

Case Number:	CM14-0154829		
Date Assigned:	09/24/2014	Date of Injury:	02/21/2008
Decision Date:	12/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	08/27/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/22/2014

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 New Jersey. 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 worker is a 58 years old male who was injured on 2/21/2008. He was diagnosed with spinal stenosis and discopathy of the lumbar region. He was treated with medications, epidural steroid injection, and physical therapy. There was no recent progress notes provided for review. The request for yoga classes for one year was made on 8/14/14. The patient wrote a letter stating that gym membership was paid for by Workers' Compensation in the past, although no records of this were provided to the reviewer.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Yoga classes (rehabilitative exercise) for one (1) year: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Yoga/Pilates

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Yoga and Exercise Page(s): 126 and 45-47. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Lower Back section, Gym membership

Decision rationale: The MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines states that exercise, in general, is recommended, however there is insufficient evidence to support the recommendation

of any particular exercise regimen over any other exercise program. Physical conditioning in chronic pain patients can have immediate and long-term benefits. Yoga, however, is independently recommended by the MTUS as an option to treat chronic pain, but only for select highly motivated patients. There is considerable evidence to support yoga as part of an effective treatment plan for chronic pain. The MTUS states that exercise is recommended for chronic pain, although there is no sufficient evidence to support the recommendation of any particular exercise regimen over any other. Such programs should emphasize education, independence, and the importance of an on-going exercise regime. The MTUS also recommends aquatic therapy as an optional exercise strategy in cases where land-based exercise or therapy is not tolerated, as it can minimize the effects of gravity, and may be appropriate for a patient that is extremely obese. The MTUS does not specifically address gym memberships or classes taken at a gym. The ODG discusses when a gym membership (with or without exercise classes) is recommended for low back injuries. It states that the gym membership is only recommended when a home exercise program has not been effective and there is a need for equipment. Plus treatment needs to be monitored and administered by medical professionals, such as a physical therapist for example. Unsupervised exercise programs do not provide any information back to the treating physician, which is required to make adjustments if needed and to prevent further injury. In the case of this worker, the request was for yoga classes (unnumbered) for one year as a recommended form of exercise. In the case of this worker who sustained an injury to his lower back, he was recommended to use yoga as the choice of continual physical rehabilitation via gym classes. There is was no explanation found in the documents which detailed why the worker required ongoing gym classes rather than home based yoga (via video or basic book instruction) in order to perform these exercises/stretches. There does not seem to be any evidence found that yoga classes would be warranted and medically necessary in this case. If yoga is the chosen exercise form, then home-based yoga is suggested.