

Notice of Independent Review Decision

DATE OF REVIEW: MARCH 17, 2011

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE

Prospective preauthorization CPT code 97545, ten units work conditioning for right shoulder

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

The physician performing this review is Board Certified, American Board of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation. He is certified in pain management. He is a member of the Texas Medical Board. He has a private practice of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Electrodiagnostic Medicine & Pain Management in Texas. He has published in medical journals. He is a member of his state and national medical societies.

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.

Uphold original denial of initial request for preauthorization and denial of the subsequent appeal.

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Based on review of the available records provided, the *ODG* does not indicate that an additional return-to-work program consisting of ten work-conditioning sessions is medically reasonable and necessary. In particular and as noted in my attachment to this review, there is no medical necessity for repeating a return-to-work program such as in this case. This man has already undergone work hardening, which, according to the records, enabled him to achieve a heavy physical demand level, and the need for a second return-to-work program such as work conditioning is not medically indicated in keeping with the *ODG*

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The medical records note that this is a XX-year-old man seen for evaluation of injuries sustained in the course and scope of his regular job. At the time of his injury, he was cleaning a truck and was lifting a wooden pallet to stack it to the side. As he lifted and turned the pallet, he experienced the sudden onset and pop in the right shoulder with immediate onset of superior and posterior glenohumeral joint pain. Initial x-rays were taken. He advanced into physical therapy, at the same location, but was not able to tolerate the physical therapy program.

An MRI of the shoulder 08/10/09 showed mild tendinosis of the supraspinatus tendon without a discrete tear. The study also showed hypertrophic degenerative change of the acromioclavicular joint with some subacromial encroachment and a cystic structure within the glenoid notch. From these findings, a possibility of a glenoid labral tear was diagnosed. There was also a finding of adhesive capsulitis.

The patient was sent to orthopedist. The patient had surgery 01/19/10, which included right shoulder arthroscopic decompression with mini open right acromioclavicular resection and excision of a large right shoulder ganglion cyst.

He then went through postoperative rehab at the Center.

He had follow-up with Dr. 10/27/10 with continuing pain and severely restricted range of motion. Dr. had recommended mobilization under anesthesia for the shoulder.

The record of Dr. 01/28/11 indicated that at that point in time that had not been preauthorized.

The records also reflected that the patient had been through 25 work-hardening sessions following his arthroscopic shoulder and by the conclusion of the work hardening was classified for heavy physical demand level of work.

The medical center has currently recommended ten treatment sessions of work conditioning.

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

Based on review of the available records provided, the *ODG* does not indicate that an additional return-to-work program consisting of ten work-conditioning sessions is medically reasonable and necessary. In particular and as noted in my attachment to this review, there is no medical necessity for repeating a return-to-work program such as in this case. This man has already undergone work hardening, which, according to the records, enabled him to achieve a heavy physical demand level, and the need for a second return-to-work program such as work conditioning is not medically indicated in keeping with the *ODG*.

REFERENCE FOR DENIAL:

Work conditioning, work hardening	Recommended as an option, depending on the availability of quality programs, and should be specific for the job individual is going to return to. (Schonstein-Cochrane, 2003) There is limited literature support for multidisciplinary treatment and work-hardening for the neck, hip, knee, shoulder and forearm. (Karjalainen, 2003) Work-Conditioning should restore the client's physical capacity and function. Work-Hardening should be work simulation and not just therapeutic exercise, plus there should also be psychological support. Work-Hardening is an interdisciplinary, individualized, job specific program of activity with the goal of return to work. Work-Hardening programs use real or simulated work tasks and progressively graded conditioning exercises that are based on the individual's measured tolerances. (CARF, 2006) (Washington, 2006) The need for work hardening is less clear for workers in sedentary or light
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demand work, since on the job conditioning could be equally effective, and an examination should demonstrate a gap between the current level of functional capacity and an achievable level of required job demands. As with all intensive rehab programs, measurable functional improvement should occur after initial use of WH. It is not recommended that patients go from work conditioning to work hardening to chronic pain programs, repeating many of the same treatments without clear evidence of benefit. ([Schonstein-Cochrane, 2008](#)) For more information and references, see the [Low Back Chapter](#). The Low Back WH & WC Criteria are copied below.

Criteria for admission to a Work-Hardening (WH) Program:

(1) **Prescription:** The program has been recommended by a physician or nurse case manager, and a prescription has been provided.

(2) **Screening Documentation:** Approval of the program should include evidence of a screening evaluation. This multidisciplinary examination should include the following components: (a) History including demographic information, date and description of injury, history of previous injury, diagnosis/diagnoses, work status before the injury, work status after the injury, history of treatment for the injury (including medications), history of previous injury, current employability, future employability, and time off work; (b) Review of systems including other non work-related medical conditions; (c) Documentation of musculoskeletal, cardiovascular, vocational, motivational, behavioral, and cognitive status by a physician, chiropractor, or physical and/or occupational therapist (and/or assistants); (d) Diagnostic interview with a mental health provider; (e) Determination of safety issues and accommodation at the place of work injury. Screening should include adequate testing to determine if the patient has attitudinal and/or behavioral issues that are appropriately addressed in a multidisciplinary work hardening program. The testing should also be intensive enough to provide evidence that there are no psychosocial or significant pain behaviors that should be addressed in other types of programs, or will likely prevent successful participation and return-to-employment after completion of a work hardening program. Development of the patient's program should reflect this assessment.

(3) **Job demands:** A work-related musculoskeletal deficit has been identified with the addition of evidence of physical, functional, behavioral, and/or vocational deficits that preclude ability to safely achieve current job demands. These job demands are generally reported in the medium or higher demand level (i.e., not clerical/sedentary work). There should generally be evidence of a valid mismatch between documented, specific essential job tasks and the patient's ability to perform these required tasks (as limited by the work injury and associated deficits).

