

Case Number:	CM15-0188587		
Date Assigned:	09/30/2015	Date of Injury:	12/15/2009
Decision Date:	11/09/2015	UR Denial Date:	08/31/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/24/2015

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 39-year-old male with a date of industrial injury 12-15-2009. The medical records indicated the injured worker (IW) was treated for lumbosacral radiculitis; status post lumbar spine surgery, L5-S1 fusion (2010); and depression. In the progress notes (6-17-15 and 8-24-15), the IW reported constant pain across the low back rated 5 out of 10, radiating to the right leg. Medications included Amrix, Silenor, Tramadol, Tylenol and Vicoprofen. On examination (6-17-15 and 8-24-15 notes), lumbar level L5 was tender with spasms present. Trigger points were noted over the bilateral "sciatic", the iliac crest and the bilateral L4-5 lumbar paraspinal muscles. Range of motion was reduced 25%. Sensation was reduced in the calf (side not specified). The motor exam and reflexes were stated to be normal. Treatments included trigger point injections and therapy; the notes did not specify the location of injections, type of therapy or outcomes. A Request for Authorization was received for physical therapy three times a week for four weeks. The Utilization Review on 8-31-15 non-certified the request for physical therapy three times a week for four weeks.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical Therapy, three times a week for four weeks: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG-TWC) Low Back Procedure Summary Online Version last updated 7/17/20105, physical therapy guidelines.

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 2009 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 Physical Therapy, three times a week for four weeks is not medically necessary and appropriate.