

State of California
Department of Industrial Relations
Division of Workers' Compensation

2021 Independent Medical Review (IMR) Report: Analysis of 2020 Data

**CALIFORNIA LABOR AND WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AGENCY
(LWDA)**

JULIE A. SU, SECRETARY

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS (DIR)

KATIE HAGEN, DIRECTOR

DIVISION OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION (DWC)

GEORGE PARISOTTO, ADMINISTRATIVE DIRECTOR

Contents

- Executive Summary..... 3
- Introduction 4
 - About IMR 4
 - Analysis of 2020 IMR Data 5
 - Note on the COVID-19 Pandemic..... 5
- Findings 6
 - Applications..... 6
 - Ineligible Applications 7
 - IMR Timeline 8
 - Geographic Region of the Injured Worker..... 9
 - Physician Reviewers 10
 - Treatment Requests and Outcomes 11
 - Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule Treatment Guidelines..... 13
- Conclusion and Future Directions..... 14
- Appendices..... 15
 - Appendix A1. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Opioid Analgesics 15
 - Appendix A2. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Skeletal Muscle Relaxants..... 15
 - Appendix A3. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Topical Analgesics 16
 - Appendix A4. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: NSAIDs..... 16
 - Appendix A5. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Anticonvulsants..... 17
 - Appendix A6. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Sedatives/Hypnotics 17
 - Appendix A7. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antidepressants 17
 - Appendix A8. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antiulcer Agents..... 18
 - Appendix A9. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Benzodiazepines 18
 - Appendix A10. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Anti-infective Agents..... 18
 - Appendix A11. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Laxatives..... 19
 - Appendix A12. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antiemetics 19
 - Appendix A13. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: All Other Drug Classes..... 20
 - Appendix B1. Treatment Request Outcomes: Behavioral and Mental Health Services 21
 - Appendix B2. Treatment Request Outcomes: Programs 21
 - Appendix B3. Treatment Request Outcomes: Diagnostic Testing 22
 - Appendix B4. Treatment Request Outcomes: DMEPOS 23
 - Appendix B5. Treatment Request Outcomes: Evaluation and Management..... 24

Appendix B6. Treatment Request Outcomes: Home Health and Transportation 24

Appendix B7. Treatment Request Outcomes: Injections..... 25

Appendix B8. Treatment Request Outcomes: Rehabilitation..... 26

Appendix B9. Treatment Request Outcomes: Surgery 27

Geographic Regions Appendix 28

Executive Summary

In September 2012, Governor Brown signed into legislation Senate Bill (SB) 863. This reform of the workers' compensation system in California included Independent Medical Review (IMR), which went into effect January 1, 2013. Now in its eighth year, IMR continues to provide expedient, effective resolution of disputes over medical necessity for injured workers treated in the state of California's workers' compensation system.

IMR activity slowed in the first half of 2020 at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Independent Medical Review Organization (IMRO) processed 184,100 applications for the year, a 17% decrease from 2019. Of these 184,100, nearly 36,000 were found to be duplicate applications, and nearly 9,300 were determined to be ineligible. IMR activity rebounded in the second half of 2020, with at least 15,000 applications filed each month.

Concurrently, the IMRO issued 136,740 IMR final determinations, 16% fewer than the previous year. Throughout the year, the average length of time the IMRO took to issue a final determination after the receipt of all medical records was eight to twelve days. Expert reviewers licensed in the state of California reviewed 79% of all IMR cases, and around 74% were evaluated by a reviewer with board certification in Occupational Medicine, Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management, or Orthopedic Surgery.

Overall, the IMRO overturned 9.5% of the Utilization Review (UR) decisions that denied treatment requests made by physicians treating injured workers. This rate of overturn is slightly lower than in the previous year (10.4%). As in most previous years, similar rates of overturned cases occurred in all geographic regions in which injured workers reside.

Pharmaceutical requests encompass 34% of the issues in dispute. This percentage continues to decrease from 2019 (37% of all requests) and 2018 (42%). Opioid analgesics comprise 30% of the drug requests. The second- and third-highest number of requests were for diagnostic tests (e.g., imaging, radiology), representing 18% of all issues, and rehabilitation services (e.g., physical therapy, chiropractic), with 17%.

The treatment request denials that were overturned most often were for behavioral and mental health service (18% overturned); programs, such as functional restoration programs and gym memberships (16% overturned); and evaluation and management services, which include specialist consultations and dental service (15% overturned). The requests with the fewest overturned UR denials were in the category of DMEPOS (durable medical equipment, prosthetics, orthotics, & supplies), with 7% overturned.

Along with treating physicians and UR practitioners, the IMRO's expert reviewers follow guidelines set forth in the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) for determinations of medical necessity. Division of Workers' Compensation (DWC) offers a free online education module to all those promoting the application of the MTUS and evidence-based medicine for California's injured workers.

Introduction

In September 2012, Governor Brown signed into legislation SB 863. This reform of the workers' compensation system in California included IMR, which went into effect January 1, 2013, for injuries that occurred in 2013. On July 1, 2013, IMR was available to all injured workers regardless of their date of injury.

IMR is an efficient, expedient process for resolving disputes over the medical necessity of medical treatment recommended by physicians for injured workers but denied or modified in the Utilization Review (UR) process ([UR information](#)). The expert reviewers follow the guidance of the Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule (MTUS) and the principles of evidence-based medicine to determine the medical necessity of the requested treatment ([MTUS information](#)).

