

Case Number:	CM15-0216635		
Date Assigned:	11/06/2015	Date of Injury:	08/21/1991
Decision Date:	12/22/2015	UR Denial Date:	10/07/2015
Priority:	Standard	Application Received:	11/03/2015

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: Otolaryngology

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 58 year old male who sustained an industrial injury on 8-21-1991. A review of the medical records indicates that the injured worker is undergoing treatment for moderate to severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Per the letter dated 8-6-2015, the injured worker was currently using binaural hearing aids that were over five years old and had recently experienced a reduction in his hearing thresholds and his speech understanding. According to the progress report dated 8-25-2015, the injured worker had worn hearing aids in both ears for approximately 20 years for moderate to severe sensorineural hearing loss. Objective findings (8-25-2015) revealed moderate to severe bilateral exostosis left greater than right ear. The injured worker was well oriented and communicated well with normal affect and voice. The physician noted that the most recent audiogram performed was in April 2015 and revealed stable moderate to severe bilateral sensorineural hearing loss. Thresholds were stable compared to the last evaluation of the prior year. The treatment plan (8-25-2015) was to repeat audiogram in one year. The original Utilization Review (UR) (10-7-2015) denied a request for Oticon Aite 2 Pro Custom in the ear aides, bilateral hearing aid.

IMR ISSUES, DECISIONS AND RATIONALES

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

Oticon Alte2 Pro Custom in the ear aides, hearing aid, bilateral: Overturned

Claims Administrator guideline: The Claims Administrator did not base their decision on the MTUS. Decision based on Non-MTUS Citation Official Disability Guidelines, Head Chapter, updated 7/24/14-Hearing Aids subheading.

MAXIMUS guideline: Decision based on MTUS General Approaches 2004, Section(s): Prevention, General Approach to Initial Assessment and Documentation, Initial Approaches to Treatment, Cornerstones of Disability Prevention and Management.

Decision rationale: Please note that MTUS guidelines from Head chapter/Hearing aids is used as evidence basis - this is not given as an option in above check boxes. (Reviewer has checked general approaches box in order to be able to submit this case as system does not allow submission without checked box) Guidelines state that hearing aids are recommended for, among other types of hearing loss, sensorineural hearing loss. It is further stated that "hearing aids should be recommended by an otolaryngologist or a qualified audiologist and prior authorization should be required for hearing aids costing more than \$█████ per ear, including hearing aid evaluation, fitting and purchase of hearing aids once every 4 years." This patient has been tested to have stable audiometric thresholds compared with testing done last year and it is also noted that worker has "good speech discrimination ability". There is no documentation as to change in thresholds between the time current aids were obtained and most recent testing and there is no documentation regarding condition of current hearing aids. Despite this lack of documentation, the average life span of a hearing aid is approximately 5 years. Per MTUS guidelines hearing aids should be recommended once every 4 years. Per these guidelines, then, updated hearing aids are medically appropriate at this time.