



Fluidized Therapy (Fluidotherapy)

Policy Number: 8.01.503
Origination: 10/2004

Last Review: 10/2014
Next Review: 10/2015

Policy

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Kansas City (Blue KC) will provide coverage for fluidized therapy when the criteria shown below are met.

When Policy Topic is covered

Use of fluidized therapy dry heat may be **medically necessary** as an alternative to other heat therapy modalities in the treatment of acute or sub-acute traumatic or non-traumatic musculoskeletal disorders of the extremities.

When Policy Topic is not covered

Fluidized therapy is contraindicated in patients with local sensory loss or open wounds.

Considerations

Fluidized therapy serves only as a temporary relief of pain. It is not a treatment used on a long term basis.

Fluidized therapy should not be confused with dry hydrotherapy or hydromassage which are forms of massage.

Description of Procedure or Service

Fluidized therapy (Fluidotherapy®) is a high intensity heat modality consisting of a dry whirlpool of finely divided solid particles suspended in a heated air stream, the mixture having the properties of a liquid.

Use of this therapy may include pain relief in arthritic conditions of small joints, joint mobilization following trauma / mobility, and analgesia / sedation in young patients undergoing exercise programs with painful and contracted joints due to sickle cell anemia.

Rationale

The effectiveness of a new heat modality, Fluidotherapy, was compared with other superficial heat modalities by in vivo temperature measurements. The joint capsule and muscle temperatures in the hands and feet were measured in subjects treated with hydrotherapy, paraffin wax, and Fluidotherapy. Fluidotherapy is a dry heat modality consisting of finely divided solids suspended in an air stream. The dry heat modality, applied at 118 degrees F (47.78 degrees C), resulted in maximum joint capsule and muscle temperature rises of 16.2 degrees F (9 degrees C) and 9.5 degrees F (5.27 degrees C), respectively, compared to 13.5 degrees F (7.5 degrees C) and 8.1 degrees F (4.5 degrees C) for paraffin wax treatment and 10.8 degrees F (6.0 degrees C) and 7.7 degrees F (4.3 degrees C) for a 102 degrees F (38.89 degrees C) water bath, at a depth of about 0.5 cm beneath the skin. At depths down to 1.2 cm, superficial heat modalities are more effective than diathermy and much more effective than ultrasound in elevating temperature.

Fluidotherapy uses air fluidized solid as a heat transfer medium in thermal therapy application coupled with massage and pressure fluctuation, used instead of water, paraffin or air. The fluidized bed behaved like a low viscosity fluid - patient could exercise freely as in the bath almost as freely as in water. It was found to be particularly useful for hand, arm and foot burns for functional training and desensitization.

Rehabilitation of burns was mostly provided during inpatient stay, except very complicated case(s), referral to Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital was rare.

References

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). Fluidized therapy dry heat for certain musculoskeletal disorders. Medicare Coverage Issues Manual Section 35-56. Baltimore, MD: CMS; 2002.
2. Herrick RT, Herrick S. Fluidotherapy. Clinical applications and techniques. Ala Med. 1992;61(12):20-25.
3. Borrell RM, Parker R, Henley EJ, et al. Comparison of in vivo temperatures produced by hydrotherapy, paraffin wax treatment, and Fluidotherapy. Phys Ther. 1980;60(10):1273-1276.
4. Borrell RM, Henley EJ, Ho P, et al. Fluidotherapy: Evaluation of a new heat modality. Arch Phys Med Rehab. 1977;58(2):69-71.
5. <http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/Fellows%20Reports/Law%20Henrietta%201996.pdf> . Accessed 7/12/2005.

Billing Coding/Physician Documentation Information

97022 Application of a modality to one or more areas; whirlpool

97039 Unlisted modality (specify type and time if constant attendance)

Fluidized therapy is considered a physical therapy modality. Only the professional charges for the provider will be considered for reimbursement.

Additional Policy Key Words

N/A

Policy Implementation/Update Information

10/1/04 New policy.
10/1/05 No policy statement changes.
10/1/06 No policy statement changes.
10/1/07 No policy statement changes.
10/1/08 No policy statement changes.
10/1/09 No policy statement changes.
10/1/10 No policy statement changes.
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