

# Medicare will cover expensive new leukemia medication

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(HealthDay)—Medicare will pay for a new, expensive cancer medication that costs about \$178,000 for a standard course of treatment, the Obama administration says.

Beginning Oct. 1, Medicare will make additional payments for patients with a particularly aggressive type of leukemia to receive Amgen's Blincyto (blinatumomab), *The New York Times* reported.

The announcement reverses a preliminary decision in April, when the government said Medicare would not pay extra for Blincyto because [clinical studies](#) were "not sufficient to demonstrate" that it offered substantial benefits to patients with [acute lymphoblastic leukemia](#). However, the final rule to be published in the Federal Register on Aug.

17 says the administration received "additional information and input" from Amgen and other experts and now agrees with their opinion, *The Times* reported.

That means that Blincyto qualifies for special "add-on payments" that Medicare makes to hospitals for new treatments whose costs are not yet included in standard lump-sum payments for treating patients with a particular health problem.

**More information:** [Health Highlights: Aug 10, 2015](#)

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