

Case Number:	CM15-0207660		
Date Assigned:	10/26/2015	Date of Injury:	06/13/2014
Decision Date:	12/07/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/12/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	10/21/2015

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 45 year old who sustained an industrial injury on 6-13-2014. Diagnoses include cervical strain with radicular complaints and disc protrusions, and lumbar strain with radicular complaints and evidence of disc protrusion and facet arthropathy. Treatments to date include activity modification, chiropractic therapy, and cervical spine epidural steroid injection. The most recent medical evaluation was completed on 6-24-15. The subjective complaints included ongoing pain in the low back with radiation to bilateral lower extremities. The cervical spine epidural provided on 6-8-15, was noted to provide relief from pain. The physical examination documented cervical tenderness and guarding. There was lumbar tenderness and tenderness over facet joint with muscle spasms and weak extensors. The plan of care included a follow up appointment with pain management. The appeal requested authorization for a Functional Capacity Evaluation. The Utilization Review dated 10-12-15, denied the request.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Functional capacity evaluation (FCE): 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) Guidelines for performing an FCE.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Medical Treatment 2009, Section(s): Functional improvement measures.

Decision rationale: Though functional capacity evaluations (FCEs) are widely used and promoted, it is important for physicians and others to understand the limitations and pitfalls of these evaluations. Functional capacity evaluations may establish physical abilities, and also facilitate the examinee/employer relationship for return to work. However, FCEs can be deliberately simplified evaluations based on multiple assumptions and subjective factors, which are not always apparent to their requesting physician. There is little scientific evidence confirming that FCEs predict an individual's actual capacity to perform in the workplace; an FCE reflects what an individual can do on a single day, at a particular time, under controlled circumstances, that provide an indication of that individual's abilities. As with any behavior, an individual's performance on an FCE is probably influenced by multiple nonmedical factors other than physical impairments. For these reasons, it is problematic to rely solely upon the FCE results for determination of current work capability and restrictions. It is the employer's responsibility to identify and determine whether reasonable accommodations are possible to allow the examinee to perform the essential job activities. The patient has received a significant amount of conservative treatments without sustained long-term benefit. The patient continues to treat for ongoing significant symptoms with further plan for care without any work status changed. It appears the patient has not reached maximal medical improvement and continues to treat for chronic pain symptoms. Current review of the submitted medical reports has not adequately demonstrated the indication to support for the request for Functional Capacity Evaluation as the patient continues to actively treat. Per the ACOEM Treatment Guidelines on the Chapter for Independent Medical Examinations and Consultations regarding Functional Capacity Evaluation, there is little scientific evidence confirming FCEs ability to predict an individual's actual work capacity as behaviors and performances are influenced by multiple nonmedical factors which would not determine the true indicators of the individual's capability or restrictions. The Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) is not medically necessary and appropriate.