

Case Number:	CM15-0108949		
Date Assigned:	06/15/2015	Date of Injury:	07/17/2006
Decision Date:	09/24/2015	UR Denial Date:	05/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	06/05/2015

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: 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:

The injured worker is a 60 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on July 17, 2006, incurring upper spine, left shoulder injuries. She was diagnosed with a right rotator cuff syndrome, left rotator cuff syndrome, cervical disc herniation, and thoracic sprain. She underwent surgical repair of both the left and the right rotator cuff tears, and a cervical discectomy and cervical fusion. Treatment included physical therapy, pain medications, muscle relaxants, anti-inflammatory drugs, neuropathic medications, therapy, and activity restrictions. Currently, the injured worker complained of persistent chronic pain in the cervical spine, left shoulder and left arm. She rated her pain 9 out of 10. She noted loss of range of motion of the upper extremities. Her symptoms worsened with prolonged standing, bending and walking. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included twelve physical therapy sessions for the cervical spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

12 Physical Therapy 2x6 weeks for the Cervical Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Neck and Upper back (Acute & Chronic).

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

Decision rationale: Time-limited care plan with specific defined goals, assessment of functional benefit with modification of ongoing treatment based upon the patient's progress in meeting those goals and the provider's continued monitoring of successful outcome is stressed by MTUS guidelines. 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. Submitted reports have no acute flare-up or specific physical limitations to support for physical/ occupational therapy. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for 9-10 visits of therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It is unclear how many PT sessions have been completed; however, the submitted reports have not identified clear specific functional improvement in ADLs, functional status, or decrease in medication and medical utilization nor have there been a change in neurological compromise or red-flag findings demonstrated from the formal physical therapy already rendered to support further treatment. Submitted reports have also not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for excessive quantity of PT sessions without extenuating circumstances established beyond the guidelines. The 12 Physical Therapy 2x6 weeks for the Cervical Spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.