



CIGNA MEDICAL COVERAGE POLICY

The following Coverage Policy applies to all plans administered by CIGNA Companies including plans administered by Great-West Healthcare, which is now a part of CIGNA.

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Coverage Policy Number 0352

Subject **Dry Hydrotherapy**

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Hyperlink to Related Coverage Policies

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- Massage Therapy
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- Physical Therapy

INSTRUCTIONS FOR USE

Coverage Policies are intended to provide guidance in interpreting certain **standard** CIGNA HealthCare benefit plans as well as benefit plans formerly administered by Great-West Healthcare. Please note, the terms of a participant's particular benefit plan document [Group Service Agreement (GSA), Evidence of Coverage, Certificate of Coverage, Summary Plan Description (SPD) or similar plan document] may differ significantly from the standard benefit plans upon which these Coverage Policies are based. For example, a participant's benefit plan document may contain a specific exclusion related to a topic addressed in a Coverage Policy. In the event of a conflict, a participant's benefit plan document **always supercedes** the information in the Coverage Policies. In the absence of a controlling federal or state coverage mandate, benefits are ultimately determined by the terms of the applicable benefit plan document. Coverage determinations in each specific instance require consideration of 1) the terms of the applicable group benefit plan document in effect on the date of service; 2) any applicable laws/regulations; 3) any relevant collateral source materials including Coverage Policies and; 4) the specific facts of the particular situation. Coverage Policies relate exclusively to the administration of health benefit plans. Coverage Policies are not recommendations for treatment and should never be used as treatment guidelines. Proprietary information of CIGNA. Copyright ©2009 CIGNA

Coverage Policy

CIGNA does not cover dry hydrotherapy/aquamassage/hydromassage, because it is considered experimental, investigational or unproven.

General Background

Dry hydrotherapy, also referred to as aquamassage, water massage or hydromassage, is a treatment that incorporates water with the intent of providing therapeutic massage. The water is contained in a bed or chair, and the patient is separated from the water by a waterproof barrier, such as a vinyl cover. Pumps or water jets circulate, pulsate and spray the water within the contained area. Streams of pulsating water are sent along the patient's body as the individual sits or lies on the device. The user remains fully clothed and dry during the treatment. The treatment is generally provided in chiropractor or physical therapy offices.

There are several dry hydrotherapy devices available that provide this treatment, including the following:

- Aqua Massage® (AMI Inc., Mystic, CT)
- AquaMED® (JTL Enterprises, Inc., Clearwater, FL)
- H₂O Massage System™ (H₂O Massage Systems, Winnipeg, MB, Canada)
- Hydrotherapy Tables (Sidmar Manufacturing, Inc., Princeton, MN)

According to some manufacturers, these devices have the ability to deliver the benefits of hydrotherapy, massage therapy, thermotherapy, soft tissue manipulation, and trigger point therapy. Manufacturing websites also claim that the treatments may provide the following benefits: increased blood circulation, increased flow of endorphins, decreased mean blood pressure, pain relief, stress relief, increased lymphatic and venous drainage, resolution of muscle guarding, and increased metabolism.

It is proposed that the advantages of this treatment include the fact that clients can experience benefits of massage without the therapist and can remain fully clothed. In addition, manufacturing websites assert that the tables provide effects similar to those of whirlpools and immersion water therapy and that the pressure of the water against the patient's body provides the massage. Some proponents of dry hydrotherapy maintain that it can be used in lieu of certain conventional physical medicine therapeutic modalities and procedures, such as heat packs, wet hydrotherapy, massage, and soft tissue manipulation. In addition to these recommendations that it can be used to replace multiple modalities, it has been proposed that this device be used over and above the normal treatment plan (e.g., for relaxation). The assertions that have been made by manufacturers of this device at their websites have not yet been proven.

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has classified the dry hydrotherapy device as a physical medicine device, Class I device: massager, therapeutic, electric. According to the FDA, a therapeutic massager is an electrically powered device intended for medical purposes, such as to relieve minor muscle aches and pains. These devices are exempt from the FDA-premarket notification procedure.

