

Case Number:	CM14-0015052		
Date Assigned:	02/28/2014	Date of Injury:	04/22/2013
Decision Date:	10/06/2014	UR Denial Date:	01/17/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/06/2014

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 Preventative Medicine, has a subspecialty in Occupational Medicine and is licensed to practice in Iowa. 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 patient is a 32 year old female with date of injury of 4/22/2013. A review of the medical records indicates that the patient is undergoing treatment for lumbrosacral neuritis. Subjective complaints include pain in the legs, buttock, weakness and stiffness in lumbrosacral region. Objective findings include tenderness and spasm in lumbrosacral region. X-rays performed on 6/12/2013 revealed good alignment and mild-to-moderate degenerative disc disease at L5-S1. Treatment has included six aquatic therapy visits and four PT sessions. (8 additional PT sessions approved on 12/13/2013, but number completed, details of sessions, and patient improvement was not specified in medical records). Medications included Norco and Melatonin. Over the counter night time sleep aid (name not specified), Vicodin, and Naproxen. The utilization review dated 1/17/2014 non-certified the request for eight additional physical therapy visits for the lumbar spine due to lack of documented effectiveness of previous physical therapy visits.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

8 ADDITIONAL PHYSICAL THERAPY VISITS FOR THE LUMBAR SPINE: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines PHYSICAL MEDICINE Page(s): 98-99.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 287-315, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, Physical Medicine

Page(s): 98-99. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG)
Low Back - Lumbar & Thoracic (Acute & Chronic), Physical Therapy

Decision rationale: California MTUS guidelines refer to physical medicine guidelines for physical therapy and recommends as follows: "Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine." Additionally, ACOEM guidelines advise against passive modalities by a therapist unless exercises are to be carried out at home by patient. ODG quantifies its recommendations with 10 visits over 8 weeks for lumbar sprains/strains and 9 visits over 8 weeks for unspecified backache/lumbago. ODG further states that a "six-visit clinical trial" of physical therapy with documented objective and subjective improvements should occur initially before additional sessions are to be warranted. Physicians' notes do not detail the content of treatment, noted patient improvement, or number of sessions completed. Therefore, the effectiveness of Physical Therapy cannot be accurately evaluated and the request for eight additional Physical Therapy sessions is not medically necessary.