

Case Number:	CM14-0195907		
Date Assigned:	01/07/2015	Date of Injury:	12/06/1999
Decision Date:	02/11/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/24/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/22/2014

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 Chiropractic therapy, 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:

The injured worker is a 68 year old female who reported neck and right arm pain from injury sustained on 12/06/99. Mechanism of injury was not documented in the provided medical records. There were no diagnostic imaging reports. Patient is diagnosed with C4-5 and C5-6 degenerative disc disease; right arm radiculopathy; C4-5 and C5-6 moderate foraminal stenosis; right shoulder impingement syndrome; left trigger thumb. Patient has been treated with medication, physical therapy and acupuncture. Per medical notes dated 09/12/14, patient has completed both acupuncture and physical therapy with improvement in her symptoms. However, once the therapies were completed, her symptoms returned. Patient complains of right sided neck pain rated at 5/10 with medication and increases to 7/10 without medication. She complains of left thumb pain rated at 5/10 with medication and 7/10 without medication. Examination revealed tenderness to palpation over the right greater than the left cervical paravertebral muscles and decreased range of motion of the cervical spine. Provider requested additional acupuncture treatments which were non-certified by the utilization review. Therefore, the Utilization Review decision was appealed for an Independent Medical Review.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Continued acupuncture sessions, 2 times 3 (cervical and right arm/shoulder): Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Acupuncture Treatment Guidelines.

Decision rationale: Per MTUS- Section 9792.24.1 Acupuncture Medical treatment Guidelines pages 8-9. "Acupuncture is used as an option when pain medication is reduced and not tolerated, it may be used as an adjunct to physical rehabilitation and/or surgical intervention to hasten functional recovery". "Time to produce function improvement: 3-6 treatments. 2) Frequency: 1-3 times per week. 3) Optimum duration: 1-2 months. Acupuncture treatments may be extended if functional improvement is documented". Patient has had prior acupuncture treatment. Provider requested additional acupuncture treatments which were non-certified by the utilization review. Per medical notes dated 09/12/14, patient has completed both acupuncture and physical therapy with improvement in her symptoms. However, once the therapies were completed, her symptoms returned. There is no assessment in the provided medical records of functional efficacy with prior acupuncture visits. Medical reports reveal little evidence of significant changes or improvement in findings, revealing a patient who has not achieved significant objective functional improvement to warrant additional treatment. Additional visits may be rendered if the patient has documented objective functional improvement. Per MTUS guidelines, Functional improvement means either a clinically significant improvement in activities of daily living or a reduction in work restrictions as measured during the history and physical exam or decrease in medication intake. Per review of evidence and guidelines, 2 times 3 acupuncture treatments are not medically necessary.