

American Arbitration Association
New York No-Fault Arbitration Tribunal

In the Matter of the Arbitration between:

North Shore LIJ Anesthesiology PC
(Applicant)

- and -

Allstate Fire & Casualty Insurance Company
(Respondent)

AAA Case No. 17-24-1375-3583

Applicant's File No. 413824

Insurer's Claim File No. 0725305940
ZRP

NAIC No. 29688

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 04/07/2025
Declared closed by the arbitrator on 04/07/2025

Neil Menashe, Esq. from Neil Menashe Attorney at Law P.C. participated virtually for the Applicant

Mubeen Chughtai, Esq. from Law Offices of John Trop participated virtually for the Respondent

2. The amount claimed in the Arbitration Request, **\$178.26**, 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 66 year old EIP reported involvement in a motor vehicle accident on August 11, 2023; claimed related injury and underwent a thoracic epidural injection with anesthesia provided by the applicant on June 10, 2024.

The applicant submitted a claim for these anesthesia services, payment of which was timely denied by the respondent based upon a peer review by Michael Tawfelllos, M.D. dated July 20, 2024.

The issue to be determined at the hearing is whether the respondent established that the medical services at issue were not medically necessary.

4. Findings, Conclusions, and Basis Therefor

This hearing was held on Zoom and the 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.

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.)

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.)

To support its contention that the medical services provided by the applicant were not medically necessary, respondent relies upon the report of the peer review by Dr. Tawfellos, who reviewed the medical records of the EIP, noted the injuries claimed and the treatment rendered to her. Dr. Tawfellos considered possible arguments and justification for the need for the medical services at issue and determined that they were not warranted under the circumstances presented.

Dr. Tawfellos discussed the standard of care for the spinal injuries sustained by the EIP and determined that she did not meet these criteria. He submitted a comprehensive report in which he discussed the thoracic injection with anesthesia provided to the EIP and his reasons for determining that they were not medically necessary for her at the time they were provided.

Dr. Tawfellos supported, with relevant medical literature, his opinion that the medical services at issue provided to the EIP were not medically necessary.

Respondent has met its evidentiary burden. The peer review adequately sets forth the factual basis and medical rationale to support the conclusion that the medical

services at issue were not indicated for this EIP. Therefore, pursuant to Bronx Expert Radiology, *supra* the burden shifts to the applicant, which bears the ultimate burden of persuasion to establish that the services at issue were medically necessary.

The applicant did not submit a formal rebuttal. However, the it relies upon the submissions, including reports from April 30, 2024 pre-op medical clearance for right knee surgery which was performed on May 3, 2024, the operative report and PT progress notes from May 23, 2024 and May 24, 2024.

A report dated April 4, 2024 indicated range of motion in the thoracic spine to be grossly intact. At that time the EIP experienced tenderness in the thoracic region with unspecified pain with range of motion.

Also included were reports of a May 1, 2024 visit which indicated that the EIP was not receiving physical therapy but was doing home exercises. The report documented positive findings on MRI studies of the thoracic spine with some disc bulging and herniations. The EIP was diagnosed with chronic back pain.

Most of the reports in May, 2024 indicated complaints and treatment for the right knee.

The applicant did not provide a rebuttal to the peer review. Therefore, it did not respond to the respondent's argument that the medical services provided to the EIP were a deviation from a reasonable medical standard of care.

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

Based on the foregoing, I find that the respondent has established that the services at issue were not medically necessary.

Accordingly, the claim is dismissed with prejudice.

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 claim is DENIED in its entirety

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.

04/13/2025

(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:
51126a4b019cceb33d4b519f0a415ed4

Electronically Signed

Your name: Anne Malone
Signed on: 04/13/2025