

Case Number:	CM14-0160194		
Date Assigned:	11/06/2014	Date of Injury:	12/27/2000
Decision Date:	12/09/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/16/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/29/2014

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 Preventive 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:

According to the records made available for review, this is a 49-year-old male with a 12/27/00 date of injury, and status post lumbar spine surgeries 1997 and 1998. At the time (9/16/14) of the Decision for authorization for physical therapy 2 times a week for 6 weeks, there is documentation of subjective (low back pain) and objective (tenderness and spasm along the paravertebral musculature, decreased range of motion of the lumbar spine and decreased right Achilles reflex) findings, current diagnoses (musculoligamentous sprain lumbar spine with lower extremity radiculitis, degenerative disc disease lumbar spine, and status post lumbar spine surgery 1997 and 1998), and treatment to date (activity modification, injections, medications, and physical therapy). The number of physical therapy visits completed to date cannot be determined. There is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services as a result of physical therapy completed to date.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 2 times a week for 6 weeks: Upheld

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 Physical Medicine Page(s): 98. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back, Physical Therapy and Other Medical Treatment Guideline or Medical Evidence: Title 8, California Code of Regulations, section 9792.20

Decision rationale: MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines support a brief course of physical medicine for patients with chronic pain not to exceed 10 visits over 4-8 weeks with allowance for fading of treatment frequency, with transition to an active self-directed program of independent home physical medicine/therapeutic exercise. MTUS-Definitions identify that any treatment intervention should not be continued in the absence of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services. ODG recommends a limited course of physical therapy for patients with a diagnosis of lumbar sprains and strains and lumbosacral radiculitis not to exceed 10-12 visits over 8 weeks. ODG also notes patients should be formally assessed after a "six-visit clinical trial" to see if the patient is moving in a positive direction, no direction, or a negative direction (prior to continuing with the physical therapy) and when treatment requests exceeds guideline recommendations, the physician must provide a statement of exceptional factors to justify going outside of guideline parameters. Within the medical information available for review, there is documentation of diagnoses of musculoligamentous sprain lumbar spine with lower extremity radiculitis, degenerative disc disease lumbar spine, and status post lumbar spine surgery 1997 and 1998. However, there is no documentation of the number of physical therapy visits completed to date and, if the number of treatments have exceeded guidelines, remaining functional deficits that would be considered exceptional factors to justify exceeding guidelines. In addition, there is no documentation of functional benefit or improvement as a reduction in work restrictions; an increase in activity tolerance; and/or a reduction in the use of medications or medical services as a result of physical therapy completed to date. Therefore, based on guidelines and a review of the evidence, the request for physical therapy 2 times a week for 6 weeks is not medically necessary.