

Case Number:	CM14-0218721		
Date Assigned:	01/08/2015	Date of Injury:	04/09/2014
Decision Date:	03/06/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/10/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/30/2014

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: Texas, California
 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 58 year old male with a date of injury of April 9, 2014. Results of the injury include the low back and bilateral lower extremities. Diagnoses include multilevel intervertebral disc degeneration and sciatica. Treatment has included pain medication and two epidural steroid injections with little relief. Magnetic Resonance Imaging scan dated April 30, 2014 revealed diffuse central disc protrusion with facet hypertrophy causing moderate central and bilateral lateral stenosis. Progress report dated November 6, 2014 showed decreased range of motion of the lumbar spine secondary to pain. There was positive lumbar tenderness and paraspinal muscle spasm. The patient has had Hypo reactive reflexes and diminishes sensation in the planter aspect of the right foot. He had pain in low back at 9/10 and extending to bilateral LE Work status was noted as unable to return to work at the time. The treatment plan included pain medications and a TENS unit. The medication list include Neurontin, Prilosec, Tramadol, Cyclobenzaprine, Tylenol and Naprosyn. The patient has had EMG on 8/4/14 that revealed L4-5 radiculopathy.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

TENS unit for home use: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS, chronic pain (transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation) Page(s): page 114.

Decision rationale: According the cited guidelines, electrical stimulation (TENS), 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." Recommendations by types of pain: A home-based treatment trial of one month may be appropriate for neuropathic pain and CRPS II (conditions that have limited published evidence for the use of TENS as noted below), and for CRPS I (with basically no literature to support use). According the cited guidelines, Criteria for the use of TENS is: There is evidence that other appropriate pain modalities have been tried (including medication) and failed. A treatment plan including the specific short and long-term goals of treatment with the TENS unit should be submitted. Any evidence of neuropathic pain, CRPS I and CRPS II was not specified in the records provided. Patient has received an unspecified number of PT visits for this injury Detailed response to previous conservative therapy was not specified in the records provided. In addition a treatment plan including the specific short- and long-term goals of treatment with the TENS unit was not specified in the records provided. The records provided did not specify any recent physical therapy with active PT modalities or a plan to use TENS as an adjunct to a program of evidence- based functional restoration. Any evidence of diminished effectiveness of medications or intolerance to medications or history of substance abuse was not specified in the records provided. The medical necessity of the request for TENS unit for home use is not fully established for this patient.