

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0120520		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/05/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/18/2011
<b>Decision Date:</b>	09/02/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/02/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	06/22/2015

### 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:

This injured worker is a 53-year-old male who reported an industrial injury on 4-18-2011. His diagnoses included lumbar stenosis. Comorbid conditions include obesity (BMI 32.8). No current imaging studies were noted. His treatments included physical therapy, TENS unit and medication. The provider's progress notes of 5-22-2015 reported continued moderate (5/10) low back pain with radiation into right leg that was made worse by activity and made better by medication, recent trial of a TENS unit and physical therapy. Objective findings included decreased lumbar range-of-motion, lumbar paravertebral tenderness, and decreased sensation in the right lower extremity from heel to lumbar spine, and normal motor and reflex exam of the lower extremities. The physician's requests for treatments included a trans-cutaneous electrical stimulation unit for home use.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**TENS Unit (Purchase):** Overturned

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

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 3 Initial Approaches to Treatment, Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): Chp 3 pg 48; Chp 12 pg 300, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Transcutaneous electrotherapy Page(s): 114-27.

**Decision rationale:** Transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) is the use of electric current produced by a device placed on the skin to stimulate the nerves and which can result in lowering acute or chronic pain. There is a lot of conflicting evidence for use of TENS as well as many other physical modalities making it difficult to understand if TENS therapy is actually helping a patient or not. According to ACOEM guidelines, there is not enough science-based evidence to support using TENS in the treatment of chronic pain. On the other hand, many sources, including the California Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines (CPMTG), recommend at least a one-month trial of TENS to see if there is functional improvement by using this modality. However, this trial is limited to patients with neuropathic pain, chronic regional pain syndrome, phantom limb pain, spasticity, multiple sclerosis or in the first 30 days after surgery and the unit must be used in conjunction with other treatment modalities in an overall approach to functional restoration. A meta-analysis in 2007 suggested effectiveness of this modality for chronic musculoskeletal pain but random controlled studies are needed to verify this effectiveness. The MTUS lists specific criteria for use of this treatment. These criteria are met for this patient. He has chronic intractable pain, physical therapy, medications do not fully relieve his symptoms, and a trial of TENS was helpful in decreasing his pain. At this point in the care of this patient medical necessity for use of TENS IS MEDICALLY NECESSARY.