

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM13-0018545		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	10/11/2013	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	05/15/1996
<b>Decision Date:</b>	01/02/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	08/05/2013
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	08/29/2013

### HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to a physician reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The physician reviewer is Board Certified in Preventative Medicine and Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in California. He/she has been in active clinical practice for more than five years and is currently working at least 24 hours a week in active practice. The physician reviewer was selected based on his/her clinical experience, education, background, and expertise in the same or similar specialties that evaluate and/or treat the medical condition and disputed items/services.

### CLINICAL CASE SUMMARY

The expert reviewer developed the following clinical case summary based on a review of the case file, including all medical records:

The applicant is a represented 68-year-old [REDACTED] Co. employee who has sought a claim for hearing loss reportedly connected to an industrial injury of May 15, 1996. In a utilization review report of August 5, 2013, the claims administrator modified the request for brand name hearing aids to hearing aids specified by the claims administrator with an associated fitting. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In a prior qualified medical evaluation report of May 18, 2005, it is stated that the applicant's symptoms are a result of cumulative trauma associated with noise exposure generated by heavy equipment. It is stated that the applicant was issued hearing aids with an expected lifetime of five years. Also reviewed is an October 24, 2008 audiogram which demonstrates bilateral high frequency sensorineural hearing loss. The claimant's speech discrimination ability reportedly improved 50% following introduction of hearing aids. On August 1, 2013, the claimant's audiologist states that his current hearing instruments are no longer sufficient as his hearing has taken a turn for the worse. His ability to understand words is getting worse. The new aids proposed are better designed and would improve his understanding in noisy environments.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

The Final Determination was based on decisions for the disputed items/services set forth below:

**Two (2) Beltone hearing aids and a one time fitting:** Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation the Institute for Clinical Systems Improvement (ICSI), Preventative services for adults.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Strength of Evidence hierarchy established by the California Department of Industrial Relations, Division of Workers' Compensation, the Expert Reviewer based his/her decision on the Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Head Chapter: Hearing aids.

**Decision rationale:** The MTUS does not specifically address this topic. As noted in the ODG head chapter, hearing aids are indicated in the treatment of all forms of hearing loss, including conductive hearing loss, sensorineural hearing loss, and mixed hearing loss. A review of the records indicates that in this case, the claimant's audiologist has established the case that the claimant's hearing and hearing aids have deteriorated over time. Introduction of a new set of hearing aids would likely be beneficial here. While, as noted by the claims administrator, I do not specifically have any evidence to favor one form of hearing aid over another, I do not likewise have any particular objection to the make of the hearing aid proposed by the treating audiologist. The request for Two (2) Beltone hearing aids and a one time fitting is medically necessary and appropriate.