

# US Resolutions Inc.

*An Independent Review Organization*

71 Court Street

Belfast, Maine 04915

## Notice of Independent Review Decision

**DATE OF REVIEW: NOVEMBER 25, 2008**

**IRO CASE #:**

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

Work Conditioning x 12 Sessions

### **A DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION**

Chiropractor  
AADEP Certified  
Whole Person Certified  
TWCC ADL Doctor  
Certified Electrodiagnostic Practitioner  
Clinical practice 10+ years in Chiropractic WC WH Therapy

### **REVIEW OUTCOME**

Upon independent review the reviewer finds that the previous adverse determination/adverse determinations should be:

- Upheld (Agree)
- Overturned (Disagree)
- Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

Provide a description of the review outcome that clearly states whether or not medical necessity exists for each of the health care services in dispute.

The reviewer finds that medical necessity exists for Work Conditioning x 12 Sessions.

### **INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW**

Adverse Determination Letters, 9/29/08, 10/16/08  
ODG Guidelines and Treatment Guidelines  
Cover Letter, 9/26/08, 10/15/08  
, 9/22/08, 10/9/08  
Dr. , DC, Work Conditioning Notes, Patient Note 9/22/08  
Letter to Patient from Employer, Office Depot, 8/22/08

## **PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:**

This xx-year-old woman was involved in an occupational injury on xx/xx/xx. She has undergone an MRI of the right shoulder and cervical spine. She has had an injection in the shoulder and cervical spine. The injured employee had an MRI of the lumbar spine and LESI. Upper extremity EMG/NCV was inconclusive of radiculopathy. The injured employee has been seen by a DDE and it was determined that she was not at MMI. Stay @ work program 90 has expired. Twelve (12) session of work conditioning are now being requested.

## **ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDE CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION**

This woman currently meets the required guidelines for 12-sessions of a work conditioning program, including:

- ODG page 38 “Work conditioning should be initiated when imminent return of a patient to modified or full duty is not an option, but the prognosis for returning the patient to work at completion of the program is at least fair to good.” (Length of visit 1-2 hours, frequency 2-5 visits, and duration 2-4 weeks.)
- Additionally, “*The best way to get an injured worker back to work is with a modified duty RTW program (see [ODG Capabilities & Activity Modifications for Restricted Work](#)), rather than a work conditioning program, but when an employer cannot provide this, a work conditioning program specific to the work goal may be helpful.*”
- The injured employee has a letter from her employer stating that she does have a job to return to following the program.
- The injured employee currently is not a surgical candidate.

The reviewer finds that medical necessity exists for Work Conditioning x 12 Sessions.

**Work conditioning** (See also [Procedure Summary](#) entry):  
10 visits over 8 weeks

### Work conditioning, work hardening

Recommended as an option, depending on the availability of quality programs. Physical conditioning programs that include a cognitive-behavioural approach plus intensive physical training (specific to the job or not) that includes aerobic capacity, muscle strength and endurance, and coordination; are in some way work-related; and are given and supervised by a physical therapy provider or a multidisciplinary team, seem to be effective in reducing the number of sick days for some workers with chronic back pain, when compared to usual care. However, there is no evidence of their efficacy for acute back pain. These programs should only be utilized for select patients with substantially lower capabilities than their job requires. **The best way to get an injured worker back to work is with a modified duty RTW program (see [ODG Capabilities & Activity Modifications for Restricted Work](#)), rather than a work conditioning program, but when an employer cannot provide this, a work conditioning program specific to the work goal may be helpful.** ([Schonstein-Cochrane, 2003](#)) Multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation has been shown in controlled studies to improve pain and function in patients with chronic back pain. However, specialized back pain rehabilitation centers are rare and only a few patients can participate in this therapy. It is unclear how to select who will benefit, what combinations are effective in individual cases, and how long treatment is beneficial, and if used, treatment should not exceed 2 weeks without demonstrated efficacy (subjective and objective gains). ([Lang, 2003](#)) Work Conditioning should

restore the client's physical capacity and function. Work Hardening should be work simulation and not just therapeutic exercise, plus there should also be psychological support. Work Hardening is an interdisciplinary, individualized, job specific program of activity with the goal of return to work. Work Hardening programs use real or simulated work tasks and progressively graded conditioning exercises that are based on the individual's measured tolerances. Work conditioning and work hardening are not intended for sequential use. They may be considered in the subacute stage when it appears that exercise therapy alone is not working and a biopsychosocial approach may be needed, but single discipline programs like work conditioning may be less likely to be effective than work hardening or [interdisciplinary programs](#). ([CARF, 2006](#)) ([Washington, 2006](#)) The need for work hardening is less clear for workers in sedentary or light demand work, since on the job conditioning could be equally effective, and an examination should demonstrate a gap between the current level of functional capacity and an achievable level of required job demands. As with all intensive rehab programs, measurable [functional improvement](#) should occur after initial use of WH. It is not recommended that patients go from work conditioning to work hardening to chronic pain programs, repeating many of the same treatments without clear evidence of benefit. ([Schonstein-Cochrane, 2008](#)) Use of Functional Capacity Evaluations (FCE's) to evaluate return-to-work may show mixed results. See the [Fitness For Duty Chapter](#).

**Criteria for admission to a Work Hardening Program:**

- (1) Work related musculoskeletal condition with functional limitations precluding ability to safely achieve current job demands, which are in the medium or higher demand level (i.e., not clerical/sedentary work). An FCE may be required showing consistent results with maximal effort, demonstrating capacities below an employer verified physical demands analysis (PDA).
- (2) After treatment with an adequate trial of physical or occupational therapy with improvement followed by plateau, but not likely to benefit from continued physical or occupational therapy, or general conditioning.
- (3) Not a candidate where surgery or other treatments would clearly be warranted to improve function.
- (4) Physical and medical recovery sufficient to allow for progressive reactivation and participation for a minimum of 4 hours a day for three to five days a week.
- (5) A defined return to work goal agreed to by the employer & employee:
  - (a) A documented specific job to return to with job demands that exceed abilities, OR
  - (b) Documented on-the-job training
- (6) The worker must be able to benefit from the program (functional and psychological limitations that are likely to improve with the program). Approval of these programs should require a screening process that includes file review, interview and testing to determine likelihood of success in the program.
- (7) The worker must be no more than 2 years past date of injury. Workers that have not returned to work by two years post injury may not benefit.
- (8) Program timelines: Work Hardening Programs should be completed in 4 weeks consecutively or less.
- (9) Treatment is not supported for longer than 1-2 weeks without evidence of patient compliance and demonstrated significant gains as documented by subjective and objective gains and measurable improvement in functional abilities.
- (10) Upon completion of a rehabilitation program (e.g. work hardening, work conditioning, outpatient medical rehabilitation) neither re-enrollment in nor repetition of the same or similar rehabilitation program is medically warranted for the same condition or injury.

**ODG Physical Therapy Guidelines – Work Conditioning**

10 visits over 8 weeks

See also [Physical therapy](#) for general PT guidelines.

And, as with all physical therapy programs, Work Conditioning participation does not preclude concurrently being at work.

**A DESCRIPTION AND THE SOURCE OF THE SCREENING CRITERIA OR OTHER CLINICAL BASIS USED TO MAKE THE 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 JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS**
- MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES**
- MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES**
- 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 NATIONALLY ACCEPTED MEDICAL LITERATURE (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)**
- OTHER EVIDENCE BASED, SCIENTIFICALLY VALID, OUTCOME FOCUSED GUIDELINES (PROVIDE A DESCRIPTION)**