

Case Number:	CM15-0029132		
Date Assigned:	02/24/2015	Date of Injury:	06/13/2011
Decision Date:	04/03/2015	UR Denial Date:	01/28/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	02/17/2015

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, Pain Management

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 40 year old male sustained an industrial injury on 6/13/11, with subsequent ongoing low back pain. In a follow-up visit dated 1/15/15, the injured worker complained of low back pain 5/10 on the visual analog scale with radiation to the left thigh and knee. The injured worker reported that his pain symptoms were adequately managed with the current medication regimen. Physical exam was remarkable for tenderness to palpation to left side paravertebral muscles and lumbar spinous process with positive straight leg raise bilateral, 4/5 strength to left lower extremity and decreased sensation to the left calf. Current diagnoses included postlaminectomy syndrome of lumbar region, lumbago and lumbar radiculitis. Treatment plan included including continuing medications (Omeprazole, Ultracet, Cyclobenzaprine, Gabapentin, Ketoprofen and Lunesta), eight sessions of aqua therapy and continuing acupuncture, ice, heat, exercise. On 1/26/15, Utilization Review noncertified a request for 8 Sessions of aquatic therapy for the lumbar spine with unspecified frequency or duration, citing ACOEM guidelines. As a result of the UR denial, an IMR was filed with the Division of Workers Comp.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

8 Sessions of aquatic therapy for the lumbar spine with unspecified frequency or duration:
Upheld

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation ACOEM - <https://www.acoempracguides.org/> Low Back Disorders.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS ACOEM Chapter 12 Low Back Complaints Page(s): 298, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines 8 C.C.R. 9792.20 - 9792.26 MTUS (Effective July 18, 2009) Page(s): 22, 98-99 of 127. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines (ODG), Low Back Chapter, Physical Therapy.

Decision rationale: Regarding the request for aquatic therapy, Chronic Pain Treatment Guidelines state that aquatic therapy is recommended as an optional form of exercise therapy where available as an alternative to land-based physical therapy. They go on to state that it is specifically recommended whenever reduced weight bearing is desirable, for example extreme obesity. Guidelines go on to state that for the recommendation on the number of supervised visits, see physical therapy guidelines. Within the documentation available for review, there is no documentation indicating why the patient would require therapy in a reduced weight-bearing environment. Furthermore, there is no indication as to how many physical/aquatic therapy sessions the patient has undergone and what specific objective functional improvement has been obtained with the therapy sessions already provided. Finally, there is no statement indicating whether the patient is performing a home exercise program on a regular basis, and whether or not that home exercise program has been modified if it has been determined to be ineffective. In the absence of clarity regarding those issues, the currently requested aquatic therapy is not medically necessary.