

**REVIEWER'S REPORT**

**DATE OF REVIEW:** 07/30/07

**IRO CASE #:** TDI

**DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:**

360-degree lumbar fusion, L4/L5 and L5/S1, with 3-day inpatient length of stay.

**DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS OF REVIEWER:**

M.D., F.A.C.S., board certified orthopedic surgeon, with experience in the evaluation and treatment of patients suffering low back pain and leg pain.

**REVIEW OUTCOME:**

“Upon independent review, I find that the previous adverse determination or determinations should be (check only one):

Upheld (Agree)

Overturned (Disagree)

Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

**INFORMATION PROVIDED FOR REVIEW:**

1. TDI case assignment
2. Letters of denial
3. Designated doctor exam 07/13/07
4. Radiology reports:
  - 8/18/06 CT lumbar spine
  - 8/31/06 MRI lumbar spine
  - 8/28/07 lumbar spine – 6 views
5. 11/06/06 & discogram 11/29/06
6. Orthopedic op. notes 10/11 & 10/25/06 (injections)
7. Neurodiagnostic Study 09/20/06
8. Orthopedic consult 10/18/06 and follow up 12/16/06, 0215/07 & 06/28/07
9. Radiographic biomedical report 06/28/07
10. Chiropractic office visits 04/09/07 thru 07/09/07 (6 visits)

**SUMMARY OF INJURED EMPLOYEE CLINICAL HISTORY:**

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This female suffered a direct blow injury to her lumbar spine while on her job. A lumbar surgical procedure was performed on 02/17/06. No records of that procedure were provided. The patient underwent conservative non-operative care for low back pain and proximal leg pain. She was evaluated by a D.O. for the first time on 10/18/06, and subsequently by physician assistants. A discogram performed on 11/29/06 suggested two levels of degenerative disc disease with concordant pain at L4/L5 and L5/S1. Two-level 360-degree discectomy and fusion has been requested for preauthorization and denied on two prior occasions.

**ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION, INCLUDING CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT DECISION:**

Absent documented instability of the lumbosacral spine, neurocompressive manifestations, fracture or dislocation, spondylolysis with spondylolisthesis, and simple degenerative disc disease, surgery is ill advised in the first six months after the patient has become symptomatic. Over the next year and a half or more, non-operative methods are frequently effective in alleviating much of the patient's discomfort. This patient underwent a lumbar surgical procedure in February 2006, less than one year after the onset of low back pain. The nature of that surgical procedure is unclear. The results of that surgical procedure are not well documented. Reportedly she had a transient period of symptomatic relief, which is now no longer present.

The patient has at least two features that would suggest that she has a more than 60% chance of less than acceptable result from a surgical procedure for isolated degenerative disc disease at one or two levels. There is insufficient medical information to justify this surgical procedure at this time.

**DESCRIPTION AND SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE YOUR DECISION:**

- \_\_\_\_\_ACOEM-American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine UM Knowledgebase.
- \_\_\_\_\_AHCPR-Agency for Healthcare Research & Quality Guidelines.
- \_\_\_\_\_DWC-Division of Workers' Compensation Policies or Guidelines.
- \_\_\_\_\_European Guidelines for Management of Chronic Low Back Pain.
- \_\_\_\_\_Interqual Criteria.
- \_\_\_\_\_Medical judgment, clinical experience and expertise in accordance with accepted medical standards.
- \_\_\_\_\_Mercy Center Consensus Conference Guidelines.
- \_\_\_\_\_Milliman Care Guidelines.

**INDEPENDENT REVIEW INCORPORATED**

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- ODG-Official Disability Guidelines & Treatment Guidelines.
- Pressley Reed, The Medical Disability Advisor.
- Texas Guidelines for Chiropractic Quality Assurance & Practice Parameters.
- Texas TACADA Guidelines.
- TMF Screening Criteria Manual.
- Peer reviewed national accepted medical literature (provide a description).
- Other evidence-based, scientifically valid, outcome-focused guidelines:  
Frymoyer, The Adult Spine, Second Edition.

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**P. O. Box 215  
Round Rock, TX 78680  
(1908 Spring Hollow Path, 78681)  
Phone: 512.218-1114  
Fax: 512.287-4024**