

American Arbitration Association
New York No-Fault Arbitration Tribunal

In the Matter of the Arbitration between:

Datta Endoscopic Back Surgery & Pain Center (Applicant)	AAA Case No.	17-18-1103-1144
	Applicant's File No.	2122991
- and -	Insurer's Claim File No.	Y6498860
Hartford Insurance Company (Respondent)	NAIC No.	

ARBITRATION AWARD

I, Jacques M. Leandre, the undersigned arbitrator, designated by the American Arbitration Association pursuant to the Rules for New York State No-Fault Arbitration, adopted pursuant to regulations promulgated by the Superintendent of Insurance, having been duly sworn, and having heard the proofs and allegations of the parties make the following **AWARD**:

Injured Person(s) hereinafter referred to as: Assignor (FV)

1. Hearing(s) held on 05/06/2020, 06/22/2020
Declared closed by the arbitrator on 06/22/2020

Gary Pustel from Israel, Israel & Purdy, LLP (Great Neck) participated in person for the Applicant

Non-Appearance from Hartford Insurance Company failed to appear for the Respondent

2. The amount claimed in the Arbitration Request, **\$ 1,998.30**, was NOT AMENDED at the oral hearing.
Stipulations WERE NOT made by the parties regarding the issues to be determined.
3. Summary of Issues in Dispute

The Assignor (FV), a 50 year old male, was involved in a motor vehicle accident on 3/9/18. At issue in this case is \$1,998.30 for epidural injections administered on 5/11/18. Respondent partially paid the claim and denied the remaining amount based on their interpretation of Fee Schedule.

4. Findings, Conclusions, and Basis Therefor

This hearing was decided based upon the submissions of the parties as contained in the electronic file maintained by the American Arbitration Association, and the oral arguments of the parties' representatives. No witnesses testified at this hearing. Any documents contained in the electronic file are hereby incorporated into this hearing. I have reviewed all relevant exhibits for both parties and make my decision in reliance thereon. Hence, all other arguments are considered waived if not presented at such hearing.

FEE SCHEDULE

An insurance carrier's timely asserted defense that the bills submitted were not properly No-Fault rated or that the fees charged were in excess of the Workers' Compensation fee schedule is sufficient, if proven, to justify a reduction in payment or denial of a claim. See New York Hosp. Med. Ctr. of Queens v. Country-Wide Ins. Co., 295 A.D.2d 583, 586 (2002); East Coast Acupuncture, P.C. v. New York Cent. Mut. Ins., 2008 NY Slip Op 50344(U) (App. Term 2d Dep't., Feb. 21, 2008); A.B. Med. Servs., PLLC v. American Tr. Ins. Co., 15 Misc.3d 132(A), 2007 NY Slip Op 50680(U) (App. Term, 2nd & 11th Jud Dists. 2007); Rigid Medical of Flatbush, P.C. v. New York Cent. Mut. Fire Ins. Co., 11 Misc.3d 139(A), 816 N.Y.S.2d 700, 2006 NY Op 50582 (U) (App. Term 2nd & 11th Jud Dists. 2006); Ultra Diagnostics Imaging v. Liberty Mut. Ins. Co., 9 Misc.3d 97, 98, 804 N.Y.S.2d 532, 2005 N.Y. Slip Op. 25402 (App Term, 2d Dep't.); Capio Med., P.C. v Progressive Cas. Ins. Co., 7 Misc 3d 129[A], 2005 NY Slip Op 50526 (U) (2005); Triboro Chiropractic & Acupuncture, PLLC v New York Cent. Mut. Fire Ins. Co., 6 Misc.3d 132 (A), 2005 NY Slip Op 50110 (U) (App Term, 2nd & 11th Jud Dists 2005).

Respondent has the burden of coming forward with competent evidentiary proof to support its fee schedule defenses. See, Robert Physical Therapy PC v. State Farm Mutual Auto Ins. Co., 2006 NY Slip 26240, 13 Misc.3d 172, 822 N.Y.S.2d 378, 2006 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 1519 (Civil Ct, Kings Co. 2006). See also, Power Acupuncture PC v. State Farm Mutual Automobile Ins. Co., 11 Misc.3d 1065A, 816 N.Y.S.2d 700, 2006 NY Slip Op 50393U, 2006 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 514 (Civil Ct, Kings Co. 2006). If Respondent fails to demonstrate by competent evidentiary proof that a plaintiff's claims were in excess of the appropriate fee schedules, defendant's defense of noncompliance with the appropriate fee schedules cannot be sustained. See, Continental Medical PC v. Travelers Indemnity Co., 11 Misc.3d 145A, 819 N.Y.S.2d 847, 2006 NY Slip Op 50841U, 2006 N.Y. Misc. LEXIS 1109 (App. Term, 1st Dep't., per curiam, 2006).