Literature Review

No published studies or information regarding dry hydrotherapy devices or dry hydrotherapy treatment were identified in the peer-reviewed scientific literature. There are no published studies comparing this treatment to therapeutic massage or other physical medicine treatments or modalities. In the absence of peer-reviewed literature demonstrating the effectiveness of dry hydrotherapy and in the absence of comparison to currently accepted treatment modalities, no definitive conclusions can be drawn regarding the clinical benefits of this treatment.

The Washington State Department of Labor and Industries has published a technology assessment for treatment provided with the AquaMED device. The report notes that, when compared with established technologies, there is no published research to support claims that dry hydrotherapy can replace multiple modalities or that it has any long-term benefit.

The AquaMED website contains information regarding an unpublished, uncontrolled, nonrandomized study that discusses the AquaMED therapy as a treatment modality for reducing pain and stress. The study involved 16 people, ages 23–80, divided into two groups: eight subjects were healthy individuals, while the other eight patients had been diagnosed with chronic pain syndrome (CPS). Both groups were treated with AquaMED. This article did not list further specific information regarding the nature, site, origin and history of pain. Six cardiovascular indices were assessed as indicators of stress: systolic and diastolic blood pressure; heart rate; stroke volume; cardiac output; and oxygen saturation. The parameters were evaluated before, halfway through, and at the end of the AquaMED therapy. Subjective evaluations, perceived pain levels, and relaxation levels were reported by the study participants. CPS patients and healthy volunteers showed a decrease in all indices, with the exception of mean heart rate for healthy subjects. Mean systolic and diastolic blood pressures, cardiac output, and stroke volume showed the largest decrease for both groups. The level of pain was reduced from a mean of 5.25 to 2.50 according to the Visual Analog Scale (VAS) in the patients with CPS. All patients with CPS and four of the healthy subjects indicated that they experienced marked relaxation. This unpublished report concluded that AquaMED was an effective treatment modality for alleviating psychological stress and physical pain, as well as for promoting wellness.

The Sidmar website contains information on an article regarding the influence of two back modalities (Sidmar Hydromassage Table and Back Machine) on cervical, thoracic and lumbosacral range of motion in 12 healthy, active females. Range-of-motion (ROM) measurements were assessed immediately before treatment and after 20 minutes of supine treatment using each modality. Increase in post-treatment ROM was noted as compared with pretreatment ROM during both modality treatment trials. The ROM increases following a single treatment with either modality were similar. No significant changes in ROM were noted during the control trial, which consisted of supine rest.

Summary

To date, no well-designed, randomized, controlled clinical trials have been identified comparing the use of dry hydrotherapy to well-established physical medicine modalities and procedures. The safety and effectiveness of this treatment cannot be determined. At this time, the role of dry hydrotherapy in the treatment of musculoskeletal conditions has not been established.

Coding/Billing Information

Note: This list of codes may not be all-inclusive.

Experimental/Investigational/Unproven/Not Covered:

CPT ^{®*} Codes	Description
97039 [†]	Unlisted modality (specify type and time if constant attendance)

ICD-9-CM Diagnosis Codes	Description
	All codes

[†]**Note:** Experimental, investigational or unproven and not covered when used to report hydrotherapy/aquamassage/hydromassage.

*Current Procedural Terminology (CPT[®]) ©2008 American Medical Association: Chicago, IL.

References

1. Aqua Massage [product description]. AMI Inc. Accessed April 3, 2009. Available at URL address: http://www.amiaqua.com/PR_overview.htm
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3. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). Centers for Devices and Radiological Health. Device listing database. Massager. Accessed April 3, 2009. Available at URL address: <http://www.accessdata.fda.gov/scripts/cdrh/cfdocs/cfCFR/CFRSearch.cfm?fr=890.5660>
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6. Silberstein N. Dry hydrotherapy: don't add water. Rehab Manag. 2006 Jun;19(5):22-3.
7. Washington State Department of Labor and Industries. AquaMED Technology Assessment. Undated. Accessed April 3, 2009. Available at URL address: <http://lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Files/OMD/AquaMedTA.pdf>

Policy History

<u>Pre-Merger Organizations</u>	<u>Last Review Date</u>	<u>Policy Number</u>	<u>Title</u>
CIGNA HealthCare	5/15/2007	0352	Dry Hydrotherapy

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