EARLY EXPERIENCE IN SEEKING INSURANCE COVERAGE FOR ENDOSCOPIC SLEEVE GASTROPLASTY AND TRANSORAL OUTLET REDUCTION

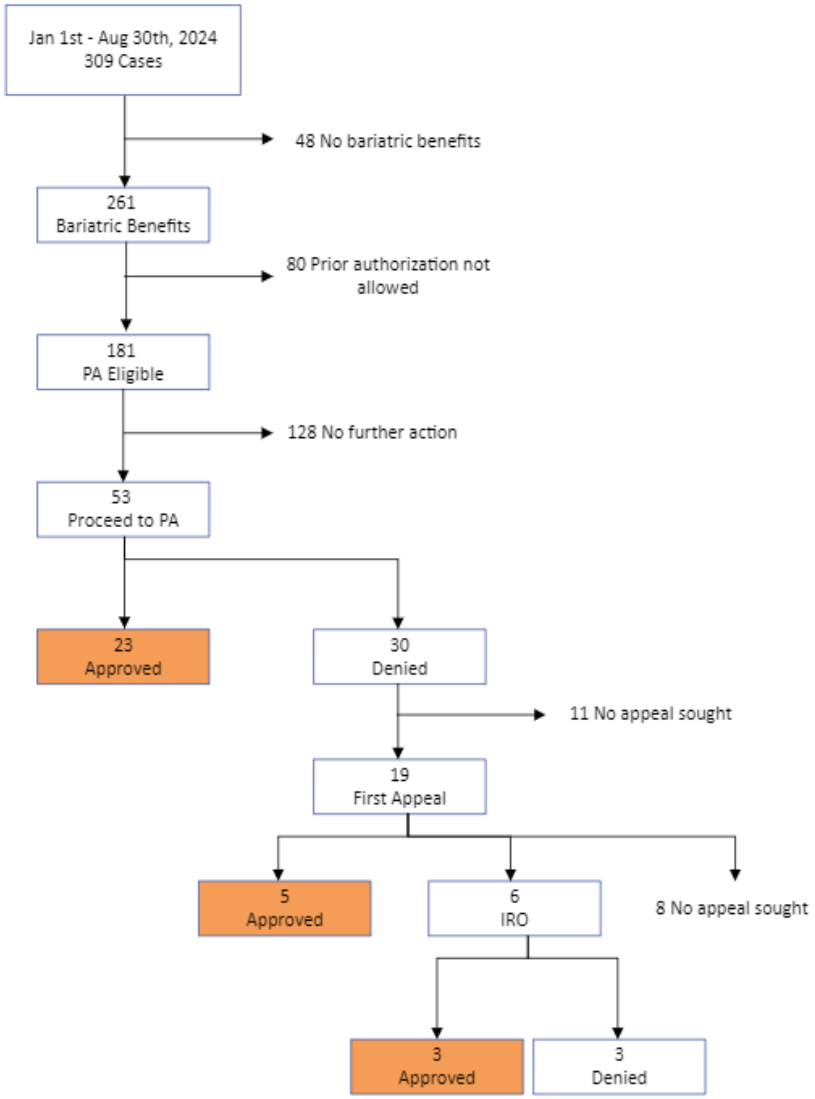
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Objective: Endoscopic Sleeve Gastroplasty (ESG) and Transoral Outlet Reduction (TORe) are incisionless endosurgical procedures to address weight loss in patients with BMI between 30-50 mg/k^2. A manufacturer managed patient access support program (PASP) is available for patients seeking insurance coverage at Boston Scientific approved centers (manufacturer of the OverStitch™ Endoscopic Suturing System).

Methods: A database of requests for prior authorization (PA) is maintained by a third-party vendor and is updated daily. This study is a descriptive analysis of outcomes associated with our experience supporting patients in the insurance approval process for ESG and TORe.

Results: Between January 1 and August 30, 2024, there were 309 closed cases in our program. Of these, 48 patients (15.5%) did not have bariatric benefits and could not seek coverage. Eighty patients had bariatric benefits (25.9%), but their insurer would not allow prior authorization for endobariatric procedures. Of those who moved forward to prior authorization (n=53), 30 (57%) were denied and 23 (43%) were approved at the PA stage. Eleven (n=37%) patients who were denied chose not to appeal. Nineteen (63%) patients who were denied at PA went to first appeal and 5 (26%) were successful in getting the denial overturned.

A cohort (n=6) of patients requested external review (IRO) after exhausting the insurer's available internal options. During IRO, an independent expert with relevant clinical experience reviews the medical records. If approved, IRO is binding for the insurance company. Currently, 50% of IRO cases have been overturned and the patients were able to receive the procedure. Average time to decision was 62 days with a range of 8 days to 155 days.



Conclusions: Prior authorization is challenging for patients seeking weight loss treatment, including those seeking medications (GLP-1s) and bariatric surgery. Unfortunately, many patients do not have access to bariatric benefits. ESG and TORe are incisionless, endosurgical procedures that facilitate weight loss in patients with obesity. Despite prior authorization burdens, patients who have bariatric benefits have found success in getting case-by-case coverage. With ample literature on safety and effectiveness and our success in securing case-by-case approvals, we believe ESG and TORe will be included as a covered benefit for more patients in the future.