



CLAIMS EVAL

*Utilization Review and
Peer Review Services*

Notice of Independent Review Decision-WCN

CLAIMS EVAL REVIEWER REPORT - WCN

DATE OF REVIEW: 8-11-10

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

L5-S1 decompression & TLIF LOS 3 63056, 22612/30 22842, 22851, 20936/31/
(PNR77002)

Bone growth stimulator E0748,
Lumbar brace L0631

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

American Board of Orthopaedic Surgery-Board Certified

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.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

- 10-2-09 MRI of the lumbar spine.
- 10-9-09 MRI of the thoracic spine.
- 12-29-09, DO. , office visit.

- 12-31-09, MD., office visit.
- MD., office visits on 1-13-10, 1-26-10, 2-23-10, 2-24-10, 3-5-10, 3-31-10, 5-12-10, 6-2-10.
- 1-20-10 CT scan of the lumbar spine.
- 2-18-10, MD., performed an EMG/NCS of the lower extremities.
- 3-18-10 Surgery performed by Dr..
- 5-28-10 MRI scan with and without contrast of the lumbar spine.
- 6-14-10, EdD., performed a psychological evaluation.
- 6-24-10, MD., performed a Utilization Review.
- 6-29-10 Letter provided by Dr..
- 7-12-10, MD., performed a Utilization Review.
- 7-16-10 Letter provided by Dr..

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

10-2-09 MRI of the lumbar spine showed degenerative disc disease, facet atrophy and minimal central canal stenosis is seen at L5-S1. There is some mild degenerative endplate changes seen in the lumbar spine.

10-9-09 MRI of the thoracic spine showed very minimal curvature of the thoracic spine.

On 12-29-09, the claimant was evaluated by, DO. The claimant reported low back pain that radiates to both feet. The claimant reports that the pain is shooting through his whole body and that it became worse while he was standing and walking today. He feels depression. The evaluator recommended the claimant be seen at the ER as his pain was inconsistent with history and out of proportion to exam findings.

On 12-31-09, the claimant was evaluated by, MD. The claimant complained of mid and low back pain as well as right leg pain. He reports the pain is worse than the last visit. The claimant is currently not working. On exam, the claimant has 5/5 motor strength in the lower extremities. Sensation was subjectively intact. DTR are 1 to 2+ patellar bilaterally, 1+ Achilles on the right and 1 to 2+ Achilles on the left. His gait is antalgic with the use of a cane for support. The evaluator recommended referral to a spine specialist for further evaluation. The claimant was given a prescription for Robaxin, Ibuprofen and Hydrocodone. The claimant has been seeing Dr. for a few sessions, but has not seen any improvement.

1-13-10, MD., the claimant is a male who is seen today for evaluation of low back and right leg pain that resulted from a workplace injury sustained on. At that time he was performing a lifting activity when he slipped and fell with the acute onset of the pain. He was on light duty until December 29, 2009 and at that time had to leave work due to his pain. He has a feeling of numbness that can affect either foot and occasionally feels weakness in the legs. He states that a few weeks ago while at work he sustained exacerbation of the right leg pain and heard a popping sensation in his back. He also notes that he has had two episodes of bowel incontinence shortly after that episode a few weeks ago. He also notes inability to obtain an erection. He has participated in some therapy activities and some episodes of spinal decompression but

has not had surgery. Lumbar x-rays performed today were normal with minimal narrowing at L5-S1. The evaluator reported the claimant may be describing low back and right leg pain on the basis of sacroiliac dysfunction. That problem could be consistent with the pop he heard in his back and it is certainly the case that sacroiliac pathology can lead to pain referral into the leg. Although MRI scan is negative, he describes markedly increasing pain over the past few weeks and had a few episodes of bowel incontinence. That incontinence may also represent a pain manifestation but the evaluator believed that additional evaluation is certainly reasonable to rule out new lumbar pathology that could cause the incontinence on a neurologic basis. The evaluator would like to obtain a lumbar CT scan.

CT scan of the lumbar spine dated 1-20-10 showed at L4-L5 a moderate midline disc protrusion with moderate thecal sac indentation. The canal appears ample in size. At the L5-S1, there is a mild broad based disc protrusion lateralizing to the right where there is potential for neural impingement upon the S1 nerve root within the distal aspect of the neural foramina.

