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05/29/2018 and 06/03/2018

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

Work hardening 5x a week x2 weeks total: 80 hours lumbar spine/right shoulder

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

REVIEW OUTCOME:

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

X Overturned (Disagree)

Provide a description of the review outcome that clearly states whether medical necessity exists for each of the health care services in dispute.

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The patient is a XXXX whose date of injury is XXXX. The mechanism of injury is described as a XXXX. Treatment to date is noted to include physical therapy and TENS unit. According to diagnostics evaluation and request for functional restoration services dated XXXX, the patient's Beck Depression Inventory score is 21 indicating moderate depression, Beck Anxiety Inventory score is 13 indicating mild anxiety. Oswestry index score is 54/100 indicating severe disability range. FABQ-PA is 24/24 and FABQ-W is 38. According to functional abilities evaluation dated XXXX, the patient's current physical demand level is light, and XXXX job physical demand level is noted to be heavy.

Initial request for work hardening was non-certified noting that per evidence based guidelines, work hardening program is recommended as an option for treatment of chronic pain syndromes, depending on the availability of quality programs with a goal of return to work. The patient complained of low back pain and left shoulder pain. The patient's current physical demand level is light and XXXX job physical demand level was heavy. XXXX BAI score was 21 and BAI is 13. However, given the chronicity of the injury, there was limited documentation that all lower levels of care were exhausted as there were no physical therapy notes submitted for review. Given the lack of information, the request is not supported. The denial was upheld on appeal noting that per guidelines, a work hardening program is indicated when there is evidence of functional limitation that did not meet regular physical demands of work along with mild psychosocial barriers to successfully participate in return to work. In this case, the patient's current physical demand level was at light demand level and XXXX job physical demand level was noted at heavy demand level; however, there was no clear clinical documentation of 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 as there was no physical therapy notes submitted to confirm exhaustion, before considering a multidisciplinary level program. Exceptional factors were not identified as well. The prior non-certification is upheld.

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

Based on the clinical records provided, the request for work hardening five times a week times two weeks total 80 hours lumbar spine/right shoulder is recommended as medically necessary. The submitted clinical records include serial physical therapy notes. Rationale for care dated XXXX

indicates that the patient has successfully completed 18 sessions of physical therapy which has resulted in improvement followed by plateau. Current evidence based guidelines require documentation of completion of an adequate course of physical therapy with improvement followed by plateau. The patient has been determined not to be a surgical candidate. The patient presents with mild anxiety and depression which will be addressed in the work hardening program through group therapy sessions. The patient is currently experiencing pain, physical limitations, and psychosocial stressors that XXXX was not experiencing before XXXX occupational incident. XXXX has been treated with all lower levels of interventional care which XXXX was a candidate for including a course of physical therapy which resulted in moderate relief. XXXX is compliant and motivated in XXXX treatment and recovery and is willing to change and do anything XXXX can in order to restore functional capacity and return to the workforce. Given the current clinical data, the request for work hardening is recommended as medically necessary.

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

X MEDICAL JUDGEMENT, CLINICAL EXPERIENCE, AND EXPERTISE IN ACCORDANCE WITH ACCEPTED MEDICAL STANDARDS

X ODG- OFFICIAL DISABILITY GUIDELINES & TREATMENT GUIDELINES

Official Disability Guidelines Treatment Index, 23rd edition online, 2018-Shoulder Chapter updated 05/09/18

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 is recommended prior to admission to a Work Hardening (WH) program, with preference for assessments tailored to a specific task or job. This evaluation 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.

(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 be 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.

(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.