

Case Number:	CM13-0050696		
Date Assigned:	12/27/2013	Date of Injury:	03/31/2012
Decision Date:	06/20/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/31/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/14/2013

HOW THE IMR FINAL DETERMINATION WAS MADE

MAXIMUS Federal Services sent the complete case file to an expert reviewer. He/she has no affiliation with the employer, employee, providers or the claims administrator. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in 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 expert 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:

This is a 23 year old male who has reported low back pain after an injury on 3/31/12. He has been diagnosed with lumbar disc protrusion, lumbar spasm, and radiculopathy. He has been treated with physical therapy, chiropractic care, medication, and injections. He has not had any prior treatment with acupuncture. On 10/11/13 the treating chiropractor requested a course of acupuncture, 18 visits. Per the evaluation of that same date, there was ongoing back pain treated with physical therapy, a brace, and medications initially. There had been no recent medical care. The treatment plan included continued modified work and 18 visits of acupuncture. An acupuncture report from 11/11/13 is for an initial evaluation for acupuncture. On 10/31/13, Utilization Review certified six of the eighteen prescribed acupuncture visits, noting the MTUS recommendations for an initial trial. This Utilization Review decision was appealed for an Independent Medical Review.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

ACUPUNCTURE FOR THE LUMBAR SPINE (18 SESSIONS): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation MTUS: Acupuncture Medical Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: The prescription for acupuncture is evaluated in light of the MTUS recommendations for acupuncture. Per the MTUS, acupuncture is used as an option when pain medication is reduced or not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery. The treating physician has not provided the specific indications for acupuncture as listed in the MTUS. There is no discussion of issues with pain medications, or functional recovery in conjunction with surgery and physical rehabilitation. An initial course of acupuncture is 3-6 visits per the MTUS. The prescription is for 18 visits, which exceeds the quantity recommended in the MTUS. An initial course of acupuncture, of 18 visits, is not medically necessary based on a prescription which exceeds the quantity recommended in the MTUS, and lack of specific indications per the MTUS.