

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------------|------------------------------|------------|
| Case Number: | CM15-0204937 | | |
| Date Assigned: | 10/21/2015 | Date of Injury: | 02/25/2011 |
| Decision Date: | 12/03/2015 | UR Denial Date: | 10/12/2015 |
| 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 44 year old female, who sustained an industrial-work injury on 2-25-11. He reported initial complaints of lumbar pain. The injured worker was diagnosed as having thoracic or lumbosacral neuritis or radiculitis, unspecified and lumbar sprain-strain. Treatment to date has included medication and home exercise program (HEP). Currently, the injured worker complains of a flare up of the low back symptoms. Pain was rated 6-7 out of 10 and radiated down the left lower extremity with associated numbness and tingling in the left leg. Per the primary physician's progress report (PR-2) on 8-17-15, she was referred to aquatics. Per the PR-2 on 6-19-15, blood pressure demonstrated hypertension and pulse demonstrated tachycardia. There was reduced range of motion to the lumbar spine with tenderness to palpation along the paravertebral muscles bilaterally. Ambulation was with a four point walker. Current plan of care includes aquatic therapy to improve range of motion and increase strength and flexibility of the lumbar spine, continue home exercise program (HEP), and follow up. The Request for Authorization requested service to include Aquatic Therapy 2 x 4 week, Lumbar Spine. The Utilization Review on 10-12-15 denied the request for Aquatic Therapy 2 x 4 week, Lumbar Spine, per CA MTUS (California Medical Treatment Utilization Schedule), Chronic Pain Medical Treatment Guidelines 2009.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Aquatic Therapy 2 x 4 week, Lumbar Spine: Upheld

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

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 progressive neurological deterioration and the patient has been instructed on a home exercise program for this 2011 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 2 x 4 week, Lumbar Spine is not medically necessary or appropriate.