

US Insurance Coverage of Lymphatic Microsurgical Preventing Healing Approach (LYMPHA)



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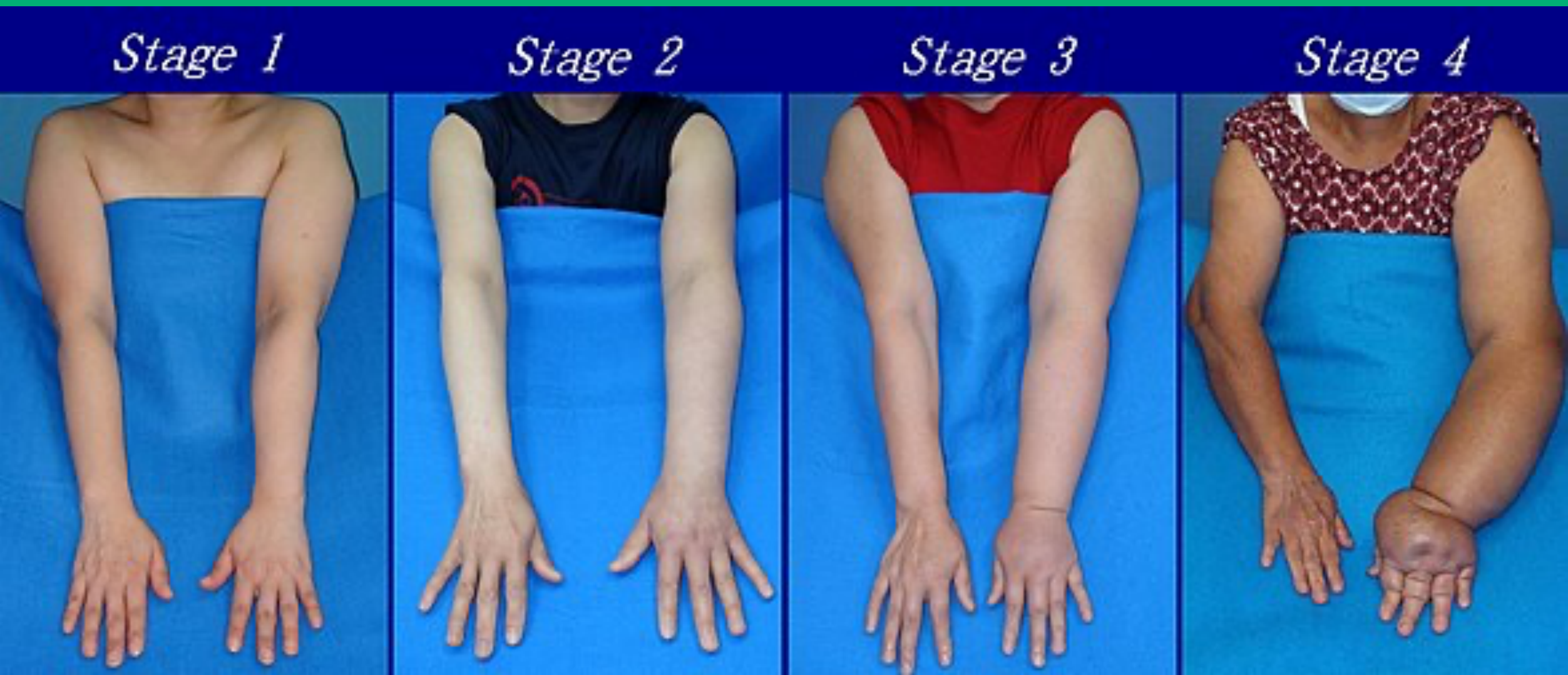
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Background

- Breast-cancer-related lymphedema (BCRL) is a chronic, debilitating condition associated with patients who have undergone axillary lymph node dissection (ALND) at the time of mastectomy. ¹
- Lymphatic Microsurgical Healing Approach (LYMPHA), a prophylactic microsurgical lymphovenous bypass technique, has been developed to prevent BCRL with promising results. ^{2,3}
- LYMPHA is not included as part of the Women’s Health and Cancer Rights Act (WHCRA) legislation.
- Insurance coverage for LYMPHA is more than often denied.

Figure 1. Stages of Breast-Cancer-Related Lymphedema ⁴



Objectives

- To investigate current coverage policies for LYMPHA among the top insurance providers in the United States.

