

Case Number:	CM14-0176067		
Date Assigned:	10/29/2014	Date of Injury:	12/13/2001
Decision Date:	12/10/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/30/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/23/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in Pain 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:

The injured worker is a 28-year-old male with an original date of injury in 2001. The industrial diagnoses include chronic shoulder pain, lumbar post-lameinectomy syndrome, cervical radiculopathy, and chronic low back pain. The disputed issue is a request for purchase of a TENS unit. This was denied in a utilization review determination on September 30, 2014. The stated rationale for this denial was that there is "no quality of evidence of effectiveness except in conjunction with recommended treatments, including return to work, exercise and medications, and the limited evidence of improvement on those recommended treatments alone."

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 for purchase: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 114-117.

Decision rationale: The Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines on Pages 114-116 specify the following regarding TENS (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation): "Not recommended as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered as

a noninvasive conservative option, if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration, for the conditions described below. While TENS may reflect the long-standing accepted standard of care within many medical communities, the results of studies are inconclusive; the published trials do not provide information on the stimulation parameters which are most likely to provide optimum pain relief, nor do they answer questions about long-term effectiveness. (Carroll-Cochrane, 2001) Several published evidence-based assessments of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) have found that evidence is lacking concerning effectiveness. One problem with current studies is that many only evaluated single-dose treatment, which may not reflect the use of this modality in a clinical setting. Other problems include statistical methodology, small sample size, influence of placebo effect, and difficulty comparing the different outcomes that were measured. Recommendations by types of pain: A home-based treatment trial of one month may be appropriate for neuropathic pain and CRPS II (conditions that have limited published evidence for the use of TENS as noted below), and for CRPS I (with basically no literature to support use). Neuropathic pain: Some evidence (Chong, 2003), including diabetic neuropathy (Spruce, 2002) and post-herpetic neuralgia. (Niv, 2005). Phantom limb pain and CRPS II: Some evidence to support use. (Finsen, 1988) (Lundeberg, 1985)Spasticity: TENS may be a supplement to medical treatment in the management of spasticity in spinal cord injury. (Aydin, 2005)Multiple sclerosis (MS): While TENS does not appear to be effective in reducing spasticity in MS patients it may be useful in treating MS patients with pain and muscle spasm. (Miller, 2007)"A review of this injured worker's industrial diagnoses failed to reveal any of the indications above of multiple sclerosis, specificity, Phantom limb pain, or complex regional pain syndrome. By statute, the California Medical Treatment and Utilization Schedule takes precedence over other national guidelines which may have broader indications for TENS unit. Given this worker's diagnoses of primary low back, shoulder, and neck pain, a TENS is not medically necessary.