

Case Number:	CM14-0177081		
Date Assigned:	10/30/2014	Date of Injury:	04/17/2014
Decision Date:	02/27/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/25/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/27/2014

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:

State(s) of Licensure: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & Gen Prev Med

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 16 year old patient with date of injury of 04/17/2014. Medical records indicate the patient is undergoing treatment for left ankle bimalleolar fracture, unstable; S/P left ankle surgery. Subjective complaints include intermittent mild to moderate dull, achy ankle pain and weakness. Objective findings include a well healed scar over the left ankle on the medial side over the medial malleolus with discoloration; limited and painful range of motion of left ankle/foot; increased swelling in the left ankle/foot and lower leg; tenderness to palpation of the anterior ankle, medial ankle and medial malleolus. Treatment has consisted of posterior splint, open reduction internal fixation on 05/01/2014, physical therapy, chiropractic care, Nabumetone and Tramadol. The utilization review determination was rendered on 09/25/2014 recommending non-certification of an EMS/TENS unit for the left ankle.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

EMS/TENS unit for the left ankle: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Ankle and Foot (Acute and Chronic) Chapter

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Interferential Current Stimulation, Transcutaneous electrotherapy Page(s): 54, 114-116, 118-120. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain, TENS chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation).

Decision rationale: MTUS states regarding TENS unit, "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." For pain, MTUS and ODG recommend TENS (with caveats) for neuropathic pain, phantom limb pain and CRPSII, spasticity, and multiple sclerosis. The medical records do not indicate any of the previous conditions. MTUS guidelines do not specifically address the utilization of TENS units for the ankle. ODG further outlines recommendations for specific body parts: Low back: Not recommended as an isolated intervention. Knee: Recommended as an option for osteoarthritis as adjunct treatment to a therapeutic exercise program. Neck: Not recommended as a primary treatment modality for use in whiplash-associated disorders, acute mechanical neck disease or chronic neck disorders with radicular findings. Ankle and foot: Not recommended. Elbow: Not recommended. Forearm, Wrist and Hand: Not recommended. Shoulder: Recommended for post-stroke rehabilitation. ODG does not recommend TENS units for the ankle or foot. ODG further details criteria for the use of TENS for Chronic intractable pain (for the conditions noted above):(1) Documentation of pain of at least three months duration(2) There is evidence that other appropriate pain modalities have been tried (including medication) and failed(3) A one-month trial period of the TENS unit should be documented (as an adjunct to ongoing treatment modalities within a functional restoration approach) with documentation of how often the unit was used, as well as outcomes in terms of pain relief and function; rental would be preferred over purchase during this trial(4) Other ongoing pain treatment should also be documented during the trial period including medication usage(5) A treatment plan including the specific short- and long-term goals of treatment with the TENS unit should be submitted(6) After a successful 1-month trial, continued TENS treatment may be recommended if the physician documents that the patient is likely to derive significant therapeutic benefit from continuous use of the unit over a long period of time. At this point purchase would be preferred over rental.(7) Use for acute pain (less than three months duration) other than post-operative pain is not recommended.(8) A 2-lead unit is generally recommended; if a 4-lead unit is recommended, there must be documentation of why this is necessary. The medical records do not satisfy the several criteria for selection specifically, lack of documented 1-month trial, lack of documented short-long term treatment goals with TENS unit, and unit use for acute (less than three months) pain. ODG does not recommend TENS units for the ankle or foot. As such, the request for an EMS/TENS unit for the left ankle is not medically necessary.