

Case Number:	CM13-0070187		
Date Assigned:	01/17/2014	Date of Injury:	12/28/2011
Decision Date:	04/22/2014	UR Denial Date:	12/10/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/24/2013

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 Family Practice, has a subspecialty in Pain 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. 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 51 yr. old male claimant sustained a work injury on 12/28/11 involving the left ankle. An ankle inversion resulted in an ankle sprain. X-rays of the ankle were unremarkable. He had completed over 18 physical therapy treatments by January 2013 as well as a work hardening program. An examination note on 7/24/13 indicated continued ankle pain and reduced range of motion. He had received steroid joint injections and oral analgesics. The treating physician requested an additional 12 visits of therapy. A therapy note on 8/16/13 indicated 6/10 pain. The claimant stopped walking with a brace and had difficulty with a bike. He has been doing home therapeutic exercises. An exam note on 12/9/13 indicated reduced range of motion of the left ankle. The treating physician recommended continued therapy and home exercises.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

PHYSICAL THERAPY 3 x 4 ADDITIONAL SESSIONS TO LEFT ANKLE: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Section Physical Medicine.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Section Physical Medicine Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: According to the MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is recommended as indicated below: Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. Physical Medicine Guidelines - Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified: 9-10 visits over 8 weeks Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified: 8-10 visits over 4 weeks Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS): 24 visits over 16 weeks In this case, the employee exceeded the recommended number of visits a year prior to the additional request. The employee was able to perform home exercises. The request for additional therapy visits is not medically necessary.