Ganglion

**Definition**

A ganglion is a benign fluid-filled cyst that forms around joints or tendons. It commonly affects joints in the wrist and hand, but can also occur anywhere else in the body.

**Policy**

It is the responsibility of referring and treating clinicians to ensure compliance with this policy. Referral proforma should be attached to the patient notes to aid the clinical audit process and provide evidence of compliance with the policy. For patients not meeting the policy criteria, clinicians can apply for funding to the Exceptional Cases Panel by completing the exceptional funding section of the referral proforma: Click policies to access the CCG clinical policies web page: policies – select the Orthopaedic Surgery Policies drop down option and select the Ganglion Policy to access the referral proforma.

The CCG will **ONLY** fund surgical removal of ganglia according to the following criteria:

- The patient presents with a significant skin breakdown, significant nail deformity or has required repeated episodes of drainage caused by distal interphalangeal joint mucous cysts (risk of septic arthritis).
- **OR**
- The ganglion is causing considerable pain, or restricted movement that results in a significant functional impairment, and is unrelieved by aspiration.

**Smoking**

Patients who smoke should be advised to attempt to stop smoking and referred to stop-smoking services – see stop smoking policy.

**Rationale and Evidence**

Studies have shown that a high proportion of dorsal wrist ganglion cysts resolve spontaneously (50-80% within a year)

2, 3. Aspiration of the ganglion often fails (~50% recurrence4, 5). Surgery is effective in the short term (estimated 10% and 30% recurrence for dorsal and palmar wrist ganglion respectively6) but higher rates of recurrence have been observed in the longer-term (39% over 6 years for dorsal wrist ganglion2 and 42% over 5 years for palmer wrist ganglion7). Ganglion surgery may incur around 2 weeks8 postoperative recovery time and studies have shown that 70-80% of patients choose not to have a repeat procedure following failed aspiration/surgery8, 9.

**Estimated number of people affected**

The incidence of ganglion cysts has been estimated at around 25/100,000 in males and 43/100,000 in females10 and this equates to ~320 per year in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.
References


Glossary

Aspiration: Removal by suction, fluid or gas from a body cavity or the procurement of biopsy specimens.

Cyst: An abnormal closed epithelium-lined (cellular layer) cavity in the body, containing liquid or semisolid material.

Dorsal wrist ganglion: Ganglia on the back of the wrist.

Palmar (or volar) wrist ganglion: Ganglia on the inside (palm side) of the wrist.

Septic arthritis: Inflammation of a joint caused by a bacterial infection (most commonly staphylococcal or streptococcal bacteria)\(^\text{10}\).