

Select Drugs for the Treatment of Dementia of Alzheimer's Disease

Policy # 00824

Original Effective Date: 01/09/2023

Current Effective Date: 01/01/2026

Applies to all products administered or underwritten by Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc. (collectively referred to as the "Company"), unless otherwise provided in the applicable contract. Medical technology is constantly evolving, and we reserve the right to review and update Medical Policy periodically.

Note: Monoclonal Antibodies for the Treatment of Alzheimer's Disease are addressed separately in medical policy 00754.

When Services May Be Eligible for Coverage

Coverage for eligible medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products may be provided only if:

- *Benefits are available in the member's contract/certificate, and*
- *Medical necessity criteria and guidelines are met.*

Based on review of available data, the Company may consider Adlarity^{®†} (donepezil patch) or Zunveyl^{®†} (benzgalantamine) to be **eligible for coverage**** when the below patient selection criteria are met.

Patient Selection Criteria

Coverage eligibility for Adlarity or Zunveyl will be considered when the following criteria are met:

- For **Adlarity** requests:
 - Patient has a diagnosis of mild, moderate, or severe dementia of the Alzheimer's type; AND
 - Patient has tried and failed (e.g., intolerance or inadequate response) at least TWO alternative agents for the treatment of mild, moderate, and severe dementia. Examples of alternative agents include donepezil tablets, donepezil ODT, rivastigmine (patch or capsule), and memantine unless there is clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the use of at least TWO alternative agents will be ineffective or cause an adverse reaction to the patient.
*(Note: This specific patient selection criterion is an additional Company requirement for coverage eligibility and will be denied as not medically necessary** if not met.)*
- For **Zunveyl** requests:
 - Patient has a diagnosis of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type; AND
 - Patient has tried and failed (e.g., intolerance or inadequate response) generic donepezil or rivastigmine unless there is clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the use of generic donepezil or rivastigmine will be ineffective or cause an adverse reaction to the patient; AND
*(Note: This specific patient selection criterion is an additional Company requirement for coverage eligibility and will be denied as not medically necessary** if not met.)*

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- Patient has tried and failed (e.g., intolerance or inadequate response) generic galantamine or galantamine er unless there is clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the use of generic galantamine or galantamine er will be ineffective or cause an adverse reaction to the patient.

*(Note: This specific patient selection criterion is an additional Company requirement for coverage eligibility and will be denied as not medically necessary** if not met.)*

When Services Are Considered Not Medically Necessary

Based on review of available data, the Company considers the use of Adlarity (donepezil patch) when the patient has not tried and failed at least TWO alternative agents for the treatment of dementia to be **not medically necessary.****

Based on review of available data, the Company considers the use of Zunveyl (benzgalantamine) when the patient has not tried and failed the pre-requisite medications listed in the patient selection criteria to be **not medically necessary.****

When Services Are Considered Investigational

Coverage is not available for investigational medical treatments or procedures, drugs, devices or biological products.

Based on review of available data, the Company considers the use of Adlarity (donepezil patch) for any indication other than the treatment of mild, moderate, and severe dementia of the Alzheimer's type to be **investigational.***

Based on review of available data, the Company considers the use of Zunveyl (benzgalantamine) for any indication other than the treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type to be **investigational.***

Background/Overview

Adlarity is a transdermal patch indicated for the treatment of mild, moderate, and severe dementia of the Alzheimer's type. It is supplied as 5 mg and 10 mg patches with the initial dose being 5 mg per day and dose increases to 10 mg/day permitted after 4 to 6 weeks. Each patch should be worn for 7 days. For patients switching from an oral donepezil product, the dose should be kept the same as the daily oral dose. Adlarity was approved based on bioavailability studies comparing it to oral donepezil. Thus, the generically available products likely provide equally efficacious and more cost-effective treatment options for patients with dementia.

Zunveyl, a prodrug of galantamine, is a cholinesterase inhibitor indicated for the treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type in adults. It is available as delayed release tablets in strengths of 5 mg, 10 mg, and 15 mg. The recommended starting dosage is 5 mg twice a day (10 mg/day) by mouth. Increase to initial maintenance dosage of 10 mg twice daily (20 mg/day) after a minimum of 4 weeks, based on clinical response and tolerability. Dosage may be increased to the

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maximum recommended dosage of 15 mg twice a day (30 mg/day) after a minimum of 4 weeks at 10 mg twice daily. Zunveyl was approved based on bioavailability studies comparing it to galantamine immediate-release tablets and galantamine extended-release capsules. Thus, the generically available products likely provide equally efficacious and more cost-effective treatment options for patients with dementia.

FDA or Other Governmental Regulatory Approval

U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA)

Adlarity is approved for the treatment of mild, moderate, and severe dementia of the Alzheimer's type.

