

Case Number:	CM13-0003317		
Date Assigned:	06/06/2014	Date of Injury:	05/04/2011
Decision Date:	01/27/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/22/2013
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/25/2013

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 Rehab 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 61 year-old patient sustained an injury on 5/4/11 while employed by the [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include AQUATIC THERAPY X 12 SESSIONS TO LOW BACK. Diagnoses included lumbosacral radiculopathy; shoulder impingement; wrist enthesopathy; trigger finger neuritis and Dupuytren's. Conservative care has included medications, physical therapy, aquatic therapy, acupuncture, and modified activities/rest. Report from the provider noted chronic ongoing pain symptoms in the low back and right hand. Exam showed unchanged findings with treatment plan for additional acupuncture x12 to lumbar spine and additional aquatic therapy. The request(s) for AQUATIC THERAPY X 12 SESSIONS TO LOW BACK was non-certified on 9/4/13 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:

Aquatic Therapy X 12 Sessions to the Low Back: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Aquatic Therapy Page(s): 2.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: The request for Aquatic Therapy x 12 sessions to the low back was non-certified on 9/4/13. Aquatic Therapy does not seem appropriate as the patient has received land-based Physical therapy. There is no records indicating intolerance of treatment, incapable of making same gains with land-based program nor is there any medical diagnosis or indication to require Aqua therapy at this time. The patient is not status-post recent lumbar or knee surgery nor is there diagnosis of morbid obesity requiring gentle aquatic rehabilitation with passive modalities and should have the knowledge to continue with functional improvement with a Home exercise program. The patient has completed formal sessions of physical therapy and there is nothing submitted to indicate functional improvement from treatment already rendered. There is no report of new acute injuries that would require a change in the functional restoration program. There is no report of acute flare-up and the patient has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic 2011 injury. Per Guidelines, 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 physical therapy treatment already rendered including milestones of increased range of motion, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The MTUS Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for the pool therapy. The aquatic therapy x 12 sessions to low back is not medically necessary and appropriate.