

Case Number:	CM15-0143552		
Date Assigned:	08/04/2015	Date of Injury:	04/27/2009
Decision Date:	09/02/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/13/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/23/2015

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, 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 59 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on April 27, 2009. The injured worker reported holding a child who moved suddenly resulting in low back pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having lumbar degenerative disc disease (DDD). Treatment to date has included steroid injections, acupuncture, x-rays, magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and medication. A qualified medical exam dated April 23, 2015 provides the injured worker complains of back pain rated 8 out of 10. Physical exam notes the injured worker appears to be very distressed and is unable to sit and will fall if she bends forward. She is unable to lie on the examination table. The gait is antalgic and uses the wall to lean on for balance. Her right foot is turned outward and she drags her right leg. She reports she cannot walk without holding on to or leaning on something and that it has gotten worse in the last few months. There is a request for aquatic therapy.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Aquatic therapy 3 times a week for 4 weeks for the lumbar spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Aquatic therapy, Physical medicine.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 298, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines x 8 C.C.R. MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) 7 Page(s): 22, 98-99 of 12. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter, Physical Therapy.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for aquatic therapy, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines state that aquatic therapy is recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy where available as an alternative to land-based physical therapy. They go on to state that it is specifically recommended whenever reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. Guidelines go on to state that for the recommendation on the number of supervised visits, see physical therapy guidelines. Within the documentation available for review, there is no documentation indicating why the patient would require therapy in a reduced weight-bearing environment. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how many physical/aquatic therapy sessions the patient has undergone and what specific objective functional improvement has been obtained with the therapy sessions already provided. Additionally, there is no statement indicating whether the patient is performing a home exercise program on a regular basis, and whether or not that home exercise program has been modified if it has been determined to be ineffective. Finally, the currently requested 12 sessions exceeds the 6-visit trial supported by guidelines. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested aquatic therapy is not medically necessary.