

Case Number:	CM13-0064425		
Date Assigned:	01/03/2014	Date of Injury:	05/11/2013
Decision Date:	04/04/2014	UR Denial Date:	11/22/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/11/2013

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 licensed in Chiropractic and Acupuncture 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 injured worker is a 36 year old female who reported neck and bilateral shoulder pain from injury sustained on 5/11/13. Patient was involved in a motor vehicle accident when she was rear-ended at a stop light. X-rays of the cervical spine revealed moderate multilevel cervical spondylosis at C3-4 through C6-C7 and reversal of cervical lordosis. Patient was diagnosed with cervical sprain/strain. Patient has been treated with medication, physical therapy and acupuncture. Patient was re-evaluated after 6 acupuncture visits to determine if care has been beneficial and/or if further treatment is necessary. Per notes dated 11/5/13 patient complains of moderately severe neck pain and headaches. She had some relief with alleviation of pain with acupuncture. Per notes dated 11/5/13, "she has significant myofascial pain, did benefit from trial of acupuncture X6, improved sleep, ability to turn her head, resolution of shoulder pain; additional 6 is appropriate. The request is for additional 12 acupuncture visits which exceeds the MTUS guidelines as 3-6 treatments are recommended. There is no assessment in the provided medical records of functional efficacy with prior acupuncture visits. Patient hasn't had any long term symptomatic or functional relief with acupuncture care as she continues to have moderately severe neck pain and headaches.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

The request for additional acupuncture treatments two (2) times a week for six (6) weeks for the neck: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: Per the Acupuncture Medical treatment Guidelines page 8-9. "Acupuncture is used as an option when pain medication is reduced and not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery". "Time to produce function improvement: 3-6 treatments. 2) Frequency: 1-3 times per week. 3) Optimum duration: 1-2 months. Acupuncture treatments may be extended if functional improvement is documented". Patient has had prior acupuncture treatment. Primary treating physician mentioned improvement with better sleep and ability to turn her head. The documentation lacked assessment of functional improvement. Additional visits may be rendered if the patient has documented objective functional improvement. Per MTUS guidelines, Functional improvement means either a clinically significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restrictions as measured during the history and physical exam. Per review of evidence and guidelines, 12 acupuncture treatments are not medically necessary as the number of treatments exceeds the quantity recommended above.