MAXIMUS Federal Services

Case Number:	CM15-0104383		
Date Assigned:	06/08/2015	Date of Injury:	04/26/2011
Decision Date:	07/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/18/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/01/2015

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: California
Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation

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 is a 37 year old male with an April 26, 2011 date of injury. A progress note dated April 27, 2015 documents subjective findings (mild to moderate back pain rated at a level of 3/10; pain that radiates down the right leg just proximal to the knee), objective findings (slight Trendelenburg gait; tenderness to palpation in the midline of L3 to L5 as well as the paraspinal muscles; pain with range of motion of the cervical spine; pain with range of motion of the lumbar spine), and current diagnoses (cervical herniated nucleus pulposus and syrinx; depression, anxiety; mild adjacent level L3-L4 disc bulge and disc desiccation). Treatments to date have included imaging studies, spine surgery, medications, and rest. The treating physician documented a plan of care that included physical therapy for the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

18 comprehensive lumbar spine physical therapy two to three times a week for six weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG): Work Loss Data Institute, LLC; Corpus Christi, www.odg-twc.com.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Therapy, pages 98-99.

Decision rationale: Review indicates the request for PT was modified for 12 sessions. 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 functional 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 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 18 comprehensive lumbar spine physical therapy two to three times a week for six weeks is not medically necessary and appropriate.