

## MODULE 1:

# Overview of Treatments and Reimbursement Considerations Within the Anti-VEGF Landscape

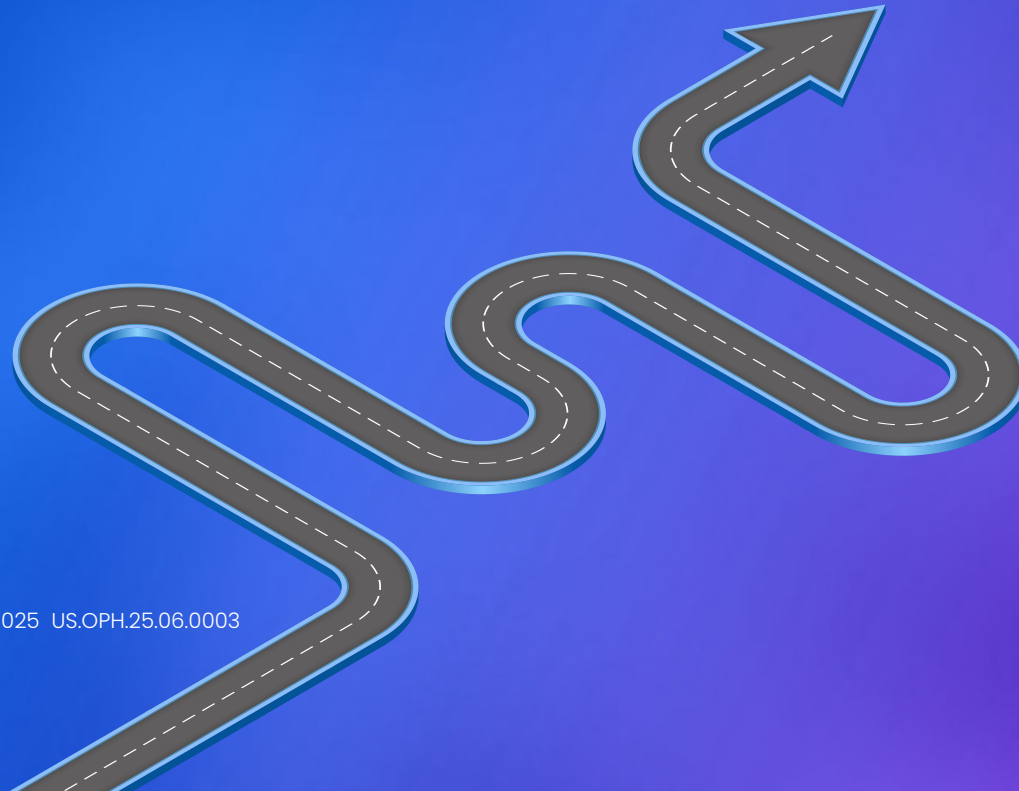
VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

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## Purpose of This Module

This module provides an overview of important concepts to the anti-VEGF landscape, including

- Evolution of available anti-VEGF treatments
- Insurance provider strategies for managing access to and reimbursement of the anti-VEGF therapeutic class of drugs
- Relevance of the insurance provider contract for meeting clinical and operational goals of the retina clinic

## How to Use This Guide

You will find the icons as shown below throughout this module. These will help you navigate the material.



The Key icon provides you with a key takeaway.



The Light Bulb icon alerts you to important insights.

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VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

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# Evolution of the Anti-VEGF Market Landscape<sup>1-13</sup>

Click on the agent below for additional insights



**Ahzantive®**  
(aflibercept-mrbb)

**Enzeevu™**  
(aflibercept-abzv)

**Opuviz™**  
(aflibercept-yszy)

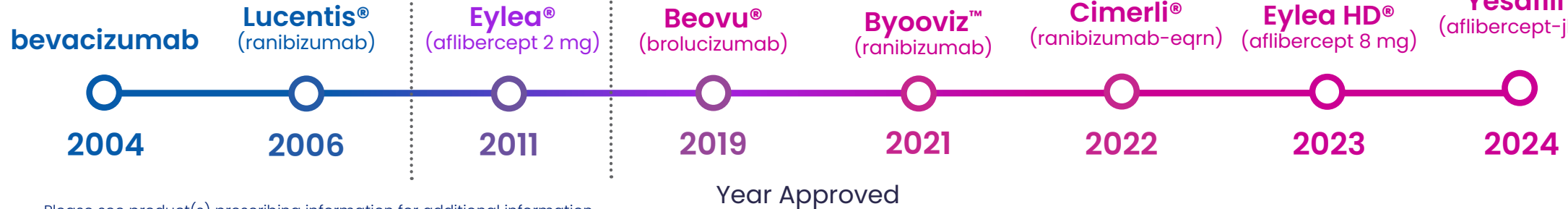
**Pavblu™\***  
(aflibercept-ayyh)

