

Case Number:	CM14-0155354		
Date Assigned:	10/02/2014	Date of Injury:	11/12/2011
Decision Date:	11/21/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/22/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/23/2014

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 North Carolina. 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 33-year-old with a reported date of injury of 11/12/2011. The patient has the diagnoses of low back pain, sciatica, herniated lumbar disc at L3/4 and L4/5 and lumbar radiculopathy. Past treatment modalities have included lumbar surgery, physical therapy and epidural steroid injections. Per the most recent progress notes provided for review by the primary treating physician dated 09/08/2014, the patient had complaints of chronic low back pain radiating down the left leg. The physical exam noted antalgic gait, marked decreased range of motion in the lumbar spine with tenderness in the paraspinal muscles and decreased pinprick sensation in the left L4-5-S1 dermatomes. Treatment plan recommendations included a request for a functional restoration program.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Functional restoration program: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Functional Rest.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on functional restoration programs states: Recommended, although research is still ongoing as to how to most appropriately screen for inclusion in these programs. Functional restoration programs (FRPs), a type of treatment included in the category of interdisciplinary pain programs (see chronic pain programs), were originally developed by Mayer and Gatchel. FRPs were designed to use a medically directed, interdisciplinary pain management approach geared specifically to patients with chronic disabling occupational musculoskeletal disorders. These programs emphasize the importance of function over the elimination of pain. FRPs incorporate components of exercise progression with disability management and psychosocial intervention. Long-term evidence suggests that the benefit of these programs diminishes over time, but still remains positive when compared to cohorts that did not receive an intensive program. (Bendix, 1998) A Cochrane review suggests that there is strong evidence that intensive multidisciplinary rehabilitation with functional restoration reduces pain and improves function of patients with low back pain. The evidence is contradictory when evaluating the programs in terms of vocational outcomes. (Guzman 2001) It must be noted that all studies used for the Cochrane review excluded individuals with extensive radiculopathy, and several of the studies excluded patients who were receiving a pension, limiting the generalizability of the above results. Studies published after the Cochrane review also indicate that intensive programs show greater effectiveness, in particular in terms of return to work, than less intensive treatment. (Airaksinen, 2006) There appears to be little scientific evidence for the effectiveness of multidisciplinary biopsychosocial rehabilitation compared with other rehabilitation facilities for neck and shoulder pain, as opposed to low back pain and generalized pain syndromes. (Karjalainen, 2003) Treatment is not suggested for longer than 2 weeks without evidence of demonstrated efficacy as documented by subjective and objective gains. For general information see chronic pain programs. This patient has the diagnoses of low back pain and has failed multiple other therapies from invasive surgery to conservative physical therapy. The patient is also not receiving pain control or function improvement through medications. The California MTUS recommends functional restoration programs especially seemingly to be more effective in patients with low back pain. For these reasons the request has met criteria per the California MTUS and is medically necessary and appropriate.