

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION POLICY

- POLICY:** Antivirals – Ribavirin (Oral Products) Prior Authorization Policy
- ribavirin tablets (generic)
 - ribavirin capsules (generic)
 - Rebetol® (ribavirin oral solution – Schering Plough; obsolete 07/31/2019)
 - Ribasphere® (ribavirin capsules – Kadmon, generic; obsolete 01/31/2020)

REVIEW DATE: 06/15/2022

OVERVIEW

Ribavirin is an antiviral agent with direct antiviral activity in tissue culture against many RNA viruses.¹ Ribavirin increases the mutation frequency in the genomes of several viruses and ribavirin triphosphate inhibits hepatitis C virus (HCV) polymerase in a biochemical reaction.

The products contained in this Prior Authorization policy are indicated for use **in combination with pegylated interferons or interferon for the treatment of chronic HCV** in adults and children with compensated disease. Ribavirin remains a component of some regimens for the management of HCV; however, there is no role for interferon (specifically non-pegylated interferon) in the management of HCV any longer.² The specific indications vary slightly among the oral ribavirin products:

- Ribavirin capsules are indicated in combination with PegIntron® (peginterferon alfa-2b injection) or Intron A® (interferon alfa-2b injection) for the treatment of chronic HCV in patients ≥ 3 years of age with compensated liver disease.^{1,6}
- Ribavirin tablets are indicated in combination with Pegasys® (peginterferon alfa-2a) for the treatment of patients ≥ 5 years of age with chronic HCV with compensated liver disease who have not previously been treated with interferon alfa.⁷

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, oral ribavirin has been used off-label to treat other systemic viral infections including, but not limited to, Lassa fever^{5,15}, Nipah virus¹³, West Nile virus¹⁴, and Crimean Congo hemorrhagic fever^{4,12}. In addition, oral ribavirin has a place in therapy for the management of respiratory syncytial virus in transplant recipients.³

POLICY STATEMENT

Prior Authorization is recommended for prescription benefit coverage of ribavirin. The intent of this Prior Authorization program is to ensure ribavirin is not used in the absence of pegylated interferon or a direct-acting antiviral for the treatment of hepatitis C virus (HCV). All approvals are provided for the duration noted below. Because of the specialized skills required for evaluation and diagnosis of patients being treated with ribavirin, as well as the monitoring required for adverse events and efficacy, approval requires ribavirin (for hepatitis C indications) to be prescribed by or in consultation with a physician who specializes in the condition being treated.

Automation: Automation is in place for the use of a pegylated interferon or a direct-acting antiviral for hepatitis C virus (HCV) in the past 130 days. This is used as a surrogate marker for HCV. If the criteria for prior use of a pegylated interferon or direct-acting antiviral for HCV are not met at the point-of-service, coverage will be determined by Prior Authorization criteria.

RECOMMENDED AUTHORIZATION CRITERIA

07/31/2019

© 2022. All Rights Reserved.

This document is confidential and proprietary. Unauthorized use and distribution are prohibited.

Coverage of ribavirin is recommended in those who meet one of the following criteria:

FDA-Approved Indication

1. **Hepatitis C Virus (HCV).** Approve for 1 year if the patient meets the following criteria (A and B)
 - A) Patient meets ONE of the following criteria (i or ii):
 - i. The medication is prescribed in combination with peginterferon alfa; **OR**
Note: Pegasys (pegylated interferon alfa-2a injection) is an example of a peginterferon alfa.
 - ii. The medication is prescribed in combination with a direct-acting antiviral for HCV; **AND**
Note: Examples of direct-acting antivirals for HCV are Epclusa (velpatasvir/sofosbuvir tablets), Sovaldi (sofosbuvir tablets/oral pellets), Harvoni (ledipasvir/sofosbuvir tablets/oral pellets), Viekira Pak (paritaprevir/ombitasvir/ritonavir tablets + dasabuvir tablets, co-packaged), Zepatier (elbasvir/grazoprevir tablets).
 - B) The medication is prescribed by or in consultation with a gastroenterologist, hepatologist, liver transplant physician, or infectious diseases physician.

Other Uses with Supportive Evidence

2. **Other Systemic Viral Infections, Excluding COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019).** Approve for 1 year.

CONDITIONS NOT RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL

Coverage of ribavirin is not recommended in the following situations:

1. **COVID-19 (Coronavirus Disease 2019).** Efficacy is not established.^{8,9} Ribavirin is not addressed as a treatment modality in guidelines from the Infectious Diseases Society of America or the National Institutes of Health.^{10,11}
2. Coverage is not recommended for circumstances not listed in the Recommended Authorization Criteria. Criteria will be updated as new published data are available.

REFERENCES

1. Rebetol® capsules and oral solution [prescribing information]. Whitehouse Station, NJ: Merck; March 2022.
2. American Association for the Study of Liver Diseases and the Infectious Diseases Society of America. Testing, managing, and treating hepatitis C. Updated October 5, 2021 . Available at: <http://www.hcvguidelines.org>. Accessed on June 13, 2022.
3. Shah JN and Chemaly RF. Management of RSV infection in adult recipients of hematopoietic stem cell transplantation. 2011;117:2755-2763.
4. Ergonul O, Keske S, Celdir MG, et al. Systematic review and meta-analysis of postexposure prophylaxis for Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever Virus among healthcare workers. *Emerg Infect Dis.* 2018;24(9):1642-1648.
5. Bausch DG, Hadi CM, Khan SH, Lertora JLL. Review of the literature and proposed guidelines for the use of oral ribavirin as postexposure prophylaxis for lassa fever. *Clin Infect Dis.* 2010;51(12):1435-1441.
6. Ribavirin capsules [prescribing information]. East Windsor, NJ: Aurobindo Pharma; May 2022.
7. Ribavirin tablets [prescribing information]. East Windsor, NJ: Aurobindo Pharma; February 2022.
8. Hung IF, Lung KC, Tso EY, et al. Triple combination of interferon beta-1b, lopinavir-ritonavir, and ribavirin in the treatment of patients admitted to hospital with COVID-19: an open-label, randomised, Phase 2 trial. *Lancet.* 2020;395(10238):1695-1704.
9. Elalfy H, Besheer T, El-Mesery A, et al. Effect of a combination of nitazoxanide, ribavirin, and ivermectin plus zinc supplement (MANS.NRIZ study) on the clearance of mild COVID-19. *J Med Virol.* 2021;93(5):3176-3183.
10. Bhimraj A, Morgan RL, Hirsch Shumaker A, et al. Infectious Diseases Society of America Guidelines on the treatment and management of patients with COVID-19. Available at: <https://www.idsociety.org/practice-guideline/covid-19-guideline-treatment-and-management/>. Accessed on June 10, 2022.

11. COVID-19 treatment guidelines panel. Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) treatment guidelines. National Institutes of Health. Available at <https://www.covid19treatmentguidelines.nih.gov/>. Accessed June 10, 2022.
12. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Crimean-Congo Hemorrhagic Fever. Treatment. Last reviewed: September 5, 2013. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/crimean-congo/treatment/index.html>. Accessed on June 13, 2022.
13. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Nipah Virus. Treatment. Last reviewed: October 6, 2020. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/nipah/treatment/index.html>. Accessed on: June 13, 2022.
14. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. West Nile Virus. Treatment and prevention. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/westnile/healthcareproviders/healthCareProviders-TreatmentPrevention.html>. Accessed on: June 13, 2022.
15. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Lassa fever. Treatment. Last reviewed: March 25, 2014. Available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/vhf/lassa/treatment/index.html>. Accessed on June 13, 2022.