

Case Number:	CM14-0057421		
Date Assigned:	07/09/2014	Date of Injury:	10/26/2005
Decision Date:	10/08/2014	UR Denial Date:	04/23/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	04/28/2014

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 licensed in Acupuncture, has a subspecialty in Addiction Detoxification and is licensed to practice in New York. 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 female employee who has filed an industrial claim for a lumbar spine injury that occurred on 10/26/05. Mechanism of injury is unspecified in the records reviewed. Currently the patient complains of pain in her lumbar spine. The treating physician requested twelve additional sessions of acupuncture to treat her pain and to reduce some of her symptoms. Records indicate the applicant might have received prior acupuncture since six sessions were certified as of 4/16/14. She currently still complains of persistent lower back pain with extremity radiculopathy and due to the nerve root involvement suffers with urinary and fecal incontinence. The applicant remains temporarily total disabled, to date. The applicant's diagnosis consists of lumbar back pain, fibromyalgia, and cervicgia. Her treatment to date includes, but is not limited to, lumbar epidural injections, psychiatric evaluations, EMG/NCV studies, MRI's, possible acupuncture sessions, TENs unit, home exercise program, and oral and topical pain and anti-inflammatory medications. In the utilization review report, dated 4/23/14, the UR determination did not approve the twelve sessions of acupuncture determining the applicant was certified for six sessions on 4/16/14 and records do not indicate they have been utilized as of yet. Therefore, this request is not certified.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Acupuncture lumbar 2 x 6: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: Initial acupuncture care is evaluated by utilizing the MTUS guidelines for acupuncture medical treatment. MTUS recommends an initial trial of 3-6 visits of acupuncture. Additionally, MTUS states "acupuncture is used as an option when pain medication is reduced or not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery." Further acupuncture, beyond this initial trial will be considered based on "functional improvement", as defined by MTUS. There is no clinical data provided by the treating physician regarding a decrease or intolerance to her medication, recent involvement in physical rehabilitation program and the prolonged Temporarily Totally Disabled work status is evident of a lack of a treatment program focused on functional recovery. Furthermore, there is no evidence that this claimant received acupuncture previously, however a request submitted in April 2014 suggests otherwise. However, the documentation of such visits happening, either factual or implied, do not exist. Therefore, given the MTUS guidelines for acupuncture care detailed above, including the initial trial that is less than twelve visits, the original request is not medically necessary.