

# Clear Resolutions Inc.

An Independent Review Organization  
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## NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW DECISION

**DATE OF REVIEW:** December 1, 2009

**IRO CASE #:**

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

Chronic Pain Management Program x 10 Sessions

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

MD, Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation  
Board Certified in 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**

ODG Guidelines and Treatment Guidelines

Adverse Determination Letters, 10/6/09, 10/30/09

Rebuttal/Request for IRO, 11/9/09

MD, 10/20/09, 9/17/09

Multidisciplinary Chronic Pain Management Physical Therapy Goals, 9/24/09

Appeal Letter, 8/8/09

FCE, 9/17/09

Behavioral Medicine Evaluation, Dr. 9/14/09

Dr. 6/11/09, 8/14/07

Dr., DO, 4/28/09

Lumbar Myelogram and Post CT, 5/8/08

Lumbar Myelogram, 10/11/07

Lumbar MRI, 6/11/07

Cervical MRI, 9/4/07

Thoracic MRI, 9/8/08

EMG/NCS, 9/25/07

Diagnostic Ultrasound, 9/12/07

Request for Pre-Authorization, 9/24/09

Weekly Schedule, undated

Physical Assessment Evaluation and Treatment Plan, 7/29/09

Evaluation Centers, DDE, MD, 9/18/09

## **PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY SUMMARY**

This man was injured on xx/xx/xx when the truck he was driving rolled over. He subsequently developed neck, shoulder and back pain with paresthesias in the hands and feet. He had a prior unrelated lumbar discectomy 15 years or so earlier. He has a history of diabetes. Electrodiagnostic studies in 9/07 showed a right S1 radiculopathy and median and ulnar sensory nerve demyelination at the wrists. A cervical MRI in 9/07 showed a focal disc protrusion at C3/4 with relative stenosis, and disc bulges at C5/6 and C6/7. There was no comment in the radiology report of the C5/6 level. The lumbar CT myelogram (5/08) a month after the lumbar fusion showed the post op changes from L4 to S1. There was no nerve compression described. An MRI in 2007 was reported as showing facet hypertrophy, central stenosis and "severe bilateral neural foraminal stenosis at L5/S1." A discogram dated 2/08 reportedly showed fissuring in the discs at L4/5 and L5/S1. He did not improve with a fusion 4/08 or prior epidural injections. There were cervical and lumbar diagnostic ultrasounds that reportedly showed inflammation of the facet joints. He had an FCE in 9/09. The overall interpretation was that he had a PDL below sedentary, much less than he needs for the job of truck driver. He had limited sitting time of up to 15 minutes. Lifting and carrying were at 10 pounds/20 pounds at most. He demonstrated slow motion (kinesiophobia). The therapist described "good effort." There was some variability in the knee and lumbar motion studies as noted on the graphs. Psychological assessment on 9/14/09 included comments the patient did not feel he would be able to perform the same job. Psychological studies showed perception of need for further treatment and pain medication, severe anxiety, depression, and kinesiophobia. He was felt to be at statutory MMI on 5/19/09 with 10% impairment.

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

This man suffered a major injury in xx/xxxx. The examinations did not describe any neurological loss. He has symptoms and has not improved with medical and surgical treatment. There appears to be no further treatment available to him. The FCE described significant kinesiophobia and anxiety issues with motion combined with generalized debilitation. There are strong psychological difficulties described in the behavioral assessment. The patient's injury occurred a little over two years ago. Regarding his future employment, the records reflect that the patient realizes he may not be able to resume being a truck driver, but other options have not been discussed. He is not a candidate for surgery. After a review of the medical records and the ODG criteria, the reviewer finds that this patient meets the criteria to warrant the initial participation in a chronic pain program. The reviewer finds that medical necessity exists for Chronic Pain Management Program x 10 Sessions.

Criteria for the general use of multidisciplinary pain management programs

Outpatient pain rehabilitation programs may be considered medically necessary in the following circumstances

(1) The patient has a chronic pain syndrome, with evidence of loss of function that persists beyond three months and has evidence of three or more of the following: (a) Excessive dependence on health-care providers, spouse, or family; (b) Secondary physical deconditioning due to disuse and/or fear-avoidance of physical activity due to pain; (c) Withdrawal from social activities or normal contact with others, including work, recreation, or other social contacts; (d) Failure to restore preinjury function after a period of disability such that the physical capacity is insufficient to pursue work, family, or recreational needs; (e) Development of psychosocial sequelae that limits function or recovery after the initial incident, including anxiety, fear-avoidance, depression, sleep disorders, or nonorganic illness behaviors (with a reasonable probability to respond to treatment intervention); (f) The diagnosis is not primarily a personality disorder or psychological condition without a physical component; (g) There is evidence of continued use of prescription pain medications (particularly those that may result in tolerance, dependence or abuse) without evidence of improvement in pain or function