Follow up with Dr. on 1-26-10 notes the claimant's CT scan was performed. Dr. reported the CT showed a broadly based protrusion at L5-S1 somewhat more to the right rather than the left and in a position to potentially cause nerve root compression. On examination, straight leg raising on the right is positive to the right ankle. Straight leg raising on the left causes only some low back pain. He has decreased sensation in the right foot although I cannot delineate whether it is more in an L5 or an S1 distribution. Dr. recommended a lumbar epidural steroid injection.

On 2-18-10, MD., performed an EMG/NCS of the lower extremities which showed prolonged right tibial H reflex as compared to the left suggestive of a chronic/old right S1 radiculopathy.

Follow up with Dr. on 2-23-10 notes the claimant did not benefit from the lumbar epidural steroid injection. On exam, straight leg raising on the left is completely negative. Straight leg raising on the right is positive to the right foot. Reflexes and strength are normal. He has numbness that can now be identified as being located on the plantar aspect of the right foot. The claimant was interested in hearing about surgical intervention.

On 2-24-10, Dr. reported he reviewed the EMG that was performed on 2-18-10 which was consistent with a chronic right S1 radiculopathy.

On 3-5-10, Dr. performed a preoperative evaluation.

On 3-18-10, the claimant underwent surgery performed by Dr.: Right L5-S1 discectomy and decompression.

Postop follow up with Dr. on 3-31-10 notes that the claimant was doing reasonable well. Sutures were removed.

On 5-12-10 Dr. reported the claimant states that he has gradually developed recurrent right leg pain and dorsal foot irritation. He has been participating in therapy. On exam, straight leg raising on the right appears to provoke leg pain again. Straight leg raising on the left is negative. Reflexes are equal bilaterally. There is a subjectively decreased sensation on the right dorsal foot. Prior postoperative are consistent with moderate L5-S1 narrowing. Assessment was possible recurrent disc herniation. The evaluator recommended a gadolinium enhanced MRI scan.

MRI scan with and without contrast dated 5-28-10 showed postop change at the L5-S1 level with enhancement suggesting granulation tissue contributing to mild right neural foramina narrowing and central canal narrowing at this level. At L4-L5, there is approximately 4 mm central disc protrusion abutting the ventral aspect of the thecal sac.

Follow up with Dr. on 6-2-10 notes the claimant had the MRI scan. The evaluator reported he reviewed the MRI scan by report and by actual study. He has a small L4 L5 protrusion but is not particularly in a position to cause this type of leg pain. He has the expected right L5-S1 postoperative scar tissue. There is no specific evidence for recurrent disc herniation. Repeat lateral flexion and extension x-rays were obtained today he has some additional disc space narrowing to the extent that he has significant collapse. He has mild instability on flexion which corrects in extension. Examination is unchanged. The claimant was provided with a prescription for Norco 10/325 mg. the evaluator recommended repeat discectomy is not going to be helpful. He has only the expected postoperative scar tissue of the surgical site. He could consider L5-S1 posterior instrumented fusion in an attempt to help this post laminectomy syndrome. Other levels are normal. The L5-S1 level is quite narrow, has been subjected to discectomy, and has mild instability. The claimant would like the procedure performed.

6-14-10, EdD., performed a psychological evaluation. The evaluator felt the claimant was "okay" for lumbar surgery. The prognosis for returning to work is good. The expected clinical response is good.

6-24-10, MD., performed a Utilization Review. As per medical records, the patient had right L5-S1 Discectomy and decompression on 3-18-10. In the clinical report dated 6/2/10, the patient complains of popping sensation in his back which suddenly exacerbates right leg pain and numbness on the plantar aspect of the right foot. On exam there is a positive straight leg raise test on the right and decreased range of motion. The MRI scan of the lumbar spine on 5-28-10 showed mild right neural foramina narrowing and central canal narrowing, at the level L4-L5, there is a four millimeter central disc protrusion abutting the ventral aspect of the thecal sac. Extension/flexion X-Rays show mild instability on flexion which corrects on extension. He has tried physical therapy, medication, and epidural steroid injection prior to initial surgery without relief. However there is no documentation of conservative therapy after initial surgery or rationale why it was not attempted. There is also only mild instability on X-Ray findings and no mention of surgery creating instability. As the surgical request is not indicated for this patient, a three days length of stay, Bone Growth Stimulator, and

post-operative Lumbar Brace is neither warranted nor necessary at this time. Furthermore, the specifications for the use of the requested unit are not provided for review, which include the timing, frequency, and duration of use. With this, the medical necessity of the request is deemed not fully established at this point.

