

American Arbitration Association
New York No-Fault Arbitration Tribunal

In the Matter of the Arbitration between:

Putnam Rx Inc
(Applicant)

- and -

Geico Insurance Company
(Respondent)

AAA Case No.	17-23-1295-8694
Applicant's File No.	179.352
Insurer's Claim File No.	0442691740101015
NAIC No.	22063

ARBITRATION AWARD

I, Anne Malone, 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: EIP

1. Hearing(s) held on 08/30/2024
Declared closed by the arbitrator on 08/30/2024

Sakrit Srivastava, Esq. from Tsirelman Law Firm PLLC participated virtually for the Applicant

Jaime Drantch from Geico Insurance Company participated virtually for the Respondent

2. The amount claimed in the Arbitration Request, **\$1,651.08**, was AMENDED and permitted by the arbitrator at the oral hearing.

The amount in dispute was amended by the applicant to \$1,650.49 to conform to the appropriate fee schedule.

Stipulations WERE NOT made by the parties regarding the issues to be determined.

3. Summary of Issues in Dispute

The 55 year old EIP reported involvement in a motor vehicle accident on February 20, 2023; claimed related injury and received Lidocaine ointment, Cyclobenzaprine and Naproxen prescription medication provided by the applicant on March 14, 2023.

The applicant submitted a claim for this prescription medication, payment of which was denied by the respondent based upon a peer review by Shruti Patel, M.D. dated April 4, 2023. In response, the applicant submitted a rebuttal dated June 21, 2023 by Pervaiz Qureshi, M.D. who was the not the EIP's prescribing or treating medical provider.

The issue to be determined at the hearing is whether the respondent established that the topical and oral prescription medication at issue was not medically necessary.

4. Findings, Conclusions, and Basis Therefor

This decision is based upon the documents reviewed from the Modria File as well as the arguments made by counsel and/or representative at the arbitration hearing. Only the arguments presented at the hearing are preserved in this decision; all other arguments not presented at the hearing are considered waived.

In order to support a lack of medical necessity defense respondent must "set forth a factual basis and medical rationale for the peer reviewer's [or examining physician's] determination that there was a lack of medical necessity for the services rendered." Provvedere, Inc. v. Republic Western Ins. Co., 2014 NY Slip Op 50219(U) (App. Term2d, 11th and 13th Jud. Dists. 2014.) Respondent bears the burden of production in support of its lack of medical necessity defense, which if established shifts the burden of persuasion to applicant. See Bronx Expert Radiology, P.C. v. Travelers Ins. Co., 2006 NY Slip Op 52116 (App. Term 1st Dept. 2006.)

The Civil Courts have held that a defendant's peer review or report of medical examination must set forth more than just a basic recitation of the expert's opinion. The trial courts have held that a peer review or medical examination report's medical rationale will be insufficient to meet respondent's burden of proof if: 1) the medical rationale of its expert witness is not supported by evidence of a deviation from "generally accepted medical" standards; 2) the expert fails to cite to medical authority, standard, or generally accepted specifics as to the claim at issue, is conclusory or vague. See Nir v. Allstate, 7 Misc.3d 544 (N.Y. City Civ. Ct. 2005.)

In support of its contention that the Lidocaine ointment, Cyclobenzaprine and Naproxen provided by the applicant was not medically necessary, respondent relies upon the report of the peer review by Dr. Patel, who reviewed the medical records of the EIP, noted the injuries claimed and the treatment rendered to him. Dr. Patel considered possible arguments and justification for the need for the topical and oral prescription medication at issue and determined that it was not warranted under the circumstances presented.

Dr. Patel discussed the standard of care for the initial management of pain which is to try nonpharmacologic therapy and if systems persist, although NSAIDs are considered the first line of treatment, he noted the general risks of NSAIDs, the use of which he determined come at a "huge cost" including preventable adverse drug reactions.

He stated that topical NSAIDs such as Lidocaine are a second or third line of therapy and discussed the risks of prescribing this medication. He noted that the EIP in this instance did not meet the standard of care because there was no documentation of findings of neuropathy based on the physical examination of the EIP.

Dr. Patel also stated that muscle relaxants such as Cyclobenzaprine, can be used as an adjunctive therapy for second or third line agents. He discussed the side effects of this type of medication and determined that it should be used very cautiously.

Dr. Patel supported, with relevant medical literature, the risks associated with this oral and topical prescription medication which he determined were not medically necessary for this EIP.

Respondent has factually demonstrated that the topical/oral prescription medication at issue was not medically necessary. Accordingly, the burden now shifts to the applicant, who bears the ultimate burden of persuasion, pursuant to Bronx Expert Radiology, P.C., supra.

In opposition to the peer review, the applicant presented a rebuttal by Dr. Qureshi, who reviewed the EIP's medical records, disagreed with the conclusions reached by Dr. Patel and discussed in detail the injuries sustained by the EIP and the treatment rendered to him.

He discussed the arguments made by Dr. Patel and the specific reasons that he determined that each was medically necessary for this particular EIP.

Dr. Qureshi supported, with relevant medical citations, his opinion that the prescription medication at issue was medically necessary for the EIP at the time it was provided.

A review of the applicant's submissions reveals that it has met the burden of persuasion in rebuttal. The medical records submitted in opposition to the findings of Dr. Patel are sufficient to overcome the burden of production established by the respondent.

Based on the foregoing, I find that the respondent has failed to establish that the prescription medication at issue was not medically necessary.

Accordingly, the applicant is awarded \$1,650.49 in disposition of this claim.

Any further issues submitted in the record are held to be moot and/or waived insofar as they were not raised at the time of this hearing. This decision is in full disposition of all claims for no-fault benefits presently before this Arbitrator.

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	Amount Amended	Status
	Putnam Rx Inc	03/14/23 - 03/14/23	\$1,651.08	\$1,650.49	Awarded: \$1,650.49
Total			\$1,651.08		Awarded: \$1,650.49

- B. The insurer shall also compute and pay the applicant interest set forth below. 04/19/2023 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." See 11 NYCRR §64-3.9(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. Where a claim is untimely denied, or not denied or paid, interest shall accrue as of the 30th day following the date the claim is presented by the claimant to the insurer for payment. Where a claim is timely denied, interest shall accrue as of the date an action is commenced or an arbitration requested, unless an action is commenced or an arbitration requested within 30 days after receipt of the denial, in which event interest shall begin to accrue as of the date the denial is received by the claimant. 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 was timely. LMK Psychological Servs. P.C. v. State Farm Mut. Auto. Ins. Co., 12 NY3d 217 (2009.)

C. Attorney's Fees

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

Applicant is awarded statutory attorney's fees pursuant to the no fault regulations. For cases filed after February 4, 2015 the attorney's fee shall be calculated as follows: 20% of the amount of first-party benefits awarded, plus interest thereon subject to no minimum fee and a maximum of \$1,360.00. See 11 NYCRR §65-4.6(d.)

- 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 CT

SS :

County of Fairfield

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

09/05/2024
(Dated)

Anne Malone

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:
ffe77160d0229ca01bb216eae28f523f

Electronically Signed

Your name: Anne Malone
Signed on: 09/05/2024