This annual report analyzes the activity and progress in the program's eighth year.

About IMR

Barring a change in the injured worker's condition, a UR decision modifying or denying a treatment request because it is not medically necessary is final and in effect for one year unless it is overturned through IMR. This process requires that qualified independent medical professionals determine the medical necessity of recommended treatments based on the MTUS.

To dispute a UR denial or modification on one or more requested treatments, injured workers or their legal representatives must, within 30 days, submit a signed IMR application that has been completed (except for the signature) by the UR claims administrator, along with a copy of the UR decision. Upon receipt of an eligible application, the IMRO requests medical records from the claims administrator, the worker, the attorney (if the worker is represented), and the requesting physician.

After receiving the medical records, the IMRO assigns the case to an expert physician reviewer. Unless the case is terminated or withdrawn during the process, it is resolved when the assigned physician reviewer communicates the IMR decision(s) to the worker or representative, employer or insurer, and treating physician in a Final Determination Letter (FDL). Redacted information in these FDLs is available on the DWC's website.

The cost of IMR is borne by employers through direct payment to the IMRO. Maximus Federal Services has been the contracted IMRO since the program's inception in 2013 and is currently under contract to provide IMR through December 2022.

Analysis of 2020 IMR Data

The IMRO provides the DWC with case and treatment data for all completed case decisions, which includes information directly from the IMRO application, details on the types of treatment under review from UR reports, and evidence cited by the expert reviewers in their determination of medical necessity. The data used for this report were extracted and collected for analysis on January 26, 2021, and are current as of that date.

All treatment requests for cases issued in 2020 were assigned specific service categories, to assist with analysis of particular types of treatments and their medical necessity resolutions. Geographic regions were determined from the ZIP Code of the IMR application as listed in the case file. The ZIP Code was matched against the monthly US Postal ZIP Code Table identifying ZIP codes by county. Counties were then grouped by region. (See Geographic Regions Appendix for more information.)

Note on the COVID-19 Pandemic

The emerging pandemic at the beginning of 2020 caused a small disruption in IMR activity in the spring. IMR filings decreased approximately 20% between the first and second quarters of the year. As the year progressed, the IMRO received at least 15,000 new applications each month, which held steady through December. The number of applications determined to be eligible in December was only 1,000 lower than that deemed eligible in January. While the average length of time needed to issue a decision after receipt of complete medical records increased slightly in April (twelve days), the IMRO was well within the statutory time requirement of 30 days, and this average returned to normal the following month.

Findings

Applications

In 2020, the IMRO received a total of **184,100** IMR applications, 17% fewer than the previous year (222,236). As in previous years, approximately one in five applications (19.2%) duplicated an application previously received. After duplicate applications were subtracted, the number of “unique” applications received totaled **148,713** for the year.

After an application is determined not to be a duplicate, it is screened for eligibility. In 2020, **139,411** eligible applications were processed by the IMRO, a monthly average of 11,612. Since 2013, the IMRO has deemed eligible nearly 1.2 million applications.

Table 1. IMR Applications by Calendar Year (CY), 2013 to 2020

Calendar Year	Total Number of Applications Filed	Total Number of Unique Applications	Total Number of Applications Deemed Eligible
2020	184,100	148,713	139,411
2019	222,236	177,204	165,610
2018	252,565	199,956	185,783
2017	248,251	192,538	175,118
2016	249,436	196,057	172,452
2015	253,779	195,685	165,427
2014	228,207	171,704	142,658
2013	83,921	68,323	52,544
TOTAL	1,722,495	1,350,180	1,199,003

Table 2. IMR Applications by Month, 2020

Month	Total Number of Applications Filed	Total Number of Unique Applications	Total Number of Applications Deemed Eligible
January	17,364	13,961	12,792
February	16,866	13,636	12,658
March	17,694	13,951	12,925
April	14,026	11,450	10,622
May	12,516	10,235	9,596
June	14,176	11,561	10,980
July	14,955	12,195	11,657
August	15,053	12,167	11,601
September	15,175	12,166	11,415
October	15,746	12,744	11,964
November	15,218	12,167	11,426
December	15,311	12,480	11,775
TOTAL	184,100	148,713	139,411

Ineligible Applications

An IMR application is ineligible if:

- (1) It lacks the signature of the injured worker or their representative;
- (2) It is not submitted within 30 days of service of the written UR decision;
- (3) The UR report is not attached to the application; and/or
- (4) The UR does not reflect a determination of medical necessity (conditional non-certification)

The number of applications determined to be ineligible, and the percentage of these applications in proportion to all “unique” applications, continues to decrease year-on-year. In 2020, the total number of untimely filings, those not submitted within 30 days of service of the written UR decision, was only one-quarter of the previous year’s total.

Table 3. Ineligible Applications as Percentage of Unique Filings, CY 2013 to CY 2020

Calendar Year	Total Number of Unique Applications	Total Number of Ineligible Applications	Percent of Applications Deemed Ineligible
2020	148,713	9,277	6.1%
2019	177,204	11,594	6.5%
2018	199,956	14,173	7.1%
2017	192,538	17,420	9.0%
2016	196,057	23,605	12.0%
2015	195,685	30,258	15.5%
2014	171,704	29,046	16.9%
2013	68,323	15,729	23.0%
TOTAL	1,350,180	151,102	11.2%

Table 4. Reasons for Ineligibility, 2020 vs. 2019

Category	CY 2020	CY 2019
No Signature on Application	750	802
Untimely Filing	740	2,754
No UR Report Attached	2,263	3,236
No Signature and No UR Report	108	153
Conditional Non-certification (CNC)*	3,994	3,191
Other	1,422	1,458
TOTAL	9,277	11,594

*Conditionally noncertified decision (CNC): A UR decision that has been denied because the treating physician has not provided the medical information requested by the claims administrator that is required to make a medical necessity determination on the treatment recommendation.

