

Case Number:	CM14-0181982		
Date Assigned:	11/06/2014	Date of Injury:	12/07/2012
Decision Date:	12/11/2014	UR Denial Date:	09/29/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/03/2014

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 Occupational 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:

Aquatic therapy is an alternate form of physical therapy that minimizes the effects of gravity. This is effective for patients with significant weight bearing difficulties such as morbid obesity or other significant weight bearing problems. The MTUS does not comment specifically on use of water-based physical therapy for treatment of neck or hip injuries but notes the significant benefits from regular exercise in returning individuals to function and describes random controlled studies that showed effectiveness of aqua therapy for long term relief of low back pain and from fibromyalgia. It further notes that therapeutic exercises can relieve discomfort while improving dysfunction and endurance. The goal of this this therapy is improved motion against gravity with advancement from water-based physical therapy to land-based and home-based physical therapy. This patient has already been given 18 sessions of water-based physical therapy with improvement in activity endurance and mobility. If this request is for a retro-approval of this therapy then the facts speak for themselves as this was an effective therapy for this patient. However, she does not need to continue this treatment. She now needs to transition to land-based and home-based physical therapy to maintain and improve on the benefits derived from her water-based physical therapy. As noted by the aquatic therapy provider independent long term aquatic exercise may help in this transition. Therefore, this request is medically necessary.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Aquatic Therapy 3 Times A Week for 6 Weeks for The Left Hip and Neck: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chapter 13 Knee Complaints Page(s): 299-301, 339-40, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Part 2 Page(s): 22, 46-7, 98-9.

Decision rationale: Aquatic therapy is an alternate form of physical therapy that minimizes the effects of gravity. This is effective for patients with significant weight bearing difficulties such as morbid obesity or other significant weight bearing problems. The MTUS does not comment specifically on use of water-based physical therapy for treatment of neck or hip injuries but notes the significant benefits from regular exercise in returning individuals to function and describes random controlled studies that showed effectiveness of aqua therapy for long term relief of low back pain and from fibromyalgia. It further notes that therapeutic exercises can relieve discomfort while improving dysfunction and endurance. The goal of this this therapy is improved motion against gravity with advancement from water-based physical therapy to land-based and home-based physical therapy. This patient has already been given 18 sessions of water-based physical therapy with improvement in activity endurance and mobility. If this request is for a retro-approval of this therapy then the facts speak for themselves as this was an effective therapy for this patient. However, she does not need to continue this treatment. She now needs to transition to land-based and home-based physical therapy to maintain and improve on the benefits derived from her water-based physical therapy. As noted by the aquatic therapy provider independent long term aquatic exercise may help in this transition. Therefore, this request is medically necessary.