

Case Number:	CM13-0024083		
Date Assigned:	06/06/2014	Date of Injury:	07/15/2007
Decision Date:	07/14/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/05/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/13/2013

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a Physician Reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The Physician Reviewer is Board Certified in Family Medicine, and is licensed to practice in New Jersey. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The Physician Reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/services. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The worker is a 53 year old male who injured his upper back and neck on 7/15/07. He was later diagnosed with cervical and thoracic sprain/strain, brachial plexus lesions, myalgia and myositis, cervical disc degeneration, and pain in the throacic spine. He was treated with steroid injections, oral analgesics, TENS, chiropractor treatments, topical analgesics, and he was seen by his treating physician on 8/27/13 who discussed the fact that although the TENS unit was prescribed and authorized for use as it had been helping him with his chronic pain, he had run out of the pads and electrodes and couldn't afford to buy them. The worker reported then that he was working full time and that he had significant improvements with his current regimen of TENS unit use as well as oral opioids. He was given a prescription for the pads and electrodes for one year.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

TENS (TRANSCUTANEOUS NERVE STIMULATION) PADS AND ELECTRODES FOR ONE YEAR: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TRANSCUTANEOUS ELECTROTHERAPY Page(s): 113.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Transcutaneous electrotherapy, TENS, chronic pain Page(s): 114-116.

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines for Chronic Pain indicate that transcutaneous nerve stimulation (TENS) is not recommended as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered as a non-invasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional resoration, however, the studies on TENS are inconclusive and evidence is lacking concerning effectiveness. The criteria for the use of TENS, according to the MTUS Guidelines, includes 1. Documentation of pain of at least 3 months duration, 2. Evidence that other appropriate pain modalities have been tried and failed, 3. Documentation of other pain treatments during TENS trial, 4. Documented treatment plan including the specific short and long-term goals of treatment with TENS, 5. Documentation of reasoning for use of a 4-lead unit, if a 4-lead unit is prescribed over a 2-lead unit. In the case of this worker, the TENS unit was already approved for use and the worker reported it being helpful for pain and function. The worker is working full time. The use of the TENS unit is dependent on having the required pads and electrodes and should be considered approved along with the TENS unit. The previous reviewer suggested that only prescribing these supplies for 6 months was warranted to help remind the physician to review how effective the TENS unit continues to be. However, I disagree, and since there is no guideline referenced as a basis for this specific duration, and the TENS has already been approved, the TENS pads and electrodes for one year is medically necessary.