SENT VIA EMAIL OR FAX ON
Mar/09/2010

True Decisions Inc.

An Independent Review Organization
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NOTICE OF INDEPENDENT REVIEW DECISION

DATE OF REVIEW:
Mar/09/2010
IRO CASE #:
DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:
Purchase of a Pair of Siemens Pure 700 Behind-The-Ear Hearing Instruments

DESCRIPTION OF THE QUALIFICATIONS FOR EACH PHYSICIAN OR OTHER HEALTH CARE PROVIDER WHO REVIEWED THE DECISION:
Certified by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
Licensed by the State Committee of Examiners for Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology
Master's degree in Audiology
32 years experience in diagnostic audiology and hearing aid fitting and dispensing.

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

[ ] Upheld (Agree)
[X] Overturned (Disagree)
[ ] Partially Overturned (Agree in part/Disagree in part)

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW
OD Guidelines

A report from Professional Hearing Centers, dated 8/27/09, by, hearing instrument specialist, diagnosing a moderate sloping sensorineural hearing loss and ringing in the ears suffered by the injured employee. This report included a hearing test dated 7/23/09. The results of the hearing exam that day were that the ear canals were both clear. The test results were consistent with noise induced hearing loss. The patient's history of working for 13 years in extreme noise was given. The patient's complaint of ringing in the ears was noted. A recommendation for a pair of Siemens Pure 700 Behind-the-ear digital hearing aids was made.

A letter, D.O., was submitted dated 8-17-09. This letter was titled Impairment Rating and it diagnosed sensorineural hearing loss (389.1) and tinnitus (388.31). The letter indicated that the hearing loss was typical of noise induced hearing loss. The letter gave the injured employees history of 13 years employment in a high noise environment at U.S. Steel.

2 letters of denial, one dated 1/8/10 by, M.D., specialist in Internal Medicine and one dated 2/4/10 by, M.D., board certified Family Practice physician. These letters gave their reasons for denial.

An outdated research study (dated December 1996) titled Customer Satisfaction and Subjective Benefit with High Performance Hearing Aids was provided.

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY SUMMARY
The injured employee is a man who worked in a high noise environment. He complained of ringing in both ears and hearing loss. He had no other medical conditions prescribed by his physician.

ANALYSIS AND EXPLANATION OF THE DECISION INCLUDING CLINICAL BASIS, FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS USED TO SUPPORT THE DECISION
The injured employee complained of ringing in both ears and hearing loss after high noise exposure at work. His complaints and his hearing test are consistent with noise induced hearing loss. The treatment for noise induced hearing loss is hearing aid use. The primary treatment for ringing in the ears is also hearing aid use to mask the tinnitus (ringing) by stimulating the inner ear at the specific region where there is cochlear damage. Only digitally programmable hearing aids can target these regions of the cochlea. The hearing aids that were recommended, Siemens Pure 700 digital behind-the-ear, are appropriate for the hearing loss suffered by the injured employee. These hearing aids are digital. Digital hearing aids are currently the only type available by leading manufactures of hearing aids. The research submitted was outdated, though current research supports programmable digital hearing aids as current technology for successfully fitting all types of hearing loss

The letters of denial were from physicians who have no background in diagnosis of hearing loss, ringing in the ears or treatment of those conditions. They gave no valid reasons for denial of the recommended hearing aids. Dr. stated, “There is little support from current evidence based literature regarding this type of device hearing loss treatment”. He gave no such literature for support of that claim. He also said there is “no documented rationale why a hearing aid of such specifications would be necessary for the patient over conventional models.” This is not his field. He does not know what hearing aids are currently considered appropriate for different types of hearing loss. In fact, digital hearing aids such as those described are now considered “conventional hearing aids”. This physician apparently did not seek advice from a peer who specializes in diseases of the ears and disorders of hearing or from an audiologist. He is not qualified make recommendations for hearing loss treatment so he is not qualified to deny the injured parties recommendation from his hearing instrument specialist.

The injured party has a history of noise trauma at work. He has sustained a typical noise induced hearing loss. He can be helped with the digital hearing aids recommended in his letter dated 8/27/09. The reviewer agrees with that recommendation. The reviewer has successfully helped similar patients who suffered from noise induced hearing loss and ringing in the ears with comparable hearing instruments.

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
[X] MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS
[ ] MERCY CENTER CONSENSUS CONFERENCE GUIDELINES
[ ] MILLIMAN CARE GUIDELINES
[X] 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)