

Case Number:	CM15-0149405		
Date Assigned:	08/12/2015	Date of Injury:	05/26/2014
Decision Date:	09/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/23/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	07/31/2015

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 38 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 5-26-2014. He reported a mechanical fall onto the left shoulder with injury to the shoulder, neck, and low back. Diagnoses include cervical nucleus pulposus and lumbar herniated nucleus pulposus. Treatments to date include physical therapy and chiropractic manipulations and epidural steroid injections. Currently, he complained of pain in the neck and arms and pain in the low back with radiation to the left lower extremity. On 7-15-15, the physical examination documented tenderness in left scapula region. There was a positive straight leg raise on the left side and a positive Lasegue's test. The plan of care included a request to authorize eighteen physical therapy sessions to treat the cervical and lumbar spines.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

18 PT Sessions Including Therapeutic Exercises, Re-Learning Neuromuscular Movement, Gait Training, E-Stim without Direct Provider Contact, Each 15 Minutes, Ultrasound, Each 15 Minutes: Cervical/Lumbar Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Physical Medicine.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Page(s): 98-99 of 127. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG) Neck and Low Back Chapters, Physical Medicine.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for physical therapy, Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines recommend a short course (10 sessions) 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 no documentation of specific objective functional improvement with any 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, the request exceeds the amount of PT recommended by the CA MTUS and, unfortunately, there is no provision for modification of the current request. In light of the above issues, the currently requested physical therapy is not medically necessary.