

Case Number:	CM14-0070896		
Date Assigned:	07/14/2014	Date of Injury:	07/17/2012
Decision Date:	09/19/2014	UR Denial Date:	05/02/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	05/16/2014

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, 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 49 year-old patient sustained an injury on 7/17/12 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include 8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks. Diagnoses included lumbar and cervical radiculopathy. Cervical MRI in February 2014 showed mild degenerative changes. Conservative care has included medications, physical therapy, lumbar epidural steroid injections (January 2014), and modified activities/rest. Report of 4/24/14 from the provider noted ongoing chronic neck and left upper extremity pain. Exam showed mildly reduced extension range with moderate pain; tenderness to palpation over cervical paraspinals; positive Spurling's; decreased sensation over left C6 dermatome with normal motor strength. The request(s) for 8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks was non-certified on 5/2/14 citing guidelines criteria and lack of medical necessity.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine guidelines Page(s): 104.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, Physical Medicine Guidelines -Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3

visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: This 49 year-old patient sustained an injury on 7/17/12 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include 8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks. Diagnoses included lumbar and cervical radiculopathy. Cervical MRI in February 2014 showed mild degenerative changes. Conservative care has included medications, physical therapy, lumbar epidural steroid injections (January 2014), and modified activities/rest. Report of 4/24/14 from the provider noted ongoing chronic neck and left upper extremity pain. Exam showed mildly reduced extension range with moderate pain; tenderness to palpation over cervical paraspinals; positive Spurling's; decreased sensation over left C6 dermatome with normal motor strength. The request(s) for 8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks was non-certified on 5/2/14. Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and work status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for 9-10 visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury of 2012. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The 8 Physical therapy sessions for cervical spine 2 x a week for 4 weeks is not medically necessary and appropriate.