

Case Number:	CM14-0210353		
Date Assigned:	12/23/2014	Date of Injury:	02/22/2013
Decision Date:	02/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	11/17/2014
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. The expert reviewer is Board Certified in Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation, 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 46 year-old patient sustained an injury on 2/22/13 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee in 4 weeks). Diagnoses include knee osteoarthritis s/p knee arthroscopy on 9/19/13 and wrist arthroscopy on 7/29/13. Conservative care have included medications, trigger point injections, therapy, aquatic therapy, and modified activities/rest. Report of 5/29/14 noted ongoing left knee and left wrist pain with intermittent tingling sensation. Assessment noted post-surgical left knee and left wrist arthropathy. The patient continues to treat for chronic ongoing pain symptoms. Report of 10/28/14 from the provider noted the patient with headaches and neck pain associated with left arm pain and numbness; medications noted to be helpful. Exam showed unchanged findings of decreased cervical range of motion; trigger points; normal range of wrists and hands with pain on movement in left wrist and left knee; positive left knee McMurray's and Apley's; decreased left hand sensation and weakness. Treatment plan included muscle stretching exercise and pool therapy. The request(s) for Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee in 4 weeks) was non-certified on 11/17/14 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:

Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine, Aquatic Therapy.

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

Decision rationale: This 46 year-old patient sustained an injury on 2/22/13 while employed by [REDACTED]. Request(s) under consideration include Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee in 4 weeks). Diagnoses include knee osteoarthritis s/p knee arthroscopy on 9/19/13 and wrist arthroscopy on 7/29/13. Conservative care have included medications, trigger point injections, therapy, aquatic therapy, and modified activities/rest. Report of 5/29/14 noted ongoing left knee and left wrist pain with intermittent tingling sensation. Assessment noted post-surgical left knee and left wrist arthropathy. The patient continues to treat for chronic ongoing pain symptoms. Report of 10/28/14 from the provider noted the patient with headaches and neck pain associated with left arm pain and numbness; medications noted to be helpful. Exam showed unchanged findings of decreased cervical range of motion; trigger points; normal range of wrists and hands with pain on movement in left wrist and left knee; positive left knee McMurray's and Apley's; decreased left hand sensation and weakness. Treatment plan included muscle stretching exercise and pool therapy. The request(s) for Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee in 4 weeks) was non-certified on 11/17/14. Aquatic Therapy does not seem appropriate as the patient has received land-based Physical therapy. There is no records indicating intolerance of treatment, incapable of making same gains with land-based program nor is there any medical diagnosis or indication to require Aqua therapy at this time. The patient is not status-post recent lumbar or knee surgery (in September 2013) nor is there diagnosis of morbid obesity requiring gentle aquatic rehabilitation with passive modalities and should have the knowledge to continue with functional improvement with a Home exercise program. The patient has completed formal sessions of PT and there is nothing submitted to indicate functional improvement from treatment already rendered. There is no report of new acute injuries that would require a change in the functional restoration program. There is no report of acute flare-up and the patient has been instructed on a home exercise program for this injury. Per Guidelines, 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. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for the pool therapy. The Physical therapy (swimming pool exercises on a daily basis for the left knee) is not medically necessary and appropriate.