**Yesafili™**  
(aflibercept-jbvf)

## Eras of Treatment



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Please see product(s) prescribing information for additional information.

VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

\*As of [June] 2025, Pavblu is the only aflibercept 2 mg biosimilar approved that is currently on the market.

**1.** Dickson SR, et al. *JAMA Health Forum*. 2023;4(9):e232951. **2.** Lucentis [prescribing information]. South San Francisco, CA; Genentech, Inc.; February 2024. **3.** Eylea [prescribing information]. Tarrytown, NY; Regeneron Pharmaceuticals, Inc.; October 2024. **4.** Beovu [prescribing information]. East Hanover, NJ; Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corporation; July 2024. **5.** Byooviz [prescribing information]. Cambridge, MA; Biogen Inc.; October 2024. **6.** Vabysmo [prescribing information]. South San Francisco, CA; Genentech, Inc.; May 2024. **7.** Cimerli [prescribing information]. Redwood City, CA; Coherus BioSciences, Inc. May 2024. **8.** U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Eylea HD [BLA 761355 approval letter]. August 18, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2025. [https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda\\_docs/applletter/2023/761355Orig1s000ltr.pdf](https://www.accessdata.fda.gov/drugsatfda_docs/applletter/2023/761355Orig1s000ltr.pdf) **9.** Ahzantive [prescribing information]. Planegg Germany; Formycon AG; June 2024. **10.** Enzeevu [prescribing information]. Princeton, NJ; Sandoz Inc.; August 2024. **11.** Opuviz [prescribing information]. Yeonsu-gu, Incheon; Samsung Bioepis Co., Ltd.; Cambridge, MA; Biogen, Inc.; May 2024. **12.** Pavblu [prescribing information]. Thousand Oaks, CA; Amgen, Inc.; August 2024. **13.** Yesafili [prescribing information]. Cambridge, MA; Biocon Biologics Inc.; May 2024.

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# Evolution of the Anti-VEGF Market Landscape<sup>1-13</sup>

Click on the agent below for additional insights

The anti-VEGF treatment landscape has been defined by aflibercept, ranibizumab, and bevacizumab, with other agents and biosimilars becoming available in recent years.

VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.



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## Eras of Treatment



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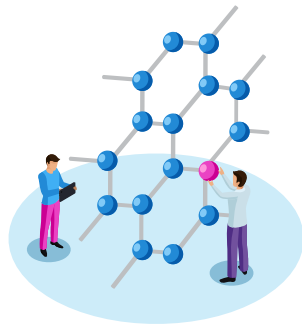
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# Evolution of the Anti-VEGF Market Landscape<sup>1-13</sup>



## Biosimilars<sup>1</sup>

- Biosimilars are sometimes described as “generic” versions of biologic compounds because, when the patents of biologic medicines expire, biosimilars of the reference product can be produced
- However, while traditional small-molecule drugs can be replicated exactly, biologics cannot be precisely replicated due to their size and complex manufacturing process
- Anti-VEGF biosimilars have the potential to decrease cost of care and increase accessibility of effective treatment options

VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

**1.** Haynes J. *Rev Optometry*. September 15, 2023. Accessed May 22, 2025. <https://www.reviewofoptometry.com/article/the-wild-and-woolly-world-of-antivegf-in-2023>

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# Utilization Management (UM)