IMR Timeline

Standard IMR decisions must be issued within 30 days of receipt of the medical records and decisions for expedited applications within 72 hours. Of the 136,698 *standard* IMR decisions issued in 2020, fewer than 500 were issued outside the statutory time requirement. The monthly average length of time taken to issue a decision after receipt of complete medical records rose at the beginning of the pandemic but quickly fell.

Table 5. Average Number of Days to Complete Standard IMRs, 2020

Month	Total Number of Standard Final Decisions Issued	Average Age from Assigned Date	Average Age from Complete Medical Records
January	12,491	26	8
February	10,645	27	8
March	13,715	25	8
April	13,799	25	12
May	9,628	24	9
June	10,101	24	9
July	10,637	24	9
August	10,386	25	9
September	11,033	26	10
October	11,212	27	10
November	10,906	27	10
December	12,145	28	11

"Average Age from Assigned Date" represents the average number of calendar days required to process an IMR from the date the Notice of Assignment and Request for Information (NOARFI) was mailed to the date the Final Determination Letter (FDL) was mailed.

"Average Age from Complete Medical Records" represents the average number of calendar days required to process an IMR from the date MAXIMUS received all necessary records to the date the FDL was mailed.

Table 6. Standard IMR Final Determinations Issued, CY 2013 to CY 2020

Calendar Year	Total Number of FDLs Issued
2020	136,698
2019	163,698
2018	184,672
2017	172,145
2016	175,960
2015	165,496
2014	143,840
2013	3,682
TOTAL	1,416,191

In 2020, 42 expedited cases were decided. The average length of time from receipt of application to issuance of decision was two days.

Expedited Review: UR or IMR conducted when the injured worker's condition is such that the injured worker faces an imminent and serious threat to his or her health, including, but not limited to, the potential loss of life, limb, or other major bodily function, or the normal timeframe for the decision-making process would be detrimental to the injured worker's life or health or could jeopardize the injured worker's permanent ability to regain maximum function. (8 CCR § 9792.6.1(j))

Geographic Region of the Injured Worker

Case decision outcomes in this quarter were analyzed by evaluating a sample time period during the past calendar year in which activity would be the least affected by the pandemic, October to December 2020, and consistency was seen across all geographic regions.

Table 7. Case Outcomes by Geographic Region of the Injured Worker, Fourth Quarter 2020

Region	Total Number	Uphold	Partial Overturn	Overturn
Bay Area	7,325	85.8%	3.9%	10.3%
Central Coast	2,731	87.9%	3.4%	8.7%
Central Valley	4,740	88.6%	4.1%	7.3%
Eastern Sierra Foothills	714	86.6%	3.5%	9.9%
Inland Empire	6,065	87.6%	4.6%	7.8%
Los Angeles	7,120	88.3%	4.3%	7.5%
North State-Shasta	445	86.5%	3.4%	10.1%
Sacramento Valley	1,703	85.8%	3.6%	10.6%
Sacramento Valley-North	535	89.2%	3.7%	7.1%
San Diego	2,155	84.4%	4.8%	10.8%
Out-of-State/Others	737	90.2%	3.4%	6.4%
TOTAL	34,270	87.2%	4.1%	8.7%

Overturn = All the disputed items/services are necessary and appropriate.

Partial Overturn = Some (not all) of the disputed items/services are necessary and appropriate.

Uphold = None of the disputed items/services are medically necessary and appropriate.

Physician Reviewers

Expert reviewers may hold licenses to practice in any of the 50 states. Reviewers licensed in California evaluated 79% of the decisions in 2020, a higher proportion than in the previous year, when reviewers licensed in the state evaluated 65% of the decisions.

Although expert reviews may have more than one board certification, cases are assigned based on the *relevant* specialty of the reviewer, determined by the issues in dispute during the preliminary review. The expert reviewer does not need to have the same board certification as the requesting physician but is knowledgeable and is qualified to review the requested treatment. Reviewers with five specialties common in the practice of industrial injury and illness completed four of every five case decisions.

Table 8. IMR Expert Reviewers by Board Certification/Relevant Specialty, 2020

Board Certification	Total	Percentage
Occupational Medicine	35,912	26.3%
Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation	33,186	24.3%
Pain Management	16,051	11.7%
Orthopedic Surgery	15,419	11.3%
Emergency Medicine	10,708	7.8%
Family Practice	6,434	4.7%
Internal Medicine	4,010	2.9%
Anesthesiology	2,305	1.7%
Neurological Surgery	2,242	1.6%
Oriental Medicine	2,169	1.6%
Chiropractic	2,046	1.5%
Psychology	1,917	1.4%
Psychiatry	1,268	0.9%
Neurology	1,126	0.8%
Preventive Medicine	971	0.7%
Podiatrist	361	0.3%
Dentist	201	0.1%
Ophthalmology	130	0.1%
Other/Not Listed	284	0.2%
TOTAL	136,740	100.0%

Treatment Requests and Outcomes

“Treatment request” refers to the medical treatment that was denied or modified in UR and challenged through the IMR process. IMR cases have one or more disputed treatments. In 2020, 270,281 treatment request decisions were made in the 136,740 decided cases. Overall, 9.5% of these treatment request decisions were *overturned*, meaning the IMRO decided that the disputed service is medically necessary and appropriate. Conversely, a treatment request for a disputed service that is ultimately found not to be medically necessary and appropriate in IMR is *upheld*.

