

Wren Systems

An Independent Review Organization
71 Court Street
Belfast, ME 04915
Phone: (512) 553-0533
Fax: (207) 470-1064
Email: manager@wrensystems.com

NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW DECISION

DATE OF REVIEW:

Sep/28/2009

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:

M.D., Board Certified Orthopedic Surgeon

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)

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY SUMMARY

The claimant is a female. She reported injuries on xx/xx/xx when she turned suddenly, twisted her left knee and fell to the ground. The diagnosis was a torn anterior cruciate ligament in the left knee. Conservative treatment measures provided no significant improvement. The records indicated the claimant ceased employment on 03/17/08 and began individualized psychotherapy for the diagnoses of major depressive disorder, severe anxiety, and panic disorder. An office note on 05/21/08 indicated a history of substance abuse and a current smoking habit. The claimant subsequently underwent arthroscopic surgery on 08/19/08 with partial medial and lateral meniscectomy, anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction with anterior tibialis allograft and application of platelet gel. She attended postoperative therapy but continued to report pain along with depression. According to the clinical records reviewed, the claimant fell down some stairs on xx/xx/xx. She reported left knee pain and swelling and lower back pain. MRI of the left knee on 11/12/08 noted no evidence of graft disruption. There was an extensive, complex medial meniscus tear and large joint effusion noted as well as suspicion for full thickness chondral defect at the medial tibial plateau. Left knee arthroscopy was recommended but not approved by the insurance carrier as unrelated to the initial injury. Dr. saw the claimant for pain management consult on 02/04/09. The claimant continued with individual psychotherapy sessions and completed four sessions of biofeedback. Her medications as of 06/17/09 noted Robaxin, Neurontin and hydrocodone. Examination noted slightly decreased lumbar motion with decreased muscle motor testing in the left lower extremity. Advanced physical therapy was advised. A functional capacity evaluation on 07/16/09 noted good effort with the claimant safely able to lift and carry up to thirty pounds. Left knee flexion was to 60 degrees with extension to zero. Ten sessions of a chronic pain management program were prescribed on 08/07/09.

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

Records indicate there are ongoing pain complaints in this case. The current functional capacity evaluation suggests function up to a medium level. It is unclear from the records as to why this claimant has not progressed toward work as a cashier. The records show that the psychologic components of her complaints have been addressed with visits spanning 06/08 through 07/09. No recent psychologic testing was made available in the records to identify specific areas that would be addressed in a chronic pain program, which is a requirement of the guidelines. This claimant does not meet ODG criteria for multidisciplinary pain management. There is nothing in the records to substantiate why the criteria should not be followed in this case. The reviewer finds that medical necessity does not exist for Chronic Pain Management Program x 10 Sessions.

Official Disability Guidelines Treatment in Worker's Comp, 14th edition, 2009 updates, Pain Chapter

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)