

IRO REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE -WC

ReviewTex. Inc.
1818 Mountjoy Drive
San Antonio, TX 78232
(phone) 210-598-9381 (fax) 210-598-9382
reviewtex@hotmail.com

Notice of Independent Review Decision

Date notice sent to all Parties:

December 19, 2012

IRO CASE #:

DESCRIPTION OF THE SERVICE OR SERVICES IN DISPUTE:

Work Hardening for the left ankle – 80 hours (10 sessions)

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

Board Certified PM&R; Board Certified Pain Medicine

REVIEW OUTCOME:

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

X Upheld (Agree)

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

IRO REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE -WC

INFORMATION PROVIDED TO THE IRO FOR REVIEW:

PATIENT CLINICAL HISTORY [SUMMARY]:

The patient is a male whose date of injury is xx/xx/xx. On this date the patient slipped on oil twisting his leg and then as he began to fall he tried to grab and hold himself up with both arms and injured his left shoulder and low back at the same time. The patient sustained a spiral oblique fracture of the distal fibula, nondisplaced. The patient's lower extremity was immobilized. Note dated 12/05/11 indicates that the patient's left ankle feels good, but he still has some soreness after initiating physical therapy last week. The patient underwent left shoulder arthroscopic rotator cuff repair on 03/12/12. MRI of the left foot dated 04/11/12 revealed marrow edema and periosteal reaction along the mid and dorsal shaft of the second metatarsal, most compatible with stress response/early stress fracture; nonspecific subchondral marrow edema about the first tarsometatarsal joint; nonspecific mild marrow edema within the middle cuneiform which may also represent stress. Note dated 04/16/12 indicates that the patient will be placed in below-the-knee nonweightbearing cast and will continue utilizing crutches. The patient was also provided a bone growth stimulator. Note dated 06/01/12 indicates that the patient has been weightbearing. Functional capacity evaluation dated 10/12/12 indicates that the patient presents with very minimal difference in strength and range of motion between the left versus the right lower extremity. Current PDL is light-medium and required PDL is very heavy. Psychosocial screening dated life challenges. Note dated 11/09/12 indicates that the patient completed his work hardening of the shoulder.

Initial request for work hardening for the left ankle 80 hours was non-certified on 11/07/12 noting that the requesting provider was not available for peer to peer, but it appears that a partial approval of 40 hours of work hardening program may be appropriate. The denial was upheld on appeal dated 11/16/12 noting that the documentation submitted for review details that the patient made significant recovery with regards to the left ankle and achieving 5/5 muscle strength and full range of motion of the ankle after completing his physical therapy course. There was no evidence of plateau in treatment.

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

Based on the clinical information provided, the request for work hardening for the left ankle 80 hours (10 sessions) is not recommended as medically necessary, and the two previous denials are upheld.

IRO REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE -WC

Functional capacity evaluation dated 10/12/12 indicates that the patient presents with very minimal difference in strength and range of motion between the left versus the right lower extremity. The note dated 11/09/12 states that the patient completed a work hardening program for the shoulder; however, the patient's objective functional response to this program is not documented. There is no updated functional capacity evaluation submitted for review documenting the patient's functional ability as well as current versus required physical demand level. The submitted records indicate that range of motion of the ankle is full and muscle strength is rated as 5/5. Given the current clinical data, the requested work hardening program is not indicated as medically necessary.

(3) *Job demands:* A work-related musculoskeletal deficit has been

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

ODG Ankle and Foot Chapter

<p>Work conditioning, work hardening</p>	<p>Recommended as an option, depending on the availability of quality programs. See especially the Low Back Chapter or the Knee Chapter, for more information and references.</p> <p>Criteria for admission to a Work Hardening (WH) Program:</p> <p>(1) <i>Prescription:</i> The program has been recommended by a physician or nurse case manager, and a prescription has been provided.</p> <p>(2) <i>Screening Documentation:</i> 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.</p>
--	---

IRO REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE -WC

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 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

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

IRO REVIEWER REPORT TEMPLATE -WC

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.

ODG Work Conditioning (WC) Physical Therapy Guidelines

WC amounts to an additional series of intensive physical therapy (PT) visits required beyond a normal course of PT, primarily for exercise training/supervision (and would be contraindicated if there are already significant psychosocial, drug or attitudinal barriers to recovery not addressed by these programs). See also [Physical therapy](#) for general PT guidelines. WC visits will typically be more intensive than regular PT visits, lasting 2 or 3 times as long. And, as with all physical therapy programs, Work Conditioning participation does not preclude concurrently being at work.

Timelines: 10 visits over 4 weeks, equivalent to up to 30 hours.