

Case Number:	CM14-0195893		
Date Assigned:	12/03/2014	Date of Injury:	03/16/2012
Decision Date:	01/26/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/05/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/21/2014

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 Neurology, has a subspecialty in Neuromuscular Medicine and is licensed to practice in New Jersey. 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 patient is a 64-year-old woman who sustained a work-related injury on March 16, 2012. Subsequently, the patient developed bilateral shoulders and wrist pain. X-rays of the bilateral shoulders and wrists dated October 28, 2014 showed mild acromioclavicular arthritis, downsloping acromion bilaterally, no evidence of glenohumeral arthritis. Left wrist showed an old distal radius fracture with some residual deformity of the distal radius and shortening. Also a non-union of the left ulnar styloid. Right wrist: mild degenerative changes were noted. According to a visit note dated on October 28, 2014, the patient reported that the pain level was 5/10 and described as aching, stabbing, and sharp at times. Objective findings included: limited range of motion of bilateral shoulders. Positive Tinel's and positive Phalen's bilaterally. Positive grind bilateral CMC joints. Atrophy was noted over the right thenar eminence. There was mild pain with ulnar deviation bilaterally, right greater than left. Sensation was decreased in bilateral hands. There was decreased grip strength bilateral upper extremities, supraspinatus 5-/5 bilateral shoulders, external rotation strength 5/5 bilaterally. the patient was diagnosed with bilateral rotator cuff tears and bilateral carpal tunnel syndrome. The provider requested authorization for Additional physical therapy 2 x 4 bilateral shoulders.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Additional physical therapy 2 x 4 bilateral shoulders: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG)

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

Decision rationale: According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is: 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) The patient underwent several physical therapy sessions without documentation of clear benefit. Therefore, the request for additional Physical therapy, 2x4 sessions, for bilateral shoulders is not medically necessary without an intermediate evaluation during the first 3 or 4 sessions assessing physical therapy efficacy. Therefore, the request is not medically necessary.