Commissioning Policy
Individual Funding Request

Cosmetic Contact Lenses
Individual Funding Requests Policy
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Cosmetic Contact Lenses

Policy Statement - Date of Issue: 19th April 2017

The provisions of cosmetic contact lenses are not routinely funded by the CCG.

General Principles

Funding approval will only be given in line with these general principles. Where patients are unable to meet these principles in addition to the specific treatment criteria set out in this policy, funding approval will not be given.

1. Funding approval must be secured by primary care prior to referring patients for assessment. Referring patients to secondary care without funding approval having been secured not only incurs significant costs in out-patient appointments for patients that may not qualify for surgery, but inappropriately raises the patient’s expectation of treatment.

2. On limited occasions, the CCG may approve funding for an assessment only in order to confirm or obtain evidence demonstrating whether a patient meets the criteria for funding. In such cases, patients should be made aware that the assessment does not mean that they will be provided with surgery and surgery will only be provided where it can be demonstrated that the patient meets the criteria to access treatment in this policy.

3. Where funding approval is given by the Individual Funding Panel, it will be available for a specified period of time, normally one year.

4. Funding approval will only be given where there is evidence that the treatment requested is effective and the patient has the potential to benefit from the proposed treatment. Where it is demonstrated that patients have previously been provided with the treatment with limited or diminishing benefit, funding approval is unlikely to be agreed.

Background

The CCG does not routinely commission treatments for cosmetic purposes.

Patients can be concerned with the cosmetic appearance of their eye either due to congenital deformity or acquired traumatic injury. Cosmetic or zero-powered or ‘plano cosmetic’ contact lenses (non-corrective contact lenses designed to change the colour or appearance of the eye) are effective for changing eye colour and appearance, and are also used in various therapeutic applications such as masking disfigured eyes; e.g. they can be used to mask the misaligned direction of the eyeball caused by exotropia or amblyopia or can also be used to mask conditions such as inoperable Cataracts, Coats disease or Heterochromia.
In addition, there has been a significant increase in wearing cosmetic contact lenses being worn purely for fashion purposes in recent years.

**Risks**

The increase in wearing cosmetic contact lenses for fashionable reasons and is leading to a rapid increase in patients developing significant eye conditions such as severe infectious keratitis (Singh S, 2012)

Zero-powered lenses can only be supplied by or under the supervision of a registered optometrist, suitably qualified dispensing optician or medical practitioner. Supervision requires the registered person to be present on the premises, aware of the procedure and in a position to intervene if necessary. The seller/supplier must also make arrangements for the wearer to receive aftercare. There is no legal requirement to give a patient a written specification after fitting with zero-powered lenses but the College of Optometrists and Association of British Dispensing Opticians have advised their members that it is in the patient's best interest to do so.

Appropriate handling, cleaning and disinfection techniques are essential and it is important to comply with the recommended wearing times and frequency of lens replacement.

There have been reported cases of serious corneal ulcers and infections associated with wear of plano cosmetic contact lenses. Corneal ulcers can progress rapidly, leading to internal ocular infection if left untreated. Uncontrolled infection can lead to corneal scarring and vision impairment.

In extreme cases, this condition can result in blindness and eye loss. Other risks associated with the use of these lenses include conjunctivitis (an infection of the eye), corneal swelling, allergic reactions, corneal abrasion from poor lens fit and a reduction in vision, resulting in interference with activities such as driving. (British Contact Lens Association)

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**Policy - Criteria to Access Treatment – INDIVIDUAL FUNDING REQUEST APPROVAL REQUIRED**

The provision of cosmetic or zero-powered or 'plano cosmetic' contact lens or lenses in order to manage concerns with the cosmetic appearance of an eyeball either due to congenital, acquired/traumatic reasons or fashionable concerns are **not** routinely commissioned.
Patients who are not eligible for treatment under this policy may be considered on an individual basis where their GP or consultant believes exceptional circumstances exist that warrant deviation from the rule of this policy.

Individual cases will be reviewed at the CCG’s Individual Funding Request Panel upon receipt of a completed application form from the patient’s GP, consultant or clinician. Applications cannot be considered from patients personally.

If you would like further copies of this policy or need it in another format, such as Braille or another language, please contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on 0800 073 0907 or 0117 947 4477.

This policy has been developed with the aid of the following references:

http://bcla.org.uk/Public/Consumer/Cosmetic_contact_lenses.aspx