

Case Number:	CM15-0181263		
Date Assigned:	09/22/2015	Date of Injury:	07/10/2014
Decision Date:	11/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/15/2015

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:

This is a 52-year-old female with a date of injury on 7-10-2014. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for chronic cervical spine strain with underlying degenerative disc disease C5-C6, left shoulder impingement-biceps tenosynovitis, chronic lumbar spine strain and left knee lateral meniscus tear. According to the progress report dated 6-4-2015, the injured worker complained of constant neck pain and stiffness left worse than right rated 5 out of 10. She complained of pain in her left shoulder at night or with certain movements rated 7 out of 10. She complained of constant low back pain rated 5 out of 10; she reported acupuncture helped the low back pain. She also reported headaches and bilateral knee pain. Per the treating physician (6-4-2015), the injured worker was working with modified duties. The physical exam (6-4-2015) revealed "significantly decreased, painful motion of the left shoulder." There was tenderness to palpation of the cervical spine, left shoulder, low back and left knee. Treatment has included acupuncture, left shoulder injection, and medications (Ibuprofen). The original Utilization Review (UR) (8-7-2015) denied a request for physical therapy 2-3xWk x 6Wks for the left shoulder.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

18 Sessions physical therapy to left shoulder: 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 progress with the PT treatment already rendered including milestones of increased ROM, strength, and functional capacity. Review of submitted physician reports show no evidence of functional benefit, unchanged chronic symptom complaints, clinical findings, and functional status. There is no evidence documenting functional baseline with clear goals to be reached and the patient striving to reach those goals. The Chronic Pain Guidelines allow for visits of physical therapy with fading of treatment to an independent self-directed home program. It appears the employee has received significant therapy sessions without demonstrated evidence of functional improvement 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 has been instructed on a home exercise program for this chronic injury. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support further physical therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The 18 sessions physical therapy to left shoulder is not medically necessary and appropriate.