

Case Number:	CM15-0163457		
Date Assigned:	08/31/2015	Date of Injury:	11/30/2007
Decision Date:	09/30/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/10/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/20/2015

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: North Carolina

Certification(s)/Specialty: Family Practice

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 52 year old female who sustained an industrial injury on 11-30-2007. Mechanism of injury was cumulative. Diagnoses include cervicothoracic musculoligamentous strain-sprain, history of head injury with cerebral concussion with post-traumatic cephalgia and dizziness, occipital neuralgia with TMJ pain, lumbar musculoligamentous strain-sprain, injury to both shoulders with residual of impingement syndrome of the left shoulder, status post-surgical repair of the right shoulder x 2 with residuals, strain-sprain of the right elbow with medial epicondylitis rule out ligamentous tear of the right elbow, and non-orthopedic injuries to include emotional injuries and respiratory system. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, medications, physical therapy, and psychotherapy. She is temporarily totally disabled and not working. A physician progress note dated 04-23-2015 documents the injured worker complains of severe low back pain and is having a hard time walking. The physician documented that on her visit of 03-29-2015 she had finished 9 physical therapy visits and did not respond so a Magnetic Resonance Imaging was scheduled and done on 04-09-2015. The report was reviewed and there is degenerative disc and facet joint disease present throughout the lumbar spine. There are multiple levels of disc bulge present causing mild foraminal stenosis, and areas of facet arthropathy. The injured worker remains symptomatic and her back pain is worse with radiculopathy. The Magnetic Resonance Imaging findings show significant findings explaining the back pain and radiculopathy and the lack of improvement with the physical therapy sessions. The treatment plan was for her to proceed with home exercises for the lumbar spine and if there

is no improvement a request will be for a series of lumbar epidural blocks. Treatment requested is for Physical therapy 2 x 6, low back.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy 2 x 6, low back: Upheld

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

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines physical medicine Page(s): 98-99.

Decision rationale: The California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines section on physical medicine states: 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 instruction(s). 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) Physical Medicine Guidelines: Allow for fading of treatment frequency (from up to 3 visits per week to 1 or less), plus active self-directed home Physical Medicine. Myalgia and myositis, unspecified (ICD9 729.1): 9-10 visits over 8 weeks. Neuralgia, neuritis, and radiculitis, unspecified (ICD9 729.2) 8-10 visits over 4 weeks. Reflex sympathetic dystrophy (CRPS) (ICD9 337.2): 24 visits over 16 weeks. The goal of physical therapy is graduation to home therapy after a certain amount of recommended sessions. The patient has already completed physical therapy. The request is in excess of these recommendations per the California MTUS. There is no objective reason why the patient would not be moved to home therapy after completing the recommended amount of supervised sessions in the provided clinical documentation. Therefore the request is not certified.