On 6-29-10, Dr. reported that surgery has been denied. The evaluator reviewed the information and still feels that surgery is reasonable. He respectfully requested reconsideration.

On 7-12-10, MD., performed a Utilization Review. The evaluator reported that ODG does not support lumbar fusion in the absence of instability with relative angular motion greater than 20 degrees and intersegmental movement of more than 4.5 mm. The request was not certified.

On 7-16-10 Dr. reports that surgery has been denied twice. The claimant was advised to file an IRO review.

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

Medical records reflect the claimant developed recurrent symptoms of back and right leg pain following the initial surgical procedure. There is no documentation of post-op non-surgical care following the surgery. The alleged instability is vague as to degree. The psychological evaluation does not appear to be complete. There are no objective findings to support a fusion. Therefore, this request is not reasonable or medically necessary.

ODG-TWC, last update 8-5-10 Occupational Disorders of the Low Back – Lumbar Fusion: Not recommended for patients who have less than six months of failed recommended conservative care unless there is objectively demonstrated severe structural instability and/or acute or progressive neurologic dysfunction, but recommended as an option for spinal fracture, dislocation, spondylolisthesis or frank neurogenic compromise, subject to the selection criteria outlined in the section below entitled, "Patient Selection Criteria for Lumbar Spinal Fusion," after 6 months of conservative care. For workers' comp populations, see also the heading, "Lumbar fusion in workers' comp patients." After screening for psychosocial variables, outcomes are improved and fusion may be recommended for degenerative disc disease with spinal segment collapse with or without neurologic compromise after 6 months of compliance with recommended conservative therapy. [For spinal instability criteria, see AMA Guides (Andersson, 2000)] For complete references, see separate document with all studies focusing on Fusion (spinal). There is limited scientific evidence about the long-term effectiveness of fusion for degenerative disc disease compared with natural history, placebo, or conservative treatment. Studies conducted in order to compare different surgical techniques have shown success for fusion in carefully selected patients. (Gibson-Cochrane, 2000) (Savolainen, 1998) (Wetzel, 2001) (Molinari, 2001) (Bigos, 1999) (Washington, 1995) (DeBarard-Spine, 2001) (Fritzell-Spine, 2001) (Fritzell-Spine, 2002) (Deyo-NEJM, 2004) (Gibson-Cochrane/Spine, 2005) (Soegaard,

