

Case Number:	CM14-0137343		
Date Assigned:	09/05/2014	Date of Injury:	04/09/2012
Decision Date:	10/02/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/28/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/25/2014

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Family Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. 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 expert 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:

This is a 56-year-old female who reported an industrial injury on 4/9/2012, 2 years ago, to the neck, back, and bilateral hands, attributed to the performance of her usual, and customary job tasks. The patient was noted to complain of ongoing neck and upper extremity pain associated with headaches that were characterized as migraine in nature. The patient also complained of lower back pain radiating to the bilateral lower extremities. The patient complained of pain to the wrists and bilateral feet. The objective findings on examination included tenderness to palpation to the cervical paravertebral muscles and upper trapezial muscles with spasm; positive axial loading compression test; positive Spurling's maneuver; range of motion of the cervical spine was limited; numbness and tingling documented to the C5-C6 dermatome; 4/5 strength to the deltoid, biceps, and wrist extensors in this C five-C6 innervated muscles; tenderness over the medial epicondyles; Tinel's sign positive over the cubital tunnel and diminished sensation to the ulnar digits; tenderness palpation over the volar aspect of the wrist; positive Phalen's sign over the wrist; positive Tinel's sign; tenderness to palpation to the paravertebral muscles of the lower back; reported numbness to the L5 and S1 dermatome pattern on the left lower extremity; tenderness to palpation of the left heel on plantar aspect of the heel. The treatment plan included acupuncture and the use of a TENS unit.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) unit, purchase: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 9 Shoulder Complaints, Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 300; 203, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS unit chronic pain Page(s): 114-117. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Forearm, wrist, hand--TENS unit; Pain chapter--TENS unit

Decision rationale: The requesting provider did not provide subjective/objective evidence to support the medical necessity of the TENS Unit or the electronic muscle stimulator for the treatment of the neck and back. The ACOEM Guidelines do not recommend the use of TENS Units for neck, shoulder, elbow, or wrist as there is no objective evidence available to support their use. There is no demonstrated medical necessity for a TENS unit is a freestanding treatment modality without the documentation of a functional restoration effort. It is recommended that the patient undergo a 30-day trial to demonstrate functional improvement prior to the purchase of a TENS unit for the treatment of the lumbar spine chronic pain issues. There is no justification for the use of the 4-lead TENS unit as required by the CA MTUS. The use of the TENS unit for the treatment for the wrist/hand/forearm is not recommended by the CA MTUS or the ACOEM Guidelines. There is no objective evidence provided to support the medical necessity of the requested TENS Unit or electric muscle stimulator for the treatment of the neck and back for the effects of the industrial injury. The TENS unit is directed to chronic neck and back pain issues with a date of injury over 21/2 years ago. The patient was noted to have used a TENS unit during PT rehabilitation; however, there was no documented functional improvement with the use of the tens unit and no demonstrated reduction in the use of medications. There was no objective evidence to justify the continued use of the tens unit in the treatment plan for this patient. The CA MTUS and the Official Disability Guidelines only recommends the use of the TENS unit for chronic lower back pain with a demonstrated exercise program for conditioning and strengthening. The TENS Unit is recommended for only chronic intractable pain. There was no provided documentation that the patient was participating in a self-directed home exercise program. The ACOEM Guidelines revised back chapter 4/07/08 does recommend the use of the TENS Unit for the treatment of chronic lower back pain; however, it must be as an adjunct to a functional rehabilitation program and ongoing exercise program. The CA MTUS only recommend the use of the TENS unit for chronic lower back pain with a demonstrated exercise program for conditioning and strengthening. There are no recommendations for the use of the TENS Unit in the treatment of the neck and upper back. There is no objective evidence provided by the requesting provider that the same results cannot be achieved with a home exercise program established for functional rehabilitation with strengthening and conditioning directed to the hand. There is no demonstrated medical necessity for the provision of a TENS for the rehabilitation of the chronic pain to the lower back without an initial 30-day trial to demonstrate evidence of functional improvement.