

February 14, 2003

David Martinez
TWCC Medical Dispute Resolution
4000 IH 35 South, MS 48
Austin, TX 78704

MDR Tracking #: M2-03-0546-01-SS
IRO #: 5251

___ has been certified by the Texas Department of Insurance as an Independent Review Organization. The Texas Worker's Compensation Commission has assigned this case to ___ for independent review in accordance with TWCC Rule 133.308 which allows for medical dispute resolution by an IRO.

___ has performed an independent review of the proposed care to determine if the adverse determination was appropriate. In performing this review, all relevant medical records and documentation utilized to make the adverse determination, along with any documentation and written information submitted, was reviewed.

The independent review was performed by a matched peer with the treating doctor. This case was reviewed by a licensed Medical Doctor with a specialty and board certification in Neurological Surgery. The ___ health care professional has signed a certification statement stating that no known conflicts of interest exist between the reviewer and any of the treating doctors or providers or any of the doctors or providers who reviewed the case for a determination prior to the referral to ___ for independent review. In addition, the reviewer has certified that the review was performed without bias for or against any party to the dispute.

CLINICAL HISTORY

___ is a 46-year-old gentleman who was involved in a motor vehicle accident on ___. He complained of low back pain with radiation to the bilateral buttocks and down bilateral lower extremities, right greater than left, with associated numbness. An MRI of the lumbar spine dated 11/21/00 revealed a far lateral disc herniation at L4/5 with associated right L4/5 neural foraminal stenosis. There was as well L5/S1 mild degenerative disc disease and a moderate sized central disc herniation causing spinal canal stenosis and mild bilateral neural foraminal stenosis. The official report of an MRI dated 6/25/02 was interpreted as "asymmetric annular bulging to the right at L4/5 with moderately severe lower neural foraminal stenosis on the right and central shallow disc protrusion on L5/S1 with annular bulging and moderately severe encroachment on the lower neuro foramina bilaterally." The MRI dated 11/21/00 shows mild degenerative disc disease with far right lateral disc herniation and moderate right neural foraminal stenosis, as well as L5/S1 degenerative disc disease with a central disc herniation and mild spinal canal stenosis and mild bilateral neural foraminal stenosis as interpreted by the radiologist and echoed by

the clinician who was evaluating the patient. The patient failed to have complete resolution of his symptoms, even with epidural steroid injections.

REQUESTED SERVICE

A lumbar fusion with graft is requested for this patient.

DECISION

The reviewer agrees with the prior adverse determination.

BASIS FOR THE DECISION

Based upon treatment guidelines and care standards, and after evaluation of the clinical syndrome and reports of neuroradiographic studies available, the reviewer finds no evidence of frank instability that would substantiate the need for a proposed lumbar fusion with grafting. Therefore, such a procedure is not indicated at this time.

___ has performed an independent review solely to determine the medical necessity of the health services that are the subject of the review. ___ has made no determinations regarding benefits available under the injured employee's policy.

As an officer of ___, I certify that there is no known conflict between the reviewer, ___ and/or any officer/employee of the IRO with any person or entity that is a party to the dispute.

___ is forwarding by mail and, in the case of time sensitive matters by facsimile, a copy of this finding to the treating doctor, payor and/or URA, patient and the TWCC.

Sincerely,

YOUR RIGHT TO REQUEST A HEARING

Either party to this medical dispute may disagree with all or part of the decision and has a right to request a hearing.

In the case of prospective *spinal surgery* decision, a request for a hearing must be made in writing and it must be received by the TWCC Chief Clerk of Proceedings within 10 days of your receipt of this decision. (20 Tex. Admin. Code 142.5(c)).

In the case of other *prospective (preauthorization) medical necessity* disputes a request for a hearing must be in writing, and it must be received by the TWCC Chief Clerk of Proceedings within **20** (twenty) days of your receipt of this decision (28 Tex. Admin. Code 148.3).

This decision is deemed received by you 5 (five) days after it was mailed (28 Tex. Admin. Code 102.4(h) or 102.5(d)). A request for a hearing should be sent to: Chief Clerk of Proceedings, Texas Worker's Compensation Commission, P.O. Box 40669, Austin, TX 78704-0012. A copy of this decision should be attached to the request.

The party appealing this decision shall deliver a copy of its written request for a hearing to all other parties involved in the dispute, per TWCC rule 133.308(t)(2).

I hereby certify, in accordance with TWCC Rule 102.4 (h), that a copy of this Independent Review Organization decision was sent to the carrier, requestor, claimant (and/or the claimant's representative) and the TWCC via facsimile, U.S. Postal Service or both on this 14th day of February, 2003.