

Case Number:	CM15-0001488		
Date Assigned:	01/12/2015	Date of Injury:	07/30/2014
Decision Date:	04/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/09/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/05/2015

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 Jersey, Michigan, California
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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 injured worker is a 49 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on July 30, 2014. He has reported while lifting and carrying bundles of pipes weighing approximately 100 pounds, he was throwing them over his left shoulder and after six or seven bundles he felt a sharp pain from the left side of his neck to his lower back, he was prescribed medication and returned to work without restrictions. The diagnoses have included cervical sprain/strain, lumbosacral sprain/strain with radiation left lower extremity and Discopathy L5-S1. Treatment to date has included physical therapy in October 2014 approximately twelve sessions, Magnetic resonance imaging of lumbar spine on October 6, 2014, X-ray of cervical and lumbar spine. Currently, the injured worker complains of cervical spine and lumbar spine pain, the symptoms in the cervical spine include, muscle spasm on the right side, burning, cracking and popping, achy pain that becomes sharp throbbing shooting and stabbing pain, locking, exhaustion, pressure and numbness and tingling radiating to both hands, the lumbar spine symptoms include locking, muscle spasms, burning, cracking, popping, pressure, muscle tension, exhaustion and numbness and tingling radiating down the left leg. In a progress note dated November 19, 2014, the treating provider reports examination of the cervical spine reveals paraspinal tenderness bilaterally with palpation, the lumbar spine revealed tenderness to palpation at L4-L5 and L5-S1 as well as superior iliac crest tenderness on the left more than on the right, and tenderness at the sacroiliac joint and decreased range of motion.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 2 x 6: Upheld

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

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). There is no documentation of the efficacy and outcome of previous physical therapy sessions. The patient underwent 12 sessions of physical therapy without clear documentation of efficacy. There is no recent objective findings that support musculoskeletal dysfunction requiring additional physical therapy. There is no documentation that the patient cannot perform home exercise. Therefore, the request for 12 physical therapy sessions is not medically necessary.