In this matter, it must be noted that Respondent has again failed to appear after a courtesy adjournment from the previously scheduled 5/6/20 hearing was granted. Therefore, a decision will be rendered based upon Respondent's documents in submission and arguments by the Applicant.

The Applicant originally sent a bill totaling \$3,731.20. Of which, Respondent paid \$1,732.90 leaving \$1,998.30 in dispute. Respondent's reduction of Applicant's billing is unsupported by an affidavit or any other credible evidence to demonstrate that the reduction was proper. Respondent submitted an internal audit report. However, the audit

is void of any credible explanation how it arrived at the reduced amount. Respondent cannot unilaterally alter a claim without the benefit of a medical expert or fee coder. See Compas Medical P.C. v. American Transit Ins. Co., 56 Misc. 3d 133(A) (App Term 2nd Dept., 2017).

Accordingly, I find in favor of Applicant and award the claim in the amount of \$1,998.30.

5. Optional imposition of administrative costs on Applicant.
Applicable for arbitration requests filed on and after March 1, 2002.

I do NOT impose the administrative costs of arbitration to the applicant, in the amount established for the current calendar year by the Designated Organization.

6. **I find as follows with regard to the policy issues before me:**
- The policy was not in force on the date of the accident
 - The applicant was excluded under policy conditions or exclusions
 - The applicant violated policy conditions, resulting in exclusion from coverage
 - The applicant was not an "eligible injured person"
 - The conditions for MVAIC eligibility were not met
 - The injured person was not a "qualified person" (under the MVAIC)
 - The applicant's injuries didn't arise out of the "use or operation" of a motor vehicle
 - The respondent is not subject to the jurisdiction of the New York No-Fault arbitration forum

Accordingly, the applicant is AWARDED the following:

A.

Medical		From/To	Claim Amount	Status
	Datta Endoscopic Back Surgery & Pain Center	05/11/18 - 05/11/18	\$1,998.30	Awarded: \$1,998.30
Total			\$1,998.30	Awarded: \$1,998.30

- B. The insurer shall also compute and pay the applicant interest set forth below. 08/17/2018 is the date that interest shall accrue from. This is a relevant date only to the extent set forth below.

Applicant is awarded interest pursuant to the no-fault regulations. See generally, 11 NYCRR §65-3.9. Interest shall be calculated "at a rate of two percent per month, calculated on a pro rata basis using a 30-day month." 11 NYCRR §65-3.9(a). A claim becomes overdue when it is not paid within 30 days after a proper demand is made for its payment. However, the regulations toll the accrual of interest when an applicant "does not request arbitration or institute a lawsuit within 30 days after the receipt of a denial of claim form or payment of benefits calculated pursuant to Insurance Department regulations." See, 11 NYCRR 65-3.9(c). The Superintendent and the New York Court of Appeals has interpreted this provision to apply regardless of whether the particular denial at issue was timely. LMK Psychological Servs., P.C. v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 12 N.Y.3d 217 (2009).

C. Attorney's Fees

The insurer shall also pay the applicant for attorney's fees as set forth below

The insurer shall also pay the applicant for attorney's fees as set forth below Applicant is awarded statutory attorney fees pursuant to the no-fault regulations. After calculating the sum total of the first-party benefits awarded in this arbitration plus interest thereon, Respondent shall pay Applicant an attorney's fee equal to 20 percent of that sum total, as provided for in 11 NYCRR 65-4.6(d) (as existing on the filing date of this arbitration), subject to a maximum fee of \$1,360.00.

- D. The respondent shall also pay the applicant forty dollars (\$40) to reimburse the applicant for the fee paid to the Designated Organization, unless the fee was previously returned pursuant to an earlier award.

This award is in full settlement of all no-fault benefit claims submitted to this arbitrator.

State of New York
SS :
County of Nassau

I, Jacques M. Leandre, do hereby affirm upon my oath as arbitrator that I am the individual described in and who executed this instrument, which is my award.

07/09/2020
(Dated)

Jacques M. Leandre

IMPORTANT NOTICE

This award is payable within 30 calendar days of the date of transmittal of award to parties.

This award is final and binding unless modified or vacated by a master arbitrator. Insurance Department Regulation No. 68 (11 NYCRR 65-4.10) contains time limits and grounds upon which this award may be appealed to a master arbitrator. An appeal to a master arbitrator must be made within 21 days after the mailing of this award. All insurers have copies of the regulation. Applicants may obtain a copy from the Insurance Department.

ELECTRONIC SIGNATURE

Document Name: Final Award Form
Unique Modria Document ID:
a720f770007fcb8f421220bdfef400ce

Electronically Signed

Your name: Jacques M. Leandre
Signed on: 07/09/2020