

Case Number:	CM14-0207688		
Date Assigned:	12/19/2014	Date of Injury:	05/31/2013
Decision Date:	02/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/12/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/11/2014

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 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 patient sustained an injury on 5/31/13 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks. Diagnoses include hand joint stiffness NEC; right radial tunnel syndrome; right upper extremity tendinitis s/p right index trigger finger release. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, and modified activities/rest. Follow-up report of 12/9/14 from the provider noted the patient was denied therapy and continues with complaints of stiffness and weakness in her right index finger and hand; been working light duties. Exam showed unchanged findings of radial tunnel tenderness on right; mild volar forearm tenderness on right with mild stiffness of right index without triggering. Treatment plan included continuing with NSAIDs and light duties with expectant MMI in 6 weeks. The request(s) for Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks was non-certified on 11/12/14 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:

Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not cite any medical evidence for its decision.

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

Decision rationale: This 58 year-old patient sustained a repetitive trauma injury to the right index finger on 5/31/13 from computer use while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks. Diagnoses include hand joint stiffness NEC; right radial tunnel syndrome; right upper extremity tendinitis s/p right index trigger finger release. Conservative care has included medications, therapy, and modified activities/rest. Follow-up report of 12/9/14 from the provider noted the patient was denied therapy and continues with complaints of stiffness and weakness in her right index finger and hand; been working light duties. Exam showed unchanged findings of radial tunnel tenderness on right; mild volar forearm tenderness on right with mild stiffness of right index without triggering. Treatment plan included continuing with NSAIDs and light duties with expectant MMI in 6 weeks. The request(s) for Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks was non-certified on 11/12/14. Review indicated that patient has received at least 24 postoperative therapy treatments with report on 10/28/14 of good mobility and improved strength. 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. 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 Outpatient post-op occupational therapy 2 x 6 weeks is not medically necessary and appropriate.