

Case Number:	CM14-0029140		
Date Assigned:	06/16/2014	Date of Injury:	03/11/1997
Decision Date:	07/18/2014	UR Denial Date:	02/14/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	03/07/2014

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 Neurology 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 patient is a 63-year-old man who sustained a work-related injury on March 11, 1997. Subsequently, he developed chronic low back pain. According to a note dated on August 7 2013, the patient continued to have chronic back pain despite the use of Norco and Fentanyl. He was diagnosed with degenerative disc disease/ muscular strain, post lumbar laminectomy and chronic low back pain. Hi physical examination showed lumbar tenderness without focal neurological examination. The patient was treated with conservative therapies including aquatic therapy. No clear benefit was documented from previous aquatic therapy. The provider requested authorization for aquatic therapy and a Gym membership.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

AQUATIC THERAPY TWO TIMES A WEEK FOR SIX 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 AQUATIC THERAPY Page(s): 22.

Decision rationale: According to the MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines, aquatic therapy is "recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy, where available, as an alternative to land

based physical therapy. Aquatic therapy (including swimming) can minimize the effects of gravity, so it is specifically recommended where reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. For recommendations on the number of supervised visits, see Physical medicine. Water exercise improved some components of health-related quality of life, balance, and stair climbing in females with fibromyalgia, but regular exercise and higher intensities maybe required to preserve most of these gains. (Tomas-Carus, 2007)." There no clear evidence that the patient is obese or has difficulty performing land based physical therapy or the need for the reduction of weight bearing to improve the patient ability to perform particular exercise regimen. There is no documentation for a clear benefit expected from Aquatic therapy. There is no documentation of trial of previous aquatic therapy. Therefore the request is not medically necessary.

GYM MEMBERSHIP: 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. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG).

Decision rationale: According to MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines, "There is strong evidence that exercise programs, including aerobic conditioning and strengthening, are superior to treatment programs that do not include exercise. There is no sufficient evidence to support the recommendation of any particular exercise regimen over any other exercise regimen. A therapeutic exercise program should be initiated at the start of any treatment or rehabilitation program, unless exercise is contraindicated. Such programs should emphasize education, independence, and the importance of an on-going exercise regime." According to the ODG, Gym memberships are "Not recommended as a medical prescription unless a documented home exercise program with periodic assessment and revision has not been effective and there is a need for equipment. Plus, treatment needs to be monitored and administered by medical professionals. While an individual exercise program is of course recommended, more elaborate personal care where outcomes are not monitored by a health professional, such as gym memberships or advanced home exercise equipment, may not be covered under this guideline, although temporary transitional exercise programs may be appropriate for patients who need more supervision. With unsupervised programs there is no information flow back to the provider, so he or she can make changes in the prescription, and there may be risk of further injury to the patient. Gym memberships, health clubs, swimming pools, athletic clubs, etc., would not generally be considered medical treatment, and are therefore not covered under these guidelines." The request does not address who will be monitoring the patient's gym attendance and functional improvement. In addition, there is no clear documentation of the failure of a supervised home exercise program or the need for specific equipment that is only available in a gym. As such, the request is not medically necessary and appropriate.