



Ontario Health
Cancer Care Ontario

Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy Program Policy

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Acronyms

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| CADTH | Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health |
| CAR T-cell | Chimeric antigen receptor T-cell |
| OOC | Ministry's Out of Country Prior Approval Program |
| pCODR | pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review |
| pCPA | pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance |

A. INTRODUCTION

About CAR T-cell Therapy

CAR T-cell therapy is a type of immunotherapy (adoptive T-cell immunotherapy) or cellular therapy which use genetically modified immune cells to fight cancer.

The process to produce and deliver CAR T-cell therapy is complex and requires specialized expertise that is only available at select centres in Ontario hospitals (i.e., CAR T-cell therapy centres). The treatment involves very high product and delivery costs, leading to a specialized provincial program approach to support delivery.

Program Description

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) administers the CAR T-cell Therapy Program with funding provided by the Ministry of Health. This program provides provincial oversight for the planning and delivery of CAR T-cell therapy services in Ontario. The program provides funding to CAR T-cell therapy centres to cover the associated product costs and clinical care costs of delivering CAR T-cell therapy services. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program also monitors emerging evidence, clinical practice, and guidelines to inform provincial plans.

B. PURPOSE

The purpose of the CAR T-cell Program policy is to:

- I. Describe the process to determine which CAR T-cell therapy products and indications (reason for use) are eligible for public funding in Ontario; and
- II. Describe which patients and hospitals are eligible for funding; and

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- III. Describe the application, adjudication, and reimbursement processes for CAR T-cell therapies in Ontario.

C. SCOPE

- I. The intent of the CAR T-cell Therapy program is to provide Ontario patients with access to clinical and cost-effective CAR T-cell therapies that are approved for funding by the Ministry of Health.
- II. Given that Canadian capacity to deliver CAR-T cell therapies is limited across the country, this program will accept applications for patients referred from other provinces and territories.
- III. The program is not intended:
 - a. to provide interim funding for indications that are currently being reviewed or expected to be reviewed for public funding in Ontario; or
 - b. to fund new CAR T-cell products or new indications that are being investigated as part of a clinical trial; or
 - c. to provide funding for special, exceptional, unique/rare, or compassionate requests that do not meet the intent of the established funding criteria for a given CAR T-cell product.

D. LISTING PROCESS FOR CAR T-CELL THERAPIES

Ontario has a rigorous process for evaluating CAR T-cell products that are funded through the CAR T-cell Therapy Program. It includes explicit consideration of a CAR T-cell product's effectiveness, safety, and value for money. Throughout this process, Ontario considers advice from provincial and pan-Canadian clinician experts on CAR T-cell therapy. Additionally, Ontario considers the outputs from the following organizations to inform funding decisions and criteria:

Health Canada: Health Canada provides federal market authorization to sell a CAR T-cell therapy under the Food and Drugs Act. Health Canada will evaluate the safety, efficacy, and quality of the product for a given indication.

Canadian Agency for Drugs and Technologies in Health (CADTH): CADTH's pan-Canadian Oncology Drug Review (pCODR) evaluates the clinical- and cost-effectiveness of the CAR T-cell therapy for the

specified indication and provides a reimbursement recommendation to provinces and territories.

Pan-Canadian Pharmaceutical Alliance (pCPA): The pCPA uses a pan-Canadian pricing negotiation process with the manufacturer to obtain consistent and lower drug costs (including for CAR T-cell products). Ontario is a participant in this process.

Ministry of Health: The Ministry of Health is responsible for the approval of funding for CAR T-cell therapy products and/or indications according to the above process.

Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario): Ontario Health is subsequently responsible for administering the program, adjudicating individual patient applications, and reimbursing the hospitals for the delivery of care.

E. ELIGIBLE PATIENTS

The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will consider applications for patients who are from Ontario or another province/territory:

- I. Ontario residents must be eligible for OHIP coverage.
- II. Applications for patients from other provinces must be approved for funding by their provincial/territorial Ministry of Health.

F. APPLYING FOR INDIVIDUAL PATIENT FUNDING IN ONTARIO

- I. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program applicant (“Applicant”) must be an oncologist, hematologist, or CAR T-cell specialist licensed to practice in the patient’s province or territory in Canada. Patients cannot directly enroll themselves in the program.
- II. For each individual patient, the Applicant must obtain approval for funding prior to administering CAR T-cell therapy. Hospitals will not be reimbursed for apheresis for CAR T-cell treatments that are not approved by this program and subsequently infused into the patient.
- III. The Applicant confirms the patient meets all funding criteria for the given CAR-T product and indication.

