

RESOLUTION

Subject: Expanding Insurance Coverage for Cranial Prosthesis in Patients with Alopecia Areata
Submitted by: Gabriella Beharry (Medical Student Section)
Referred to: Reference Committee

WHEREAS, alopecia areata is an autoimmune disorder in which the body attacks its hair follicles, has no cure, and more than 6.8 million people in the United States¹; and

WHEREAS, alopecia areata creates a significant psychological impact on individuals, negatively influencing one's self-image while also causing financial distress for those diagnosed with this condition^{1,2}; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 2021, Representative James McGovern of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts proposed an amendment to title XVIII of the Social Security Act to provide coverage for cranial prosthesis as durable medical equipment under the Medicare program⁴; and

WHEREAS, cranial prosthesis, such as wigs, were shown to improve the self-esteem and quality of life for individuals, but the total cost was limited with 23% of individuals receiving insurance coverage \$645,597²; and

WHEREAS, in the state of Massachusetts, cranial prosthesis is covered at a \$350 annual maximum for cancer patients having undergone chemotherapy, but hair loss due to alopecia areata is covered only on a case-by-case basis^{3,4}; and

WHEREAS, all insurance companies in the state of Minnesota are required to provide coverage for cranial prosthesis at a \$350 annual maximum for hair loss specifically due to alopecia areata; and

WHEREAS, Kentucky Medicaid does not provide coverage for wigs, including those used for cranial prosthesis, because they are considered a cosmetic service and not medically necessary^{4,5}; and

WHEREAS, most private insurance companies do not pay for cranial prosthetics for alopecia areata patients but will reimburse for cranial prosthetics for other disease-related hair loss, such as those caused by chemotherapy¹; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that KMA support the Commonwealth of Kentucky to provide coverage for cranial prosthesis as durable medical equipment under the Medicare program; and be it further

RESOLVED, that Medicare and private insurance companies expand coverage for cranial prosthesis at a \$350 annual maximum for hair loss due to alopecia areata.

References:

1. Caro, Sarah & PhD, RN. (2023). Understanding the Profound Impact of Alopecia Areata on Patients. *AJN, American Journal of Nursing*, 123,11.
2. Li SJ, Mostaghimi A, Tkachenko E, Huang KP. Association of Out-of-Pocket Health Care Costs and Financial Burden for Patients With Alopecia Areata. *JAMA Dermatol*. 2019;155(4):493–494
3. Rinderknecht FA, Nambudiri V, Lee MS, LaChance A, Mostaghimi A. Expanding Wig Coverage under Medicare: Improving Access for Patients with Alopecia. *J Clin Aesthet Dermatol*. 2023 Jun;16(6):52.
4. Ezeemma O, Devjani S, Lee A, Kelley KJ, Anderson L, Friedland N, Senna M. Patterns of insurance coverage for wigs in patients with alopecia areata: a cross-sectional survey. *Int J Womens Dermatol*. 2023 Feb 10;9(1):e075.
5. Department of Insurance Health and Life Division. (n.d.). *The Kentucky Standard Health Benefit Plan*. THE KENTUCKY STANDARD HEALTH BENEFIT PLAN. <https://insurance.ky.gov/PPC/Documents/SHBP102411.pdf>