

DECISION AND ORDER

This case is decided pursuant to Chapter 410 of the Texas Workers' Compensation Act and Rules of the Division of Workers' Compensation adopted thereunder.

ISSUES

A contested case hearing was held on December 7, 2009 to decide the following disputed issue:

Is the preponderance of the evidence contrary to the decision of the Independent Review Organization (IRO) that Claimant is not entitled to 1 hour of a psychological interview with 5 hours of psychological testing for the compensable injury of _____?

PARTIES PRESENT

Petitioner/Claimant appeared and was assisted by YG, ombudsman.
Respondent/Carrier was represented by MB, attorney.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Claimant testified that he was injured during the course and scope of employment when a forklift hit his back on _____. His medical treatments have included physical therapy, back surgery, medications, injections, and pain management. He said that pain from the injury has prevented him from working, except for brief periods, since he was injured. He has also experienced depression.

Dr. H conducted a psychological assessment of Claimant in April of 2009 to evaluate his need and appropriateness for individual psychological treatment. The assessment did not require preauthorization. Dr. H wrote that Claimant had a depressed mood, a restricted affect, and suicidal ideations. In addition, he noted that Claimant was confused.

In April and May of 2009, Carrier denied the request for Claimant to have 1 hour of a psychological interview with 5 hours of psychological testing. An IRO upheld the adverse determination on July 2, 2009. The reviewer for the IRO, a medical doctor certified by the American Board of Psychiatry and Neurology, wrote that the request did not meet the *Official Disability Guidelines* (ODG). The reviewer opined that Claimant did not need another psychological interview and that 5 hours of psychological testing was not medically necessary for Claimant.

Texas Labor Code Section 408.021 provides that an employee who sustains a compensable injury is entitled to all health care reasonably required by the nature of the injury as and when needed. Health care reasonably required is further defined in Texas Labor Code Section 401.011 (22a) as health care that is clinically appropriate and considered effective for the injured employee's injury and provided in accordance with best practices consistent with evidence based medicine or, if evidence based medicine is not available, then generally accepted standards of

medical practice recognized in the medical community. Health care under the Texas Workers' Compensation system must be consistent with evidence based medicine if that evidence is available. Evidence based medicine is further defined in Texas Labor Code Section 401.011 (18a) to be the use of the current best quality scientific and medical evidence formulated from credible scientific studies, including peer-reviewed medical literature and other current scientifically based texts and treatment and practice guidelines. The Commissioner of the Division of Workers' compensation is required to adopt treatment guidelines that are evidence-based, scientifically valid, outcome-focused and designed to reduce excessive or inappropriate medical care while safeguarding necessary medical care. Texas Labor Code Section 413.011(e). Medical services consistent with the medical policies and fee guidelines adopted by the commissioner are presumed reasonable in accordance with Texas Labor Code Section 413.017(1).

In accordance with the above statutory guidance, the Division of Workers' Compensation has adopted treatment guidelines by Division Rule 137.100. This rule directs health care providers to provide treatment in accordance with the current edition of the ODG, and such treatment is presumed to be health care reasonably required as defined in the Texas Labor Code. Thus, the focus of any health care dispute starts with the health care set out in the ODG. Also, in accordance with Division Rule 133.308 (t), "A decision issued by an IRO is not considered an agency decision and neither the Department nor the Division are considered parties to an appeal. In a Contested Case Hearing (CCH), the party appealing the IRO decision has the burden of overcoming the decision issued by an IRO by a preponderance of evidence-based medical evidence."

The IRO reviewer relied on the following ODG provision for psychological screening:

Recommended as an option prior to surgery, or in cases with expectations of delayed recovery. Before referral for surgery, clinicians should consider referral for psychological screening to improve surgical outcomes, possibly including standard tests such as MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) and Waddell signs. (Scalzitti, 1997) (Fritz, 2000) (Gaines, 1999) (Gatchel, 1995) (McIntosh, 2000) (Polatin, 1997) (Riley, 1995) (Block, 2001) (Airaksinen, 2006) A recent study concluded that psychological distress is a more reliable predictor of back pain than most diagnostic tests. (Carragee, 2004) The new ACP/APS guideline as compared to the old AHCPR guideline is a bit stronger on emphasizing the need for psychosocial assessment to help predict potentially delayed recovery. (Shekelle, 2008) For more information, see the Pain Chapter and the Stress/Mental Chapter.

The Pain Chapter of the ODG provides the following for psychological screening:

Recommended based upon a clinical impression of psychological condition that impacts recovery, participation in rehabilitation, or prior to specified interventions (e.g., lumbar spine fusion, spinal cord stimulator, implantable drug-delivery systems). (Doleys, 2003) Psychological evaluations are generally accepted, well-established diagnostic procedures not only with selected use in pain problems, but also with more widespread use in subacute and chronic pain populations. Diagnostic evaluations should distinguish between

