

Case Number:	CM15-0147056		
Date Assigned:	08/10/2015	Date of Injury:	12/05/2011
Decision Date:	09/04/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/16/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/28/2015

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 45 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 12-05-2011. Mechanism of injury was a slip and fall with low back pain. Diagnoses include lumbar discopathy, lumbar radiculopathy, and lumbar facet syndrome. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, medications, chiropractic sessions, and physical therapy. She is not working. A physician progress note dated 06-01-2015 documents the injured worker has tenderness and spasm over the paralumbar muscles, sacroiliac joint, sciatic notch and sacral base bilaterally. There is tenderness and spasm over the spinous processes from L3 through S1 bilaterally. Straight leg raise is positive at 45 degrees on the left with lower extremity radicular pain. Kemp's test is positive bilaterally. Gross muscle testing is 4-5 upon big toe raise. The treatment plan includes a home IF unit, chiropractic sessions and a lumbar spine Magnetic Resonance Imaging. Treatment requested is for physical therapy 1 time a week for 6 weeks to the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 1 time a week for 6 weeks to the lumbar spine: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 298, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 98 of 127. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Low Back Chapter, Physical Therapy.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for additional physical therapy, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend a short course of active therapy with continuation of active therapies at home as an extension of the treatment process in order to maintain improvement levels. ODG has more specific criteria for the ongoing use of physical therapy. ODG recommends a trial of physical therapy. If the trial of physical therapy results in objective functional improvement, as well as ongoing objective treatment goals, then additional therapy may be considered. Within the documentation available for review, there is documentation of completion of prior PT sessions, but there is no documentation of specific objective functional improvement with the previous sessions and remaining deficits that cannot be addressed within the context of an independent home exercise program, yet are expected to improve with formal supervised therapy. Furthermore, it is unclear how many therapy sessions the patient has already undergone making it impossible to determine if the patient has exceeded the maximum number recommended by guidelines for their diagnosis. In light of the above issues, the currently requested additional physical therapy is not medically necessary.