

Case Number:	CM15-0004448		
Date Assigned:	01/15/2015	Date of Injury:	06/10/2011
Decision Date:	04/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/12/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/08/2015

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: North Carolina
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 72 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on June 10, 2011. He has reported thumb pain. The diagnoses have included hand joint pain. Treatment to date has included medications, radiological imaging, laboratory evaluations, wound care, and acupuncture. Currently, the IW complains of continued thumb pain. On March 20, 2014, he has complaints of left upper extremity pain with radiation to the left forearm, left wrist and left hand. He relates that medications are helping. Physical findings are tenderness over the proximal interphalangeal joint of left thumb, distal interphalangeal joint of thumb and thenar eminence, and painful range of motion. On December 12, 2014, Utilization Review non-certified one equipment interspec IF II, based on Chronic Pain Medical Treatment guidelines. On January 8, 2015, the injured worker submitted an application for IMR for review of one equipment interspec IF II.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

1 equipment interspec IF II: Upheld

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on ICS states: Interferential Current Stimulation (ICS): Not recommended as an isolated intervention. There is no quality evidence of effectiveness except in conjunction with recommended treatments, including return to work, exercise and medications, and limited evidence of improvement on those recommended treatments alone. The randomized trials that have evaluated the effectiveness of this treatment have included studies for back pain, jaw pain, soft tissue shoulder pain, cervical neck pain and post-operative knee pain. (Van der Heijden, 1999) (Werner, 1999) (Hurley, 2001) (Hou, 2002) (Jarit, 2003) (Hurley, 2004) (CTAF, 2005) (Burch, 2008) The findings from these trials were either negative or non-interpretable for recommendation due to poor study design and/or methodologic issues. In addition although proposed for treatment in general for soft tissue injury or for enhancing wound or fracture healing, there is insufficient literature to support interferential current stimulation for treatment of these conditions. There are no standardized protocols for the use of interferential therapy; and the therapy may vary according to the frequency of stimulation, the pulse duration, treatment time, and electrode-placement technique. Two recent randomized double-blind controlled trials suggested that ICS and horizontal therapy (HT) were effective in alleviating pain and disability in patients with chronic low back pain compared to placebo at 14 weeks, but not at 2 weeks. The placebo effect was remarkable at the beginning of the treatment but it tended to vanish within a couple of weeks. The studies suggested that their main limitation was the heterogeneity of the low back pain subjects, with the interventions performing much better for back pain due to previous multiple vertebral osteoporotic fractures, and further studies are necessary to determine effectiveness in low back pain from other causes. (Zambito, 2006) (Zambito, 2007) A recent industry-sponsored study in the Knee Chapter concluded that interferential current therapy plus patterned muscle stimulation (using the RS-4i Stimulator), has the potential to be a more effective treatment modality than conventional low-current TENS for osteoarthritis of the knee. (Burch, 2008) This recent RCT found that either electroacupuncture or interferential electrotherapy, in combination with shoulder exercises, is equally effective in treating frozen shoulder patients. It should be noted that this study only showed the combined treatment effects with exercise as compared to no treatment, so the entire positive effect could have been due to the use of exercise alone. (Cheing, 2008) See also Sympathetic therapy. See also TENS, chronic pain. While not recommended as an isolated intervention, patient selection criteria if interferential stimulation is to be used anyway. Possibly appropriate for the following conditions if it has documented and proven to be effective as directed or applied by the physician or a provider licensed to provide physical medicine:- Pain is ineffectively controlled due to diminished effectiveness of medications; or- Pain is ineffectively controlled with medications due to side effects; or- History of substance abuse; or- Significant pain from postoperative conditions limits the ability to perform exercise programs/physical therapy treatment; or- Unresponsive to conservative measures (e.g., repositioning, heat/ice, etc.). The provided documentation does not show intolerable medication side effects or diminished medication efficacy. There is no history of substance abuse and no postoperative situation that limits the ability to perform exercise programs or physical therapy. Therefore all criteria have not been met and the request is not certified.