

Case Number:	CM15-0130796		
Date Assigned:	07/17/2015	Date of Injury:	03/01/1988
Decision Date:	08/13/2015	UR Denial Date:	06/08/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/07/2015

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: Massachusetts

Certification(s)/Specialty: Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Pain Management

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 55-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on March 1, 1988, incurring upper and lower back injuries. He was diagnosed with lumbar degenerative disc disease, lumbar radiculopathy, cervical degenerative disc disease and cervical radiculopathy. Treatment included physical therapy, heat and cold modalities, anti-inflammatory drugs, pain medications, muscle relaxants, topical analgesic patches and work restrictions. Currently, the injured worker complained of chronic pain and tenderness of the cervical and lumbar region with limited range of motion. He was diagnosed with cervical and lumbar strain with muscle spasms. Activities worsened the pain. He had difficulty with driving, sleeping exercising and activities of daily living. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization included physical therapy for the back.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy for the back, 9 sessions: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: The Expert Reviewer did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) (1) Chronic pain, Physical medicine treatment. (2) Preface, Physical Therapy Guidelines.

Decision rationale: The claimant has a remote history of a work-related injury and is being treated for chronic neck and low back pain. When seen, there had been slight improvement. Physical therapy and modalities had been helpful. There was cervical and lumbar spine paraspinal muscle tenderness with decreased and painful range of motion. Physical therapy was requested. The claimant is being treated for chronic pain with no new injury and has already had physical therapy. Patients are expected to continue active therapies and compliance with an independent exercise program would be expected without a need for ongoing skilled physical therapy oversight. An independent exercise program can be performed as often as needed/ appropriate rather than during scheduled therapy visits. In terms of physical therapy treatment for chronic pain, guidelines recommend a six visit clinical trial with a formal reassessment prior to continuing therapy. In this case, the number of visits requested is in excess of that recommended or what might be needed to reestablish or revise the claimant's home exercise program. Skilled therapy in excess of that necessary could promote dependence on therapy provided treatments. The request is not medically necessary.