OVERVIEW
Beta-blockers can be classified into four pharmacologic subgroups based on their effect on beta and alpha receptors: cardioselective beta-blockers, nonselective beta-blockers, combined alpha-beta blockers, and beta-blockers with intrinsic sympathomimetic activity (ISA). Cardioselective beta-blockers are those agents that preferentially block beta-1 receptors over beta-2 receptors. Nonselective beta-blockers block both the beta-1 and beta-2 receptors. Based on mechanism of action, cardioselective beta-blockers may be safer than nonselective beta-blockers in patients with asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), peripheral arterial disease (PAD), and diabetes mellitus who require beta-blocker therapy. However, cardioselectivity appears to be dose-dependent and at higher doses, cardioselective agents may lose their selectivity. The dose at which cardioselectivity is lost varies from patient to patient. Combined alpha-beta blockers nonselectively block beta receptors as well as alpha receptors. Beta-blockers with ISA act as partial beta-receptor agonists and therefore, resting heart rate, cardiac output, and peripheral blood flow are not as reduced.

POLICY STATEMENT
A step therapy program has been developed to encourage the use of one generic Step 1 product prior to the use of a Step 2 product. If the step therapy rule is not met for a Step 2 agent at the point of service, coverage will be determined by the step therapy criteria below. All approvals are provided for 12 months in duration.

Automation: Patients with a history of one Step 1 drug within the 130-day look-back period are excluded from step therapy.

Step 1: generic beta-blockers (i.e., acebutolol, atenolol, betaxolol, bisoprolol, carvedilol, labetalol, metoprolol tartrate, nadolol, pindolol, propranolol, timolol, metoprolol succinate ER, propranolol ER) and generic beta-blocker/diuretic combinations (i.e., atenolol/chlorthalidone, bisoprolol/HCTZ, metoprolol/HCTZ, propranolol/HCTZ, nadolol/bendroflumethiazide).

Step 2: brand name beta-blockers (i.e., Bystolic, Sectral, Tenormin, Kerlone, Zebeta, Coreg, Coreg CR, Trandate, Lopressor, Toprol XL, Corgard, Levatol, Inderal LA, InnoPran XL, Inderal XL) and brand name beta-blocker combinations (i.e., Tenoretic, Ziac, Lopressor HCT, Corzide, Dutoprol, Byvalson).

CRITERIA
1. If a patient has tried one generic beta-blocker or generic beta-blocker combination product (Step 1), then approve a brand name beta-blocker or brand name beta-blocker combination product (Step 2).

References


Bystolic™ tablets [prescribing information]. St. Louis, MO: Forest Pharmaceuticals; January 2014.

Toprol-XL® tablets [prescribing information]. Wilmington, DE: AstraZeneca; May 2014.


Coreg CR® capsules [prescribing information]. Research Triangle Park, NC: GlaxoSmithKline; May 2014.


Sotylize™ oral solution [prescribing information]. Atlanta, GA: Arbor Pharmaceuticals and Whitby, ON, Canada: Patheon; October 2014.


**OTHER REFERENCES UTILIZED**


