

Case Number:	CM15-0167451		
Date Assigned:	09/08/2015	Date of Injury:	08/24/2011
Decision Date:	10/21/2015	UR Denial Date:	07/30/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	08/26/2015

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

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 female who sustained an industrial injury on August 24, 2011. A spine follow up visit dated February 04, 2015 reported the worker as status post a cervical total disk replacement on May 23, 2014. Overall, she is doing well. Of note, she had a major setback with a car accident and stopped physical therapy sessions with note of just re-initiating therapy. The plan of care noted involving being a great candidate for continued physical therapy session for deconditioning. Spine follow up dated March 18, 2015 reported the working having been back to work for 3 months. Overall, she has "minimal complaints of radiculopathy." The plan of care noted "At this point, the patient will continue with her work activities; reassess for physical therapy requirements after work." Spine follow up visit dated June 24, 2015 reported "she does believe potentially that her strenuous lifestyle may be contributing to significant symptoms and does feel deconditioned." The plan of care is noted with recommendation for a "course of physical therapy to work on gradual stretching, strengthening, for her deconditioned state." "It will also help with potentially the scapular muscle issues."

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

12 more physical therapy sessions for the cervical spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Physical Medicine.

Decision rationale: Physical therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified physical therapist due to the complexity and sophistication of the therapy and the physical condition of the patient. However, there is no clear measurable evidence of deficits to support for further treatment beyond the sessions already rendered. Review of submitted reports noted the patient has clinical findings of normal range, good strength with normal sensation and reflexes. Clinical reports submitted also had no focal neurological deficits or ADL limitation to support for further therapy treatment. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals when the patient has no defined deficits. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for 9-10 visits of therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated necessity or indication to allow for additional therapy treatments. There is no report of acute flare-up, new injuries, or change in symptom or clinical findings to support for formal PT in a patient that should have been transitioned to an independent home exercise program. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for the physical therapy. The 12 more physical therapy sessions for the cervical spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.