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- IV. An approved CAR T-cell therapy centre has confirmed that they can treat the patient in a clinically appropriate timeframe.
 - V. Applications may be submitted by any hospital, but the treatment must be provided at an approved CAR T-cell therapy centre.

G. ELIGIBLE ONTARIO HOSPITALS

- I. To deliver CAR T-cell therapy, hospitals must meet specific quality and access expectations as defined by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) (e.g., FACT accreditation, manufacturer accreditation, and/or Health Canada requirements) to ensure patients receive safe and effective treatment.
- II. A list of approved Ontario hospitals that offer CAR T-cell therapy will be maintained on the Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) website:
<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/find-cancer-services/car-t-cell-therapy-centres>.
- III. Only hospitals approved by Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) to offer CAR T-cell therapy will be reimbursed. For patients approved for therapy, hospitals will be reimbursed according to specific conditions (see [section L](#)).

H. APPROVED PRODUCTS AND INDICATIONS

- I. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will only fund products and indications that are approved for funding by the Ministry of Health (see [section D](#) for Ontario's listing process).
- II. Each approved indication has an enrolment form that specifies the funding criteria. Current enrolment forms are available on the CAR T-cell therapy enrolment page of the Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) website:
<https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/types-of-cancer/hematologic/car-t-cell-therapy-enrolment>).
- III. Patients must meet the current funding criteria at the time of enrolment and must continue to meet funding criteria until they receive CAR T-cell therapy.

I. FUNDING EXCLUSIONS

Not all clinical circumstances and CAR T-cell products are eligible for funding. For example, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program does not fund any of the following situations:

- I. The requested CAR T-cell therapy product and indication are currently being reviewed or expected to be reviewed for funding in Ontario (e.g., under review by Health Canada or CADTH).
- II. Pricing negotiations for the requested CAR T-cell therapy product and indication have yet to be finalized.
- III. For the requested CAR T-cell therapy product and indication, provincial funding has not yet been implemented.
- IV. The requested CAR T-cell therapy product and indication have previously been reviewed and rejected for public funding in Ontario.
- V. Delivery of a CAR T-cell product is inconsistent with the funding criteria and conditions specified in a patient approval letter and/or the Funding Agreement established between Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) and the delivering hospital.
- VI. Special, exceptional, unique/rare, or compassionate requests that do not meet the intent of the established funding criteria for a given CAR T-cell product. As evidence evolves, funding criteria and new indications are expected to be formally evaluated or re-evaluated through the regular listing process (see [section D.](#))

J. ADJUDICATION PROCESS

The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will adjudicate each funding request received to verify that the patient meets the funding criteria for the listed product and indication. The adjudication process is comprised of the following components:

- I. **Application completeness:** The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will screen each submitted request for completeness. In the case of missing information, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program will contact the Applicant as necessary. The Applicant may be contacted to

further clarify some of the information provided in the request. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will follow up with the Applicant after 10 business days if any additional information or clarification requested has not been provided. Applications that remain incomplete after 20 business days from the date of submission will be closed. The application will be deemed incomplete if any of the following is missing or incomplete:

- a. Mandatory questions on the enrolment form.
- b. Requested clinical documents.

II. **Verification of eligibility:** Upon receipt of a complete enrolment form, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program will assess whether the patient meets all of the funding criteria. Where patient eligibility is uncertain, the applicant must provide a robust and detailed clinical justification for the use of CAR-T. The expected clinical outcomes from the therapy must be meaningful and superior when compared to all other available treatment options (including best supportive care). The applicant must justify that the potential benefits of CAR T-cell therapy outweigh the risks.

III. **External clinical expert review:** External clinical experts will be consulted where there is uncertainty based on clinical grounds (e.g., diagnostic uncertainty, issues regarding patient's performance status) to verify that the patient meets all funding criteria.

- a. Clinical experts may be either oncologists or hematologists.
- b. Clinical experts will provide an opinion on whether the patient meets the clinical and funding criteria.
- c. The funding decision will be informed by the opinion of the external clinical experts.

IV. **Funding decision:**

- a. For each request reviewed, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program will make the final decision to approve or deny funding.
- b. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will notify the Applicant of the funding decision in writing.
- c. In the event of a negative funding decision, the Applicant can:
 - Resubmit the application with additional information, or
 - File an appeal to the CAR T-cell Therapy Program.
- d. The applicant has 60 days from the date of the decision letter to file an appeal or resubmission.
- e. An appeal or resubmission will be reviewed according to the *Chimeric Antigen Receptor (CAR) T-cell Therapy Program Appeals Policy*.

