

Case Number:	CM15-0082904		
Date Assigned:	05/05/2015	Date of Injury:	03/08/2013
Decision Date:	06/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	04/09/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/30/2015

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: Iowa, Illinois, Hawaii

Certification(s)/Specialty: Preventive Medicine, Occupational Medicine, Public Health & General Preventive 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 62 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 03/08/2013. She reported symptoms of pain to the bilateral hands and wrists with the left side worse than the right secondary to repetitive work activities. The injured worker was diagnosed as having status post left open carpal tunnel release performed on 03/16/2015, left wrist carpal tunnel syndrome with tendinitis, left thumb basal joint and early degenerative joint disease, right carpal tunnel syndrome with tendinitis, de Quervain's tenosynovitis, right thumb basal joint early degenerative joint disease, status post probable right thumb basal joint arthroplasty, and status post right carpal tunnel release right trigger thumb and small trigger digit. Treatment to date has included hand therapy, x-rays, cortisone injection to the left hand and wrist, medication regimen, physical therapy, use of bilateral wrist splints, status post left carpal tunnel release performed on 03/16/2015, and status post right carpal tunnel release. In a progress note dated 03/25/2015 the treating physician reports complaints of pain to the left hand along with triggering of the right middle and ring fingers. The treating physician notes a slight limitation of the range of motion of the fingers and numbness. The treating physician requested a transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit for twelve months, but the documentation provided did not indicate the specific reason for this requested treatment.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS Unit x 12 months: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Interferential Current Stimulation, Transcutaneous electrotherapy Page(s): 54, 114-116, 118-120. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Pain, TENS chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation).

Decision rationale: MTUS states regarding TENS unit, "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." For pain, MTUS and ODG recommend TENS (with caveats) for neuropathic pain, phantom limb pain and CRPSII, spasticity, and multiple sclerosis. The medical records do not indicate any of the previous conditions. ODG further outlines recommendations for specific body parts: Low back: Not recommended as an isolated intervention Knee: Recommended as an option for osteoarthritis as adjunct treatment to a therapeutic exercise program Neck: Not recommended as a primary treatment modality for use in whiplash-associated disorders, acute mechanical neck disease or chronic neck disorders with radicular findings Ankle and foot: Not recommended Elbow: Not recommended Forearm, Wrist and Hand: Not recommended Shoulder: Recommended for post-stroke rehabilitation Medical records do not indicate conditions of the low back, knee, neck, ankle, elbow, or shoulders that meet guidelines. Of note, medical records do not indicate knee osteoarthritis. ODG further details criteria for the use of TENS for Chronic intractable pain (for the conditions noted above): (1) Documentation of pain of at least three months duration; (2) There is evidence that other appropriate pain modalities have been tried (including medication) and failed; (3) 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; rental would be preferred over purchase during this trial; (4) Other ongoing pain treatment should also be documented during the trial period including medication usage; (5) A treatment plan including the specific short- and long-term goals of treatment with the TENS unit should be submitted; (6) After a successful 1- month trial, continued TENS treatment may be recommended if the physician documents that the patient is likely to derive significant therapeutic benefit from continuous use of the unit over a long period of time. At this point purchase would be preferred over rental. (7) Use for acute pain (less than three months duration) other than post-operative pain is not recommended. (8) A 2-lead unit is generally recommended; if a 4-lead unit is recommended, there must be documentation of why this is necessary. The medical records do not satisfy the several criteria for selection specifically, lack of documented 1-month trial, lack of documented short-long term treatment goals with TENS unit, and unit use for acute (less than three months) pain. Additionally, guidelines recommend against the use of TENS for wrist, hand and forearm complaints. As such, the request for TENS Unit x 12 months is not medically necessary.