

Case Number:	CM15-0021061		
Date Assigned:	02/10/2015	Date of Injury:	01/24/2013
Decision Date:	03/25/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/14/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/04/2015

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:

This is a male injured worker who sustained an industrial injury on January 24, 2003. He had tripped over gravel and fell onto his lower back. At the time, he was status post two lumbar spine laminectomy surgeries. The diagnoses have included chronic pain syndrome, bilateral L5 radiculopathy, axial low back pain, lumbar facet pain at the L4-5 areas, substance abuse/addiction and opioid-induced hyperalgesia. Treatment to date has included surgery, epidural injections, lumbar brace and medications. Currently, the injured worker complains of ongoing aching sensations in the low back. He rated his pain as a 4-7 on a 1-10 pain scale. Prolonged standing and sitting exacerbate his pain. He stated that some of his medications have helped him but he is interested in trying alternatives. On January 14, 2015 Utilization Review non-certified a three month gym membership, noting the CA MTUS/ACOEM and Official Disability Guidelines. On February 4, 2015, the injured worker submitted an application for Independent Medical Review for review of a three month gym membership.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Gym membership (x3 months): Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), gym membership

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines Exercise, Pages 46-47.

Decision rationale: It can be expected that the patient had been instructed in an independent home exercise program to supplement the formal physical therapy the patient had received and to continue with strengthening post discharge from PT. Although the MTUS Guidelines stress the importance of a home exercise program and recommend daily exercises, there is no evidence to support the medical necessity for access to the equipment available with a gym/pool membership versus resistive thera-bands to perform isometrics and eccentric exercises. It is recommended that the patient continue with the independent home exercise program as prescribed in physical therapy. The accumulated wisdom of the peer-reviewed, evidence-based literature is that musculoskeletal complaints are best managed with the eventual transfer to an independent home exercise program. Most pieces of gym equipment are open chain, i.e., the feet are not on the ground when the exercises are being performed. As such, training is not functional and important concomitant components, such as balance, recruitment of postural muscles, and coordination of muscular action, are missed. Again, this is adequately addressed with a home exercise program. Core stabilization training is best addressed with floor or standing exercises that make functional demands on the body, using body weight. These cannot be reproduced with machine exercise units. There is no peer-reviewed, literature-based evidence that a gym membership or personal trainer is indicated nor is it superior to what can be conducted with a home exercise program. There is, in fact, considerable evidence-based literature that the less dependent an individual is on external services, supplies, appliances, or equipment, the more likely they are to develop an internal locus of control and self-efficacy mechanisms resulting in more appropriate knowledge, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. The Gym membership (x3 months) is not medically necessary and appropriate.