UR denials/modifications for pharmaceuticals are the most-often requested issue in dispute. Since the establishment of the MTUS drug formulary in 2018, the number of pharmaceutical requests has steadily decreased, in both the volume of requests received for review and their proportion to requests for other medical services.

Table 9. Outcomes for All Treatment Requests, CY 2013 to CY 2020

Calendar Year	Total Number of Treatment Requests	UR Decision Upheld	UR Decision Overturned
2020	270,281	90.5%	9.5%
2019	319,505	89.6%	10.4%
2018	360,124	89.7%	10.3%
2017	343,451	91.7%	8.3%
2016	343,141	91.6%	8.4%
2015	308,765	88.8%	11.2%
2014	274,598	91.4%	8.6%
2013	7,805	84.3%	15.7%

Table 10. Treatment Request Outcomes by Category, 2020

Category	Total Number	Upheld	Overturned
Behavioral & Mental Health	3,480	81.7%	18.3%
Diagnostic Testing	48,720	90.1%	9.9%
DMEPOS	26,305	92.7%	7.3%
Evaluation & Management	11,090	84.8%	15.2%
Home Health & Transportation	1,776	91.3%	8.7%
Injection	21,425	91.4%	8.6%
Pharmaceuticals	92,294	91.9%	8.9%
Programs	2,228	83.6%	16.4%
Rehabilitation	46,337	90.2%	9.8%
Surgery	16,626	90.7%	9.3%
TOTAL	270,281	90.5%	9.5%

Table 11. Treatment Requests by Category and Percentage of Total, CY 2020 vs. CY 2019

Service Category	Total Treatment Requests CY 2020	Percent of CY 2020 Total	Total Treatment Requests CY 2019	Percent of CY 2019 Total
Behavioral & Mental Health	3,480	1.3%	3,537	1.1%
Diagnostic Testing	48,720	18.0%	54,296	17.0%
DMEPOS	26,305	9.7%	29,669	9.3%
Evaluation & Management	11,090	4.1%	13,282	4.2%
Home Health & Transportation	1,776	0.7%	2,206	0.7%
Injections	21,425	7.9%	23,929	7.5%
Pharmaceuticals	92,294	34.1%	117,176	36.7%
Programs	2,228	1.0%	3,018	0.9%
Rehabilitation	46,337	17.1%	54,704	17.1%
Surgeries	16,626	6.2%	17,688	5.5%
TOTAL	270,281	100.0%	319,505	100.0%

Table 12. Treatment Requests for Pharmaceuticals by Drug Class, CY 2020

Category	Total Number	Upheld	Overturned
Opioids	27,497	91.8%	8.2%
Muscle Relaxants	14,316	96.6%	3.4%
Topical Analgesics	12,446	93.5%	6.5%
Anti-Epilepsy Drugs	8,466	86.1%	13.9%
NSAIDs	7,658	85.7%	14.3%
Sedative-Hypnotics	4,791	94.1%	5.9%
Antidepressants	3,087	78.2%	21.8%
Antiulcer Agents	2,749	87.5%	12.5%
Benzodiazepines	1,758	97.2%	2.8%
Anti-infective Agents	1,234	94.3%	5.7%
Laxatives	1,219	84.2%	15.8%
Antiemetics	1,060	92.1%	7.9%
Others	6,013	87.7%	12.3%
TOTAL	92,294	91.1%	8.9%

Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule Treatment Guidelines

The MTUS includes medical treatment guidelines, a Medical Evidence Search Sequence, and a Methodology for Evaluating Medical Evidence to provide an evidence-based analytical framework for the treatment of work-related injuries. The MTUS assists medical providers in understanding which evidence-based treatments have been effective in providing improved medical outcomes. In making a determination of medical necessity for a requested treatment, IMR reviewers follow the guidance in the MTUS, which is updated regularly to remain current with the latest treatment recommendations.

The current MTUS adopts and incorporates by reference the treatment guidelines of the American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (ACOEM). In 2020, 69.1% of IMR treatment request decisions were based on recommendations within the MTUS Treatment Guidelines, while 30.9% were based on recommendations solely outside the MTUS Treatment Guidelines.

Table 13. Current California MTUS-ACOEM Treatment Guidelines

Section/Chapter	MTUS Effective Date
Prevention	October 31, 2019
General Approach to Initial Assessment and Documentation	October 31, 2019
Initial Approaches to Treatment	December 1, 2017
Cornerstones of Disability Prevention and Management	October 31, 2019
Ankle and Foot Disorders	April 19, 2019
Antiemetics	October 6, 2020
Cervical and Thoracic Spine	April 19, 2019
Chronic Pain	December 1, 2017
Elbow Disorders	April 18, 2019
Eye Disorders	December 1, 2017
Hand, Wrist, and Forearm Disorders	April 18, 2019
Hip and Groin Disorders	October 7, 2019
Occupational Interstitial Lung Disease	September 21, 2020
Knee Disorders	September 21, 2020
Low Back Disorders	August 11, 2019
Occupational Work-Related Asthma	September 21, 2020
Opioids	December 1, 2017
Shoulder Disorders	December 1, 2017
Traumatic Brain Injury	October 31, 2018
Workplace Mental Health: Introduction	August 11, 2019
Workplace Mental Health: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder	April 18, 2019
Workplace Mental Health: Depressive Disorders	September 21, 2020

Conclusion and Future Directions

Activity for IMR started to decrease in 2019, and the decline continued into 2020 at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. By the end the year, it appeared to be leveling off, with application filings and case decisions slightly below the previous-year counts. Over the course of the year, the IMRO processed over 15,000 applications every month. The number of standard case determinations issued in December 2020 (12,145) was almost the same as in January 2020 (12,491).

