SOAH DOCKET NO. 454-11-6630.M4
DWC NO.

VISTA MEDICAL CENTER HOSPITAL, Petitioner	§	BEFORE THE STATE OFFICE
V.	§	OF
SERVICE LLOYDS INSURANCE COMPANY, Respondent	§	ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS

DECISION AND ORDER

Vista Medical Center Hospital (Vista) challenges the denial of additional reimbursement by Service Lloyds Insurance Company (Service) for outpatient (OP) services, specifically a transforaminal epidural steroid injection and flouroscopy (ESI), CPT Code 64483, provided to an injured worker on January 26, 2004. The Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) finds that the evidence failed to prove Vista is entitled to additional reimbursement for services rendered in connection with the ESI procedure. Accordingly, Vista's request for additional reimbursement is denied.

I. JURISDICTION, NOTICE, AND PROCEDURAL HISTORY

Vista filed a request for medical fee dispute resolution with the Medical Review Division (MRD) of the Texas Department of Insurance, Division of Workers' Compensation (Division).[1] On May 6, 2011, the Division issued its Medical Fee Dispute Resolution Findings and Decision (MRD Decision), denying Vista any additional reimbursement. By letter dated May 31, 2011, Vista requested a hearing at the State Office of Administrative Hearings (SOAH) to contest MRD's determination. A hearing convened before ALJ Michael J. O'Malley on May 10, 2012, at SOAH's facilities in Austin, Texas. Vista was represented by attorney Christina Hernandez.

[1] Effective September 1, 2005, the legislature dissolved the Texas Workers' Compensation Commission (Commission) and created the Division of Workers' Compensation within the Texas Department of Insurance. Act of June 1, 2005, 79th Leg., R.S., ch. 265, § 8.001, 2005 Tex. Gen. Laws 469, 607. This Decision and Order refers to the Commission and its successor collectively as the Division.

Service was represented by attorney Roy W. Horton. The record closed on August 24, 2012, when the parties filed their closing briefs.

II. DISCUSSION

A. Applicable Law

This case is governed by the Tex. Lab. Code (Labor Code) § 401.001*et seq.*, also known as the Texas Workers' Compensation Act (Act). The workers' compensation insurance program created by the Act covers all medically necessary health care.[2] Although amended several times, Section 413.011 of the Act generally directs the Division's Commissioner to establish medical policies and guidelines relating to fees charged or paid for medical services for employees who suffer compensable injuries, including guidelines relating to payment of fees for specific medical treatments or services.[3] The Act has consistently required that the fee guidelines for medical services be fair and reasonable, ensure quality medical care, and achieve effective medical cost control.[4] Moreover, the guidelines may not provide for payment of a fee in excess of the fee charged for similar treatment of an injured individual of an equivalent standard of living and paid by that individual or by someone acting on that individual's behalf.[5] In setting such guidelines, the increased security of payment afforded by the Act also must be considered.[6]

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[2] Labor Code § 401.011.

[3] This section of the Act has been amended on several occasions as follows:

Acts 1993, 73rd Leg. ch. 269, Sec. 1, eff. Sept. 1, 1993. Amended by Acts 2001, 77th Leg., ch. 1456, Sec. 6.02, eff. Jun. 17, 2001; Acts 2003, 78th Leg., ch. 962, Sec. 1, 2, eff. Jun. 20, 2003.
Amended by:
Acts 2005, 79th Leg., ch. 265, Sec. 3.233, eff. Sept. 1, 2005.
Acts 2007, 80th Leg. R.S., ch. 1177, Sec. 2, eff. Sept. 1, 2007.
Acts 2007, 80th Leg., R.S. ch. 1177, Sec. 2, eff. Jan. 1, 2011.

[4] Tex. Labor Code § 413.011(d).

[5] Tex. Labor Code § 413.011(d).

[6] Tex. Labor Code § 413.011(d).

