MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM14-0168796		
Date Assigned:	07/22/2015	Date of Injury:	10/21/2012
Decision Date:	09/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/17/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/13/2014

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. 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/Service. He/she is familiar with governing laws and regulations, including the strength of evidence hierarchy that applies to Independent Medical Review determinations.

The Expert Reviewer has the following credentials:
State(s) of Licensure: North Carolina
Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 is a 62-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 10-21-2012. Diagnoses include chronic cervical strain and chronic lumbar strain. Treatment to date has included medication and physical therapy. According to the progress notes dated 8-23-2014, the IW (injured worker) reported persistent pain in the neck, low back, bilateral shoulders, left elbow, bilateral hands, left knee and bilateral feet. Her lower back pain was rated 5 out of 10, was described as frequent and improving with therapy, and was noted to radiate down into the bilateral legs. Therapy, rest and medication improved the pain; Tramadol decreased her pain from 7 out of 10 to 3 or 4 out of 10. On examination, range of motion of the lumbar spine was decreased and there was tenderness over the paraspinals as well as the midline. Kemp's test was positive bilaterally. Strength and sensation was decreased at 4 out of 5 bilaterally at L4, L5 and S1. Deep tendon reflexes were 2+ at the patellar and Achilles tendons. A request was made for 12 additional physical therapy visits for the lumbar spine, twice per week for six weeks, as the IW is showing progress and increased functionality in the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Additional physical therapy x12 visits for the lumbar spine, 2 times a week for 6 weeks:
Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical medicine Guidelines Page(s): 98-99.

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

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on physical medicine states: Recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short-term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instruction(s). Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007) 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; Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2):24 visits over 16 weeks The requested amount of physical therapy is in excess of California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines. The patient has already completed a course of physical therapy. There is no objective explanation why the patient would need excess physical therapy and not be transitioned to active self-directed physical medicine. The request cannot be medically necessary. The requested amount of physical therapy is in excess of California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines. The patient has already completed a course of physical therapy. There is no objective explanation why the patient would need excess physical therapy and not be transitioned to active self-directed physical medicine. The request cannot be certified.