Most of the applications filed (not counting duplicates) are determined to be eligible. The number of ineligible applications continues to decrease both in volume and as a percentage of the unique applications. The number of applications that were not submitted timely (within 30 days of service of the written UR decision) was only one-quarter of the previous year's total. Applications with no UR attached fell by one-third.

Over 99.5% of the standard cases are decided within the statutory time requirements. On average, reviews were completed within 8 to 12 days of the IMRO's receipt of the medical records, and less than 30 days from a case's notice of assignment.

The average rate of overturn for treatment request denials was 9.5%. The category with the highest overturn rate was Behavioral and Mental Health services, at 18.3%. With the MTUS Formulary firmly established, pharmaceutical requests continue to decrease in terms of the number of requests received and their proportion of overall requests.

More cases are being assigned to reviewers licensed in California. In 2020, expert reviewers licensed in the state evaluated 79% of all IMR cases, up from 65% the prior year. At the request of treating physicians, the IMRO focuses on matching primary and subspecialty board certifications more closely to the treatments in dispute. The proportion of cases reviewed by physicians with board certifications in Occupational Medicine and Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation increased, and cases assigned to Family Practice specialists decreased. The DWC meets regularly with the IMRO to address any concerns and to work on continuously improving the IMR process.

Appendices

Appendix A1. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Opioid Analgesics

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
BELBUCA	176	161	91%	15	9%
Codeine/Acetaminophen	341	325	95%	16	5%
DILAUDID	220	205	93%	15	7%
Hydrocodone (incl. ER)	3,128	2,790	89%	338	11%
Methadone	271	246	91%	25	9%
Morphine (incl. ER)	523	464	89%	59	11%
MS-CONTIN (incl. ER)	364	323	89%	41	11%
NARCAN	356	320	90%	36	10%
NORCO	9,489	8,678	91%	811	9%
NUCYNTA	199	184	92%	15	8%
Oxycodone (incl. OxyIR)	1,910	1,726	90%	184	10%
OXYCONTIN	356	326	92%	30	8%
PERCOCET	2,132	1,951	92%	181	8%
Tramadol (incl. ER)	5,269	4,971	94%	298	6%
TYLENOL with Codeine	1,092	1,031	94%	61	6%
ULTRACET	170	162	95%	8	5%
ULTRAM (incl. ER)	572	534	93%	38	7%
Other opioid analgesics	929	851	92%	78	8%
TOTAL	27,497	25,248	92%	2,249	8%

Appendix A2. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Skeletal Muscle Relaxants

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Baclofen	1,565	1,512	97%	53	3%
Carisprodol	251	249	99%	2	1%
Chlorzoxazone	281	274	98%	7	2%
Cyclobenzaprine (incl. ER)	4,102	3,938	96%	164	4%
FLEXERIL	2,577	2,485	96%	92	4%
Methocarbamol	601	580	97%	21	3%
ROBAXIN	611	597	98%	14	2%
SOMA	622	615	99%	7	1%
Tizanidine	2,237	2,154	96%	83	4%
ZANAFLEX	639	620	97%	19	3%
Other muscle relaxant	830	802	97%	28	3%
TOTAL	14,316	13,826	97%	490	3%

Appendix A3. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Topical Analgesics

	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Buprenorphine	197	171	87%	26	13%
BUTRANS	232	208	90%	24	10%
Capsaicin	208	193	93%	15	7%
Diclofenac	1,153	1,060	92%	93	8%
Fentanyl	183	171	93%	12	7%
FLECTOR	318	293	92%	25	8%
Lidocaine	4,196	3,975	95%	221	5%
LIDODERM	1,173	1,108	94%	65	6%
LIDOPRO	1,297	1,213	94%	84	6%
Miscellaneous topical non-opioids	747	699	94%	48	6%
TEROCIN	214	211	99%	3	1%
VOLTAREN Gel	1,802	1,664	92%	138	8%
Other topical analgesics	726	672	93%	54	7%
Total	12,446	11,638	94%	808	6%

Appendix A4. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: NSAIDs

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Aspirin	217	199	92%	18	8%
CELEBREX	753	641	85%	112	15%
Celecoxib	227	195	86%	32	14%
Diclofenac	1,221	1,082	89%	139	11%
Fenoprofen	224	191	85%	33	15%
Flurbiprofen	123	103	84%	20	16%
Ibuprofen	1,074	893	83%	181	17%
Ketoprofin	121	107	88%	14	12%
Meloxicam	361	301	83%	60	17%
MOBIC	324	281	87%	43	13%
MOTRIN	224	188	84%	36	16%
NAPROSYN	290	245	84%	45	16%
Naproxen (incl. ER)	1,264	1,060	84%	204	16%
TORADOL	141	125	89%	16	11%
TYLENOL	275	231	84%	44	16%
VOLTAREN (incl. XR)	138	128	93%	10	7%
Other NSAIDs	681	595	87%	86	13%
TOTAL	7,658	6,565	86%	1,093	14%

