

Case Number:	CM15-0204309		
Date Assigned:	10/21/2015	Date of Injury:	04/23/2012
Decision Date:	12/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	09/23/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/19/2015

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 56 year old male with an industrial injury dated 04-23-2012. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for cervical spine sprain and strain, thoracic sprain and strain, lumbar sprain and strain and myofascial pain. In a progress report dated 06-15-2015, the injured worker reported back and neck pain rated 8-10 out of 10. The injured worker also reported hand and foot numbness, right and left sciatica, stomach pain and rashes. Objective findings (06-15-2015) revealed positive Tinel's and Phalen's on the right and 5 out of 5 in the bilateral lower extremity and upper extremity. According to the progress note dated 09-23-2015 the injured worker presented for left wrist cortisone injection for carpal tunnel syndrome. Objective findings (09-23-2015) revealed decreased lumbar flexion, tenderness to palpitation of lumbar spine and "psm", tenderness to palpitation of cervical and thoracic spine, muscle spasm in lower "psm", and tenderness to palpitation of bilateral hips. Treatment to date has included diagnostic studies, prescribed medications, transcutaneous electrical nerve stimulation (TENS), home exercise program, acupuncture, unknown amount of physical therapy sessions and periodic follow up visits. The injured worker remains off work. The utilization review dated 09-23-2015, non-certified the request for aquatic therapy for neck, low back, upper back x 12 visits.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Aquatic Therapy for Neck/Low Back/Upper Back x 12 visits: Upheld

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

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 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 2012 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 Aquatic Therapy for Neck/Low Back/Upper Back x 12 visits is not medically necessary and appropriate.