K. TIMELINES FOR REVIEW

The CAR T-cell Therapy Program aims to provide a funding decision within 5 business days after receiving the completed application with all supporting documents. If additional information and/or clinical expert review is required, the review process may take longer.

L. REIMBURSEMENT CONDITIONS

- I. For approved patients, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program will cover the product costs and clinical care costs (e.g., apheresis, hospitalizations, supportive care costs) as per the Funding Agreement between Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) and the CAR T-cell therapy centre.
- II. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will reimburse CAR T-cell therapy centres according to the conditions of payment as stated in the Funding Agreement between Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) and the CAR T-cell therapy centre.
- III. In the patient approval letter, the CAR T-cell Therapy Program will notify the Applicant of the following conditions:
 - a. **Funded dose:** Funding is provided for a single dose, one-time treatment to be administered as an intravenous infusion.
 - b. **Coverage period:** The coverage period for approval of funding starts on the Effective Date (the date the decision is transmitted) and ends on the Expiry Date (90 days after the Effective Date). If there is a significant change in patient circumstances or a lengthy delay (e.g., > 90 days) to CAR T-cell therapy infusion, additional documentation will be requested to reassess eligibility. Failure to provide the required documentation will result in the termination of coverage. The Applicant is required to contact the CAR T-cell Therapy Program if there are any questions about continued eligibility.
 - c. **Reimbursement rate:** The reimbursement rate for CAR T-cell therapy will be based on the Funding Agreement established between Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) and the treating centre, for Ontario treatments.

M. ACCESS FOR OUT-OF-PROVINCE PATIENTS

Given that provincial and Canadian capacity to deliver CAR T-cell therapy is limited, the CAR T- cell

Therapy Program will permit residents of other provinces and territories to access CAR T-cell therapy in Ontario. Out-of-province patients must meet the same funding criteria as Ontario patients to access therapy:

- I. For **pediatric** patients, the following applies:
 - a. The patient's hematologist or oncologist from their home jurisdiction must contact The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) to confirm eligibility and capacity before applying to Ontario's CAR T-cell Therapy Program.
 - b. A pediatric oncologist at SickKids needs to apply on behalf of the patient.
 - c. The application must include a letter from the patient's provincial/territorial Ministry of Health that commits to covering the cost of treatment (i.e., specific drug costs and clinical care costs).

- II. For **adult** patients, the following applies:
 - a. An approved Ontario CAR T-cell therapy centre must confirm that they will accept the patient. Documentation of this must be included in the application to the CAR T-cell Therapy Program.
 - b. Eligible Applicants from an Ontario CAR T-cell therapy centre will apply on behalf of the out-of-province patient.
 - c. The application must include a funding letter from their provincial/territorial Ministry of Health that commits to covering the cost of treatment (i.e., specific drug product costs and clinical care costs).

- III. Out-of-province requests will be assessed as per [section J](#).

- IV. Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) will provide the funding decision directly to the Ontario Applicant. The Ontario Applicant should provide a copy of the decision letter to the out-of-province referring physician. **It is the referring physician's responsibility** to provide a copy of the decision letter to their provincial/territorial Ministry of Health.

- V. For approved patients:
 - a. Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario) will reimburse the Ontario CAR T-cell therapy centre as per [section L](#).
 - b. The Ontario CAR T-cell therapy centre will invoice all clinical care costs directly to the provincial/territorial Ministry of Health that referred the patient.
 - c. The Ontario Ministry of Health will invoice the cost of the approved CAR T-cell product directly to the patient's province/territory.

N. FUNDING FOR OUT-OF-COUNTRY REQUESTS

- I. If the capacity in Ontario is limited (e.g., the patient is unable to be treated at an Ontario CAR T-cell therapy centre in a clinically appropriate timeframe), the Applicant may apply to the Ministry's Out-of-Country (OOC) Prior Approval Program:
 - a. The Applicant must complete the CAR T-cell Therapy Program enrolment form for the given indication and the Ministry's application to the OOC program and submit it to Ontario Health (Cancer Care Ontario).
 - b. The OOC application requirements are included on the CAR T-cell therapy enrolment form: <https://www.cancercareontario.ca/en/guidelines-advice/types-of-cancer/hematologic/car-t-cell-therapy-enrolment>

- II. The CAR T-cell Therapy Program will assist the Ministry of Health in their review of out-of-country applications:
 - a. Requests will be assessed according to Ministry's OOC program policies for cancer services.
 - b. To be approved by the OOC program, the request must meet in-Ontario public funding requirements for CAR T-cell therapies.
 - c. For requests approved by the OOC program, the Ministry will inform the Applicant and patient, and coordinate the payments to the out-of-country facility.