Appendix A5. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Anticonvulsants

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Gabapentin (incl. ER)	5,229	4,537	87%	692	13%
LYRICA	1,319	1,120	85%	199	15%
NEURONTIN	798	706	88%	92	12%
Pregabalin	408	345	85%	63	15%
TOPAMAX	240	198	83%	42	17%
Topiramate	178	141	79%	37	21%
Other anticonvulsants	294	242	82%	52	18%
TOTAL	8,466	7,289	86%	1,177	14%

Appendix A6. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Sedatives/Hypnotics

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Ambien (incl. CR)	759	752	99%	7	1%
LUNESTA	239	229	96%	10	4%
Moderate Sedation	2,131	2,045	96%	86	4%
Trazadone	743	635	85%	108	15%
Zolpidem (incl. ER)	294	290	99%	4	1%
Other sedatives	625	556	89%	69	11%
TOTAL	4,791	4,507	94%	284	6%

Appendix A7. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antidepressants

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Amitriptyline	297	217	73%	80	27%
CYMBALTA	664	576	87%	88	13%
ELAVIL	123	103	84%	20	16%
Duloxetine	403	303	75%	100	25%
Nortriptyline	362	278	77%	84	23%
WELLBUTRIN	129	102	79%	27	21%
Other antidepressants	1,109	837	75%	272	25%
TOTAL	3,087	2,416	78%	671	22%

Appendix A8. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antiulcer Agents

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Lansoprazole	759	665	88%	94	12%
Omeprazole	792	680	86%	112	14%
PREVACID	286	264	92%	22	8%
PRILOSEC	357	307	86%	50	14%
Other antiulcer agents	555	490	88%	65	12%
TOTAL	2,749	2,406	88%	343	12%

Appendix A9. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Benzodiazepines

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Alprazolam	194	186	96%	8	4%
ATIVAN	210	206	98%	4	2%
Clonazepam	175	166	95%	9	5%
Diazepam	181	173	96%	8	4%
Lorazepam	157	155	99%	2	1%
RESTORIL	107	107	100%	0	0%
Temazepam	107	107	100%	0	0%
VALIUM	193	190	98%	3	2%
XANAX	310	303	98%	7	2%
Other benzodiazepines	124	115	93%	9	7%
TOTAL	1,758	1,708	97%	50	3%

Appendix A10. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Anti-infective Agents

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Cephalexin	88	84	95%	4	5%
KEFLEX	661	641	97%	20	3%
Other anti-infective agents	485	439	91%	46	9%
TOTAL	1,234	1,164	94%	70	6%

Appendix A11. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Laxatives

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
COLACE	570	496	87%	74	13%
Docusate	133	109	82%	24	18%
MIRALAX	89	69	78%	20	22%
Senna	119	95	80%	24	20%
SENOKOT	93	82	88%	11	12%
Other Laxatives	215	176	82%	39	18%
TOTAL	1,219	1,027	84%	192	16%

Appendix A12. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: Antiemetics

Drug Name	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Ondansetron	230	216	94%	14	6%
ZOFRAN	599	552	92%	47	8%
Other Antiemetics	231	208	90%	23	10%
TOTAL	1,060	976	92%	84	8%

Appendix A13. Pharmacy Request Outcomes: All Other Drug Classes

Drug Class	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Antineoplastic Hormones	736	661	90%	75	10%
Enteral Nutrition	695	666	96%	29	4%
Anesthetics	525	484	92%	41	8%
Antihypertensive Combos	385	304	79%	81	21%
Analgesics	353	336	95%	17	5%
Gastric Medications	353	294	83%	59	17%
Topical Analgesics - OTIC	337	313	93%	24	7%
Antimigraine Agents	310	276	89%	34	11%
Antipsychotics	298	227	76%	71	24%
Lipid Supplements	229	207	90%	22	10%
Erectile Dysfunction	224	192	86%	32	14%
Adrenal Corticosteroids	175	133	76%	42	24%
Opioid Antagonist Agent	169	154	91%	15	9%
CNS Stimulants	154	143	93%	11	7%
Anticoagulants	123	96	78%	27	22%
Gastrointestinal Medications	104	92	88%	12	12%
Antiasthma Bronchodilators	96	69	72%	27	28%
Investigative Anti-diabetic	88	66	75%	22	25%
Topical Compounds	75	69	92%	6	8%
Botulinum Toxin	71	64	90%	7	10%
Cardiovascular Meds.	69	61	88%	8	12%
Antispasmodics	51	32	63%	19	37%
Alpha blockers	47	38	81%	9	19%
Anti-Parkinson Agents	47	47	100%	0	0%
Anabolic Androgens	44	33	75%	11	25%
Barbituric Acid Derivative	40	40	100%	0	0%
Antihistamines	28	22	79%	6	21%
Beta Blockers	37	30	81%	7	19%
Cannabinoids	29	29	100%	0	0%
Diuretics	21	13	62%	8	38%
Other/Unclassified	100	85	85%	15	15%
TOTAL	6,013	5,276	88%	737	12%

Appendix B1. Treatment Request Outcomes: Behavioral and Mental Health Services

Subcategory: Evaluation and Management

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Beck Anxiety and/or Depression Inventory	291	280	96%	11	4%
Psychiatrist	125	103	82%	22	18%
Psychologist	1,199	966	81%	233	19%
TOTAL	1,615	1,349	84%	266	16%

