

Case Number:	CM14-0004878		
Date Assigned:	01/24/2014	Date of Injury:	07/25/2010
Decision Date:	06/10/2014	UR Denial Date:	12/27/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/10/2014

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:

Patient is an employee of [REDACTED] who has submitted a claim for low back pain associated with an industrial injury date of 07/25/2010. Treatment to date has included, acupuncture treatments, TENS, aquatic physical therapy sessions since March 2013, medications namely Tramadol 50 mg, Lyrica 25mg, and Skelaxin 800 mg. Medical records from 2013 were reviewed which revealed persistent bilateral low back pain radiating into the bilateral posterior thighs and bilateral posterior calves with radicular burning symptoms. Exacerbating factors mentioned were prolonged sitting, standing, lifting, twisting, driving and bending. Physical examination showed muscle strength of 5/5 in bilateral lower extremities; lumbar ranges of motion were restricted by pain in all directions. Lumbar discogenic provocative maneuvers were positive. Nerve root tension signs were negative bilaterally except straight leg raise that is mildly positive on the right and negative on the left and sitting root was positive bilaterally. Clonus, Babinski's and Hoffmann's signs are absent bilaterally. Utilization review from 12/27/2013 denied the request for additional pool therapy for 8 visits because based from medical records; patient underwent unknown number of sessions of pool therapy without documentation of its efficacy. Based from guidelines aquatic therapy is only recommended as an option when land based therapy cannot be accomplished.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

ADDITIONAL POOL THERAPY 8 SESSIONS FOR LUMBAR SPINE: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines
AQUATIC THERAPY Page(s): 22.

Decision rationale: As stated on page 22 of CA MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, aquatic therapy is recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy to land-based physical therapy. It is specifically recommended where reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example, extreme obesity. In this case, patient started to have pool therapy sessions since February 2013. However, total number of sessions was not documented. Although, in the progress report dated 02/26/2013, she reported 50% relief of her low back pain with regular aquatic exercise, the most recent outcomes are not documented. Patient's physical examination showed normal strength and no weight bearing reduction needed. Furthermore, her height was noted to be 5'4" with weight of 110. There was no unit of weight specified, thus it is unknown whether it is in pounds or kilograms. Body mass index cannot be derived. It is not clear why she cannot participate in a land based program. Therefore, the request for additional pool therapy 8 sessions for lumbar spine is not medically necessary.