2005) (Glassman, 2006) (Atlas, 2006) According to the recently released AANS/NASS Guidelines, lumbar fusion is recommended as a treatment for carefully selected patients with disabling low back pain due to one- or two-level degenerative disc disease after failure of an appropriate period of conservative care. This recommendation was based on one study that contained numerous flaws, including a lack of standardization of conservative care in the control group. At the time of the 2-year follow up it appeared that pain had significantly increased in the surgical group from year 1 to 2. Follow-up post study is still pending publication. In addition, there remains no direction regarding how to define the “carefully selected patient.” (Resnick, 2005) (Fritzell, 2004) A recently published well respected international guideline, the “European Guidelines,” concluded that fusion surgery for nonspecific chronic LBP cannot be recommended unless 2 years of all other recommended conservative treatments – including multidisciplinary approaches with combined programs of cognitive intervention and exercises – have failed, or such combined programs are not available, and only then in carefully selected patients with maximum 2-level degenerative disc disease. (Airaksinen, 2006) For chronic LBP, exercise and cognitive intervention may be equivalent to lumbar fusion without the potentially high surgical complication rates. (Ivar Brox-Spine, 2003) (Keller-Spine, 2004) (Fairbank-BMJ, 2005) (Brox, 2006) In acute spinal cord injury (SCI), if the spine is unstable following injury, surgical fusion and bracing may be necessary. (Bagnall-Cochrane, 2004) (Siebenga, 2006) A study on improving quality through identifying inappropriate care found that use of guideline-based Utilization Review (UR) protocols resulted in a denial rate for lumbar fusion 59 times as high as denial rates using non-guideline based UR. (Wickizer, 2004) The profit motive and market medicine have had a significant impact on clinical practice and research in the field of spine surgery. (Weiner-Spine, 2004) (Shah-Spine, 2005) (Abelson, 2006) Data on geographic variations in medical procedure rates suggest that there is significant variability in spine fusion rates, which may be interpreted to suggest a poor professional consensus on the appropriate indications for performing spinal fusion. (Deyo-Spine, 2005) (Weinstein, 2006) Outcomes from complicated surgical fusion techniques (with internal fixation) may be no better than the traditional posterolateral fusion. (van Tulder, 2006) (Maghout-Juratli, 2006) Despite the new technologies, reoperation rates after lumbar fusion have become higher. (Martin, 2007) According to the recent Medicare Coverage Advisory Committee Technology Assessment, the evidence for lumbar spinal fusion does not conclusively demonstrate short-term or long-term benefits compared with nonsurgical treatment for elderly patients. (CMS, 2006) When lumbar fusion surgery is performed, either with lateral fusion alone or with interbody fusion, unlike cervical fusion, there is no absolute contraindication to patients returning even to contact sports after complete recovery from surgery. Like patients with a thoracic injury, those with a lumbar injury should be pain free, have no disabling neurological deficit, and exhibit evidence of bone fusion on x-ray films before returning. (Burnett, 2006) A recent randomized controlled trial comparing decompression with decompression and instrumented fusion in patients with foraminal stenosis and single-level degenerative disease found that patients universally improved with surgery, and this improvement was maintained at 5 years. However, no obvious additional benefit was noted by combining decompression with an instrumented fusion. (Hallett, 2007) Discography may be supported if the decision has already been made to do a spinal fusion, and a negative discogram could rule out the

need for fusion on that disc (but a positive discogram in itself would not justify fusion). Discography may help distinguish asymptomatic discs among morphologically abnormal discs in patients without psychosocial issues. Precise prospective categorization of discographic diagnoses may predict outcomes from treatment, surgical or otherwise. ([Derby, 2005](#)) ([Derby2, 2005](#)) ([Derby, 1999](#)) New research shows that healthcare expenditures for back and neck problems have increased substantially over time, but with little improvement in healthcare outcomes such as functional disability and work limitations. Rates of imaging, injections, opiate use, and spinal surgery have increased substantially over the past decade, but it is unclear what impact, if any, this has had on health outcomes. ([Martin, 2008](#)) The efficacy of surgery for nonspecific back pain is uncertain. There may be some patients for whom surgery, fusion specifically, might be helpful, but it is important for doctors to discuss the fact that surgery doesn't tend to lead to huge improvements on average, about a 10- to 20-point improvement in function on a 100-point scale, and a significant proportion of patients still need to take pain medication and don't return to full function. ([Chou, 2008](#)) This study showed that fusion for chronic lower back pain was the least successful common orthopaedic surgery. The study compared the gains in quality of life achieved by total hip replacement, total knee replacement, surgery for spinal stenosis, disc excision for lumbar disc herniation, and arthrodesis for chronic low back pain. For chronic lower back pain, improvements were statistically significant but clinically negligible. Although pain was reduced and function improved slightly, outcomes remained in the moderately affected range, quality of life was not improved and rendered worse, on average. While surgery for spinal stenosis and for disc herniation compare well with archetypical orthopaedic operations, the outcomes of surgery for chronic lower back pain do not even approach those of other orthopaedic procedures, and the data show that patients with back pain are rendered worse off by surgery. ([Hansson, 2008](#)) Recent studies document a 220% increase in lumbar spinal fusion surgery rates, without demonstrated improvements in patient outcomes or disability rates. ([Deyo, 2009](#)) In a study of 2,378 Washington State workers' compensation claimants who underwent fusion to assess the frequency, timing, and causes of death, the 3-year cumulative mortality rate post-fusion was 1.93% and analgesic-related deaths were responsible for 21% of all deaths and 31.4% of all potential life lost. ([Juratli, 2009](#)) A study to compare the surgical experience, clinical outcomes, and effect on body weight between obese and morbidly obese patients undergoing lumbar spine fusion surgery concluded that clinical outcomes were independent of the BMI of the patient, but the incidence of postoperative complications was significant in 45% of morbidly obese and 44% of obese patients. The authors proposed that morbidly obese patients should undergo bariatric surgery before spine surgery in nonemergent situations. ([Vaidya, 2009](#)) For nonradicular low back pain with common degenerative changes, there is fair evidence that fusion is no better than intensive rehabilitation with a cognitive-behavioral emphasis for improvement in pain or function, and less than half of patients experience optimal outcomes (defined as no more than sporadic pain, slight restriction of function, and occasional analgesics) following fusion. ([Chou, 2009](#)) Posterolateral bone-grafting fusion is not necessary when a Denis type-B thoracolumbar burst fracture associated with a load-sharing score of ≤ 6 is treated with short-segment pedicle screw fixation. ([Dai, 2009](#)) Discography (and not merely the fusion) may actually be the cause of adjacent segment disc

