



## NIH Stroke Scale (NIHSS) Certification for Healthcare Professionals

### Background

On October 11, 2023, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) expanded coverage of percutaneous transluminal angioplasty (PTA) of the carotid artery with stenting for a broader population under section B4 of the National Coverage Determination (NCD 20.7).<sup>1</sup> CMS requires a neurological assessment by a neurologist or NIHSS-certified healthcare professional before and after carotid artery stenting to assess procedural harms. Neurological assessments may be conducted in the normal course of patient care without requiring a unique visit.<sup>1</sup>

Note: Healthcare providers seeking Medicare coverage under section B3 (Vascular Quality Initiative TCAR Surveillance Project) are not required to perform neurological assessments for coverage purposes.

### Description

The NIH Stroke Scale (NIHSS) is a standardized neurological assessment tool used by healthcare professionals to assess the severity of a stroke. It evaluates various aspects of the patient like consciousness, vision, sensation, movement, speech, and language. The NIHSS helps guide treatment decisions and is recommended by the American Heart Association/American Stroke Association.<sup>5</sup>

### Training Options

There are several different training options available for healthcare professionals who want to obtain NIHSS certification. The following web-based options have been identified by the National Institutes of Health.<sup>2</sup> Healthcare professionals are responsible for any certification costs.

- [BlueCloud® NIH Stroke Scale Certification](#) is a free online course that prepares healthcare professionals to accurately administer and interpret the NIHSS.
- [Apex Innovations Interactive Training Tool](#) offers a convenient and affordable online course that prepares healthcare professionals for the NIHSS certification exam.
- [American Heart Association Stroke Scale Course](#) is an online course that provides healthcare professionals with the knowledge and skills needed to use the NIHSS effectively.

### Certification Requirements

The specific requirements for obtaining NIHSS certification vary depending on the training provider. However, most programs require participants to complete a training course and pass a certification exam.

### Recertification Requirements

There is no single standard for how often an individual needs to recertify for the NIHSS. Individual hospitals should determine their own protocol on certification standards. However, the following recommendations are provided by different organizations.<sup>3,4</sup>

- National Stroke Association (NSA): Recertification every 6 months.
- National Institute of Health (NIH): Retesting every 2 years.
- American Stroke Association (ASA): 1-2-year certification depending on the test group.
- American Heart Association (AHA): Wait 12 months before taking the next patient group.

<sup>1</sup> NCA - Percutaneous Transluminal Angioplasty (PTA) of the Carotid Artery Concurrent with Stenting (CAG-00085R8) - Decision Memo. Cms.gov. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/ncaal-decision-memo.aspx?proposed=N&ncaid=311>

<sup>2</sup> Health Professionals. National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke. <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/public-education/know-stroke/health-professionals>

<sup>3</sup> Apex Innovations. NIH Stroke Scale General Information Contents. [https://www.apexinnovations.com/docs/NIHSS\\_User\\_Guide.pdf](https://www.apexinnovations.com/docs/NIHSS_User_Guide.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> American Heart Association Professional Educational Hub [https://store.education.heart.org/asls-nihss?insights\\_portfolio=180&insights\\_product\\_type=183](https://store.education.heart.org/asls-nihss?insights_portfolio=180&insights_product_type=183)

<sup>5</sup> NIH Stroke Scale & link to AHA FAQ's <https://www.ninds.nih.gov/health-information/stroke/assess-and-treat/nih-stroke-scale>

## How to Get Certified

To get certified, follow these steps:

1. Choose a training program from a reputable organization.
2. Complete the training program and pass the certification exam.
3. Maintain your certification by completing continuing education requirements.

## Reimbursement Support

For reimbursement assistance, please contact PI HEMA team:

- Email: [SRM-Reimburse@bsci.com](mailto:SRM-Reimburse@bsci.com)
- Website: [Boston Scientific Peripheral Vascular Coding & Payment Guides](#)

### ENROUTE Transcarotid Stent System

**INTENDED USE/INDICATIONS FOR USE** The ENROUTE® Transcarotid Stent System used in conjunction with the ENROUTE Transcarotid Neuroprotection System (NPS) is indicated for the treatment of patients at high risk and standard risk for adverse events from carotid endarterectomy, who require carotid revascularization and meet the criteria outlined below: High Risk | Standard Risk With neurological symptoms:  $\geq 50\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by ultrasound or angiogram |  $\geq 70\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by ultrasound or  $\geq 50\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by angiogram Without neurological symptoms:  $\geq 80\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by ultrasound or angiogram |  $\geq 70\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by ultrasound or  $\geq 60\%$  stenosis of the common or internal carotid artery by angiogram Reference vessel diameter: Must be within 4.0 mm – 9.0 mm at the target lesion Carotid bifurcation location: Minimum 5 cm above the clavicle to allow for placement of the ENROUTE Transcarotid NPS

### ENROUTE Transcarotid Neuroprotection System

**INTENDED USE/INDICATIONS FOR USE** The ENROUTE Transcarotid Neuroprotection System (ENROUTE Transcarotid NPS) is intended to provide transcarotid vascular access, introduction of diagnostic agents and therapeutic devices, and embolic protection during carotid artery angioplasty and stenting procedures for patients diagnosed with carotid artery stenosis and who have appropriate anatomy described below: • Adequate femoral venous access • Common carotid artery reference diameter of at least 6 mm • Carotid bifurcation is a minimum of 5 cm above the clavicle as measured by duplex Doppler ultrasound (DUS) or computerized axial tomography (CT) angiography or magnetic resonance (MR) angiography.

### Important Information

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