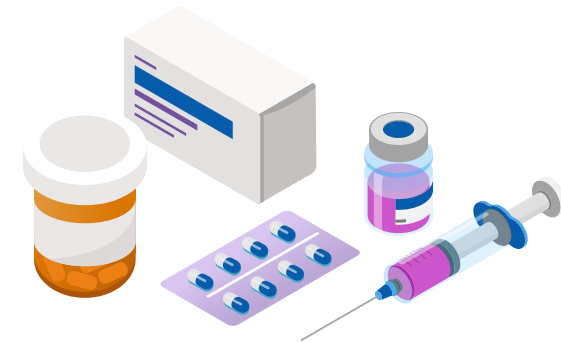
- UM is a process that payers sometimes use to evaluate the efficiency, appropriateness, and medical necessity of treatments that have been prescribed to patients. Some examples of UM include<sup>1</sup>:



**Step edits:** require trial of one or more preferred agent(s) before moving on to another one<sup>2</sup>



**Prior authorization:** requires providers to request approval and provide additional patient and treatment information before a payer will cover a medication<sup>1</sup>



**Quality limits:** controls on how often or how much of a prescription can be utilized at once<sup>3</sup>

- UM became prevalent in the 1980s when healthcare costs started to rise substantially and insurers and employers looked for ways to control costs<sup>1</sup>

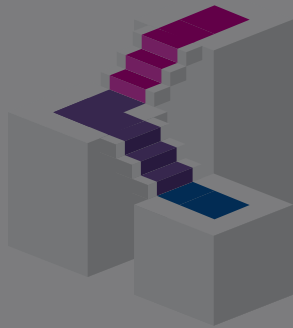
<sup>1</sup>. Weller J. January 9, 2020. Accessed May 22, 2025 <https://www.smartsheet.com/content/utilization-management>. <sup>2</sup>. Mott M, et al. EyeNet Magazine. April 1, 2022. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://www.aao.org/eyenet/article/step-therapy-clinicians-concerns-and-challenges> <sup>3</sup>. Harvard Pilgrim HealthCare/Tufts Health Plan. March 1, 2025. Accessed May 22, 2025. <https://www.point32health.org/provider/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2025/01/Quantity-Limit-Exceptions-pmng-comm.pdf>

# Utilization Management (UM)

- UM is a process that payers sometimes use to evaluate the necessity of treatments that have been prescribed to patients

UM is a process insurers use to drive effective care for patients at the appropriate time, for the appropriate duration of time, delivered at a reasonable cost.<sup>1</sup>

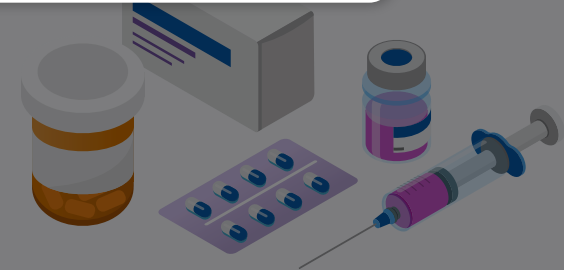
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# Potential Impact of Utilization Management (UM) on Anti-VEGF Treatments

In response to the increasing number of branded anti-VEGF treatment options, payers may apply UM criteria to help drive the initial use of less-expensive therapies.<sup>1</sup>



Step edits (SE) typically require that bevacizumab be tried initially and only changed to another agent if response is suboptimal<sup>2</sup>

The AAO and ASRS have challenged the use of SE due to the limits it places on clinical decision-making and the potential for treatment delays<sup>2,3</sup>

As the anti-VEGF market becomes more crowded, payers may increase use of SE, with some beginning to put **double step edits** in place<sup>4-5</sup>



**Details of UM criteria that apply to anti-VEGF therapies are typically included in the payer medical policy and the contract between a payer and the retina clinic.<sup>6</sup>**

AAO = American Academy of Ophthalmology; ASRS = American Society of Retina Specialists; VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

**1.** Mott M. EyeNet Magazine. April 1, 2022. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://www.aao.org/eyenet/article/step-therapy-clinicians-concerns-and-challenges>

**2.** Liu Y. AJMC. 2022;28(suppl 3):S44-S51. **3.** American Society of Retina Specialists. ASRS support of physician and patient choice in treatments for retinal disease. June 2022. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://www.asrs.org/content/documents/asrs-biosimilars-step-therapy-statement.pdf>

