

Case Number:	CM14-0114826		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2014	Date of Injury:	11/04/2013
Decision Date:	12/16/2014	UR Denial Date:	07/03/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/21/2014

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 Family 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:

The patient is a 50 year-old man who was injured at work on 11/4/2013. The injury was primarily of his back. He is requesting review of denial for "Additional Physical Therapy X 12 for the Lumbar Spine." Medical records corroborate ongoing care for his injuries. He underwent an assessment for this on 12/4/2013 at the [REDACTED]. They reviewed his medical history, performed an examination, reviewed radiographic studies and provided the following chronic diagnoses: Chronic Intermittent Low Back Pain; L4-5 and L5-S1 Mild Disc Dessication and Disc Protrusion; and Thoracic Disc Herniations at T7-8, T8-9, and T9-10. Treatment has included Physical Therapy Sessions; there are 11 prior sessions documented in the records. The request was for 12 additional physical therapy sessions.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Additional Physical Therapy x 12 for the Lumbar Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines-Treatment for Worker's Compensation, Low Back Procedure Summary last updated 05/12/2014.

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

Decision rationale: The MTUS/Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines comment on the use of physical therapy as a treatment modality. These guidelines state that such methods are 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. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) 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. (Fritz, 2007). In this case, the medical records indicate that the patient has already exceeded the MTUS criteria for the maximum number of visits. Further, that there is no evidence that the patient has since been directed towards a self-directed home exercise program, per the Guidelines. There is insufficient rationale provided as to the medical necessity of exceeding the MTUS Guidelines. Therefore, there is insufficient evidence in support of 12 additional physical therapy sessions for this patient's low back condition. The request for 12 additional physical therapy sessions are not medically necessary.