

Case Number:	CM13-0053115		
Date Assigned:	12/30/2013	Date of Injury:	04/08/2011
Decision Date:	05/27/2014	UR Denial Date:	11/15/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/18/2013

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 Neurology, has a subspecialty in Neuromuscular 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:

The patient is a 46-year-old man who sustained a work-related injury on April 8, 2011. He subsequently developed chronic back pain. The patient underwent lumbar decompression on April 29, 2013. According to the note dated October 31 2013, the patient was complaining of paresthesia, weakness in the left leg, burning sensation, and tingling aggravated by heavy activity. Physical examination demonstrated lumbar tenderness. The patient was treated with physical therapy. The provider requested authorization for hardening evaluation to help determining the patient's ability to work full duty.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

EIGHT SESSIONS OF WORK HARDENING FOR THE LUMBAR SPINE (RETROSPECTIVE: 11/5/13): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Postsurgical Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines.

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

Decision rationale: According to the MTUS guidelines, work conditioning/hardening is recommended as an option, depending on the availability of quality programs. Criteria for

admission to a work hardening program include having a work-related musculoskeletal condition with functional limitations precluding ability to safely achieve current job demands, which are in the medium or higher demand level (i.e., not clerical/sedentary work); having been treated with an adequate trial of physical or occupational therapy with improvement followed by plateau, but not likely to benefit from continued physical or occupational therapy, or general conditioning; not being a candidate where surgery or other treatments would clearly be warranted to improve function; the patient's physical and medical recovery is sufficient to allow for progressive reactivation and participation for a minimum of four hours a day for 3-5 days a week; a defined return to work goal has been agreed to by the employer & employee meaning either a documented specific job to return to with job demands that exceed abilities, or documented on-the-job training; the worker must be able to benefit from the program; approval of these programs should require a screening process that includes file review, interview and testing to determine likelihood of success in the program; the worker must be no more than two years past date of injury; the program should be completed in four consecutive weeks or less; and treatment is not supported for longer than 1-2 weeks without evidence of patient compliance and demonstrated significant gains as documented by subjective and objective gains and measurable improvement in functional abilities. Based on the above, a single visit for work hardening is recommended rather than eight visits. This visit would determine if the patient is eligible for more sessions. As such, the request for eight sessions of work hardening is not medically necessary.