

Case Number:	CM15-0080831		
Date Assigned:	05/01/2015	Date of Injury:	09/07/2006
Decision Date:	06/02/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/01/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/27/2015

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 56 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 9/7/06. He has reported initial complaints of back injury after pulling a pallet jack onto a truck when he tripped and fell backwards. The diagnoses have included lumbar degenerative disc disease (DDD) and cervical and thoracic degenerative disc disease (DDD). Treatment to date has included medications, conservative care, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), acupuncture, chiropractic, physical therapy and epidural steroid injection (ESI) times two with temporary benefit. The diagnostic testing that was performed included Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI). Currently, as per the physician progress note dated 1/15/15, the injured worker complains of continued low back, cervical and thoracic pain which has failed conservative care , medications and epidural steroid injection (ESI). Physical exam revealed trigger points in the lumbosacral spine and thoracic spine. The treatment plan was to continue with conservative care, pain management, and renew medications. Work status was permanent and stationary. The physician requested treatment included Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) patches x2 for chronic pain.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS patches x2: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation Page(s): 114.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS Page(s): 117.

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. However, it is recommended for a one-month trial to document subjective and objective gains from the treatment. There is no provided documentation of a one-month trial period with objective measurements of improvement. Therefore, criteria have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.