Prior to March 1, 2008, the Division did not have a fee guideline for medical services provided in an outpatient acute care hospital.[7] In reimbursing providers for services without a fee guideline, an insurance carrier is required to reimburse at a fair and reasonable rate, as described in Section 413.011(d) of the Act.[8] Until May 2006, "fair and reasonable reimbursement" was defined as follows:

> Reimbursement that meets the standards set out in § 413.011 of the Texas Labor Code, and the lesser of a health care provider's usual and customary charge, or
>
> (A) the maximum allowable reimbursement, when one has been established in an applicable Commission fee guideline,
>
> (B) the determination of a payment amount for medical treatment(s) and/or service(s) for which the Commission has established no maximum allowable reimbursement amount, or
>
> (C) a negotiated contract amount.[9]

Effective May 2, 2006, the Division defined "fair and reasonable reimbursement" as reimbursement that:

> (1) is consistent with the criteria of Labor Code § 413.011;
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> (2) ensures that similar procedures provided in similar circumstances receive similar reimbursement; and
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> (3) is based on nationally recognized published studies, published Division medical dispute decisions, and values assigned for services involving similar work and resource commitments, if available.[10]

When the Division has not established a fee guideline for a particular procedure, service, or item, the Division's rules require carriers to develop and consistently apply a methodology to determine fair and reasonable reimbursement.[11]

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[7] Effective March 1, 2008, the Division adopted a fee guideline for outpatient medical services. 28 TAC § 134.403. By its terms, that fee guideline applies only to outpatient medical services provided on or after March 1, 2008.

[8] 28 Tex. Admin. Code § 134.1(f) from Oct. 7, 1991 until May 16, 2002, when it became 28 TAC § 134.1(c). On May 2, 2006, it became 28 TAC § 134.1(c)(3). In 2008, it was amended to become 28 TAC § 134.1(e)(3).

[9] 28 TAC § 133.1(8).

[10] 28 TAC § 134.1(d)(1)-(3). Amended in 2008 to 28 TAC § 134.1(f)(1)-(3).

B. Discussion

In its request for reimbursement presented to the Carrier, Vista asked for $16,303.75 for the services it provided to the injured worker. Service reimbursed Vista $2,236.00 for those services. Vista sought additional reimbursement of $13,005.75 in its request for medical fee dispute resolution filed at MRD. At MRD, Vista contended that 70% of its billed charges constituted fair and reasonable reimbursement. The MRD Decision found that Vista did not establish the amount it requested was fair and reasonable.

For the SOAH hearing, Vista altered its theory and requested recovery based on the average for CPT Code 64483 in cases that were not subject to a fee dispute. Vista asserts that including the payments that are subject to a fee dispute would be unfair and skewed since it is disputing those payments. In the alternative, Vista seeks the average payment made by all workers' compensation carriers for the services billed in line with the analysis in the Renaissance cases and in reliance on Commissioner's Bulletin #B-0009-07[12] and a March 2005 MDR Newsletter.[13] Vista seeks additional reimbursement within a range of the two averages, plus interest.[14] Vista seeks additional reimbursement of approximately $11,954.80. Vista asserted that this amount for CPT Code 64483 is a fair and reasonable reimbursement.

To support its position, Vista relied on two recent Division decisions involving Renaissance Hospital. In those cases, the Division found that the average payment by all insurance carriers in the Texas workers' compensation system during the same year and

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[11] 28 TAC § 133.304(i)(1) (eff. July 15, 2000); 28 TAC § 134.1(e) (eff. May 2, 2006).
[12] Vista Ex. 9.
[13] Vista Ex. 8.
[14] Vista Ex. 13.

involving the same procedures that Renaissance provided was the best evidence in those cases of an amount that would achieve a fair and reasonable reimbursement.

Vista also argued that Service did not present any evidence that its methodology produces a fair and reasonable reimbursement under the statutory standards. Although Service offered evidence showing the amount it reimbursed Vista, Vista asserted that Service did not present sufficient evidence that the amount it reimbursed Vista was fair and reasonable under the statutory standards.

