

## Ketamine/esketamine requests

Access to safe, effective treatment is an important part of an injured worker's recovery. WCB-Alberta's (WCB) approach to requests for ketamine/ esketamine (both on-label and off-label) reflects medical evidence, safety, efficacy, regulatory compliance and meets WCB policy requirements.

### Background

**Controlled substances:** Both ketamine and esketamine are Schedule 1 substances with a high potential for harm and abuse.

#### On-label use:

**Ketamine (Ketalar):** Approved for anesthetic use during procedures.

**Esketamine (SPRAVATO®):** Approved for treatment-resistant major depressive disorder (MDD) via nasal spray.

**Off-label use:** Ketamine has been explored for off-label uses, such as treatment resistant depression (TRD), posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and certain pain conditions.

### Requests for on-label esketamine (SPRAVATO®)

Only requests for SPRAVATO® as intranasal esketamine for the treatment of treatment-resistant depression will be considered. All prescribers/pharmacists of SPRAVATO® must be registered with the JANSSEN JOURNEY™ Program. WCB requires that SPRAVATO® is administered in compliance with the drug monograph.

### Coverage requests for off-label use of Ketamine

Only requests for IV ketamine for an initial trial will be considered.

### Coverage criteria for all requests

**Pre-approval is required for all requests.** WCB may arrange an independent specialist consultation to review the request.

**Completion** of the *Application for trial of ketamine*.

**Extension of treatment requests** require the completion of the *Ketamine-esketamine medication report*.

**Treatment plan:** A detailed treatment plan must be provided, including dose, duration, route and site of administration.

WCB requires compliance with all current regulatory requirements for the safe administration of (es)ketamine, with or without psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy.

Requested ketamine/esketamine must be the **sole new therapy**, (not with other new treatments such as rTMS) to ensure a response can be determined.

As ketamine/esketamine is considered **adjunctive therapy** for major depressive disorder, it will be added to other anti-depressants.

#### Required documentation:

- Informed consent.
- Instruction to not drive for 24 hours following the treatment.
- Compliance with required monitoring and reporting of outcome measures as defined by WCB is required.
- Baseline complete psychiatric and medical assessment with physical exam and current weight.
- In keeping with Alberta Health Services protocol for IV ketamine for treatment-resistant depression, appropriate baseline bloodwork and ECG are required.
- Documented confirmation of the absence of contraindications as below is required, with detail as appropriate.

#### Exclusion criteria

##### Absolute:

- Under the age of 18 years.
- History of primary psychotic disorder.
- Inability to provide informed consent.
- Pregnancy or breast feeding.
- Allergy to ketamine.

##### Relative:

- Hypersensitivity to ketamine or esketamine.
- History of substance use disorder.
- History of a medical condition that is unstable or is at

risk of becoming unstable due to an increase in blood pressure or intracranial pressure during treatment (such as uncontrolled hypertension, heart failure, coronary artery disease or previous heart attack or stroke, history of intracerebral hemorrhage, or aneurysmal vascular disease).

## Diagnosis specific requirements

1. **Treatment-resistant depression (TRD)** – We may consider requests from the treating psychiatrist with the following requirements:
  - Major depressive disorder (MDD), per DSM-5-TR criteria, in which the current episode of depression has failed treatment with at least two antidepressants of adequate dose and duration, or four trials in cases of failure to tolerate the medication AND
  - one trial with an adjunctive agent or other neuro-modulation therapies, where MDD has been accepted as resulting from the work-related injury, disease or treatment AND

**Trial period for treatment-resistant depression:** Initial approval may be given for a trial of six administrations of IV ketamine or four weeks of induction SPRAVATO® as adjunctive therapy, with further approval pending documented benefit as determined by WCB and beneficial effect on recovery and progress to return to work (RTW).

2. **Other compensable diagnoses** – an appropriate trial period of up to three months may be considered. Documentation of prior treatments will be required.

### References

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