



DATE OF REVIEW: 11/16/2009

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

Request for one pair of digital binaural hearing instruments

DESCRIPTION OF QUALIFICATIONS OF REVIEWER:

M.D., Family Practice physician, board certified by the American Board of Family Practice, with extensive experience in hearing problems in patients and the use of hearing aids in such patients

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)

The request for digital hearing aids instead of the conventional hearing aids is not appropriate in this particular case.

INFORMATION PROVIDED FOR REVIEW:

1. TDI insurance information
2. Review and UR determination dated 09/29/09 by Utilization Review Unit
3. Hearing Center papers
4. Company request for IRO
5. Letter dated 10/08/09 to D.O., from the Utilization Review Unit
6. URA records including Hearing Center
7. 09/29/09 letter from D.O., D.P.M.
8. Patient’s audiogram and an article from Hearing Review entitled “Customer Satisfaction with Subjective Benefit with High Performance Hearing Aids”
9. Report of the medical evaluation

INJURED EMPLOYEE CLINICAL HISTORY (Summary):

The patient complains of hearing loss, right ear greater than left ear, popping, and ear ringing. An audiogram revealed mild hearing loss in the lower mid-frequencies in the left ear and severe loss in the high frequencies in the left ear. In the ear there was moderate loss of hearing in the low and mid-frequencies and severe hearing loss in the high frequencies.

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

This patient's hearing loss is a very common problem. Conventional hearing aids have been used for years with adequate results in many, many patients. There is a body of research showing that the conventional hearing aids are a cost-effective option as opposed to the digital hearing aids with little data to support increased efficacy with the digital hearing aids. Although there is some information in the literature suggesting that patients with this type of hearing loss do somewhat better with digital hearing aids, this improved hearing is only of a mild degree, and the digital hearing aids are only needed in the event of failure to adequately hear with the conventional hearing aids, which are far more cost effective and very often perfectly adequate treatment for a condition such as in this case. It is suggested that the patient use the conventional hearing aids as opposed to the digital hearing aids, and if he or she feels the need for the digital devices, he or she could spend the extra money to purchase those. It is likely that the marginal improvement would not be worth the significantly increased cost.

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

(Check any of the following that were used in the course of your review.)

- 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.
- 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 (provide a description.)