

Case Number:	CM15-0142862		
Date Assigned:	08/03/2015	Date of Injury:	10/16/2014
Decision Date:	09/01/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/10/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/23/2015

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: California

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine

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 51 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 10-16-2014. He reported injury to his low back while carrying a ladder. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbago. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, epidural steroid injections, physical therapy, and medications. Currently, the injured worker complains of very significant groin and bilateral lower extremity pain. Symptoms were helped with Lyrica and pain medications but he ran out. It was documented that he received an evaluation with a recommendation for multi-level surgery (unspecified). He remained interested in more conservative measures and desired repeat epidural steroid injection. He stated that his case worker recommended a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit. Medications included Diazepam, Hydromorphone, and Lyrica. Exam noted moderate distress and limited ambulation, with guarded changes in position. The treatment plan included a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit and electrodes combo pack. Work status remained total temporary disability.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Purchase of TENS Unit and Electrodes Combo Pack for the management of low back pain as an outpatient: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Transcutaneous Electrotherapy Section Page(s): 114-116.

Decision rationale: The use of TENS for chronic pain is not recommended by the MTUS Guidelines as a primary treatment modality, but a one-month home-based TENS trial may be considered if used as an adjunct to a program of evidence-based functional restoration in certain conditions. A home based treatment trial of one month may be appropriate for neuropathic pain and CRPS II and for CRPS I. There is some evidence for use with neuropathic pain, including diabetic neuropathy and post-herpetic neuralgia. There is some evidence to support use with phantom limb pain. TENS may be a supplement to medical treatment in the management of spasticity in spinal cord injury. It may be useful in treating MS patients with pain and muscle spasm. The criteria for use of TENS include chronic intractable pain (for one of the conditions noted above) with documentation of pain of at least three months duration, evidence that other appropriate pain modalities have been tried (including medication) and failed, 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, and a treatment plan including specific short and long term goals of treatment. The injured worker does not meet the medical conditions that are listed by the MTUS Guidelines where a TENS unit may be beneficial. The TENS unit is also being used as a primary treatment modality, which is not supported by the guidelines. These criteria also specify that there is to be a treatment plan including specific short and long term goals of treatment with the TENS unit. There is no documentation of a trial with TENS and its benefits for the injured worker, therefore, the request for purchase of TENS unit and electrodes combo pack for the management of low back pain as an outpatient is determined to not be medically necessary.