RATIONALE FOR INCLUSION IN PA PROGRAM

Background
Erbitux is a medication used to treat patients with squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck (SCCHN) and patients with metastatic colorectal cancer. Metastatic colorectal cancer is an advanced form of cancer affecting the colon or rectum that has begun spreading to other parts of the body. Epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) is a protein involved in the growth and spread of cancer cells that is detected in many human cancers, including those of the head, neck, colon and rectum. Erbitux competitively blocks the EGFR receptor and prevents the activation of kinases, resulting in inhibition of cell growth and induction of cell death (1).

Regulatory Status
FDA-approved indications: Erbitux (cetuximab) is an epidermal growth factor receptor (EGFR) antagonist indicated for the treatment of (1):

1. Head and Neck Cancer
   a. Locally or regionally advanced squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck in combination with radiation therapy.
   b. Recurrent locoregional disease or metastatic squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck in combination with platinum-based therapy with 5-FU.
   c. Recurrent or metastatic squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck progressing after platinum-based therapy.

2. Metastatic Colorectal Cancer
   a. K-Ras wild-type, EGFR-expressing, as determined by FDA-approved tests
   b. In combination with FOLFIRI for first-line treatment
   c. In combination with irinotecan in patients who are refractory to irinotecan-based chemotherapy
   d. As a single agent in patients who have failed oxaliplatin- and irinotecan-based chemotherapy or who are intolerant to irinotecan.

Limitation of Use:
Erbitux is not indicated for the treatment of Ras-mutant colorectal cancer or when the results of the Ras mutation tests are unknown (1).

**Off Label Uses:** (2-5).
1. Head Neck cancer Stage III or IV – cancer has spread to nearby tissues and different parts of the body
2. Metastases of squamous cell skin cancer
3. Metastases of penile cancer
4. Non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC)

Erbitux carries a boxed warning for serious infusion reactions and cardiopulmonary arrest. The reported incidence of serious infusion reactions was 3%, some of which were fatal. Cardiopulmonary arrest and/or sudden death occurred in 2% of patients with squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck while being used in combination with radiation therapy, and 3% of patients with squamous cell carcinoma of the head and neck when used in combination with platinum-based therapy with 5-FU. Serum magnesium, potassium, and calcium should be closely monitored during and after Erbitux administration (1).

Safety and effectiveness of Erbitux in pediatric patients have not been established (1).

**Summary**
Erbitux (cetuximab) is medically necessary for the treatment of head and neck and colorectal cancers. Erbitux should be used for head and neck cancers in combination with radiation therapy or platinum therapy with 5-FU. It may also be used as a single agent following disease progression after platinum-based therapy. Erbitux is also used for squamous cell skin cancer, penile cancer, or non-small cell lung cancer (NSCLC). Erbitux carries a boxed warning for serious infusion reactions and cardiopulmonary arrest. Safety and effectiveness of Erbitux in pediatric patients have not been established (1-5).

Prior authorization is required to ensure the safe, clinically appropriate and cost effective use of Erbitux while maintaining optimal therapeutic outcomes.
References