

Case Number:	CM15-0005164		
Date Assigned:	01/20/2015	Date of Injury:	02/22/2012
Decision Date:	03/17/2015	UR Denial Date:	12/11/2014
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	01/09/2015

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: Pennsylvania

Certification(s)/Specialty: Internal Medicine, Hospice & Palliative 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:

This 54 year old male sustained a work related injury on 02/22/2012. According to a progress note dated 08/06/2014, the injured worker presented for a left elbow possible tendon injury. Symptoms were due to an injury that occurred around 2006. Treatments included surgery and injections. He did well until about a month ago but now has pain. The pain was minimal. Diagnoses included left elbow lateral epicondylitis. According to the provider, the injured worker had already had surgery and didn't remember how to do the exercises so he was sending him to therapy. Illegible therapy notes were submitted for review and it was unclear what body part was treated. The injured worker was also being seen by another provider for a shoulder injury in which physical therapy had been requested, but denied. On 12/11/2014, Utilization Review non-certified physical therapy x 12 visits lateral epicondylitis left elbow. According to the Utilization Review physician, the current request for 12 additional sessions of physical therapy exceeds guideline recommendations for this clinical presentation of lateral epicondylitis, as the guidelines recommend up to eight sessions over five weeks. Guidelines cited for this review included CA MTUS ACOEM Elbow Disorders. The 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:

PT x 12 visits Lateral Epicondylitis LT elbow: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 10 Elbow Disorders (Revised 2007), Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines.

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

Decision rationale: The MTUS Guidelines support the use of physical therapy, especially active treatments, based on the philosophy of improving strength, endurance, function, and pain intensity. This type of treatment may include supervision by a therapist or medical provider. The worker is then expected to continue active therapies at home as a part of this treatment process in order to maintain the improvement level. Decreased treatment frequency over time (fading) should be a part of the care plan for this therapy. The Guidelines support specific frequencies of treatment and numbers of sessions depending on the cause of the worker's symptoms. The submitted documentation indicated the worker was experiencing lower back pain that went in to the left leg and mid-back pain. There was no discussion describing the reason directed physical therapy would be expected to provide more benefit than a home exercise program. In the absence of such evidence, the current request for twelve visits of physical therapy for left elbow lateral epicondylitis is not medically necessary.