

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0144487		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	08/05/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	04/19/2013
<b>Decision Date:</b>	08/31/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	06/23/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	07/25/2015

### 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: New Jersey, Alabama, California  
 Certification(s)/Specialty: Neurology, Neuromuscular 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:

The injured worker (IW) is a 43-year-old female who sustained an industrial injury on 04/19/2013. She reported falling after stepping into a gopher hole. The injured worker was diagnosed as having: Carpal tunnel syndrome. Chronic pain syndrome. Morbid obesity. Strain of knee. Pain in wrist. Degeneration of intervertebral disc. Ankle pain. Treatment to date has included medications and a trial of an unloading brace which helped her significantly decrease her back pain and increase her transfers and endurance of standing and walking. Currently, the injured worker complains of pain in the low back, buttocks and neck that is aching, pulsating, burning, and at times penetrating. She rates her pain at a 7 on a scale of 0- 10 and feels she does get a significant decrease in back pain with the pain medication. On exam, there is tenderness to palpation of the cervical paraspinal muscles on the right, including the levator scapula, rhomboid and lumbar paraspinal muscles. She has positive trigger points at the lumbar paraspinal, levator scapula, and rhomboid muscles bilaterally. The treatment plan included trigger point injections, medications, and physical therapy. A request for authorization was made for the following: Physical Therapy, twice a week for eight weeks for the back, lumbar spine, thoracic spine and cervical spine.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Physical Therapy, twice a week for eight weeks for the back, lumbar spine, thoracic spine and cervical spine:** Upheld

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Passive Therapy.

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

**Decision rationale:** According to MTUS guidelines, Physical Medicine is recommended as indicated below. Passive therapy (those treatment modalities that do not require energy expenditure on the part of the patient) can provide short term relief during the early phases of pain treatment and are directed at controlling symptoms such as pain, inflammation and swelling and to improve the rate of healing soft tissue injuries. They can be used sparingly with active therapies to help control swelling, pain and inflammation during the rehabilitation process. Active therapy is based on the philosophy that therapeutic exercise and/or activity are beneficial for restoring flexibility, strength, endurance, function, range of motion, and can alleviate discomfort. Active therapy requires an internal effort by the individual to complete a specific exercise or task. This form of therapy may require supervision from a therapist or medical provider such as verbal, visual and/or tactile instructions. Patients are instructed and expected to continue active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. Home exercise can include exercise with or without mechanical assistance or resistance and functional activities with assistive devices. (Colorado, 2002) (Airaksinen, 2006) Patient-specific hand therapy is very important in reducing swelling, decreasing pain, and improving range of motion in CRPS. (Li, 2005) The use of active treatment modalities (e.g., exercise, education, activity modification) instead of passive treatments is associated with substantially better clinical outcomes. In a large case series of patients with low back pain treated by physical therapists, those adhering to guidelines for active rather than passive treatments incurred fewer treatment visits, cost less, and had less pain and less disability. The overall success rates were 64.7% among those adhering to the active treatment recommendations versus 36.5% for passive treatment. (Fritz, 2007) There is no clear documentation in this case whether this is an initial physical therapy or a follow up physical therapy after an initial physical therapy. If this is the initial physical therapy, the patient sustained a work injury in 2013 and there is no clear documentation of exacerbation of the patient condition requiring the help of 16 sessions of physical therapy. The patient was complaining of chronic cervical, thoracic spine pain and back pain and there is no clear evidence of the change in the patient condition compared to base line. If the requested sessions are complement to previous physical therapy sessions, there is no clear evidence of improvement from previous sessions. There is no clear documentation that the residual musculoskeletal dysfunction requires 16 sessions of physical therapy. Therefore Physical Therapy, twice a week for eight weeks for the back, lumbar spine, thoracic spine and cervical spine is not medically necessary.