

<b>Case Number:</b>	CM15-0184621		
<b>Date Assigned:</b>	09/25/2015	<b>Date of Injury:</b>	02/25/2015
<b>Decision Date:</b>	11/02/2015	<b>UR Denial Date:</b>	09/09/2015
<b>Priority:</b>	Standard	<b>Application Received:</b>	09/21/2015

### 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 55 -year-old male who sustained an industrial injury on 2-25-2015. Pre surgical diagnosis was medial meniscal tear. Documented treatment includes surgery performed in May 2015 consisting of left knee arthroscopy, partial medial and lateral meniscectomy, synovectomy shaving, and chondroplasty. The injured worker has completed 9 sessions of post-operative physical therapy treatments noted on 8-14-2015 to have "reduced pain, increased functional capacity and facilitated activities of daily living." The injured worker also reported that the therapy helped reduce his need for pain medication. Other than medication, the provided medical records do not address previous treatment, but the operative note of 5-14-15 stated that he has "failed conservative treatment." The injured worker reported recurring pain on 8-14-2015 and the physician noted decreased range of motion, loss of motor function graded 4 out of 5, and medial and lateral joint line tenderness with patellar crepitus. Pain character and rating are not provided in the documents. The treating physician's plan of care includes a 9/1/2015 request for additional 12 post-operative physical therapy visits for the left knee which was modified to 3 visits on 9-9-2015. The 4-14-2015 note stated the injured worker could work with restrictions, but there is no current information stating if he is working.

### IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

**Additional post-operative physical therapy x12 visits for the left knee: Upheld**

**Claims Administrator guideline:** Decision based on MTUS Postsurgical Treatment 2009.

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

**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 requested amount of physical therapy is in excess of California chronic pain medical treatment guidelines. The patient has already completed a course of physical therapy. There is no objective explanation why the patient would need excess physical therapy and not be transitioned to active self-directed physical medicine. The request is not medically necessary.