

## IRI - MEDICAL CASE REVIEW

This is for Independent Review Incorporated, 1601 Rio Grande, Suite 420, Austin, Texas 78701. I have reviewed the medical information forwarded to me concerning MDR Case File #M2-02-0466-01, in the area of Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation which is my particular Board-certified specialty. The following documents were presented and reviewed:

### A. MEDICAL INFORMATION REVIEWED:

1. Request for review of denial of reimbursement for open Coblation Nucleoplasty at levels L4-L5 and L5-S1.
2. History and physical notes, consultations, and follow-up progress notes from the attending physician as well as documentation of adverse determination from the pre-authorization providers.
3. Radiographs and other imaging study reports.
4. Procedure notes.

### B. SUMMARY OF EVENTS:

This is a lady who sustained an injury on \_\_\_\_\_. She gives a history of working as a housekeeper at that time. She was holding a bucket of water when, apparently, she pulled a muscle in her left shoulder. She visited a physician, and radiographs and other imaging studies were performed. Physical therapy was initiated. She continued to have pain and was evaluated by Dr. Ali Mohamed initially on September 9, 1997.

There is a gap in the progress notes, and the next available test is a CT discogram from May 24, 2001, with left L4/5, L5/S1 disc protrusions. It is essential to note that at that time Dr. Mohamed reports, "No radiculopathy to the bilateral lower extremities." She was seen on a monthly basis thereafter, and again on December 17, 2001, Dr. Mohamed reports, "No radiation of pain into the bilateral lower extremities."

At that time, there was a request made for an open Coblation nucleoplasty at two levels. This was reviewed by a pre-authorization provider on December 7th, and at that time, there was a first determination made primarily that this is an experimental procedure and that there is no evidence of leg pain. This was appealed, and a second pre-authorization adverse determination was made again on January 8, 2002, again noting no leg pain.

On January 14th, after two denials for this Coblation nucleoplasty, Dr. Mohamed then reports in his progress note that there were complaints of bilateral lower extremity pain ending at the knees. This is a marked change from the complaints offered by the patient as reported by the treating doctor six months prior. I should mention that there is an EMG report by Dr. Mohamed from 6/29/00 (3 years post DOI), with unbelievable results of only acute changes in every single limb muscle tested.

### C. OPINION:

I AGREE WITH THE DETERMINATION MADE BY THE UTILIZATION REVIEW AGENT ON THIS CASE.

Open Coblation nucleoplasty is a new and experimental procedure. There is a lack of medical evidence documenting the efficacy of this procedure. There is no clear medical literature with a comprehensive double-blind study nor have there been adequate peer review journal articles published denoting that there is any indication for this procedure.

Therefore, it is my opinion, based on the fact of the experimental nature of this procedure, that this is clearly not the standard of care for treating disk protrusions in the lower lumbar spine. This decision is based on generally accepted medical guidelines and available published literature to date.

D.       DISCLAIMER:

The opinions rendered in this case are the opinions of this evaluator. This medical evaluation has been conducted on the basis of the documentation as provided to me with the assumption that the material is true, complete and correct. If more information becomes available at a later date, then additional service, reports or consideration may be requested. Such information may or may not change the opinions rendered in this evaluation. My opinion is based on the clinical assessment from the documentation provided.

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Date: 22 May 2002