Introduced by: Maria Iliakova, MD, Kaitlin McLean, Sara Kazyak, and Zoha Mian

Subject: Access to Methotrexate Based on Clinical Decisions

Whereas, Methotrexate is a medication used to treat many medical conditions including, but not limited to, cancer, psoriasis, myasthenia gravis, and various autoimmune diseases;¹,²,³ and

Whereas, Methotrexate has remained a cornerstone in treatment specifically for rheumatoid arthritis (RA) and common rheumatic disorders with 90% of RA patients using methotrexate alone or in combination with other medications at some point in their treatment;⁴ and

Whereas, Autoimmune disorders are twice as prevalent in women, and RA rates are typically two-to-three times higher in women than men;⁵,⁶ and

Whereas, Methotrexate may also be used be used, off-label, alone or in combination with mifepristone as a non-invasive alternative method for early medical pregnancy terminations and treatment of ectopic pregnancies;⁷,⁸ and

Whereas, The Supreme Court ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization revoked the constitutional right to abortion;⁹ and

Whereas, Because methotrexate “can cause a pregnancy to terminate, some pharmacists in states that have added further restrictions that limit or ban abortions may hesitate to fill methotrexate prescriptions for women of childbearing age because of legal concerns”;¹⁰,¹¹ and

Whereas, Two large United States pharmacy chains have “instructed their pharmacists to confirm methotrexate will not be used to terminate a pregnancy before dispensing it to people in states that ban abortion in many circumstances,”;¹² and

Whereas, As an example of numerous accounts of refusal of methotrexate, in interviews with CNN, a Maryland woman with Crohn’s disease said her health insurance plan informed her they would no longer cover her methotrexate prescription, and a Virginia woman with lupus said her rheumatologist told her she would need to be weaned off methotrexate and switched to another drug due to legal concerns;¹¹,¹⁴ and

Whereas, Restricting access to methotrexate based on non-clinical decisions can lead to unintended consequences, including worsening health conditions, suffering, and death for patients that cannot safely access methotrexate; and

Whereas, Restricting access to methotrexate may impact the health and safety of female patients, who are disproportionately affected by health conditions that could be treated using methotrexate; and

Whereas, Methotrexate is on the World Health Organization’s list of essential medicines for a basic health-care system due to efficacy, safety, and cost-effectiveness;¹³ and
Whereas, Our AMA issued a statement regarding state laws that limit patient access to medically necessary treatment and impede use of professional judgment by physicians; therefore be it

RESOLVED, That our AMA work to create a formal process to review pharmaceutical practices related to refusal of methotrexate and other drugs on the basis that it could be used off-label for pregnancy termination (Directive to Take Action); and be it further

RESOLVED, That our AMA work to provide educational guidance on state-specific laws that have impacted the distribution of methotrexate given post Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization restrictions. (Directive to Take Action)

Fiscal note: TBD

Received: 8/25/22

Relevant AMA Policy:
Patient Access to Treatments Prescribed by Their Physicians H-120.988
Establishing A Task Force to Preserve the Patient-Physician Relationship When Evidence-Based, Appropriate Care Is Banned or Restricted G-605.009

References:
11. Upham B. Women with RA, other diseases may have trouble accessing methotrexate because of abortion restrictions. 2022 July; https://www.everydayhealth.com/rheumatoid-arthritis/women-with-ra-may-have-trouble-accessing-methotrexate-due-to-abortion-restrictions/