(4) **Functional capacity evaluations (FCEs):** A valid FCE should be performed, administered and interpreted by a licensed medical professional. The results should indicate consistency with maximal effort, and demonstrate capacities below an employer verified physical demands analysis (PDA). Inconsistencies and/or indication that the patient has performed below maximal effort should be addressed prior to treatment in these programs.

(5) **Previous PT:** There is evidence of treatment with an adequate trial of active physical rehabilitation with improvement followed by plateau, with evidence of no likely benefit from continuation of this previous treatment. Passive physical medicine modalities are not indicated for use in any of these approaches.

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(6) **Rule out surgery:** The patient is not a candidate for whom surgery, injections, or other treatments would clearly be warranted to improve function (including further diagnostic evaluation in anticipation of surgery).

(7) **Healing:** Physical and medical recovery sufficient to allow for progressive reactivation and participation for a minimum of 4 hours a day for three to five days a week.

(8) **Other contraindications:** There is no evidence of other medical, behavioral, or other comorbid conditions (including those that are non work-related) that prohibits participation in the program or contradicts successful return-to-work upon program completion.

(9) **RTW plan:** A specific defined return-to-work goal or job plan has been established, communicated and documented. The ideal situation is that there is a plan agreed to by the employer and employee. The work goal to which the employee should return must have demands that exceed the claimant's current validated abilities.

(10) **Drug problems:** There should be documentation that the claimant's medication regimen will not prohibit them from returning to work (either at their previous job or new employment). If this is the case, other treatment options may be required, for example a program focused on detoxification.

(11) **Program documentation:** The assessment and resultant treatment should be documented and be available to the employer, insurer, and other providers. There should documentation of the proposed benefit from the program (including functional, vocational, and psychological improvements) and the plans to undertake this improvement. The assessment should indicate that the program providers are familiar with the expectations of the planned job, including skills necessary. Evidence of this may include site visitation, videotapes or functional job descriptions.

(12) **Further mental health evaluation:** Based on the initial screening, further evaluation by a mental health professional may be recommended. The results of this evaluation may suggest that treatment options other than these approaches may be required, and all screening evaluation information should be documented prior to further treatment planning.

(13) **Supervision:** Supervision is recommended under a physician, chiropractor, occupational therapist, or physical therapist with the appropriate education, training and experience. This clinician should provide on-site supervision of daily activities, and participate in the initial and final evaluations. They should design the treatment plan and be in charge of changes required. They are also in charge of direction of the staff.

(14) **Trial:** Treatment is not supported for longer than 1-2 weeks without evidence of patient compliance and demonstrated significant gains as documented by subjective and objective improvement in functional abilities. Outcomes should be presented that reflect the goals proposed upon entry, including those specifically addressing deficits identified in the screening procedure. A summary of the patient's physical and functional activities performed in the program should be included as an assessment of progress.

(15) **Concurrently working:** The patient who has been released to work with specific restrictions may participate in the program while concurrently working in a restricted capacity, but the total number of daily hours should not exceed 8 per day while in treatment.

(16) **Conferences:** There should be evidence of routine staff conferencing regarding progress and plans for discharge. Daily treatment activity and response should be documented.

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(17) **Voc rehab:** Vocational consultation should be available if this is indicated as a significant barrier. This would be required if the patient has no job to return to.

(18) **Post-injury cap:** The worker must be no more than 2 years past date of injury. Workers that have not returned to work by two years post injury generally do not improve from intensive work hardening programs. If the worker is greater than one-year post injury a comprehensive multidisciplinary program may be warranted if there is clinical suggestion of psychological barrier to recovery (but these more complex programs may also be justified as early as 8-12 weeks, see [Chronic pain programs](#)).

(19) **Program timelines:** These approaches are highly variable in intensity, frequency and duration. APTA, AOTA and utilization guidelines for individual jurisdictions may be inconsistent. In general, the recommendations for use of such programs will fall within the following ranges: These approaches are necessarily intensive with highly variable treatment days ranging from 4-8 hours with treatment ranging from 3-5 visits per week. The entirety of this treatment should not exceed 20 full-day visits over 4 weeks, or no more than 160 hours (allowing for part-day sessions if required by part-time work, etc., over a longer number of weeks). A reassessment after 1-2 weeks should be made to determine whether completion of the chosen approach is appropriate, or whether treatment of greater intensity is required.

(20) **Discharge documentation:** At the time of discharge the referral source and other predetermined entities should be notified. This may include the employer and the insurer. There should be evidence documented of the clinical and functional status, recommendations for return to work, and recommendations for follow-up services. Patient attendance and progress should be documented including the reason(s) for termination including successful program completion or failure. This would include noncompliance, declining further services, or limited potential to benefit. There should also be documentation if the patient is unable to participate due to underlying medical conditions including substance dependence.

(21) **Repetition:** Upon completion of a rehabilitation program (e.g., work conditioning, work hardening, outpatient medical rehabilitation, or chronic pain/functional restoration program) neither re-enrollment in nor repetition of the same or similar rehabilitation program is medically warranted for the same condition or injury.

ODG Work Conditioning (WC) Physical Therapy Guidelines

WC amounts to an additional series of intensive physical therapy (PT) visits required beyond a normal course of PT, primarily for exercise training/supervision (and would be contraindicated if there are already significant psychosocial, drug or attitudinal barriers to recovery not addressed by these programs). See also [Physical Therapy](#) for general PT guidelines. WC visits will typically be more intensive than regular PT visits, lasting 2 or 3 times as long. And, as with all physical therapy programs, Work-Conditioning participation does not preclude concurrently being at work.

Timelines: 10 visits over 4 weeks, equivalent to up to 30 hours.

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 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)