degeneration. This study suggested that the phenomenon of accelerated adjacent segment degeneration adjacent to fusion levels may be, in part, explained by previous disc puncture if discography was used in segments adjacent to the fusion. (Carragee, 2009) Among Medicare recipients, the frequency of complex fusion procedures for spinal stenosis increased 15-fold in just 6 years. The introduction and marketing of new surgical devices and financial incentives may stimulate more invasive surgery. (Devo-JAMA, 2010) Lumbar spinal fusion surgeries use bone grafts, and are sometimes combined with metal devices, to produce a rigid connection between two or more adjacent vertebrae. The therapeutic objective of spinal fusion surgery for patients with low back problems is to prevent any movement in the intervertebral spaces between the fused vertebrae, thereby reducing pain and any neurological deficits. See also Adjacent segment disease/degeneration (fusion) & Iliac crest donor-site pain treatment.

Lumbar fusion in workers' comp patients: In cases of workers' compensation, patient outcomes related to fusion may have other confounding variables that may affect overall success of the procedure, which should be considered. Until further research is conducted there remains insufficient evidence to recommend fusion for chronic low back pain in the absence of stenosis and spondylolisthesis, and this treatment for this condition remains "under study." It appears that workers' compensation populations require particular scrutiny when being considered for fusion for chronic low back pain, as there is evidence of poorer outcomes in subgroups of patients who were receiving compensation or involved in litigation. (Fritzell-Spine, 2001) (Harris-JAMA, 2005) (Maghout-Juratli, 2006) (Atlas, 2006) Despite poorer outcomes in workers' compensation patients, utilization is much higher in this population than in group health. (Texas, 2001) (NCCI, 2006) Presurgical biopsychosocial variables predict patient outcomes from lumbar fusion, which may help improve patient selection. Workers' compensation status, smoking, depression, and litigation were the most consistent presurgical predictors of poorer patient outcomes. Other predictors of poor results were number of prior low back operations, low household income, and older age. (DeBerard-Spine, 2001) (DeBerard, 2003) (Devo, 2005) (LaCaille, 2005) (Trief-Spine, 2006) Obesity and litigation in workers' compensation cases predict high costs associated with interbody cage lumbar fusion. (LaCaille, 2007) A recent study of 725 workers' comp patients in Ohio who had lumbar fusion found only 6% were able to go back to work a year later, 27% needed another operation, and over 90% were in enough pain that they were still taking narcotics at follow-up. (Nguyen, 2007) A recent case-control study of lumbar fusion outcomes in worker's compensation (WC) patients concluded that only 9% of patients receiving WC achieved substantial clinical benefit compared to 33% of those not receiving WC. (Carreon, 2009)

Lumbar fusion for spondylolisthesis: Recommended as an option for spondylolisthesis. Patients with increased instability of the spine after surgical decompression at the level of degenerative spondylolisthesis are candidates for fusion. (Eckman, 2005) This study found only a 27% success from spinal fusion in patients with low back pain and a positive single-level low-pressure provocative discogram, versus a 72% success in patients having a well-accepted single-level lumbar pathology of unstable spondylolisthesis. (Carragee, 2006) Unilateral instrumentation used for the treatment of degenerative lumbar spondylolisthesis is as effective as bilateral instrumentation. (Fernandez-Fairen, 2007) Patients with degenerative spondylolisthesis and spinal

