

Applied Assessments LLC

An Independent Review Organization
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Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: 10/09/08

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

Chronic pain management program 5x2

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

Clinical psychologist; Member American Academy of Pain Management

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)

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

OD Guidelines

Denial Letters 8/18/08 and 9/4/08

Records from : Initial Diagnostic Screen 4/2/07, CPMP Goals & Objectives 8/1/08, Progress Report 8/1/08

FCE 7/9/08

BBHI 5/31/08

Records from : 5/29/08 thru 7/15/08, PT Daily Notes 5/16/08 thru 7/1/08

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The claimant is a xx year-old male who sustained a work-related injury on xx/xx/xx. Patient was performing his usual job duties as a , when records indicate he sustained a low back injury attempting to move a 400lb drum. He felt

immediate onset of low back pain, and was taken off work. Patient attempted to return to work at a later time for approximately three weeks, but pain escalated and he was placed back on restriction from work. He is currently status post lumbar surgery. Patient is not at MMI and has not returned to work.

Over the course of his treatment, patient received x-rays, lumbar MRI (positive for disk herniation at L4-L5, FCE), and has been treated conservatively with active and passive physical therapy, medication management, chiropractic adjustments, and individual therapy x 6, with no overall improvement in his pain. Additional surgery is not recommended. Patient is currently receiving Vicodin, Anaprox DS, and Skelaxin for conditions related to his on-the-job injury.

At the time of the initial eval for CPMP, claimant was exhibiting the following injury-related symptoms: low back pain that is rated "severe" (6/10 VAS) by the patient, difficulty sleeping, difficulty with lying down or sitting, decreased ADL's, disability mindset, poor pain coping skills, negative self-talk, fear-avoidance beliefs, mild to moderate depression, and mild anxiety. His physical demand level per the FCE is currently at a sedentary level. Current GAF is 50 with prior GAF being 80. Psychosocial stressors include: physical health, educational/school (patient has 6th grade education), occupational/work, economic/financial, and housing/living circumstances. Patient has been referred for CPMP by his treating physician and goals include: reduction in depressed/anxious symptoms, reduction in perception of pain, implementation of pain management coping strategies, improved sleep, improved physical and cognitive functioning, narcotic extinction, and development of a realistic RTW plan. This request is for the initial 10 days of a chronic pain management program.

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

Patient has continued low back pain, and has received evaluations from a medical doctor, a psychotherapist, and physical therapist, all of whom agree patient needs a CPMP. Previous methods of treating the pain have been unsuccessful, and patient is not a candidate for further surgery. Patient appears to have followed all doctor recommendations to this point, and reports motivation to continue to follow recommendations that would improve him so he can go back to work. He has a significant loss of ability to function independently resulting from the chronic pain, both physical and behavioral, and there are no reported contraindications in the records that have not been discussed with the patient. Per ODG, patient has followed a stepped-care approach to treatment, and is now in the tertiary stages of his treatment.

Therefore, the current request is deemed medically reasonable and necessary, per ODG criteria. Twenty days is generally established as meeting the minimum requirements for most patients, given that subjective and objective functional improvements are happening. Patient is not currently at clinical MMI, but should be at the end of the program.

ODG recommends CPMP for this type of patient, and ODG supports using the BDI and BAI, among other tests, to establish baselines for treatment. [Bruns D. Colorado Division of Workers' Compensation, Comprehensive Psychological Testing: Psychological Tests Commonly Used in the Assessment of Chronic Pain Patients. 2001.](#)

See also:

Psychological treatment: Recommended for appropriately identified patients during treatment for chronic pain. Psychological intervention for chronic pain includes setting goals, determining appropriateness of treatment, conceptualizing a patient's pain beliefs and coping styles, assessing psychological and cognitive function, and addressing co-morbid mood disorders (such as depression, anxiety, panic disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder). Cognitive behavioral therapy and self-regulatory treatments have been found to be particularly effective. Psychological treatment incorporated into pain treatment has been found to have a positive short-term effect on pain interference and long-term effect on return to work. The following "stepped-care" approach to pain management that involves psychological intervention has been suggested:

Step 1: Identify and address specific concerns about pain and enhance interventions that emphasize self-management. The role of the psychologist at this point includes education and training of pain care providers in how to screen for patients that may need early psychological intervention.

Step 2: Identify patients who continue to experience pain and disability after the usual time of recovery. At this point a consultation with a psychologist allows for screening, assessment of goals, and further treatment options, including brief individual or group therapy.

Step 3: Pain is sustained in spite of continued therapy (including the above psychological care). Intensive care may be required from mental health professions allowing for a multidisciplinary treatment approach. See also [Multi-disciplinary pain programs](#). See also [ODG Cognitive Behavioral Therapy \(CBT\) Guidelines for low back problems](#). ([Otis, 2006](#)) ([Townsend, 2006](#)) ([Kerns, 2005](#)) ([Flor, 1992](#)) ([Morley, 1999](#)) ([Ostelo, 2005](#))

Criteria for the general use of multidisciplinary pain management programs:2008

Outpatient pain rehabilitation programs may be considered medically necessary when all of the following criteria are met:

(1) An adequate and thorough evaluation has been made, including baseline functional testing so follow-up with the same test can note [functional improvement](#); (2) Previous methods of treating the chronic pain have been unsuccessful and there is an absence of other options likely to result in significant clinical improvement; (3) The patient has a significant loss of ability to function independently resulting from the chronic pain; (4) The patient is not a candidate where surgery or other treatments would clearly be warranted; (5) The patient exhibits motivation to change, and is willing to forgo secondary gains, including disability payments to effect this change; & (6) Negative predictors of success above have been addressed.

Integrative summary reports that include treatment goals, progress assessment and stage of treatment, must be made available upon request and at least on a bi-weekly basis during the course of the treatment program. Treatment is not suggested for longer than 2 weeks without evidence of demonstrated efficacy as documented by subjective and objective gains. Total treatment duration should generally not exceed 20 sessions. ([Sanders, 2005](#)) Treatment duration in excess of 20 sessions requires a clear rationale for the specified extension and reasonable goals to be achieved. The patient should be at MMI at the conclusion.

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)