to review the available research. The internet was searched for articles about manual therapy of the extremities and/or jaw for the treatment of a wide range of musculoskeletal disorders. The work group independently examined the selected research studies. A broadly accepted rating scale was used. Possible ratings were high, moderate, low, or critically low quality.

Before it was approved, the policy was presented to a series of committees that included independent health care practitioners.

What did the work group find?

Manual therapy may be helpful in the treatment musculoskeletal conditions involving the upper extremity (shoulder, elbow, wrist, and hand) and lower extremity (hip, knee, ankle, and foot). In particular, manual therapy may help with pain and your ability to do daily activities. At present, there is not enough evidence of benefit to recommend manual therapy for temporomandibular joint (TMJ) dysfunction or jaw pain. Research evidence does not support the use of extraspinal manual therapy for the treatment of spine-related disorders (neck and low back pain).

Further research can be expected to help better understand the role of manual therapy for the treatment of individuals with extremity and jaw disorders.

What were the limitations of the information?

The research supporting manual therapy of the extremities is based upon limited study. For the most part, manual therapy of the extremities has not been compared to commonly used medications. Additional research will help in more accurately defining the benefit from these services.

What are the conclusions?

Extraspinal manual therapy is considered to be proven and medically necessary when:

- The services are covered by your health plan; and
- Your health care provider has a diagnosed health condition/disorder for which extraspinal manual therapy techniques are clinically appropriate and not contraindicated; and
- Skilled care services are warranted

Extraspinal manual therapy is considered to be unproven and not medically necessary for the treatment of pain and dysfunction of the jaw (temporomandibular joint) and for spinal disorders (neck and low back pain).