

Molina Clinical Review

Robotically Assisted Surgery: Policy No. MCR-161

Last Approval: 4/5/2021
Next Review Due By: April 2022



DISCLAIMER

This Molina Clinical Review (MCR) is intended to facilitate the Utilization Management process. Policies are not a supplementation or recommendation for treatment; Providers are solely responsible for the diagnosis, treatment and clinical recommendations for the Member. It expresses Molina's determination as to whether certain services or supplies are medically necessary, experimental, investigational, or cosmetic for purposes of determining appropriateness of payment. The conclusion that a particular service or supply is medically necessary does not constitute a representation or warranty that this service or supply is covered (e.g., will be paid for by Molina) for a particular Member. The Member's benefit plan determines coverage – each benefit plan defines which services are covered, which are excluded, and which are subject to dollar caps or other limits. Members and their Providers will need to consult the Member's benefit plan to determine if there are any exclusion(s) or other benefit limitations applicable to this service or supply. If there is a discrepancy between this policy and a Member's plan of benefits, the benefits plan will govern. In addition, coverage may be mandated by applicable legal requirements of a State, the Federal government or CMS for Medicare and Medicaid Members. CMS's Coverage Database can be found on the CMS website. The coverage directive(s) and criteria from an existing National Coverage Determination (NCD) or Local Coverage Determination (LCD) will supersede the contents of this MCP and provide the directive for all Medicare members.¹ References included were accurate at the time of policy approval and publication.

OVERVIEW

Robotically assisted surgery is minimally invasive surgery performed remotely from a computerized workstation where the surgeon views the operative field through a specialized camera arrangement. The surgeon manipulates robotic arms to hold and position an endoscope to grasp, cut, dissect, cauterize, and suture tissue using hand controls and foot switches. Robotically assisted surgery is intended as an alternative to conventional laparoscopic surgical procedures to extend the capabilities of surgeons and address difficulties and morbidities associated with conventional laparoscopic technology.²⁻¹²

The proposed major advantages of robot-assisted over conventional laparoscopy are:²⁻¹²

- **Enhanced visualization:** D versus two-dimensional (2D) imaging of the operative field.
- **Mechanical improvements:** A fulcrum effect is created when rigid conventional instruments pass through the incision, leading to inversion of movement from the surgeon's hand to the working end of the instrument. Robotic instruments have seven degrees of freedom similar to the human arm and hand, while rigid conventional instruments have four degrees of freedom.
- **Stabilization of instruments within the surgical field:** Small movements by the surgeon are amplified (including errors or hand tremor) using conventional laparoscopy procedures.
- **Improved ergonomics for the operating surgeon:** The surgeon can be seated with telerobotic systems limiting pain, numbness or fatigue in their arms, wrists, or shoulders as compared to performing conventional laparoscopic procedures.

The limitations of robotic surgery may include:²⁻¹²

- Additional required surgical training for this technique
- Increased costs and operating room time
- Bulkiness of the devices
- Instrumentation limitations (e.g., lack of a robotic suction and irrigation device, size, cost)
- Lack of tactile feedback
- Risk of mechanical failure
- Limited number of energy sources (e.g., less than with conventional laparoscopy)
- Surgical limitations (not designed for abdominal surgery involving more than one quadrant; the device needs to be re-docked and repositioned to change quadrants)

Robotic surgical systems are approved by the FDA as a 510 (k), Class II devices. The da Vinci® Surgical System (Intuitive Surgical Inc.) has received FDA 510(k) premarket approval. Since its original approval in 1997, numerous modifications have been made to the system and its accessories, resulting in multiple subsequent 510(k) approvals.^{2,13}

COVERAGE POLICY

1. Robotically assisted surgery **may not be authorized** separately in adults and children for any indication because it is considered equivalent to but not superior to a standard minimally invasive surgical approach. Includes any type of robotically assisted surgery for indications such as: abdominal, bariatric, cardiac, general surgery, gynecological, gastrointestinal, orthopedic, otolaryngology, prostate, spinal, thoracic, and urology.¹⁴
2. When a surgical procedure is performed using robotic-assisted technique, additional professional or technical reimbursement will not be made for the robotic-assisted technique. Payment will be based on the reimbursement for the standard surgical procedure(s). Any additional charges for the robotic assisted surgery will be bundled into the standard surgical procedure because it is considered to be integral to the procedure and not a separate service.³⁵

Limitations and Exclusions

Robotically assisted surgery for any indication may not be authorized because it is considered equivalent to but not superior to a standard minimally invasive surgical approach.

DOCUMENTATION REQUIREMENTS. Molina Healthcare reserves the right to require that additional documentation be made available as part of its coverage determination; quality improvement; and fraud; waste and abuse prevention processes. Documentation required may include, but is not limited to, patient records, test results and credentials of the provider ordering or performing a drug or service. Molina Healthcare may deny reimbursement or take additional appropriate action if the documentation provided does not support the initial determination that the drugs or services were medically necessary, not investigational or experimental, and otherwise within the scope of benefits afforded to the member, and/or the documentation demonstrates a pattern of billing or other practice that is inappropriate or excessive.

SUMMARY OF MEDICAL EVIDENCE

There is insufficient evidence from large well-designed randomized-control or prospective cohort/comparison studies comparing robotically assisted procedures with conventional procedures. Weaknesses of the available studies include small sample size, lack of long-term follow-up, lack of randomization and lack of direct comparison of robotic-assisted procedures with conventional open procedures. In addition, comparison of results among studies was difficult due to differences in surgical procedures, types of robotic systems utilized, operative techniques, differences in patient characteristics, and differences in reporting of outcomes. Well-designed long term studies are needed to determine whether robotically assisted procedures are safer, more effective and provide greater benefits than conventional procedures.^{15-34,36}

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

None.

CODING & BILLING INFORMATION

CPT Codes – N/A

HCPCS Code

HCPCS	Description
S2900	Surgical techniques requiring use of robotic surgical system (list separately in addition to code for primary procedure)

CODING DISCLAIMER. Codes listed in this policy are for reference purposes only and may not be all-inclusive. Deleted codes and codes which are not effective at the time the service is rendered may not be eligible for reimbursement. Listing of a service or device code in this policy does not guarantee coverage. Coverage is determined by the benefit document. Molina adheres to Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®), a registered trademark of the American Medical Association (AMA). All CPT codes and descriptions are copyrighted by the AMA; this information is included for informational purposes only. Providers and facilities are expected to utilize industry standard coding practices for all submissions. When improper billing and coding is not followed, Molina has the right to reject/deny the claim and recover claim payment(s). Due to changing industry practices, Molina reserves the right to revise this policy as needed.

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APPROVAL HISTORY

4/5/2021	Policy reviewed, no changes to criteria, removed ICD-10 procedural classification system (PCS) codes.
3/8/2018, 6/19/2019, 4/23/2020	Policy reviewed, no changes to criteria.
12/16/2015, 6/15/2016, 9/19/2017	Policy reviewed, no changes to criteria.
4/2/2014	New policy.

REFERENCES

Government Agency

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Other Evidence Based Reviews and Publications

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APPENDIX

Reserved for State specific information (to be provided by the individual States, not Corporate). Information includes, but is not limited to, State contract language, Medicaid criteria and other mandated criteria.