Service argued that Vista's theory of recovery asserted at the SOAH hearing was flawed because Vista offered no evidence that the payments it received for the ESI during 2004 and 2005 were based on the criteria for fair and reasonable reimbursement established in the Act and the Division's rules. Service further asserted that there is a significant difference between Vista's average payments and those approved by the MRD in the Renaissance cases. Service pointed out that Vista's use of its limited, unsubstantiated historical payment data not only failed to establish a fair and reasonable rate, it also failed to demonstrate cost control. Service contended that Vista provided no evidence on how it calculates its usual and customary billing numbers. Furthermore, Service opined that Vista's evidence on its statistical validation for use of its own historical payment database and that the use of Vista's own reimbursement data is lacking and therefore inherently biased.

Although Service did not offer sufficient evidence to show that its methodology was fair and reasonable under the statutory standards, it noted that $2,236.00 is 200% of $1,118. According to Service, $1,118 is the maximum a hospital could have been reimbursed under the fee guidelines.

Vista's theory of recovery was not consistent with the Division's decisions in the two Renaissance cases.[15] Furthermore, Vista failed to establish how its proposed reimbursement level of $11,954.80 for CPT Code 64483 complied with criteria contained in the Act and rules for fair and reasonable reimbursement. Accordingly, Vista did not meet its burden of proof. Furthermore, the evidence in the record is insufficient for the ALJ to determine a fair and reasonable reimbursement for the services rendered by Vista in this case.

C. Conclusion

Vista did not prove it is entitled to additional reimbursement from Service for the ESI in question.

III. FINDINGS OF FACT

1. On January 26, 2004, Vista provided OP services for administration of an ESI to a workers' compensation claimant.

2. Service was the responsible workers' compensation insurer for the claimant.

3. Vista billed $16,303.75 for the ESI services.

4. Service reimbursed Vista $2,236.00 for the ESI services.

5. At the time Vista provided the services, there was no fee guideline in place for OP services.

6. At the MRD Vista requested $13,005.75 additional reimbursement for the services in dispute.

7. Service denied Vista's request for additional reimbursement.

8. Vista timely filed a request for medical fee dispute resolution with the Division.

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[15] The ALJ offers no opinion and makes no decision on whether the methodology used in the Renaissance cases is valid for determining fair and reasonable reimbursement.

9. On May 6, 2011, MRD issued its Medical Fee Dispute Resolution Findings and Decision and found that no additional reimbursement was owed to Vista.

10. Vista timely requested a hearing at SOAH to contest the MRD Decision.

11. A Notice of Hearing informed the parties of the date, time, and location of the hearing, the matters to be considered, the legal authority under which the hearing would be held, and the statutory provisions applicable to the matters to be considered.

12. A hearing convened before ALJ Michael J. O'Malley on May 10, 2012, at SOAH's facilities in Austin, Texas. Vista was represented by attorney Christina Hernandez. Service was represented by attorney Roy W. Horton. The record closed on August 24, 2012, when the parties filed their closing briefs.

13. Vista seeks the average payment made by all workers' compensation carriers for the services billed in line with the analysis in the Renaissance cases and in reliance on Commissioner's Bulletin #B-0009-07 and a March 2005 MDR Newsletter.

14. Vista seeks additional reimbursement of $11,954.80.

15. Vista failed to prove that $11,954.80 constituted fair and reasonable reimbursement based upon the applicable criteria.

IV. CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. The State Office of Administrative Hearings has jurisdiction over this proceeding, including the authority to issue a decision and order, pursuant to Tex. Lab. Code § 413.031 and Tex. Gov't Code ch. 2003.

2. Adequate and timely notice of the hearing was provided in accordance with Tex. Gov't Code §§ 2001.051 and 2001.052.

3. The services provided to the Claimant were not covered by a fee guideline issued by the Division, and so were required to be billed and reimbursed at a fair and reasonable rate, within the meaning of Tex. Labor Code § 413.011.

4. Vista had the burden of proof in this proceeding by a preponderance of the evidence.

5. Vista did not prove the additional reimbursement it sought complied with the applicable criteria for fair and reasonable reimbursement.

6. Vista failed to prove it is entitled to additional payment from Service for the services provided to the claimant.

ORDER

IT IS ORDERED that Service is not required to pay Vista any additional reimbursement for the services provided to the claimant.

SIGNED September 24, 2012.

MICHAEL J. O'MALLEY
ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGE
STATE OFFICE OF ADMINISTRATIVE HEARING