OVERVIEW
Nasal valve collapse is a readily identifiable cause of nasal obstruction. Specifically, the internal nasal valve represents the narrowest portion of the nasal airway with the upper lateral nasal cartilages present as supporting structures. The placement of an absorbable implant to support the lateral nasal cartilages has been proposed as an alternative to more invasive grafting procedures in patients with severe nasal obstruction. The concept is that the implant may provide support to the lateral nasal wall prior to resorption and then stiffen the wall with scarring as it is resorbed.

MEDICAL CRITERIA
Not applicable

PRIOR AUTHORIZATION
Not applicable

POLICY STATEMENT
BlueCHIP for Medicare
The insertion of an absorbable lateral nasal implant for the treatment of symptomatic nasal valve collapse is considered not covered as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

Commercial Products
The insertion of an absorbable lateral nasal implant for the treatment of symptomatic nasal valve collapse is considered not medically necessary as the evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

COVERAGE
BlueCHIP for Medicare and Commercial
Benefits may vary between groups/contracts. Please refer to the Evidence of Coverage or Subscriber Agreement for applicable not medically necessary/not covered benefits/coverage.

BACKGROUND
Nasal valve collapse is a readily identifiable cause of nasal obstruction. Specifically, the internal nasal valve represents the narrowest portion of the nasal airway with the upper lateral nasal cartilages present as supporting structures. The external nasal valve is an area of potential dynamic collapse that is supported by the lower lateral cartilages. Damaged or weakened cartilage will further decrease airway capacity and increase airflow resistance and may be associated with symptoms of obstruction. Patients with nasal valve collapse may be treated with nonsurgical interventions in an attempt to increase the airway capacity but severe symptoms and anatomic distortion are treated with surgical cartilage graft procedures. The placement of an absorbable implant to support the lateral nasal cartilages has been proposed as an alternative to more invasive grafting procedures in patients with severe nasal obstruction. The concept is that the implant may provide support to the lateral nasal wall prior to resorption and then stiffen the wall with scarring as it is resorbed.

For individuals with symptomatic nasal obstruction due to internal nasal valve collapse who receive an absorbable lateral nasal valve implant, the evidence includes 2 nonrandomized prospective, single-cohort...
industry-sponsored studies. Relevant outcomes are symptoms, change in disease status, treatment-related morbidity, functional outcomes, and quality of life. Both studies are limited by the heterogeneity of the populations evaluated. Specifically, the types and rates of prior nasal procedures were not well described, nor was the clinical rationale for alternative or adjunctive procedural interventions. Overall, improvements in the Nasal Obstruction Symptom Evaluation score have been demonstrated in the study reports. However, a clinically significant difference may not be consistently apparent in small study populations. Some patients meeting the positive responder criteria still reported severe symptoms, and many patients reported some loss of improvement at 1 year. Data elements are missing or difficult to determine for important outcomes. As reported, adverse events appeared to be mild in severity and self-limiting, but still appeared common. Device retrievals are incompletely characterized. They occurred in 10% of patients in the primary cohort study, and it is not known, eg, whether a device retrieval occurred in a patient who had only a unilateral nasal implant. The need for device retrievals appears to occur early in the course of follow-up (1 month); suggesting technical experience limitations on the part of the operator or inappropriate patient selection. The duration of outcomes reporting is less than the duration of absorption of the device (18 months) and the purported completion of tissue remodeling phase (24 months). Randomized controlled trials with a sham control are feasible and should be performed. The evidence is insufficient to determine the effects of the technology on health outcomes.

CODING
BlueCHIP for Medicare and Commercial Products
The following code is not covered/not medically necessary:
C9749 Repair of nasal vestibular lateral wall stenosis with implant(s) implant placement

Note: Physician work for the nasal implant placement would be billed with the unlisted CPT code 30999 (Unlisted procedure, nose). While some providers may use CPT 30465 (Repair of nasal vestibular stenosis [eg, spreader grafting, lateral nasal wall reconstruction]) for this service; the unlisted code is most appropriate.

RELATED POLICIES
None

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REFERENCES:
This medical policy is made available to you for informational purposes only. It is not a guarantee of payment or a substitute for your medical judgment in the treatment of your patients. Benefits and eligibility are determined by the member's subscriber agreement or member certificate and/or the employer agreement, and those documents will supersede the provisions of this medical policy. For information on member-specific benefits, call the provider call center. If you provide services to a member which are determined to not be medically necessary (or in some cases medically necessary services which are non-covered benefits), you may not charge the member for the services unless you have informed the member and they have agreed in writing in advance to continue with the treatment at their own expense. Please refer to your participation agreement(s) for the applicable provisions. This policy is current at the time of publication; however, medical practices, technology, and knowledge are constantly changing. BCBSRI reserves the right to review and revise this policy for any reason and at any time, with or without notice. Blue Cross & Blue Shield of Rhode Island is an independent licensee of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association.