Aetna considers radiofrequency (RF) thermoneurolysis (also known as RF ablation, RF neurolysis, RF thermoablation) experimental and investigational for the treatment of Ernest or Eagle's syndrome because the effectiveness of this procedure in treating this condition has not been established.

See CPB 0028 - Temporomandibular Disorders also (../1_99/0028.html) (noting that RF thermoneurolysis is considered experimental and investigational for treatment of TMD/TMJ syndrome).
Ernest or Eagle's syndrome, a problem similar to temporomandibular joint pain, involves the stylomandibular ligament, a structure that connects the styloid process at base of the skull with the hyoid bone. Symptoms of Ernest syndrome, in decreasing order of occurrence, are: temporomandibular joint and temporal pain, ear and mandibular pain, posterior tooth sensitivity, eye pain, and throat pain (especially when swallowing). Treatment of Ernest syndrome, which is successful about 80% of the time, includes a soft diet, use of an intra-oral splint, physiotherapy, medication and injections of local anesthetics at the insertion of the ligament.

There are anecdotal reports that radiofrequency thermoneurolysis is effective in treating symptoms of Ernest syndrome. However, these studies lack scientific rigor and the claims of effectiveness have not been validated in the peer-reviewed medical literature.

Surgical treatment of Eagle's syndrome includes styloidectomy (removal of the elongated portion of the styloid process). Mupparapu and Robinson (2005) stated that Eagle's syndrome refers to pain and discomfort in the cervico-facial region resulting specifically from the elongated styloid process. Surgical shortening may be the only treatment that will alleviate the patient's symptoms.

CPT Codes / HCPCS Codes / ICD-10 Codes

Information in the [brackets] below has been added for clarification purposes. Codes requiring a 7th character are represented by "+":

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Radiofrequency thermoneurolysis (also known as radiofrequency ablation, radiofrequency neurolysis, radiofrequency thermoablation):</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No specific code</td>
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<tr>
<td>Code</td>
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<td>64600</td>
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</table>

The above policy is based on the following references:


Amendment to
Aetna Clinical Policy Bulletin Number: 0400 Ernest or
Eagle's Syndrome (Stylomandibular Ligament Pain):
Treatment with Radiofrequency Thermoneurolysis

There are no amendments for Medicaid.