

Case Number:	CM14-0184192		
Date Assigned:	11/12/2014	Date of Injury:	07/16/2003
Decision Date:	12/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	10/06/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/05/2014

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 Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, has a subspecialty in Pain 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:

This is a patient of the date of injury of July 16, 2003. A utilization review determination dated October 6, 2014 recommends noncertification for supervised aquatic therapy. A progress report dated October 13, 2014 identifies subjective complaints indicating that the patient is walking daily and not having a severe flareup. Her pain is in the legs, buttocks, hips, knees, low back, and ankles/feet. The note indicates that the patient is able to get out of the house daily. Physical examination findings identify slow transitions and an antalgic gait. Diagnoses include postlaminectomy syndrome of the lumbar spine, chronic pain syndrome, depression, insomnia, back pain, lumbar radiculopathy, degenerative disc disease, degenerative facet disease, lumbar disc displacement, spinal stenosis, morbid obesity, and other symptoms referral to the back. The treatment plan recommends medications and physical therapy. A progress report dated June 19, 2014 recommends the patient "continue walking rapidly in a pool."

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Supervised aqua therapy QTY: 12.00: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Page(s): 98-99.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 298, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 22, 98-99.

Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back Chapter, Physical Therapy

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for aquatic therapy, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines state that aquatic therapy is recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy where available as an alternative to land-based physical therapy. They go on to state that it is specifically recommended whenever reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. Guidelines go on to state that for the recommendation on the number of supervised visits, see physical therapy guidelines. Within the documentation available for review, there is no documentation indicating why the patient would require therapy in a reduced weight-bearing environment. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how many physical/aquatic therapy sessions the patient has undergone and what specific objective functional improvement has been obtained with the therapy sessions already provided. Finally, there is no statement indicating whether the patient is performing a home exercise program on a regular basis, and whether or not that home exercise program has been modified if it has been determined to be ineffective. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested aquatic therapy is not medically necessary.