Subcategory: Therapies

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Biofeedback	164	146	89%	18	11%
Cognitive Therapy	1,156	901	78%	255	22%
Hypnotherapy	69	58	84%	11	16%
Other therapies	476	390	82%	86	18%
TOTAL	1,865	1,495	80%	370	20%

Appendix B2. Treatment Request Outcomes: Programs

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Functional Restoration	1,254	990	79%	264	21%
Gym Membership	216	211	98%	5	2%
Weight Loss Program	166	139	84%	27	16%
Work Conditioning	336	302	90%	34	10%
Work Hardening	159	143	90%	16	10%
Other programs	97	77	79%	20	21%
TOTAL	2,228	1,862	84%	366	16%

Appendix B3. Treatment Request Outcomes: Diagnostic Testing

Subcategory: EMG/NCV/NCS

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Electromyography (EMG)	3,508	3,105	89%	403	11%
Nerve Conduction Velocity	999	910	91%	89	9%
Other nerve tests	109	90	83%	19	17%
TOTAL	4,616	4,105	89%	511	11%

Subcategory: Imaging, Radiology

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Arthrogram	224	176	79%	48	21%
Bone Scan	141	121	86%	20	14%
CT Scan	1,017	864	85%	153	15%
Echocardiogram	345	326	94%	19	6%
Fluoroscopy	349	328	94%	21	6%
MRI	9,760	8,678	89%	1,082	11%
Ultrasound	2,203	2,067	94%	136	6%
X-Rays	3,900	3,553	91%	347	9%
Other imaging	423	386	91%	37	9%
TOTAL	18,362	16,499	90%	1,863	10%

Subcategory: Lab and Pathology

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Complete Blood Count	3,980	3,593	90%	387	10%
Metabolic Panel	2,738	2,525	92%	213	8%
Urinalysis	2,517	2,325	92%	192	8%
Urine Drug Screen	2,347	1,889	80%	458	20%
Other lab tests	8,598	7,942	92%	656	8%
TOTAL	20,180	18,274	91%	1,906	9%

Subcategory: Other Diagnostic Tests

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Electrocardiogram (EKG)	3,903	3,578	92%	325	8%
Other tests	1,659	1,463	88%	196	12%
TOTAL	5,562	5,041	91%	521	9%

Appendix B4. Treatment Request Outcomes: DMEPOS

Subcategory: Durable Medical Equipment (DME)

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Bed	99	91	92%	8	8%
Continual Passive Motion	409	398	97%	11	3%
Exercise Kit	206	178	86%	28	14%
Hot/Cold Compression	2,705	2,599	96%	106	4%
Traction Unit	197	191	97%	6	3%
Other DME	7,338	6,824	93%	514	7%
TOTAL	10,954	10,281	94%	673	6%

Subcategory: Electrical Stimulation

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
E-stim Supplies	738	686	93%	52	7%
H-Wave Unit	1,370	1,277	93%	93	7%
Interferential Unit	360	356	99%	4	1%
TENS Unit	2,261	2,018	89%	243	11%
Other elec. stimulation	551	531	96%	20	4%
TOTAL	5,280	4,868	92%	412	8%

Subcategory: Prosthetics & Orthotics

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Brace	2,602	2,367	91%	235	9%
Collar	329	310	94%	19	6%
Lumbar Support	201	194	97%	7	3%
Orthotics	540	462	86%	78	14%
Other prosthetics/orthotics	61	49	80%	12	20%
TOTAL	3,733	3,382	89%	351	11%

Subcategory: Supplies

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Bone Growth Stimulator	550	517	94%	33	6%
Commodes	362	348	96%	14	4%
Crutches	486	425	87%	61	13%
Electrodes	1,077	1,045	97%	32	3%
Sling	900	805	89%	95	11%
Walker	782	709	91%	73	9%
Other supplies	2,181	1,994	91%	187	9%
TOTAL	6,338	5,843	92%	495	8%

Appendix B5. Treatment Request Outcomes: Evaluation and Management

Subcategory: Dental Services

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Dental Services	427	319	75%	108	25%

Subcategory: Evaluation and Management

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Multidisciplinary Evaluation	409	272	67%	137	33%
Office Visit	1,083	932	86%	151	14%
Other	125	98	78%	27	22%
TOTAL	1,617	1,302	81%	315	19%

Subcategory: Medical Specialties

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Anesthesiology	589	562	95%	27	5%
Consult (unspecified)	1,233	1,060	86%	173	14%
Follow-up	1,265	992	78%	273	22%
Medical Clearance	2,057	1,881	91%	176	9%
Orthopedic and Orthopedic Surgery	648	562	87%	86	13%
Pain Management	1,054	881	84%	173	16%
Other	2,200	1,844	84%	356	16%
TOTAL	9,046	7,782	86%	1,264	14%

Appendix B6. Treatment Request Outcomes: Home Health and Transportation

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Home Health	1,402	1,273	91%	129	9%
Transportation	374	349	93%	25	7%
TOTAL	1,776	1,622	91%	154	9%

