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Notice of Independent Review Decision

Date notice sent to all parties: 2/22/13

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

10 days of multidisciplinary outpatient chronic pain management 5 days a week for 3-4 weeks to include CPT code 97799.

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

Texas Licensed, Board Certified Physician of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation

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 medical necessity exists for each of the health care services in dispute.

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW:

1. 12. 1/13/11, 2/8/13 and 1/23/13 denial letters
2. 2/1/13 Response to Denial Letter
3. 1/14/13 Chronic Pain Mgmt. Program, Pt. Goals and Objectives
4. 3/29/11, 1/14/13 notes
5. 1/3/13 FCE
6. 1/31/10, 5/21/12, 8/2/12, 11/16/12, 12/14/12 notes
7. 1/7/13 BHI Interpretive Report
8. 1/4/13 Pain Mgmt. Evaluation/Treatment Request
9. 11/30/12 Orthopedic Evaluation
10. 1/11/11, 2/9/11, 6/12/12 notes
11. Mental Health Evaluation/Treatment Request
12. 1/20/11, 2/11/11, 5/14/11 MRI reports
13. 5/24/12 Wiggins Maximum Medical Improvement and Impairment Rating Evaluation
14. 7/12/11, 8/4/11 notes
15. 6/1/11 evaluation

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

Ms. Xx is a woman with history of work injury on xx/xx/xx.

The multiple medical records reflect that she worked as a xx for xx years. There are notes which indicate that she had tripped (some notes state on a sidewalk and others state a floor mat or rug) which caused her to fall hitting both knees, elbows, arms, hips, low back, and neck. She developed chronic pain complaints attributed to soft tissue contusions.

There are multiple notes which indicate she had received multiple evaluations, physical therapy and chiropractic follow-up, x-rays and imaging studies, subspecialty evaluations, x-rays and MRI imaging studies, medication management, and conservative management. X-rays and imaging studies showed no serious fractures, dislocations, or serious orthopedic injuries. Cervical and Lumbar MRIs on 5/14/2011 showed no serious disc herniation or nerve root impingement. Physical examinations have not demonstrated any serious orthopedic or neurologic deficits.

She was evaluated by Dr. on 12/30/2010 and Dr. on 01/04/2011. There is a note by physiatrist Dr. on June 1, 2011 which had concluded the amount of treatment received by Ms. appeared excessive based on the nature and extent of her contusions. He noted that most individuals would have resolved their acute injuries by this time. She reportedly had reached maximum improvement by 05/24/2012. An impairment

rating was performed by Dr. on 05/24/2012. She was given a 4% impairment rating. This was not disputed. The DWC form DWC 069 is available for review and signed by Dr. on 5/24/2012. She reportedly retired from her xx in xx/xx.

There were follow-up medical evaluations with Dr. on 08/02/2012, 11/16/2012, and 12/14/2012. In addition she underwent an orthopedic evaluation on 11/30/2012 by Dr.. She was noted to have chronic deconditioning status post contusion to the knee. Water exercises had been recommended. She reportedly did not have access to facilities near her home.

There are notes which reflect that she has had problems with mood, depression, anxiety, sleep, and psychosocial stressors. These types of problems can be addressed with outpatient therapy follow-up or discussion with her primary care clinician.

There are additional follow-up notes and evaluations in 2013 which have recommended a multidisciplinary pain management program.

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

The information presented does not support the medical necessity and appropriateness of a 10 day multidisciplinary pain management program. The actual request indicates 5 days a week for 3-4 weeks which would amount to even more than a 10 day program.

This determination is consistent with ODG guidelines. See below. The claimant has already received extended conservative treatment and had reached maximum medical improvement and provided with an impairment rating. No serious orthopedic or neurologic deficits have been noted. She has not required strong analgesics such as opiates or required any type of surgery to treat any underlying condition. Psychosocial problems are unable to be treated within a 10 day time frame and require regular interval follow-up over a more prolonged timeframe sometimes requiring months or even years. She also reportedly had retired from work and has already had a functional capacity evaluation in the past demonstrating the physical capacity for at least light duty work or part time work. There is no new information presented which indicates that she would be unable to achieve similar types of part time work goals or household goals with follow-up through a primary care physician / clinician, mental health therapist if needed, and a self supervised home exercise program, daily activities, and/or swim program.

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.

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)**