



**BlueCross BlueShield  
Association**

An Association of Independent  
Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans

# Blue Facts

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Blue Cross and Blue Shield  
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## The Technology Evaluation Center

Founded in 1985 by the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association, the Technology Evaluation Center (TEC) pioneered the development of scientific criteria for assessing medical technologies through comprehensive reviews of clinical evidence. Since its inception, TEC has been recognized nationally for leadership in producing evidence-based technology assessments.

In 1997, TEC was designated as one of 12 original Evidence-based Practice Centers (EPCs) for the federal Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ). TEC was awarded a 5-year contract renewal in 2002, and now serves as one of 13 current EPCs. The findings of the EPCs provide the foundation on which organizations - such as physician specialty societies - develop clinical practice guidelines, as well as tools and strategies for improving the quality of healthcare services.

TEC Assessments provide objective information to those who deliver and manage medical care. They are based on clinical and scientific evidence and evaluate whether a technology improves health outcomes, such as length of life, quality of life and ability to function. TEC assessments are not recommendations for coverage decisions by health insurance companies.

TEC evaluates drugs, devices, procedures, and biological products using the following criteria:

1. The technology must have final approval from the appropriate governmental regulatory bodies.
  2. The scientific evidence must permit conclusions concerning the effect of the technology on health outcomes.
  3. The technology must improve the net health outcome.
  4. The technology must be as beneficial as any established alternatives.
  5. The improvement must be attainable outside the investigational settings.
- An average of 15 to 20 assessments is published per year, providing healthcare decision-makers with timely, rigorous, and credible information on clinical effectiveness. To date, TEC has completed more than 400 assessments.
  - Ten evidence reports have been provided to AHRQ:
    - "Relative Effectiveness and Cost-Effectiveness of Methods of Androgen Suppression in the Treatment of Advanced Prostatic Cancer" can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
    - "Uses of Epoetin for Anemia in Oncology" can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
    - "Uses of Epoetin in Patients with Chronic Renal Failure" can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).

- “The Management of Chronic Asthma” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
  - “FDG Positron Emission Tomography for Evaluating Breast Cancer” can be found at <http://cms.hhs.gov/coverage/download/8b1-g1.pdf>
  - “Endoscopic Retrograde Cholangiopancreatography” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
  - “Islet Transplantation for Type 2 Diabetes Mellitus” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
  - Wound-Healing Technologies: Low-Level Laser and Vacuum-Assisted Closure” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
  - “Management of Small Cell Lung Cancer” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
  - “Comparative Effectiveness of Epoetin and Darbepoetin for Managing Anemia in Patients Undergoing Cancer Treatment” can be viewed on the AHRQ Web site at [www.ahrq.gov](http://www.ahrq.gov).
- Findings of the TEC Assessments are provided to all independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Member Plans. A 3-year rolling inventory of TEC Assessments is available publicly at the TEC Internet resource, [www.bcbs.com/tec](http://www.bcbs.com/tec).
  - Through its collaborative relationship with Kaiser Permanente, begun in 1994, TEC staff has ready access to Kaiser's clinical experts on a wide range of topics. In many cases, these physicians either chair or sit on committees that are responsible for developing practice guidelines at Kaiser.
  - TEC staff regularly publish in peer-reviewed medical journals, including the *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* and *Journal of the American College of Surgeons*.
  - TEC staff also regularly present at scientific meetings of specialty societies, including:
    - American College of Chest Physicians
    - American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO)
    - American Society of Hematology (ASH)
    - International Society for Technology Assessment in Health Care (ISTAHC)
    - Agencies of the National Institutes of Health – such as the National Cancer Institute (NCI), the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute (NHLBI), and the Office of Medical Applications of Research (OMAR)
  - The 19-member Medical Advisory Panel has scientific and clinical authority and accountability for all TEC assessments.
    - Comprised of independent, nationally recognized experts in technology assessment, clinical research and medical specialties.
    - Includes appointees from the American College of Physicians, American Academy of Family Physicians, American Academy of Pediatrics, American College of Surgeons, American College of Medical Genetics, and American College of Cardiology.
    - Meets quarterly to review TEC assessments and judge the quality of evidence and the relative weights of the potential benefits and harms.
  - TEC assessments are researched and drafted by an experienced staff of physicians and doctorate-level scientists who are supported by professionals in pharmacology, nursing, statistical methods, and library science.

For more information about the Technology Evaluation Center, visit [www.BCBS.com/tec](http://www.BCBS.com/tec) .