

Case Number:	CM15-0104959		
Date Assigned:	06/09/2015	Date of Injury:	11/20/2014
Decision Date:	07/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/01/2015

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 53 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 11/20/14 from a twisting injury. She has a history of meniscal surgery five years ago. Currently she complains of left knee pain that is exacerbated with stair climbing and occasional pain with walking. The knee gives out at times. Physical exam shows mild swelling medial and inferior medial to patella and positive patello-femoral crepitus. Medications were salsalate, transdermal cream. Diagnoses include left knee sprain/ strain; osteoarthritis, left knee; synovitis, left knee. Treatments to date include physical therapy with improvement; home exercise. Diagnostics include MR arthrogram left knee (3/23/15) shows severe three compartment degenerative osteoarthritis, popliteal cyst, joint effusion, chondromalacia patella, medial collateral ligament thickening; x-rays of the left knee (12/02/14) showing severe degenerative osteoarthritis. In the progress note dated 4/27/15 the treating provider's plan of care includes a request for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulator unit for home use on left knee for osteoarthritis for 3 months' time.

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 Left Knee, for home use, 3 months: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation).

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation states: TENS, chronic pain (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. This treatment option is recommended as an adjunct to a program of evidence based functional restoration. In addition there must be a 30 day trial with objective measurements of improvement. These criteria have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.