**4.** United Healthcare Community Plan. Ophthalmologic policy: VEGF inhibitors. October 1, 2024. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.uhcprovider.com/content/dam/provider/docs/public/policies/medicaid-comm-plan/ophthalmologic-vascular-endothelial-growth-factor-inhibitors-cs.pdf>

**5.** Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.bluecrossma.org/medical-policies/sites/g/files/csphws2091/files/acquiadam-assets/092%20Vascular%20Endothelial%20Growth%20Factor%20%28VEGF%29%20Inhibitors%20Step%20Therapy.pdf>

**6.** Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024. <https://www.retina-specialist.com/article/yes-you-can-negotiate-payer-contracts>

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VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

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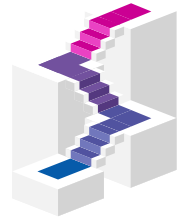
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# Potential Impact of Utilization Management (UM) on Anti-VEGF Treatments

In response to the increasing number of branded anti-VEGF treatment options, payers may apply UM criteria to help drive the initial use of less-expensive treatments.

## Double Step Edits



Some insurance providers have double step edits in place—typically a trial of bevacizumab first—followed by a second preferred agent, which in some instances may include an anti-VEGF biosimilar.<sup>1-3</sup>

VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

1. United Healthcare Community Plan. Ophthalmologic policy: VEGF inhibitors. October 1, 2024. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.uhcprovider.com/content/dam/provider/docs/public/policies/medicaid-comm-plan/ophthalmologic-vascular-endothelial-growth-factor-inhibitors-cs.pdf>
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3. Rahimy E. Step therapy for patients with DME. August 10, 2023. Accessed January 29, 2025. <https://www.hcplive.com/view/step-therapy-for-patients-with-dme>

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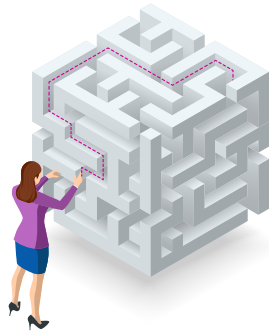
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# Understanding Payer Contracts May Help Facilitate Clinical, Operational, and Financial Goals of the Retina Clinic<sup>1</sup>



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Deciphering  
complicated  
contract terms

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Confirmation  
that the clinic can  
meet claims  
and utilization  
management  
criteria



Negotiation  
of terms

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Ensurance of  
patient access to  
therapy through  
adherence to  
contract terms

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Elements of a payer contract >

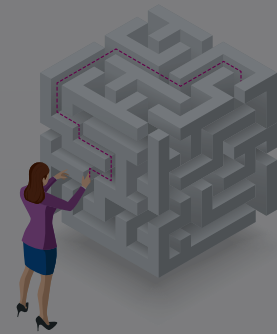
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# Understanding Payer Contracts May Help Achieve Operational, and Financial Goals of the Clinic

Understanding payer contract terms can help to ensure patient access to therapy while focusing on retina clinic goals.

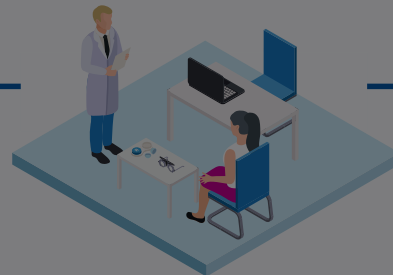


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Deciphering complicated contract terms

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Confirmation that the clinic can meet claims and utilization management criteria



Negotiation of terms

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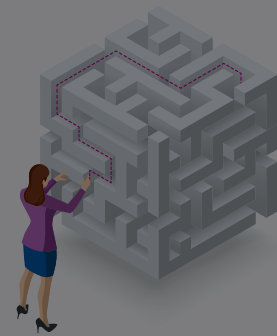


Ensurance of patient access to therapy through adherence to contract terms

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Elements of a payer contract >

# Understanding Payer Contracts: Clinical, Operational, and Financial



Deciphering complicated contract terms

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## Elements of a payer contract

### Elements of a Payer Contract

Payer contracts typically contain information on<sup>1</sup>:

- ✓ Reimbursement terms for medications
- ✓ Timelines for claims payment
- ✓ Terms for when the practice must submit claims
- ✓ Any special coverage terms for Medicare Advantage plans
- ✓ Requirements for use of specialty pharmacies
- ✓ Utilization management criteria such as the use of step therapy
- ✓ Obligations to provide access to records audits

<sup>1</sup>. Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024.  
<https://www.retina-specialist.com/article/yes-you-can-negotiate-payer-contracts>

# Clinical,



Ensurance of patient access to therapy through adherence to contract terms

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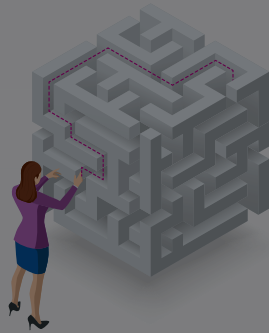
<sup>1</sup>. Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024.

