

Case Number:	CM15-0189890		
Date Assigned:	10/02/2015	Date of Injury:	08/11/2000
Decision Date:	11/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/22/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/28/2015

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 53-year-old male, who sustained an industrial injury on August 11, 2000, incurring upper, mid and lower back injuries. He was diagnosed with lumbar degenerative disc disease, and cervical degenerative disc disease. Treatment included 7 sessions of physical therapy, anti-inflammatory drugs, pain medications, epidural steroid injection, four lumbar spine surgeries, cervical spine surgery, and restricted activities. Currently, the injured worker complained of constant burning from his low neck to the mid shoulders and hands. He noted swelling of the hands, with tingling and numbness and loss of strength. He reported persistent tightness in his neck and shoulders. There was restricted range of motion of the right hand and fingers interfering with his activities of daily living. He was diagnosed with left upper extremity dysesthesia. The injured worker noted that the upper extremity symptoms and loss of motor function evolved over the last year. He had a recent crush injury to the right hand. On May 5, 2015, the injured worker complained of increased pain in the sacroiliac joint. He received a right sacroiliac joint injection to help relieve his pain. The treatment plan that was requested for authorization on September 28, 2015, included 8 sessions of physical therapy. On September 22, 2015, a request for physical therapy was denied by utilization review.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Physical therapy, 8 sessions: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS Low Back Complaints 2004.

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 August 2000 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, 8 sessions is not medically necessary and appropriate.