

Case Number:	CM14-0112611		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2014	Date of Injury:	05/11/2010
Decision Date:	10/02/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/07/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/18/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation 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:

This 37 year-old patient sustained an injury on 5/11/10 from tripping on the sidewalk and twisting her ankle while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include PT 2 times per week for 6 weeks for the right ankle. Diagnoses include low back pain and lower leg joint pain s/p ankle surgeries in January 2014 with post-op PT. Report of 6/9/14 from the provider noted the patient with ongoing right lower extremity and low back pain rated at 7/10, sharp and throbbing in nature associated with numbness, tingling, and weakness in right foot. There are also complaints of sleep disturbances, incontinence, constipation, and muscle weakness. Exam showed lumbar spine with restricted range of motion; hypertonicity and spasm in lumbar area; positive facet loading on left; TTP (tender to palpation) over medial joint of right knee with positive McMurray's; TTP over medial and lateral joints of right ankle with swelling, allodynia at lateral malleolus and limited range. Medications list Nortriptyline and Norco. The patient underwent previous PT for right ankle without benefit. The request(s) for PT 2 x 6 right ankle was modified for 6 sessions on 7/7/14 citing guidelines criteria and lack of medical necessity.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy 2 times per week for 6 weeks for the right ankle: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Page(s): 98,99.

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

Decision rationale: Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM (range of motion), strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and work status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The PT 2 times per week for 6 weeks for the right ankle is not medically necessary and appropriate.