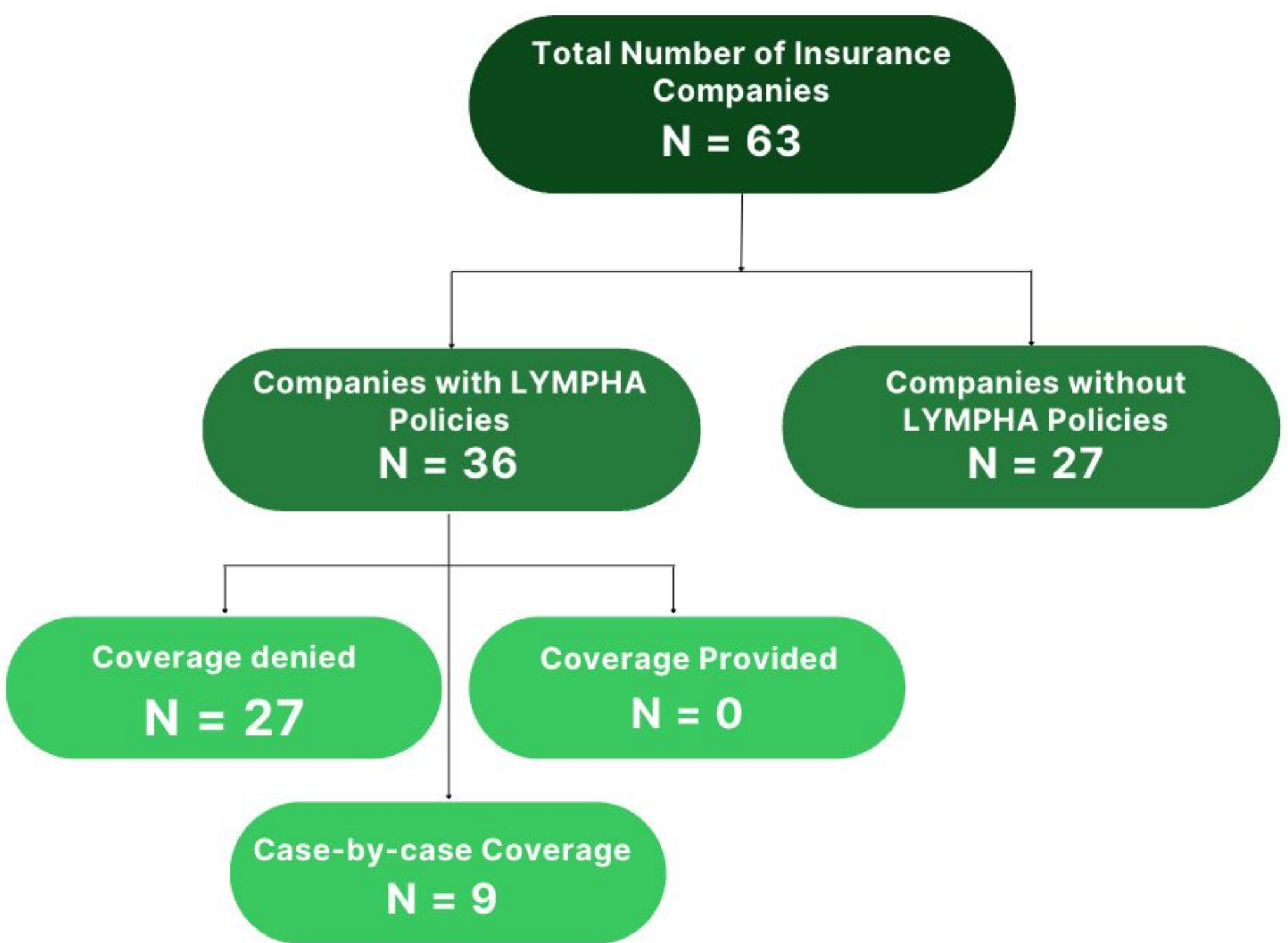
Methods

- Fifty American insurers with the largest market shares were identified.
- The 50 companies were cross-references companies with greatest enrollment per state.
- Coverage status, coverage criteria, and exclusion rationale were determined for each insurer via a web-based search or phone call for publicly available LYMPHA policies.

Results

- Of the 63 insurance companies queried, **42.9% deny coverage for LYMPHA and 42.9% do not have policies.**

Figure 2. Flow Diagram of LYMPHA Insurance Policies



Results cont.

- In 21 of the coverage denials, LYMPHA was considered as one of the following:
 - investigational
 - not medically necessary
 - not standard practice
 - to have insufficient published evidence

Table 1. Insurance Companies by Presence of Policy

Coverage denied	No Policy / Case-by-case	
Anthem	Aflac	Neighborhood Health Plan of
BCBS Alabama	Avera Health Plans	Rhode Island
BCBS Arkansas	BCBS Massachusetts	Presbyterian Health Plan
BCBS California	BCBS Vermont	Spectrum Health
BCBS Florida	Boston Medical Center Health	UCare
BCBS Idaho	Cambia Health Solutions	UPMC Health System
BCBS Louisiana	Carefirst Inc	BCBS Kansas
BCBS Michigan	Emblem Health	BCBS Wyoming
BCBS Minnesota	Geisinger Insurance	Caresource
BCBS New Jersey	Harris Health	Centene
BCBS North Carolina	HealthPlan Holdings	Common Ground Healthcare
BCBS North Dakota	Health First	Hawaii Medical Service
BCBS Tennessee	Health Partners	Humana
Cigna	Independence Blue Cross	Maine Community Health Options
CVS Aetna	Independence Health	United Healthcare
Guidewell Mutual Holding	Lifetime Healthcare	
Health Care Services Corporation	McLaren Health	
Highmark	Medica	
Kaiser Foundation	Medical Card System	
Louisiana Health Service	Mulberry Health Group	
Medical Mutual of Ohio	Mutual of Omaha	
Molina Healthcare	MVP Group	
Premera Blue Cross		
Providence Health		
Tufts		
Wellmark		

BCBS: Blue Cross Blue Shield
UPMC: University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Conclusion

- LYMPHA significantly decreases the rates of BCRL following mastectomy and ALND.
- Over half of the major insurance providers in the United States currently deny coverage for LYMPHA or do not have coverage policies.
- Low coverage rates and paucity in concrete data submitted to insurance may contribute to the prevalence and undertreatment of BCRL.
- Focus should be shifted towards sharing high level evidence (randomized trials) at the legislative level to increase insurance coverage for BCRL prevention.

References

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