

IRO America Inc.

An Independent Review Organization

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August 9, 2006

TDI-DWC Medical Dispute Resolution

Fax: (512) 804-4868

Patient: _____

TDI-DWC #: _____

MDR Tracking #: M2-06-1684-01

IRO #: 5251

IRO America Inc. (IRO America) has been certified by the Texas Department of Insurance as an Independent Review Organization. The TDI, Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) has assigned this case to IRO America for independent review in accordance with DWC Rule 133.308 which allows for medical dispute resolution by an IRO.

IRO America 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; the Reviewer is a credentialed Panel Member of IRO America's Medical Knowledge Panel who is a licensed MD, board certified and specialized in Orthopedic Surgery. The reviewer is on the DWC Approved Doctor List (ADL).

The IRO America Panel Member/Reviewer is a health care professional who has signed a certification statement stating that no known conflicts of interest exist between the Reviewer and the injured employee, the injured employee's employer, the injured employee's insurance carrier, the utilization review agent, or any of the treating doctors or insurance carriers health care providers who reviewed the case for decision before referral to IRO America for independent review. In addition, the reviewer has certified that the review was performed without bias for or against any party to the dispute.

RECORDS REVIEWED

Notification of IRO Assignment, records from the Requestor, Respondent, and Treating Doctor(s), including but not limited to:

- Letter to adjuster, Dr. Strausser, 06/24/04
- Operative report, Dr. Strausser, 09/14/05
- X-ray lumbar spine, 09/14/04
- Letter to Michael Peck from Dr. Strausser, 09/18/04
- Letter to Texas Political Sub, 10/10/04
- Office note, Dr. Strausser, 11/06/04

- Letter, Dr. Strausser, 11/19/04, 01/03/05, 02/04/05, 09/19/05, 10/31/05, 01/09/06 and 05/12/06
- Lumbar spine MRI, 10/24/05
- Denial note, 05/22/06 and 05/31/06
- Treatment records, Dr. Peck, 06/05/06, 06/27/06, 06/30/06 and 07/12/06
- Letter, Dr. Peck, 07/12/05

CLINICAL HISTORY

This 48 year old female has undergone an intradiscal electrothermal annuloplasty procedure date and level unknown, and most recently a 09/14/05 bilateral laminectomy and decompression at L4-5. Postoperatively, the Patient did well initially but then had the recurrence of mechanical low back pain and leg pain. The Patient has been treated with chiropractic treatments, medication and work restrictions. According to Dr. Strausser's note on 10/31/05, the MRI revealed postoperative decompression of L4-5, loss of disc height and significant foraminal stenosis bilaterally. By 05/12/06, the Patient reported progressive back pain almost to the point that she could not tolerate the pain. The back pain was midline at the lumbar region with occasional sharp shooting pain and burning pain. The back and leg pain were equal. Physical exam findings revealed moderate restriction on lumbar range of motion in flexion and extension, spasm, no tenderness and she was neurologically intact. Dr. Strausser presuming that her pain is discogenic has recommended a L4-5 transforaminal lumbar interbody fusion.

DISPUTED SERVICE(S)

Under dispute is the prospective, and/or concurrent medical necessity of L4-5 transforaminal lumbar interbody fusion with instrumented posterolateral fusion, possible iliac crest bone graft.

DETERMINATION/DECISION

The Reviewer agrees with the determination of the insurance company.

RATIONALE/BASIS FOR THE DECISION

The Reviewer reviewed the records on this Patient and agree with the denial of the surgical procedure. The Patient has undergone a prior decompression at L4-5 with no obvious evidence of continued nerve root impingement. Physical examination does not correlate with a specific neurological deficit and the current request for fusion appears to be secondary to discogenic pain. Fusion for discogenic pain remains controversial and unpredictable in the absence of instability. It would be reasonable to obtain flexion/extension x-rays to rule out instability but there is no evidence by the current medical records that instability is present, therefore, the Reviewer is unable to recommend L4-5 transforaminal lumbar interbody fusion as being medically necessary at this time.

Screening Criteria

1. Specific:

- AAOS, Orthopedic Knowledge Update, Spine, Chapter 52, pg 641
- Rothman and Simeone, The Spine, 3rd edition, pg 733

2. General:

In making his determination, the Reviewer had reviewed medically acceptable screening criteria relevant to the case, which may include but is not limited to any of the following: Evidence Based Medicine Guidelines (Helsinki, Finland); Texas Medical Foundation: Screening Criteria Manual (Austin, Texas); Texas Chiropractic Association: Texas Guidelines to Quality

Assurance (Austin Texas); Texas Medical Foundation: Screening Criteria Manual (Austin, Texas); Mercy Center Guidelines of Quality Assurance; any and all guidelines issued by DWC or other State of Texas Agencies; standards contained in Medicare Coverage Database; ACOEM Guidelines; peer-reviewed literate and scientific studies that meet nationally recognized standards; standard references compendia; and findings; studies conducted under the auspices of federal government agencies and research institutes; the findings of any national board recognized by the National Institutes of Health; peer reviewed abstracts submitted for presentation at major medical associates meetings; any other recognized authorities and systems of evaluation that are relevant.

CERTIFICATION BY OFFICER

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

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

IRO America is forwarding by mail or facsimile, a copy of this finding to the DWC, the Injured Employee, the Respondent, the Requestor, and the Treating Doctor.

Sincerely,
IRO America Inc.

Dr. Roger Glenn Brown
President & Chief Resolutions Officer

Cc: _____

David Strausser
Attn: Tracy Martinez
Fax: 281-367-1201

Texas Political Subdivisions / Harris & Harris
Attn: Robert Josey
Fax: 512-346-2539

Your Right To Appeal

If you are unhappy with all or part of this decision, you have the right to appeal the decision. The decision of the Independent Review Organization is binding during the appeal process.

If you are disputing the decision (other than a spinal surgery prospective decision), the appeal must be made directly to a district court in Travis County (see Texas Labor Code §413.031). An appeal to District Court must be filed not later than 30 days after the date on which the decision that is the subject of the appeal is final and appealable. If you are disputing a spinal surgery prospective decision, a request for a hearing must be in writing and it must be received by the Division of Workers' Compensation, Chief Clerk of Proceedings, within ten (10) days of your receipt of this decision.

The party appealing this decision shall deliver a copy of its written request for a hearing to other party involved in this dispute.

I hereby certify, in accordance with DWC 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 DWC via facsimile, U.S. Postal Service or both on this 9th day of August, 2006.

Name and Signature of IRO America Representative:

Sincerely,
IRO America Inc.

Dr. Roger Glenn Brown
President & Chief Resolutions Officer