stenosis who undergo standard decompressive laminectomy (with or without fusion) showed substantially greater improvement in pain and function during a period of 2 years than patients treated nonsurgically, according to the recent results from the Spine Patient Outcomes Research Trial (SPORT). (Weinstein-spondylolisthesis, 2007) (Deyo-NEJM, 2007) For degenerative lumbar spondylolisthesis, spinal fusion may lead to a better clinical outcome than decompression alone. No conclusion about the clinical benefit of instrumenting a spinal fusion can be made, but there is moderate evidence that the use of instrumentation improves the chance of achieving solid fusion. (Martin, 2007) A recent systematic review of randomized trials comparing lumbar fusion surgery to nonsurgical treatment of chronic back pain associated with lumbar disc degeneration, concluded that surgery may be more efficacious than unstructured nonsurgical care but may not be more efficacious than structured cognitive-behavior therapy. Methodological limitations of the randomized trials prevented firm conclusions. (Mirza, 2007) A comparison of surgical and nonoperative outcomes between degenerative spondylolisthesis and spinal stenosis patients from the SPORT trial found that fusion was most appropriate for spondylolisthesis, with or without listhesis, and decompressive laminectomy alone most appropriate for spinal stenosis. (Pearson, 2010)

Lumbar fusion for Scheuermann's kyphosis: Recommended as an option for adult patients with severe deformities (e.g. more than 70 degrees for thoracic kyphosis), neurological symptoms exist, and pain cannot be adequately resolved non-operatively (e.g. physical therapy, back exercises). Good outcomes have been found in a relatively large series of patients undergoing either combined anterior-posterior or posterior only fusion for Scheuermann's kyphosis. (Lonner, 2007)

Patient Selection Criteria for Lumbar Spinal Fusion:

For chronic low back problems, fusion should not be considered within the first 6 months of symptoms, except for fracture, dislocation or progressive neurologic loss. Indications for spinal fusion may include: (1) Neural Arch Defect - Spondylolytic spondylolisthesis, congenital neural arch hypoplasia. (2) Segmental Instability (objectively demonstrable) - Excessive motion, as in degenerative spondylolisthesis, surgically induced segmental instability and mechanical intervertebral collapse of the motion segment and advanced degenerative changes after surgical discectomy. [For excessive motion criteria, see AMA Guides, 5th Edition, page 384 (relative angular motion greater than 20 degrees). (Andersson, 2000) (Luers, 2007)] (3) Primary Mechanical Back Pain (i.e., pain aggravated by physical activity)/Functional Spinal Unit Failure/Instability, including one or two level segmental failure with progressive degenerative changes, loss of height, disc loading capability. In cases of workers' compensation, patient outcomes related to fusion may have other confounding variables that may affect overall success of the procedure, which should be considered. There is a lack of support for fusion for mechanical low back pain for subjects with failure to participate effectively in active rehab pre-op, total disability over 6 months, active psych diagnosis, and narcotic dependence. [For spinal instability criteria, see AMA Guides, 5th Edition, page 379 (lumbar inter-segmental movement of more than 4.5 mm). (Andersson, 2000)] (4) Revision Surgery for failed previous operation(s) if significant functional gains are anticipated. Revision surgery for purposes of pain relief must be approached with extreme caution due to the less than 50% success rate reported in medical literature. (5) Infection, Tumor, or Deformity of the lumbosacral spine that cause

intractable pain, neurological deficit and/or functional disability. (6) After failure of two discectomies on the same disc, fusion may be an option at the time of the third discectomy, which should also meet the ODG criteria. (See ODG Indications for Surgery -- Discectomy.)

Pre-Operative Surgical Indications Recommended: Pre-operative clinical surgical indications for spinal fusion should include all of the following: (1) All pain generators are identified and treated; & (2) All physical medicine and manual therapy interventions are completed; & (3) X-rays demonstrating spinal instability and/or myelogram, CT-myelogram, or discography (see discography criteria) & MRI demonstrating disc pathology; & (4) Spine pathology limited to two levels; & (5) Psychosocial screen with confounding issues addressed. (6) For any potential fusion surgery, it is recommended that the injured worker refrain from smoking for at least six weeks prior to surgery and during the period of fusion healing. (Colorado, 2001) (BlueCross BlueShield, 2002)

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 KNOWLEDGBASE
- AHCP- 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)