

Case Number:	CM14-0209585		
Date Assigned:	12/22/2014	Date of Injury:	01/14/2010
Decision Date:	02/18/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/26/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	12/15/2014

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: New York, Tennessee
Certification(s)/Specialty: Emergency Medicine

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 49-year-old female who was injured on January 14, 2010. The patient continued to experience pain in her low back and knees. Physical examination was notable for lumbar paraspinal tenderness with spasm, positive straight leg raise, tenderness to medial joint line of right knee, and positive McMurray's test right knee. Diagnoses included right shoulder impingement syndrome, cervical/trapezial musculoligamentous sprain/strain, and lumbar musculoligamentous sprain/strain with right lower extremity radiculitis. Treatment included home exercise program, aqua therapy, chiropractic therapy, acupuncture, and medications. Request for authorization for gym membership with pool was submitted for consideration.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Gym membership with pool: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Page(s): 114, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine Page(s): 98-99.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Pain Interventions and Guidelines Page(s): 46-47.

Decision rationale: Exercise is recommended. There is strong evidence that exercise programs, including aerobic conditioning and strengthening, are superior to treatment programs that do not include exercise. There is no sufficient evidence to support the recommendation of any particular exercise regimen over any other exercise regimen. A therapeutic exercise program should be initiated at the start of any treatment or rehabilitation program, unless exercise is contraindicated. Such programs should emphasize education, independence, and the importance of an on-going exercise regime. A recent study of the long term impact of aerobic exercise on musculoskeletal pain found that exercise was associated with a substantial and significant reduction in pain even after adjusting for gender, baseline BMI and attrition, and despite the fact that fractures, a significant predictor of pain, were slightly more common among exercisers. A recent trial concluded that active physical treatment, cognitive-behavioral treatment, and the two combined each resulted in equally significant improvement, much better compared to no treatment. Progressive walking, simple strength training, and stretching improved functional status, key symptoms, and self-efficacy in patients with fibromyalgia. Physical conditioning in chronic pain patients can have immediate and long-term benefits. Exercise programs aimed at improving general endurance (aerobic fitness) and muscular strength (especially of the back and abdomen) have been shown to benefit patients with acute low back problems. So far, it appears that the key to success in the treatment of low back pain is physical activity in any form, rather than through any specific activity. One of the problems with exercise, however, is that it is seldom defined in various research studies and its efficacy is seldom reported in any change in status, other than subjective complaints. If exercise is prescribed a therapeutic tool, some documentation of progress should be expected. While a home exercise program is of course recommended, more elaborate personal care where outcomes are not monitored by a health professional, such as gym memberships or advanced home exercise equipment, may not be covered under this guideline. In this case there is no oversight of the exercise program by a health care professional. This does not allow for obtaining objective evidence of functional improvement. Therefore the requested treatment is not medically necessary.