

Case Number:	CM14-0041103		
Date Assigned:	06/30/2014	Date of Injury:	04/28/2003
Decision Date:	08/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	03/21/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/08/2014

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, has a subspecialty 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:

The applicant is a represented [REDACTED] employee who has filed a claim for chronic low back pain and knee pain reportedly associated with an industrial injury of April 28, 2003. Thus far, the applicant has been treated with the following: Analgesic medications; attorney representation; left and right total knee arthroplasty surgery; earlier lumbar laminectomy surgery in 2013; a cane; unspecified amounts of physical therapy; and opioid therapy. In a Utilization Review Report dated March 21, 2014, the claims administrator apparently partially certified a request for a 'transfer to help' program to 'evaluation' to explore the possibility of weaning the applicant down off of opioids. The applicant's attorney subsequently appealed. In an August 6, 2013 progress note, the applicant was described as using Opana, OxyContin, Norco, Ambien, Antivert, and Terocin cream. The applicant was asked to remain off of work, on total temporary disability. On October 10, 2013, the applicant was asked to transition to land-based therapy. The applicant was described as severely obese, with a weight of 307 pounds. It was stated that the applicant was attending physical therapy but weight loss had nevertheless proven difficult. On January 6, 2014, it was stated that the applicant should pursue cervical epidural steroid injection and might, in fact, be a candidate for a cervical fusion surgery. A gym membership was apparently sought a few days later, on January 9, 2014. The applicant underwent the epidural injection in question on January 23, 2014. On February 25, 2014, it was suggested that the applicant pursue the cervical fusion surgery in question. Authorization was later sought for functional restoration program on March 11, 2014 by a separate treating provider, the applicant's pain management physician, on the grounds that this would help the applicant to wean off of opioids.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

HELP EVALUATION X 1: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines CHRONIC PAIN PROGRAMS Page(s): 31-32.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Chronic Pain Programs topic Page(s): 32.

Decision rationale: As noted on page 32 of the MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines, one of the cardinal criteria for pursuit of chronic pain program and functional restoration program is that the applicant is "not a candidate where surgery" or other treatments would clearly be warranted to improve pain and function. In this case, the applicant is a candidate for cervical fusion surgery and is apparently intent on pursuing the same. The applicant is not, thus, a candidate for the program in question. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.