Appendix B7. Treatment Request Outcomes: Injections

Subcategory: Peripheral

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Botox	156	136	87%	20	13%
Corticosteroid/Steroid	208	170	82%	38	18%
Injection–Ankle	191	182	95%	9	5%
Injection–Elbow	371	302	81%	69	19%
Injection–Foot	105	95	90%	10	10%
Injection–Hand	95	79	83%	16	17%
Injection–Hip	296	272	92%	24	8%
Injection–Knee	1,813	1,658	91%	155	9%
Injection–Shoulder	1,273	1,122	88%	151	12%
Injection–Wrist	220	182	83%	38	17%
Nerve Block	915	804	88%	111	12%
PRP	802	775	97%	27	3%
Synvisc	234	219	94%	15	6%
Trigger Point	1,483	1,343	91%	140	9%
Viscosupplementation	120	113	94%	7	6%
Other peripheral	24	22	92%	2	8%
TOTAL	8,306	7,474	90%	832	10%

Subcategory: Spine

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Causal Epidural	245	228	93%	17	7%
Cervical Injection	841	800	95%	41	5%
Epidural	2,577	2,452	95%	125	5%
Facet	1,139	1,057	93%	82	7%
Lumbar Epidural Steroid Injection	1,893	1,716	91%	177	9%
Lumbar Injection (non-ster.)	630	572	91%	58	9%
Medial Block Branch	1,745	1,585	91%	160	9%
Sacroiliac	740	698	94%	42	6%
Transforaminal Injection	1,504	1,377	92%	127	8%
Other spine surgery	43	35	81%	8	19%
TOTAL	11,357	10,520	93%	837	7%

Subcategory: Other Injections

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Other injections	1,762	1,587	90%	175	10%

Appendix B8. Treatment Request Outcomes: Rehabilitation

Subcategory: Acupuncture

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Acupuncture	8,288	7,283	88%	1,005	12%

Subcategory: Chiropractic

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Manual Manipulation	352	327	93%	25	7%
Other chiropractic	4,687	4,086	87%	601	13%
TOTAL	5,039	4,413	88%	626	12%

Subcategory: Physical Therapy/Occupational Therapy (PT/OT)

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Active and Passive Modalities, PT and/or OT	7,922	7,329	93%	593	7%
Occupational Therapy	1,899	1,723	91%	176	9%
Physical Therapy	16,141	14,627	91%	1,514	9%
TOTAL	25,962	23,679	91%	2,283	9%

Subcategory: Other Rehabilitation

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Aqua Therapy	1,538	1,406	91%	132	9%
Cold/Cryotherapy	473	446	94%	27	6%
Compression Therapy	115	111	97%	4	3%
Functional Capacity Test	566	514	91%	52	9%
Hand Therapy	285	246	86%	39	14%
Massage Therapy	2,080	1,849	89%	231	11%
Other Therapies	1,991	1,842	93%	149	7%
TOTAL	7,048	6,414	91%	634	9%

Appendix B9. Treatment Request Outcomes: Surgery

Subcategory: Adjunct Surgical Services

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Assistant Surgeon	2,047	1,921	94%	126	6%
Inpatient Stay	1,840	1,721	94%	119	6%
Other adjunct surgical	769	730	95%	39	5%
TOTAL	4,656	4,372	94%	284	6%

Subcategory: Arthroscopic Surgery

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Arthroscopy	943	812	86%	131	14%
Surgery–Ankle	202	175	87%	27	13%
Surgery–Elbow	315	279	89%	36	11%
Surgery–Hip	76	70	92%	6	8%
Surgery–Knee	957	866	90%	91	10%
Surgery–Shoulder	1,278	1,129	88%	149	12%
Surgery–Wrist	220	186	85%	34	15%
TOTAL	3,991	3,517	88%	474	12%

Subcategory: Non-arthroscopic Surgery

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Arthroplasty	222	180	81%	42	19%
Carpel Tunnel	629	541	86%	88	14%
Discectomy	295	259	88%	36	12%
Fusion	1,244	1,164	94%	80	6%
Knee Replace/Revision	247	215	87%	32	13%
Laminectomy	249	223	90%	26	10%
Radiofrequency Ablation	777	720	93%	57	7%
Rhizotomy	151	141	93%	10	7%
Shoulder Surgery	166	143	86%	23	14%
Spinal Cord Stimulator	651	629	97%	22	3%
Spine Surgery	460	423	92%	37	8%
Other surgery	676	552	82%	124	18%
TOTAL	5,767	5,190	90%	577	10%

Subcategory: Surgical Consult

Service	Total Requests	Upholds	Percent Upheld	Overturns	Percent Overturned
Preoperative Clearance	1,796	1,632	91%	164	9%
Surgical Clearance	132	120	91%	12	9%
Other surgical consult	284	249	88%	35	12%
TOTAL	2,212	2,001	90%	211	10%

Geographic Regions Appendix

Region	Counties
Bay Area	Alameda, Contra Costa, Marin, Napa, San Francisco, San Mateo, Santa Clara, Solano and Sonoma.
Central Coast	Monterey, San Benito, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Santa Cruz and Ventura
Central Valley	Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare
Eastern Sierra Foothills	Alpine, Amador, Calaveras, El Dorado, Inyo, Mariposa, Mono, Nevada, Placer and Tuolumne
Inland Empire	Imperial, Orange, Riverside and San Bernardino
Los Angeles	Los Angeles
North State/Shasta	Del Norte, Humboldt, Lake, Lassen, Mendocino, Modoc, Plumas, Shasta, Sierra, Siskiyou and Trinity
Sacramento Valley–North	Butte, Colusa, Glenn, Sutter, Tehama and Yuba
Sacramento Valley–South	Sacramento and Yolo
San Diego	San Diego