Myringotomy with or without ventilation tubes (grommets) in adults and children aged 12 years and older

NHS Devon

Commissioning policy

Myringotomy with or without ventilation tubes (grommets) will only be funded if the following criteria are met:

Persistent otitis media with effusion (OME) – There has been a period of at least three months watchful waiting* from the date of diagnosis of OME (by GP/primary care referrer/audiologist/ENT surgeon) ***AND*** OME persists after three months ***AND*** the patient suffers from persistent bilateral OME with a hearing level in the better ear of 25 dBHL (averaged at 0.5, 1, 2, and 4 kHz) or worse, confirmed at three months†.

OR

To aid intratympanic administration of medicines

OR

Where middle ear ventilation is an essential feature of specialist investigation for, or management of:

- underlying malignancy
- acute or chronic otitis media with complications: facial palsy or intracranial infection e.g. meningitis

*During the watchful waiting period, advice on lifestyle modifications such as stopping smoking (and if appropriate advice on educational and behavioural strategies to minimise the effects of hearing loss) should be offered. The patient's hearing should be re-tested at the end of this time.

†Good practice point: ensure OME has not resolved once a date of surgery has been agreed, with tympanometry as a minimum

Rationale for the decision

There is an absence of RCTs assessing the efficacy of grommets in adults with OME; case series demonstrate improvements in hearing in adult patients with OME, which is broadly consistent with evidence in children under 12 years with OME and which may be expected considering the mechanism of action. Follow up is short and limited. RCT data support myringotomy for intratympanic administration of medicines for vertigo or as salvage therapy for sudden sensorineural hearing loss. There is insufficient evidence for routine commissioning of other indications.

This policy has been reached after considering guidance for grommets for glue ear in children published by NHS England in November 2018.

Guidance notes on exceptionality

Where the circumstances of treatment for an individual patient do not meet the criteria described above exceptional funding can be sought. Individual cases will be reviewed by the appropriate panel of the ICB upon receipt of a completed application from the patient's GP, consultant or clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

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