# Understanding Payer Contract Language: Clinical, Operational, and Financial

Clinical,



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Deciphering complicated contract terms

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Elements of a payer contract

## Deciphering Contract Language: ×

*A Practical Example<sup>1</sup>*

Contract language can make the terms complicated to decipher:

*eg, "Payer will reimburse provider for covered services at X% of the then prevailing fee schedule or X% of the provider's billed charges, whichever is less."*

Implications:

- ✗ The practice reimbursement could decrease if the payer adjust its prevailing fees
- ✗ The clinic must adjust its charge master to ensure sufficient reimbursement for services

<sup>1</sup>. Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024. <https://www.retina-specialist.com/article/yes-you-can-negotiate-payer-contracts>



Ensurance of patient access to therapy through adherence to contract terms



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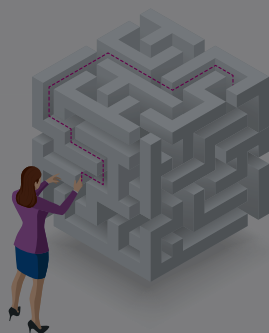
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# Understanding Payer Contracts May Help Facilitate Clinical, Operational, and Financial Outcomes<sup>1</sup>



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Deciphering  
complicated  
contract terms

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## Important Terms to Understand<sup>1</sup>



When a payer sends a new or revised contract, reviewing the most commonly used CPT codes and requesting their allowed amounts for each plan offered can help to evaluate acceptable terms



Timelines for claims payment

- Payment within a shorter period of time from a payer receiving a claim can help with inventory management

CPT = Current Procedural Terminology.

<sup>1</sup>. Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024.

<https://www.retina-specialist.com/article/yes-you-can-negotiate-payer-contracts>



Ensurance of  
patient access to  
therapy through  
adherence to  
contract terms



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**Elements of a payer contract** >

<sup>1</sup>. Rasmussen K. Retina Specialist. Accessed November 6, 2024. <https://www.retina-specialist.com/article/yes-you-can-negotiate-payer-contracts>



# Knowledge Check



  
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**What utilization management approach do payers typically use to manage the anti-VEGF drug category?**

- Step edits
- Prior authorization
- Quantity limits

**REVEAL ANSWER**

# Knowledge Check



## Knowledge Check Answer<sup>1-4</sup>



- Payers who apply utilization management criteria to the anti-VEGF category of drugs typically use step edits to ensure trial of at least 1 preferred agent before reimbursement for another drug will be approved
- Bevacizumab is typically preferred on most plans
- Use of a nonpreferred anti-VEGF agent is likely to be contingent upon documentation from the retina clinic showing a trial of 3 doses of bevacizumab resulting in minimal clinical response

VEGF = vascular endothelial growth factor.

**1.** Mott M, et al. EyeNet Magazine. April 1, 2022. Accessed November 10, 2024. <https://www.aao.org/eyenet/article/step-therapy-clinicians-concerns-and-challenges> **2.** Liu Y. AJMC. 2022;28(suppl 3):S44-S51. **3.** United Healthcare Community Plan. Ophthalmologic policy: VEGF inhibitors. October 1, 2024. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.uhcprovider.com/content/dam/provider/docs/public/policies/medicaid-comm-plan/ophthalmologic-vascular-endothelial-growth-factor-inhibitors-cs.pdf> **4.** Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts. Accessed January 28, 2025. <https://www.bluecrossma.org/medical-policies/sites/g/files/csphws2091/files/acquiadam-assets/092%20Vascular%20Endothelial%20Growth%20Factor%20%28VEGF%29%20Inhibitors%20Step%20Therapy.pdf>

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