

INDEPENDENT REVIEWERS OF TEXAS, INC.

4100 West El Dorado Pkwy · Suite 100 – 373 · McKinney, Texas 75070

Office 469-218-1010 · Toll Free 1-877-861-1442 · Fax 469-218-1030

e-mail: independentreviewers@hotmail.com

Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: 07/02/10

IRO CASE NO.:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

Item in dispute: Appeal Denied Appeal of Chronic Pain Management Program x
80 hours (97799 CP)

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

Texas Licensed Psychologist

REVIEW OUTCOME

Upon independent review, the reviewer finds that the previous adverse
determination/adverse determination should be:

Denial Upheld

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

1. Cover sheet and working documents
2. CT thoracic spine dated 12/07/09
3. CT cervical spine dated 12/07/09
4. Radiographic report chest, thoracic spine, lumbar spine dated 12/07/09
5. Patient assessment report dated 12/07/09
6. MRI thoracic spine, lumbar spine 12/30/09
7. Letter dated 01/05/10
8. Peer review dated 01/14/10
9. Functional Capacity Evaluation dated 03/03/10
10. Counseling summary note dated 03/05/10, 03/19/10, 03/24/10
11. Determination dated 03/17/10, 05/14/10, 05/27/10

12. Weekly progress reports 03/29/10 thru 04/16/10
13. Behavioral health assessment dated 03/30/10
14. Request for preauthorization dated 04/08/10
15. Weekly progress report dated 05/10/10 thru 05/14/10
16. Request for reconsideration dated 05/19/10
17. Previous review dated 05/26/10
18. Treatment plan
19. Medical records Dr.
20. Letter dated 06/17/10
21. Medical records Medical Center
22. Medical records Dr.
23. Handwritten daily treatment notes and treatment flow sheets
24. Industrial rehabilitation progress report
25. ***Official Disability Guidelines***

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY (SUMMARY):

The employee is a female whose date of injury is xx/xx/xx. On this date the employee was in an elevator which stopped on the eighteenth floor and then suddenly free fell until stopping abruptly at the ground level.

The employee presented to Medical Center with complaints of back pain and muscle spasm. The employee underwent diagnostic testing, was provided medications and discharged home.

A peer review dated 01/14/10 indicated that the employee complained of some vague discomfort between her shoulder blades and has evolved extreme fear and anxiety since that time. The extent of the compensable injury included thoracic strain and posttraumatic stress disorder, but does not include herniated nucleus pulposus or bulging disc, anxiety disorder, major depressive disorder or bipolar spectrum disease. Appropriate treatment was listed as use of an SSRI, psychological counseling, benzodiazepines and anti-anxiety medication.

The employee underwent a behavioral health assessment on 03/03/10. Treatment to date was noted to include medications, physical therapy, individual counseling, and home exercise program. Medications were listed as Hydrocodone, Flexeril, Naproxen, Paxil and Xanax. BDI was 45 and BAI was 44. The diagnoses were pain disorder with both psychological factors and medical condition; posttraumatic stress disorder; adjustment disorder, and depression secondary to CPS.

A Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) dated 03/03/10 indicated that the employee's current physical demand level was sedentary and required physical demand was light. The employee subsequently completed 20 sessions of chronic pain management program. The employee's affect improved, and the employee demonstrated fewer avoidance behaviors. The employee was

recommended for an additional 80 hours of pain management to focus on continuing with strengthening and functional restoration, individual and group counseling and continuing the process of returning to work.

The request was non-certified on 05/14/10 noting that twenty sessions of the program had been completed to date, and the request exceeded guidelines.

A request for reconsideration dated 05/19/10 indicated that the employee had made steady progress functionally to include increased functional lift and carry, cardiovascular tolerance, and lumbar range of motion. Hamilton Depression Scale had improved from 24 to 17. The denial was upheld on appeal with the reviewer noting that the **Official Disability Guidelines** do not recommend generally exceeding 160 hours of treatment, the employee should be capable of carrying out light physical demand level activities at this time, and treatment for PTSD could be carried out at a lower level of care.

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

Based on the clinical information provided, the request for chronic pain management 80 hours is not recommended as medically necessary. The injured worker presents with significant indications of symptom magnification as evidenced by extreme elevations on the Beck Depression and Anxiety Inventories. Also, there is a lack of evidence that the injured worker has produced significant, objective and sustainable gains in the previous twenty days of a chronic pain management program.

Given the current clinical data, the requested chronic pain management program is not indicated as medically necessary, and the two previous denials are upheld.

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

Official Disability Guidelines, 15th Edition, The Work Loss Data Institute, Pain Chapter, Online edition

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. This cautionary statement should not preclude patients off work for over two years from being admitted to a multidisciplinary pain management program with demonstrated positive outcomes in this population.

(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.

Inpatient pain rehabilitation programs: These programs typically consist of more intensive functional rehabilitation and medical care than their outpatient counterparts. They may be appropriate for patients who: (1) don't have the minimal functional capacity to participate effectively in an outpatient program; (2) have medical conditions that require more intensive oversight; (3) are receiving large amounts of medications necessitating medication weaning or detoxification; or (4) have complex medical or psychological diagnosis that benefit from more

intensive observation and/or additional consultation during the rehabilitation process. ([Keel, 1998](#)) ([Kool, 2005](#)) ([Buchner, 2006](#)) ([Kool, 2007](#)) As with outpatient pain rehabilitation programs, the most effective programs combine intensive, daily biopsychosocial rehabilitation with a functional restoration approach. If a primary focus is drug treatment, the initial evaluation should attempt to identify the most appropriate treatment plan (a drug treatment /detoxification approach vs. a multidisciplinary/interdisciplinary treatment program). See [Chronic pain programs, opioids](#); [Functional restoration programs](#).