

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Qualifiers for PET Scans

A Guide For Physicians August 22, 2008

This information is provided to increase your awareness of the Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Studies/Programs funded by the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

Physicians may make a referral on behalf of the patient to a principal investigator of the appropriate clinical trial, or to the nuclear medicine department at the PET Registry Coordinating Centre for a registry study that matches the patient's conditions.

If a patient is **NOT** a candidate for any of the clinical trials or registry studies, the patient might still be able to receive a funded PET scan in Ontario through the Ontario PET Access Program. To determine if a patient can qualify for medical services to be paid for by this program you must submit a completed application form on his/her behalf. PET Access Program applications are processed by the Provider Services Branch.

What is Positron Emission Tomography?

Positron emission tomography, also called PET imaging or a PET scan, is a diagnostic examination that involves the acquisition of physiologic images based on the detection of radiation from the emission of positrons. Positrons are tiny particles emitted from a radioactive substance administered to the patient. The subsequent images of the human body developed with this technique are used to detect and evaluate different types of cancer or heart disease.

Positron Emission Tomography (PET) Studies/Programs Funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, Ontario, Canada

Positron emission tomography is a nuclear medicine diagnostic imaging procedure using positron emitting radiopharmaceuticals, often F18 fluorodeoxyglucose (FDG). Evidence suggests that PET may have a role in the assessment of certain cancers and myocardial viability. FDG is currently not approved by Health Canada for routine clinical use, but may be used for research purposes. Furthermore, PET scanning is presently not an insured health service in Ontario.

Ontario PET Evaluation Studies (1st Step)

Based on recommendations of the Ontario PET Steering Committee and the Ontario Health Technology Advisory Committee, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) is funding 2 PET registries, one for cancer patients, which includes 6 separate indications and one for cardiac patients, and 5 PET clinical trials.

Ontario Cancer PET Registry Study

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

PET scans are used most often to detect cancer and to examine the effects of cancer therapy by characterizing biochemical changes in the cancer. These scans can be performed on the whole body.

The Ontario Cancer PET Registry Study provides a PET scan and tracks the outcomes of patients who meet the eligibility criteria for specific indications.

Ontario Cardiac PET Registry Study

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

The MOHLTC is funding a province wide Cardiac PET Registry (CADRE). The objective of this study is to evaluate, in the clinical setting, the role of PET viability imaging in providing additional diagnostic information in patients with coronary artery disease and severe left ventricular dysfunction that are being considered for revascularization or a heart transplant. Through this registry a PET scan will be provided to patients who meet specific criteria.

Ontario PET Clinical Trials

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

The MOHLTC has committed funding for 5 clinical trials coordinated by the Ontario Clinical Oncology Group of Cancer Care Ontario (CCO). Physicians may make a referral to a principal investigator of the appropriate clinical trial, or to the nuclear medicine department at the PET Registry Coordinating Centre for a registry study that matches the patient's condition. Eligible patients can receive a PET scan at participating health sciences centres in Toronto, Hamilton, London, or Ottawa. There will be no charge to the patient.

A brief description of each trial and its enrolment status as of May 31, 2008, as well as the contact information for the principal investigator at each centre, are summarized on the following website: <http://ontariocancertrials.ca/>.

Ontario PET Access Program (2nd step if your patient cannot access through Step 1)

If the patient is not identified as a candidate for any of the clinical trials or registry studies, the patient may still be able to receive a PET scan in Ontario, through the Ontario PET Access Program. A review process has recently been established by the MOHLTC in conjunction with Cancer Care Ontario. <http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

An application must be completed by the referring physician. Fax the completed forms and all additional reports/documents in support of a PET scan to the Provider Services Branch Out-of-Country Unit at **(613) 536-3184**. If you have any questions about the Ontario PET Access Program, please call: 1-888-359-8807.

Through this review process, a radiologist, a nuclear medicine physician and an oncologist determine whether the patient is an appropriate candidate for a PET scan. If there is agreement that a PET scan would be appropriate, then the PET Access Office at the Hamilton Health Science Centre is notified and arrangements are made for this patient’s referral to an appropriate Ontario PET Centre for the scan.

Before requesting a PET scan under the Ontario PET Access Program, it is advisable for the clinician to review the summary of the clinical trials and registries first. All efforts must be made to have the patient enrolled in one of the clinical studies or registry studies before considering the alternative described above in Step 2.

Treatment Facility in Ontario	Treatment Facility Outside Ontario
<p>Obtained at No Cost if patient qualifies for one of the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Clinical Trial 2. Registry 3. The Ontario PET Access Program 	<p>The manufacture of the FDG used by most Ontario PET centres is currently not approved by Health Canada for routine clinical use, but may be used for research purposes.</p> <p>Regulation 552.24.16 under the Ontario Health Insurance Act specifically excludes coverage for “an examination or procedure for the purpose of a research or survey</p>

	<p>program other than an assessment that is necessary to determine if an insured person is suitable for the program”.</p> <p>PET scans are NOT funded out of country.</p>
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Resources:

MOHLTC Physician Bulletin #4477, July 7, 2008

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4477.pdf>

Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences (ICES)

http://www.ices.on.ca/webpage.cfm?site_id=1&org_id=68&morg_id=0&qsec_id=0&item_id=1536&type=report

DISCLAIMER: The purpose of this information is to increase physician awareness about the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) – Out-of-Country Services (OOC). In addition, information explains how a patient may qualify for MOHLTC OOC services.