

Case Number:	CM14-0111869		
Date Assigned:	09/16/2014	Date of Injury:	01/12/2005
Decision Date:	10/15/2014	UR Denial Date:	06/30/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/17/2014

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 Acupuncture and is licensed to practice in New York & Connecticut. 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:

In order to support the medical necessity for acupuncture based on MTUS guidelines, acupuncture may be warranted in the presence of positive objective findings from the acupuncturist as an initial trial of 3-6 treatments up to 1-2 months with a maximum duration of 14 sessions. Beyond 3-6 treatment sessions, the acupuncturist is obligated to document functional improvement which was absent in this file. This is a request for 12 sessions of acupuncture which in any case exceeds guidelines. There is no documentation of the number of previous acupuncture treatments and objective improvement and it is unknown how many prior acupuncture sessions were provided to this patient and if patient had achieved the maximum recommended amount of up to 14 sessions. Moreover, no objective barriers have been identified which would have prevented the natural resolution of the work injury after 9 years. No explanation has been given to how the current request is related to the old work injury. It is not clear what the mechanism of patient's recent flare up or exacerbation is. Therefore the request for 12 sessions is not supported by MTUS guidelines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Acupuncture 3 x 4 week- Neck, Right Shoulder and Low Back: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: In order to support the medical necessity for acupuncture based on MTUS guidelines, acupuncture may be warranted in the presence of positive objective findings from the acupuncturist as an initial trial of 3-6 treatments up to 1-2 months with a maximum duration of 14 sessions. Beyond 3-6 treatment sessions, the acupuncturist is obligated to document functional improvement which was absent in this file. This is a request for 12 sessions of acupuncture which in any case exceeds guidelines. There is no documentation of the number of previous acupuncture treatments and objective improvement and it is unknown how many prior acupuncture sessions were provided to this patient and if patient had achieved the maximum recommended amount of up to 14 sessions. Moreover, no objective barriers have been identified which would have prevented the natural resolution of the work injury after 9 years. No explanation has been given to how the current request is related to the old work injury. It is not clear what the mechanism of patient's recent flare up or exacerbation is. Therefore the request for 12 sessions is not supported by MTUS guidelines.