

Case Number:	CM15-0183833		
Date Assigned:	09/24/2015	Date of Injury:	10/18/2010
Decision Date:	10/29/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/17/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/18/2015

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 49 year old female, who sustained an industrial injury on 10-18-10. The injured worker is undergoing treatment for bilateral thumb basal joint osteoarthritis, right radial tunnel syndrome and bilateral De Quervain's tendonitis. Medical records dated 8-20-15 indicate the injured worker complains of flare up of osteoarthritis and elbow and wrist pain. Physical exam dated 8-20-15 notes tenderness to palpation of the epicondyles and decreased range of motion (ROM) of the wrists and bilateral tenderness to palpation and grind of the thumb basil joints. In an appeal dated 9-4-15 the treating physician indicates there is no change from the 3-5-15 to the 8-20-15 visit. Treatment to date has included ganglion blocks, physical therapy, splints and topical and oral medication. The original utilization review dated 9-17-15 indicates the request for bilateral hard and soft thumb Spica braces is certified and hand therapy for the bilateral hands and elbows (12-sessions, 2 times a week for 6-weeks) is modified to hand therapy for the bilateral hands and elbows 2 sessions noting due to flare up guidelines typically allow for 2 visits of therapy to support limited re-treatment.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Hand Therapy for the Bilateral Hands and Elbows (12-sessions, 2 times a week for 6-weeks): 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: Review indicates the request for hand therapy was modified. Occupational therapy is considered medically necessary when the services require the judgment, knowledge, and skills of a qualified occupational 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 OT 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 9-10 visits of occupational 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 OT 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 occupational therapy when prior treatment rendered has not resulted in any functional benefit. The Hand Therapy for the Bilateral Hands and Elbows (12-sessions, 2 times a week for 6-weeks) is not medically necessary and appropriate.