



Medco Forum Presents: Health Economics Study Provides the TENS Evidence CMS Seeks

Clinical guidelines recommend the use of transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS) for chronic low back pain (CLBP). In June 2012, however, the U.S. Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services restricted reimbursement to patients in approved clinical trials.

Medicare is asking for randomized controlled trials in patient populations with some kind of comparative treatment and evidence that you followed these patients over time,” said Michael Minshall, MPH, Senior Director, Healthcare Economics & Reimbursement at [DJO Global](#).

Minshall and his team performed a retrospective analysis of a commercial and Medicare administrative claims database. After parsing patient records (2008-2010), the researchers identified those that had at least two ICD-9-CM coded claims for low back pain during a consecutive three-month period.

“We followed 23,000 patients for a year before and a year after the device and compared them with 23,000 patients who did not get TENS but had clinically diagnosed back pain.” Minshall said.

TENS Found to Provide Clinically Meaningful Reduction in Pain

The study’s extensive review revealed some telling health outcomes. Hospital and clinic visits were less for patients treated with TENS. In addition, TENS patients required less use of diagnostic imaging and fewer physical therapy visits. Back surgeries were also performed less in the TENS group.

TENS may be a useful adjuvant in the management of chronic low back pain...” said Robert Pivec MD, with the Rubin Institute for Advanced Orthopedics at the Sinai Hospital of Baltimore. “TENS is [also] an effective non-opioid alternative.”

TENS Offers Tangible Healthcare Savings

The study demonstrates that TENS may provide demonstrable value and improved efficiency for the healthcare system. If medical resource savings observed in the study were applied to the Medicare population, prescribing TENS instead of surgery could have saved Medicare not only this tremendous expense, but overall projected cost offsets approach \$1.3 billion.



**For more information about this TENS Study,
please visit djoglobal.com/empi, or
speak to a representative at AAOS Booth #1349.**