

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM14-0029568		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	06/16/2014	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	06/17/2009
<b>Decision Date:</b>	07/23/2014	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	02/27/2014
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	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 a licensed Doctor of Psychology 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:

Based on the records provided for the independent medical review, this patient is a 58 year old female who reported an industrial/occupational work related injury on June 17, 2009. The cause of her injury was not stated. The patient has been diagnosed with Major Depressive Affective Disorder, recurrent, moderate; Anxiety state, unspecified; Chronic low back syndrome; Post-concussion syndrome; Depressive disorder NOS; Chronic pain syndrome and multiple additional non-psychological-related diagnoses. She reports significant pain in her neck that radiates to both arms. Progress notes mention that pain psychology sessions were requested in August of 2013 and have not approved and that her mood is negatively impacted by her chronic pain. Treatment is sought to help teach skills pain coping skills. A request for 6 pain psychology sessions 1 time a week for 6 weeks was made and non-certified. This independent medical review will address a request to overturn this decision.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

#### **PAIN PSYCHOLOGY SESSIONS, 1 TIMES PER WEEK FOR 6 WEEKS QTY: 6.00:**

Overturned

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Psychological Evaluation And Treatment.

**MAXIMUS guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Part 2, Behavioral Interventions, Psychological Evaluations Page(s): 100. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Mental/Stress, Chapter Psychotherapy.

**Decision rationale:** The reason provided for the denial of 6 psychotherapy sessions was that the psychological evaluation/assessment had not been completed, and it was improper to start her treatment until it was. According to the ODG guidelines for psychotherapy, an initial trial of six sessions over 6 weeks should be offered to patients and that with evidence of objective functional improvements a total of up to 13 to 20 visits may be offered if progress is being made, and in cases of severe depression up to 50 sessions may be offered as long as progress is being made. I've reviewed all of the reports for this file however only 31 pages were submitted. It is unclear whether or not patient has had any prior psychotherapy treatment. The psychological evaluation, which has been approved, would be useful in order to know whether or not she has had prior treatment. Nonetheless, the rationale used to not approve the treatment of an initial 6 sessions to be used as a trial to determine patient response was based on the idea that the evaluation had to be completed before the treatment could start, and while this makes intuitive clinical sense, it is not necessary to have a psychological evaluation in order to begin psychological treatment. Psychological evaluations can be very helpful in determining the diagnosis and treatment issues that need to be addressed because it can take a long time to be completed, having treatment contingent on its report will create lengthy another as a necessary delays in most cases. Therefore the request for Pain Psychology Sessions, 1 Times per Week for 6 Weeks is medically necessary.