Zunveyl is approved for the treatment of mild to moderate dementia of the Alzheimer's type in adults.

Rationale/Source

This medical policy was developed through consideration of peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community, U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval status, nationally accepted standards of medical practice and accepted standards of medical practice in this community, technology evaluation centers, reference to regulations, other plan medical policies, and accredited national guidelines.

The efficacy of Adlarity was determined based on a relative bioavailability study in healthy subjects comparing Adlarity transdermal system to Aricept^{®†} (donepezil) tablets. Since these different dosage forms of donepezil have not been compared for efficacy, no statements of superiority can be made. Patient selection criteria presented in this policy take into account clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the patient cannot tolerate the alternative formulations of donepezil and other agents for the treatment of dementia. Based on review of available data, in the absence of this caveat, there is no advantage of using Adlarity over the available generic formulations of donepezil or other agents to treat dementia.

The efficacy of Zunveyl is based upon 3 bioavailability studies in healthy adults comparing galantamine immediate-release tablets and galantamine extended-release capsules to Zunveyl. Since these different dosage forms of galantamine have not been compared for efficacy, no statements of superiority can be made. Patient selection criteria presented in this policy take into account clinical evidence or patient history that suggests the patient cannot tolerate the alternative formulations of galantamine and other agents for the treatment of dementia. Based on review of available data, in the absence of this caveat, there is no advantage of using Zunveyl over the available generic formulations of galantamine or other agents to treat dementia.

References

1. Adlarity [package insert]. Corium, Inc. Grand Rapids, MI. Updated September 2022.
2. Zunveyl [package insert]. Alpha Cognition, Inc. Grapvine, TX. Update July 2024.

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12/01/2022 Medical Policy Committee review

12/14/2022 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. New policy.

12/07/2023 Medical Policy Committee review

12/13/2023 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.

12/05/2024 Medical Policy Committee review

12/11/2024 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Coverage eligibility unchanged.

12/04/2025 Medical Policy Committee review

12/10/2025 Medical Policy Implementation Committee approval. Added new drug, Zunveyl, to the policy with relevant criteria and background information. Title changed from "Adlarity (donepezil patch)" to "Select Drugs for the Treatment of Dementia of Alzheimer's Disease".

Next Scheduled Review Date: 12/2026

*Investigational – A medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational if the effectiveness has not been clearly tested and it has not been incorporated into standard medical practice. Any determination we make that a medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is Investigational will be based on a consideration of the following:

- A. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product can be lawfully marketed without approval of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and whether such approval has been granted at the time the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product is sought to be furnished; or
- B. Whether the medical treatment, procedure, drug, device, or biological product requires further studies or clinical trials to determine its maximum tolerated dose, toxicity, safety, effectiveness, or effectiveness as compared with the standard means of treatment or diagnosis, must improve health outcomes, according to the consensus of opinion among experts as shown by reliable evidence, including:
 1. Consultation with technology evaluation center(s);
 2. Credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community; or
 3. Reference to federal regulations.

**Medically Necessary (or "Medical Necessity") - Health care services, treatment, procedures, equipment, drugs, devices, items or supplies that a Provider, exercising prudent clinical judgment, would provide to a patient for the purpose of preventing, evaluating, diagnosing or treating an illness, injury, disease or its symptoms, and that are:

- A. In accordance with nationally accepted standards of medical practice;
- B. Clinically appropriate, in terms of type, frequency, extent, level of care, site and duration, and considered effective for the patient's illness, injury or disease; and

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- C. Not primarily for the personal comfort or convenience of the patient, physician or other health care provider, and not more costly than an alternative service or sequence of services at least as likely to produce equivalent therapeutic or diagnostic results as to the diagnosis or treatment of that patient's illness, injury or disease.

For these purposes, “nationally accepted standards of medical practice” means standards that are based on credible scientific evidence published in peer-reviewed medical literature generally recognized by the relevant medical community, Physician Specialty Society recommendations and the views of Physicians practicing in relevant clinical areas and any other relevant factors.

‡ Indicated trademarks are the registered trademarks of their respective owners.

NOTICE: If the Patient's health insurance contract contains language that differs from the BCBSLA Medical Policy definition noted above, the definition in the health insurance contract will be relied upon for specific coverage determinations.

NOTICE: Medical Policies are scientific based opinions, provided solely for coverage and informational purposes. Medical Policies should not be construed to suggest that the Company recommends, advocates, requires, encourages, or discourages any particular treatment, procedure, or service, or any particular course of treatment, procedure, or service.

NOTICE: Federal and State law, as well as contract language, including definitions and specific contract provisions/exclusions, take precedence over Medical Policy and must be considered first in determining eligibility for coverage.