

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0061607		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	04/07/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	07/25/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	05/06/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	03/13/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	04/01/2015

### 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 58 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 7/25/13. The injured worker has complaints of bilateral knee pain. The diagnoses have included knee injury and status post knee replacement. Treatment to date has included bilateral knee replacements; transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit four times a day that is reported to be very helpful; medications are helpful a little with pain control and acupuncture helpful. The request was for additional acupuncture for bilateral knees X12 and transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation unit patches Z2 pair (dispensed 3/4/15).

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Additional Acupuncture for Bilateral Knees (x12): Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

**Decision rationale:** The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on acupuncture states: 1) "Acupuncture" is used as an option when pain medication is reduced or not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery. It is the insertion and removal of filiform needles to stimulate acupoints (acupuncture points). Needles may be inserted, manipulated, and retained for a period of time. Acupuncture can be used to reduce pain, reduce inflammation, increase blood flow, increase range of motion, decrease the side effect of medication-induced nausea, promote relaxation in an anxious patient, and reduce muscle spasm. Frequency and duration of acupuncture with electrical stimulation may be performed as follows: 1. Time to produce functional improvement 3-6 treatments. 2. Frequency: 1-3 times per week. 3. Optimum duration is 1-2 months. 4. Treatments may be extended if functional improvement is documented. The request for acupuncture is for a total of 12 sessions. This is in excess of the recommendations. The patient must demonstrate functional improvement in 3-6 treatments for more sessions to be certified. Therefore the request is in excess of the recommended initial treatment sessions without objective improvements which has not been demonstrated in the provided clinical documentation and not medically necessary.

**TENS Patches x 2 pair (Dispensed 03/04/2015):** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS Page(s): 114-115.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines TENS Page(s): 114.

**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 simply that the TENS unit has been helpful. Therefore criteria have not been met and the request is not medically necessary.