conditions that are preexisting, aggravated by the current injury or work related. Psychosocial evaluations should determine if further psychosocial interventions are indicated. The interpretations of the evaluation should provide clinicians with a better understanding of the patient in their social environment, thus allowing for more effective rehabilitation. (Main-BMJ, 2002) (Colorado, 2002) (Gatchel, 1995) (Gatchel, 1999) (Gatchel, 2004) (Gatchel, 2005) For the evaluation and prediction of patients who have a high likelihood of developing chronic pain, a study of patients who were administered a standard battery psychological assessment test found that there is a psychosocial disability variable that is associated with those injured workers who are likely to develop chronic disability problems. (Gatchel, 1999) Childhood abuse and other past traumatic events were also found to be predictors of chronic pain patients. (Goldberg, 1999) Another trial found that it appears to be feasible to identify patients with high levels of risk of chronic pain and to subsequently lower the risk for work disability by administering a cognitive-behavioral intervention focusing on psychological aspects of the pain problem. (Linton, 2002) Other studies and reviews support these theories. (Perez, 2001) (Pulliam, 2001) (Severeijns, 2001) (Sommer, 1998) In a large RCT the benefits of improved depression care (antidepressant medications and/or psychotherapy) extended beyond reduced depressive symptoms and included decreased pain as well as improved functional status. (Lin-JAMA, 2003) See "Psychological Tests Commonly Used in the Assessment of Chronic Pain Patients" from the Colorado Division of Workers' Compensation, which describes and evaluates the following 26 tests: (1) BHI 2nd ed - Battery for Health Improvement, (2) MBHI - Millon Behavioral Health Inventory [has been superceded by the MBMD following, which should be administered instead], (3) MBMD - Millon Behavioral Medical Diagnostic, (4) PAB - Pain Assessment Battery, (5) MCMI-111 - Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory, (6) MMPI-2 - Minnesota Inventory, (7) PAI - Personality Assessment Inventory, (8) BBHI 2 - Brief Battery for Health Improvement, (9) MPI - Multidimensional Pain Inventory, (10) P-3 - Pain Patient Profile, (11) Pain Presentation Inventory, (12) PRIME-MD - Primary Care Evaluation for Mental Disorders, (13) PHQ - Patient Health Questionnaire, (14) SF 36, (15) SIP - Sickness Impact Profile, (16) BSI - Brief Symptom Inventory, (17) BSI 18 - Brief Symptom Inventory, (18) SCL-90 - Symptom Checklist, (19) BDI-II - Beck Depression Inventory, (20) CES-D - Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, (21) PDS - Post Traumatic Stress Diagnostic Scale, (22) Zung Depression Inventory, (23) MPQ - McGill Pain Questionnaire, (24) MPQ-SF - McGill Pain Questionnaire Short Form, (25) Oswestry Disability Questionnaire, (26) Visual Analogue Pain Scale – VAS. (Bruns, 2001) Chronic pain may harm the brain, based on using functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), whereby investigators found individuals with chronic back pain (CBP) had alterations in the functional connectivity of their cortical regions - areas of the brain that are unrelated to pain -

compared with healthy controls. Conditions such as depression, anxiety, sleep disturbances, and decision-making difficulties, which affect the quality of life of chronic pain patients as much as the pain itself, may be directly related to altered brain function as a result of chronic pain. (Baliki, 2008) See also Comorbid psychiatric disorders. See also the Stress/Mental Chapter.

Dr. R, Ph.D., testified as an expert. He is a licensed psychologist who is board certified in psychology. He stated that the certification is a prerequisite to being licensed as a psychologist in Texas. He stated that he counsels people with chronic pain. He opined that Claimant meets the ODG criteria because of an expectation of delayed recovery.

Dr. R stated that because Claimant's pain did not resolve within three months of his date of injury and has yet to resolve, Claimant is classified as having delayed recovery. He said that the IRO reviewer's comment about the previous psychological interview negating the need for the requested service is incorrect as the previous interview did not require preauthorization. In addition, he said the 1 hour of a psychological interview will enable Claimant's tester to get a snapshot of Claimant's current condition. Using information from the previous assessment would not show Claimant's current information He stated that both the ODG and common practice allow the 1 hour of psychological interview to be followed by 5 hours of psychological testing.

Claimant also presented Dr. R's writing of July 26, 2009. Dr. R wrote that he reviewed Dr. H's assessment which suggested that Claimant's delayed recovery might be the result of a mood disturbance as well as not being compliant in taking medication. He wrote that the requested services would help determine goals for Claimant's treatments.

Claimant presented a preponderance of evidence based medicine through the writings and testimony of Dr. R to overcome the decision of the IRO.

Even though all the evidence presented was not discussed, it was considered. The Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law are based on all of the evidence presented.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The parties stipulated to the following facts:
 - A. Venue is proper in the (City) Field Office of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation.
 - B. On _____, Claimant, who was the employee of (Self-Insured), sustained a compensable injury.
 - C. The IRO determined that the requested services were not reasonable and necessary health care services for the compensable injury of _____.
2. Carrier delivered to Claimant a single document stating the true corporate name of Carrier, and the name and street address of Carrier's registered agent, which document was admitted into evidence as Hearing Officer's Exhibit Number 2.

3. 1 hour of a psychological interview with 5 hours of psychological testing is health care reasonably required for the compensable injury of _____.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation, has jurisdiction to hear this case.
2. Venue is proper in the (City) Field Office.
3. The preponderance of the evidence is contrary to the decision of the IRO that 1 hour of a psychological interview with 5 hours of psychological testing is not health care reasonably required for the compensable injury of _____.

DECISION

Claimant is entitled to 1 hour of a psychological interview with 5 hours of psychological testing for the compensable injury of _____.

ORDER

Carrier is liable for the benefits at issue in this hearing. Claimant remains entitled to medical benefits for the compensable injury in accordance with §408.021.

The true corporate name of the insurance carrier is (**SELF-INSURED**) and the name and address of its registered agent for service of process is

C T CS
(STREET ADDRESS)
(CITY), TEXAS (ZIP CODE)

Signed this 8th day of December, 2009.

CAROLYN F. MOORE
Hearing Officer