

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM13-0034122		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	12/13/2013	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	08/28/2012
<b>Decision Date:</b>	04/09/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/30/2013
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	10/11/2013

### 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 Emergency Medicine and is licensed to practice in New York. 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. He/She is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

### 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 patient is a 49 year old female who was injured on August 28, 2012. The patient continued to experience bilateral wrist pain. Physical examination was notable for normal range of motion in the wrists and positive right Phalen's sign. Diagnoses included bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. The patient underwent left carpal tunnel release on February 19, 2013 and right carpal tunnel release on May 7, 2013. The patient started to receive postoperative occupational therapy on June 6, 2013 and had received 18 visits by September 5, 2013. Request for authorization for additional 8 occupational therapy visits for work hardening was submitted on September 19, 2013.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

#### **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOR WORK HARDENING #8: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 125.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 125, Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 15-16. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Forearm, Wrist, and Hand, Work conditioning, work hardening

**Decision rationale:** There is limited evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of PT (physical therapy) or OT (occupational therapy) for CTS (carpal tunnel syndrome). The recommended number of physical therapy visits for open carpal tunnel release is 2-8 visits over 3-5 weeks with a postsurgical physical treatment period of 3 months. The patient in this case had completed 18 treatments and was requesting an additional 8 treatments for work hardening. The patient had recurrent symptoms after returning to work and occupational therapy was resumed. Functional improvement was noted with good gains in strength and reduction in pain. Work Hardening is an interdisciplinary, individualized, job specific program of activity with the goal of return to work. Work Hardening programs use real or simulated work tasks and progressively graded conditioning exercises that are based on the individual's measured tolerances. Criteria for work hardening include recommendation by a physician or nurse case manager, return to work plan, functional capacity evaluation, post-injury cap of 2 years, previous physical therapy, and trial of 1-2 weeks for assessment of significant gains and functional improvement. In this case the patient had not had a functional capacity evaluation. The number of treatments requested surpassed the trial period recommended by criteria. In addition the number of postoperative treatments received had surpassed those recommended by post-surgical guidelines. The patient had already received 18 treatments when no more than 8 are recommended. Medical necessity is not established.