

REIMBURSEMENT OF CAR-T-CELL THERAPIES IN SWITZERLAND A SINGLE CENTER EXPERIENCE

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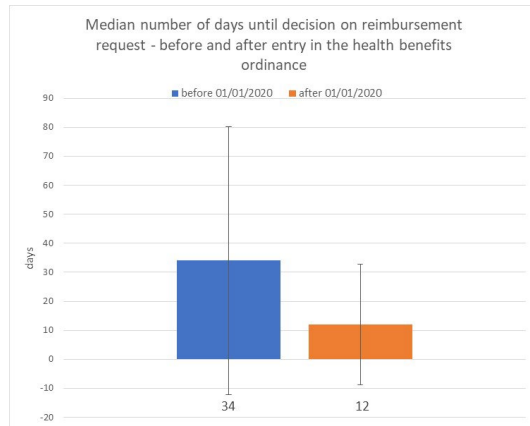
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INTRODUCTION

The costs of new cancer drugs have steadily increased, and their reimbursement is a major challenge for national health care systems. CARs are an effective, but time consuming therapy for a fragile patient population. After the authorization of CAR-T cell products since late 2018 in Switzerland, no criteria for the reimbursement existed. The off-label use led to delayed treatment and disputed rejection of reimbursement requests by health insurers. Only by January 1st 2020, CAR-T cell therapies were entered in the health care benefits ordinance (“Krankenpflege-Leistungsverordnung”) resulting in a benefit obligation by the compulsory health insurance under certain, but in the case of CARs still poorly defined conditions. The goal of our study was to assess the duration of the reimbursement process, its development over time and displaying the reimbursement reality of approved CAR-T cell therapies in Switzerland.

METHODS

All outgoing reimbursement requests issued for the for the approved CAR-T products Tisagenlecleucel and Axicabtagen-Ciloleucel from a University Hospital between October 18th 2020 and December 31st 2021 were included. We analyzed the duration in days between the issue date of the reimbursement request and the final decision of the insurer by year and before and after the entry in the health care benefits ordinance.



RESULTS

In total, 88 reimbursement requests were issued. The processing time of a reimbursement request varied from one day to 167 days with a median processing time of 18 days for all requests (mean 31 days). The median processing time was 34, 13.5 and 10 days for the years 2019, 2020 and 2021, respectively. Before the entry in the health care benefits ordinance, the median processing time was 34 days and 12 days after this reference date.

In addition, we also noticed a considerable variability between the insurance companies in the processing time, largely due to the poorly defined conditions and the perceived label.

CONCLUSION

Although progress has been made over the years by significantly reducing the processing time of a reimbursement request, especially after the inclusion of CAR-T therapies in the health care benefits ordinance, a clearly defined process and labels that allow a fair, universal and rapid reimbursement of CAR-T cell products is of utmost importance for the patients concerned.