(2) Previous methods of treating chronic pain have been unsuccessful and there is an

absence of other options likely to result in significant clinical improvement

(3) An adequate and thorough multidisciplinary evaluation has been made. This should include pertinent validated diagnostic testing that addresses the following: (a) A physical exam that rules out conditions that require treatment prior to initiating the program. All diagnostic procedures necessary to rule out treatable pathology, including imaging studies and invasive injections (used for diagnosis), should be completed prior to considering a patient a candidate for a program. The exception is diagnostic procedures that were repeatedly requested and not authorized. Although the primary emphasis is on the work-related injury, underlying non-work related pathology that contributes to pain and decreased function may need to be addressed and treated by a primary care physician prior to or coincident to starting treatment; (b) Evidence of a screening evaluation should be provided when addiction is present or strongly suspected; (c) Psychological testing using a validated instrument to identify pertinent areas that need to be addressed in the program (including but not limited to mood disorder, sleep disorder, relationship dysfunction, distorted beliefs about pain and disability, coping skills and/or locus of control regarding pain and medical care) or diagnoses that would better be addressed using other treatment should be performed; (d) An evaluation of social and vocational issues that require assessment

(4) If a goal of treatment is to prevent or avoid controversial or optional surgery, a trial of 10 visits (80 hours) may be implemented to assess whether surgery may be avoided.

(5) If a primary reason for treatment in the program is addressing possible substance use issues, an evaluation with an addiction clinician may be indicated upon entering the program to establish the most appropriate treatment approach (pain program vs. substance dependence program). This must address evaluation of drug abuse or diversion (and prescribing drugs in a non-therapeutic manner). In this particular case, once drug abuse or diversion issues are addressed, a 10-day trial may help to establish a diagnosis, and determine if the patient is not better suited for treatment in a substance dependence program. Addiction consultation can be incorporated into a pain program. If there is indication that substance dependence may be a problem, there should be evidence that the program has the capability to address this type of pathology prior to approval.

(6) Once the evaluation is completed, a treatment plan should be presented with specifics for treatment of identified problems, and outcomes that will be followed

(7) There should be documentation that the patient has motivation to change, and is willing to change their medication regimen (including decreasing or actually weaning substances known for dependence). There should also be some documentation that the patient is aware that successful treatment may change compensation and/or other secondary gains. In questionable cases, an opportunity for a brief treatment trial may improve assessment of patient motivation and/or willingness to decrease habituating medications.

(8) Negative predictors of success (as outlined above) should be identified, and if present, the pre-program goals should indicate how these will be addressed

(9) If a program is planned for a patient that has been continuously disabled for greater than 24 months, the outcomes for the necessity of use should be clearly identified, as there is conflicting evidence that chronic pain programs provide return-to-work beyond this period. These other desirable types of outcomes include decreasing post-treatment care including medications, injections and surgery

(10) Treatment is not suggested for longer than 2 weeks without evidence of compliance and significant demonstrated efficacy as documented by subjective and objective gains. (Note: Patients may get worse before they get better. For example, objective gains may be moving joints that are stiff from lack of use, resulting in increased subjective pain.) However, it is also not suggested that a continuous course of treatment be interrupted at two weeks solely to document these gains, if there are preliminary indications that they are being made on a concurrent basis.

(11) Integrative summary reports that include treatment goals, compliance, progress assessment with objective measures and stage of treatment, must be made available upon request at least on a bi-weekly basis during the course of the treatment program

(12) Total treatment duration should generally not exceed 20 full-day (160 hours) sessions (or the equivalent in part-day sessions if required by part-time work, transportation, childcare, or comorbidities). (Sanders, 2005) Treatment duration in excess of 160 hours requires a clear rationale for the specified extension and reasonable goals to be achieved. Longer durations require individualized care plans explaining why improvements cannot be achieved without an extension as well as evidence of documented improved outcomes from the facility (particularly in terms of the specific outcomes that are to be addressed)

(13) At the conclusion and subsequently, neither re-enrollment in repetition of the same or similar rehabilitation program (e.g. work hardening, work conditioning, out-patient medical rehabilitation) is medically warranted for the same condition or injury (with possible exception for a medically necessary organized detox program). Prior to entry into a program the evaluation should clearly indicate the necessity for the type of program required, and providers should determine upfront which program their patients would benefit more from. A chronic pain program should not be considered a “stepping stone” after less intensive programs, but prior participation in a work conditioning or work hardening program does not preclude an opportunity for entering a chronic pain program if otherwise indicated

(14) Suggestions for treatment post-program should be well documented and provided to the referral physician. The patient may require time-limited, less intensive post-treatment with the program itself. Defined goals for these interventions and planned duration should be specified

(15) Post-treatment medication management is particularly important. Patients that have been identified as having substance abuse issues generally require some sort of continued addiction follow-up to avoid relapse.

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

ACOEM-AMERICA 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)