MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0222643		
Date Assigned:	11/18/2015	Date of Injury:	03/06/2004
Decision Date:	12/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/04/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/12/2015

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 52-year-old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 3-06-2004. The injured worker was diagnosed as having low back pain, degeneration of cervical intervertebral disc, knee pain, and chronic pain syndrome. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, physical therapy, acupuncture, mental health treatment, and medications. On 10-23-2015, the injured worker complains of whole body pain, difficulty sleeping, depressed mood, and functional limitations, due to widespread pain. Medications included Allegra allergy, Aristocort, Clobetasol, Colchicine, Cymbalta, Gabapentin, Lidoderm, Metformin, Mirtazapine, Norco, Protonix, and Risperidone. Exam noted ambulation with a walker and a forward flexed posture. Tenderness was noted over the occipital foramen supraclavicular bilaterally. Tenderness was also noted over the lumbar paraspinal muscles overlying the facet joints and sacroiliac joints bilaterally. Physical exam of the skin noted "no rash, lesions, ulcer, induration, nodules, or jaundice". The assessment-plan noted "concern regarding her persistent rash and associated itching with the possibility that this may be related to her polypharmacy". A request was noted for transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit and electrodes combo pack. On 11-04-2015 Utilization Review non-certified, a request for purchase of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit and electrodes combo pack for low back.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS unit and Electrodes Combo Pack for low back for purchase: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Transcutaneous electrotherapy.

Decision rationale: The California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines states that TENS, for chronic pain, is 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. 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. However, it is recommended for a one-month trial to document subjective and objective gains form the treatment. There is no provided documentation of a one-month trial period with objective measurements of improvement in pain and function. Therefore, criteria have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.