

Case Number:	CM15-0191262		
Date Assigned:	10/05/2015	Date of Injury:	11/15/2010
Decision Date:	11/10/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/02/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	09/29/2015

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 46 year old male, who sustained an industrial injury on 11-15-2010. The injured worker is being treated for lumbar herniated nucleus pulposus and cervical sprain-strain. Treatment to date has included diagnostics, surgical intervention (lumbar spine, 2012), physical therapy and medications. Per the Primary Treating Physician's Progress Report dated 7-23-2015, the injured worker reported persistent pain and spasm in the lumbar spine. Objective findings included lumbar spine spasm. Forward flexion was 20 degrees, extension 10 degrees and right and left lateral rotation 10 degrees. Magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the lumbar spine is described by the evaluating provider as "not revealing any significant problem." There is not documentation of improvement in symptoms, increase in activities of daily living or decrease in pain level with previous physical therapy and no documentation of why traditional land based therapy would not be advised. He is not working. The plan of care included aqua therapy and authorization was requested for 12 sessions of aquatic therapy for the lumbar spine. On 9-02- 2015, Utilization Review modified the request for 12 sessions of aquatic therapy for the lumbar spine.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Aquatic Therapy 12 Sessions Lumbar Spine: Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG).

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Aquatic therapy.

Decision rationale: Aquatic Therapy does not seem appropriate, as the patient has received land-based physical therapy. There is no records indicating intolerance of treatment, incapable of making same gains with land-based program nor is there any medical diagnosis or indication to require Aqua therapy at this time. The patient is not status-post recent lumbar (last in 2012) or knee surgery nor is there diagnosis of morbid obesity requiring gentle aquatic rehabilitation with passive modalities and should have the knowledge to continue with functional improvement with a home exercise program. The patient has completed formal sessions of PT and there is nothing submitted to indicate functional improvement from treatment already rendered. There is no report of new acute injuries that would require a change in the functional restoration program. There is no report of acute flare-up and the patient has been instructed on a home exercise program for this injury. Per Guidelines, 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. Submitted reports have not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for the pool therapy. The request for Aquatic Therapy 12 Sessions Lumbar Spine is not medically necessary and appropriate.